

WHAT BELGIUM LOOKS LIKE TO-DAY

Impressions of the American Violinist, Louis Persinger, on a Tour to Brussels with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra—Peaceful Appearance of Country Districts—The Ruins of Louvain—How the Orchestra Was Protected Against Possible Bomb-throwers in the Théâtre de la Monnaie

BERLIN, May 24.—When the Philharmonic Orchestra returned from its trip to Brussels, its American concertmaster, Louis Persinger, was asked for his impressions of the tour.

"When it was definitely arranged that the Philharmonic Orchestra was to go to Brussels for two concerts under Weingartner's bâton I, for one," said Mr. Persinger, "looked upon the possibilities of the trip with rather mixed feelings! It was within the range of possibilities that the long-expected British 'offensive' might happen to commence at the very moment this company of musicians arrived on Belgian soil, for one thing, and it seemed to me to be tempting the devil himself to allow a German orchestra to play in a Brussels theater, where a bomb-thrower or two might make a sorry end of the whole affair. So I was careful to place my good American passport in an outside pocket before I boarded the train in Berlin, and I was also provided with a healthy supply of press notices and photographs to prove my American nationality. Two other German orchestras had already 'safely' given concerts in Brussels, however, so the wives and sisters and sweethearts of the departing 'Philharmonikers' carried their woes quite cheerfully.

"All along the route our two special cars labelled 'Brussels' excited curiosity; the trainloads of passing soldiers evidently looked upon us as the latest kind of recruits, for the red, bewhiskered, long-maned and otherwise 'musical'

heads poking out of the windows at every possible excuse were always received with the encouraging cheering that we needed! The trip to Cologne was one long list of these affectionate demonstrations.

"As we passed through Düsseldorf the huge searchlights were throwing their long rays across the black sky in every direction, as a hostile airship had been sighted in the vicinity some time before. I wondered for a moment whether our train would be visited by a bomb or two, but that danger passed over, too, and we pulled into the big station at Cologne amid squads of soldiers and Red Cross nurses and hurrying girls, presenting departing warriors with postcards to send to their dear ones at the last moment, or steering them towards the inevitable hot coffee and sausages and rolls. After about half the orchestra men had lost themselves on the crowded platforms in the general excitement and had been set right by patronizing porters and good-natured, bouquet-bedecked soldiers, our train was finally located and after a few moments we left for Aix-la-Chapelle and the Belgian frontier.

Appearances Peaceful

"At Herbesthal, just this side of the line, the German military inspectors came on the train and looked over our special permits to visit Belgium. Our faces were found to correspond approximately with the photographs on the official documents, and after another short wait our train steamed on in the night towards Liège, Louvain and Brussels. We passed through Liège very early in the morning, and from then on everyone was peering out into the hazy landscape looking for those burned villages and wrecked farm houses we had heard so much about. Once in a while one espied the bare walls of a burned house, and in villages here and there two or three houses together had been destroyed. Then, too, a long line of soldiers' graves, decorated with flowers, stretched along the track near Tirlemont. But otherwise the country was velvety and beautiful and seemingly unconscious of war. Belgian peasants stood at the gates as the train passed gazing on the German sentries with all the indifference in the world, cattle grazed in the green spots as usual, and chickens had their say in the back yards, too! I was surprised to note how every possible bit of productive soil had been carefully cultivated; in many places the crops were already high above the ground.

"The train slowly rattled along, German sentries stationed every few hundred feet along the line, little German, Bavarian and Saxon bags decorating the tiny guard-houses, German signs in place of the French ones everywhere—and we reached Louvain. As we entered the station street after street of bare, crumbling walls was visible everywhere about. The one pathetic reminder of things as they used to be was a small monument in the center, which somehow remained unscathed. As the train left, circling around the town, one could get a better idea of how much had really been destroyed. All the big factories and buildings on the outskirts are untouched; so far as I could see only that part immediately around the station and lying between that and the quaint Gothic Town Hall suffered, perhaps a fifth of the town altogether. But those forlorn-looking walls brought the war much nearer to one.

"Brussels is the same charming city it always was, and excepting that countless German soldiers are to be seen everywhere and that a few of the smaller shops are closed, it is hard, for one not living there, at least, to realize that deadly battles are being waged within a few hours' distance.

"The two concerts with Weingartner were given in the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, which was formerly Brussels' home of opera. The interior was as rich and imposing as ever and the audiences were as enthusiastic as could be ex-

pected, under the circumstances. They consisted mostly of German military and civic authorities, of course, although I was told that a number of Belgians had been 'invited' to attend the concerts.

Soldiers Everywhere

"I don't know that the military atmosphere is exactly the one that one would voluntarily choose for programs of Beethoven or Brahms, but we certainly had enough of that sort of inspiration around the theater those two nights! A line of troops stretched around the building itself, your passport was examined before you were allowed to enter, other bayonets guarded the entrance doors, and even the back part of the stage was over-run with the familiar *feldgrau* uniforms, rifles stacked in the center. And in various parts of the house, too, I noticed soldiers with their rifles resting quietly but suggestively against the seats in front. The concertmaster's chair, so near the edge of the stage, would have made an excellent mark for some misguided patriot, too! But nothing happened, after all, and the crowds of curious which the Belgian police kept from approaching too near the theater obligingly refrained from throwing any bombs.

"Brussels' Bois de la Cambre was as enticingly cool and green as ever and the postcard vendors at the Palace of Justice and the milk sellers in the woods coaxed many a good coin from us. The orchestra men betrayed such a sound appetite and liking for the various dishes in the hotel that one of the Belgian waiters was forced to remark that it must be true, then, that the people of Berlin were starving!

"The return trip to Berlin was

broken in Frankfurt, Mannheim and Hanover, where we gave concerts under the inspiring direction of the orchestra's favorite, Arthur Nikisch."

Musical Evening by Carl V. Lachmund in Yonkers

YONKERS, N. Y., June 8.—At Gymnasium Hall in the Y. W. C. A. Building last night, Carl V. Lachmund offered a piano-talk and recital entitled, "Structure and Form in Musical Composition," illustrated by students of the Lachmund Conservatory and Marjorie Gleyre Lachmund. Mr. Lachmund discussed the two-part song form, the dance and fantasy forms and later the sonata form. There were excellent demonstrations in all grades by Marie Baines, Joseph Finnegan, Bessie Chapin, Helen Hersey, Winifred Smith, Marian Pierce, Damsita Bashford, Helen Brown, Hans Dohrenwend, Dell Lampe, Anita Lachmund, Marion Fox, Laura Miller, Arnaud Lachmund, Marjorie Lachmund, Berenice Quinlan and Leda Everson.

The final try-out for Music League of America artists selected from the various former try-outs was held the afternoon of June 11, at Aeolian Hall, New York. This ends the try-outs for this season. The next audition will take place in September.

Josef Urban, the Viennese artist who was stage manager for the Boston Opera Company, has entered into a partnership agreement with F. Ziegfeld, Jr., to establish a scenic studio in New York. Before the agreement was signed a contract was made for the investiture of a new Pavlova production.

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