

BROADENS PIANO'S SCOPE WITH SUPER-TECHNIQUE

Leopold Godowsky's Aim Is to Develop the Polyphonic, Poly-rhythmic and Polydynamic Potentialities of the Instrument—Coterie of Noted Artists Centers About This Genial and Musicianly Pianist—He Points Out Present as Time for Founding National Conservatory

AMONG the changes wrought in American musical life by the war perhaps the most stimulating is the fore-gathering here of coterie of noted artists. Some driven to our shores as refugees and others coming for scheduled concert tours, their presence has given a fillip to our musical energies. This, in turn, has reacted upon the distinguished visitors so that they have felt themselves to be greater integral parts of our life, and desirous of becoming even more so in the future. One of the most distinguished of these coterie is that which centers chiefly about the genial person of Leopold Godowsky.

One who dropped in at Mr. Godowsky's New York apartment during the Winter might have seen, say, Harold Bauer and Ossip Gabrilowitsch lounging about while their host, in easy negligee attire, officiated at the piano in their behalf; or he might have found Mr. Godowsky making a group of his artist-friends comfortable for a game of cards while he himself went out with Josef Hofmann for a stroll and a quiet talk on musical subjects.

The clustering of such noted musicians about Mr. Godowsky's hearthstone bespeaks not only his kindly personality and congeniality, but the musicianship that makes these famous artists glad to spend their leisure hours in his companionship. The mellowing influence of his friendship is shown in the fact that he was this season instrumental in healing a long established breach between two artists of world-wide reputation.

His Summer Home a Mecca

With the coming of the Spring the Godowsky lares and penates were re-established at Avon, N. J., where the pianist, with his charming wife and four children, is now to be found in an attractive villa beside the lake. Just a few blocks away Mischa Elman is located with his family. The Godowsky domicile is to be a Mecca for artists' pilgrimages during the Summer. A visitor found Mr. Godowsky there the other afternoon, busied in his work as editor-in-chief of the Art Publication Society's Progressive Series of Piano Lessons. With him was his co-worker in this task, Emerson Whithorne, the composer.

One who entered deeply enough into friendship with Mr. Godowsky to grasp the fullness of his pianistic ideals might define him thus:

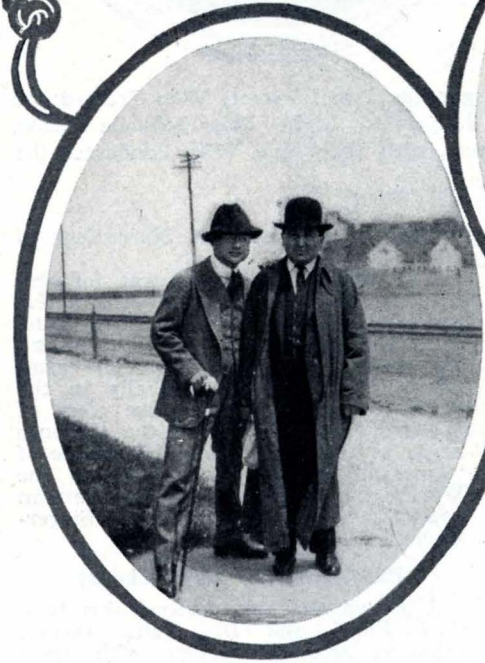
"Leopold Godowsky, the super-technician of the piano."

Mr. Godowsky's aim is to develop the mechanical, technical and rhythmical possibilities of pianoforte playing, to expand the polyphonic, polyrhythmic and polydynamic potentialities of the instrument, and to widen its range in tone-coloring.

In his compositions and arrangements he makes use of innumerable contrapuntal devices, which frequently compass almost the whole expanse of the keyboard.

Outlines Many Voices

Whereas Bach utilized about four octaves of the instrument, Mr. Godowsky, by the clever use of passages containing contrapuntal voices, and the employment of sustained voices which are often carried in the ear of the listener by a kind of aural suggestion, produces an effect akin to the closely woven fabric of a full orchestral score. These numerous voices are each given an individual tone-color and perfect dynamic differentiation through the most subtle digital articulation. For instance the left hand may simultaneously play three or even more voices, and yet each will progress smoothly on its own dynamic plane. This beautiful plasticity of phrase de-



With a Musical Bard at an American Avon: Leopold Godowsky "Snapped" in Varied Pursuits at His Summer Home, Avon, N. J. Above, Left, the Pianist Exercising His Faculties as a Critic of Asparagus. Right, Fishing from a Bulkhead in the Atlantic Ocean. Below, Left, Greeted by Another Artist Cottager, Mischa Elman, After a Trip to New York. Right, Godowsky as a Boatman on the Lake in Front of His Villa

mands a revolutionized fingering and an entirely new technique of pedaling.

In Mr. Godowsky's "super-technique" he assigns a distinct dynamic quality to each finger. He achieves the contrapuntal brilliancy of Bach, but with a modern harmonic background. With the ultra-moderns, however, he is not in sympathy.

Americans will have an opportunity to renew their acquaintance with Mr. Godowsky's pianistic art and his musicianship next season, when he makes his concert tour under the management of Foster & David. During the present season the pianist has not appeared in concerts, but he has been most assiduous in his appearing at recitals. "Wherever I am, I like to hear as much good music as possible," he related, "and this year naturally my opportunities have been greater than usual. But, you know, there are some artists who will not give their fellow-artists the satisfaction of seeing them at their recitals, or else they believe in keeping themselves apart from the public, throwing a veil of mystery about their personalities. I fail to see how an artist benefits, however, by being anything but a regular human being."

Chance for National Conservatory

Mr. Godowsky has been doing little teaching during his present stay, but he has upon several occasions re-enunciated a pedagogic vision which he had set forth in a MUSICAL AMERICA interview two or three seasons ago. This was the founding of a national conservatory here as a part of a big music establishment which should include also an opera house, theater, etc., all enlisting the services of the world's leading musicians and drawing the peoples of the whole world to America for their music.

"Would not this be the great time to establish such a conservatory?" reiterated Mr. Godowsky. "Not only are the world's great artists now in this country, but the financial conditions are such that they would be likely to accept more reasonable remuneration for their services as teachers in this great school. As to a location, I would suggest the city of Washington."

This pianist has been spending more than a little of his time in composition, but he could not be persuaded to divulge

the nature of the works which he has been creating. "The music is still in the formative stage, and I take up each work just as it appeals to me. Now, I don't believe in talking about one's compositions until they are completed. It is as if a parent should talk about his child before it is born and should say, 'My child is going to be very handsome and intelligent.'"

Pieces for Violin

Mr. Godowsky did let fall an intimation that he is engaged upon some pieces for the violin. As to the inadequacy of the violin literature as compared with that of the piano, he was asked if this was because much of the music for the fiddle had been written by violin virtuosi, some of whom might not be ranked any too high as to their musicianship. "Well, the violin is a homophonic instrument and the violinist who adheres closely to that medium is likely to find his creative mind running along homophonic lines. Thus, as polyphonic music is the highest form of music, virtuosi who incline merely toward the homophonic naturally won't reach the creative heights."

As to the effects of the war upon the American concert business, Mr. Godowsky would not venture a decisive opinion. He instanced, however, the influx of trade which is likely to come to America from the warring countries when they begin their reconstruction period after peace is declared. "Anything is likely to become a habit," he commented, "even an operation in commerce, and when the European countries get started buying from America, they're likely to continue to do so. And there seems to be no reason why the prosperity thus produced shouldn't have a very beneficial effect on America's concert business and other amusements."

His American Citizenship

Those who know Mr. Godowsky well are of the belief that there is no more neutral in the war situation than is this pianist. Born a Russian and of distinguished royal service in Austria as the head of the Master School for Piano-Playing in Vienna, Mr. Godowsky is also an American citizen, having become naturalized when he lived in America as pianist and teacher years ago. When he

became head of the Vienna Meisterschule, it was necessary for him to give allegiance to the Austrian crown, yet he did not want to give up his American citizenship, so he appealed to the U. S. state department. Here he was informed that the matter could probably be arranged, with an appeal to the courts as the necessary step in reinstating himself.

Last Fall at the outbreak of the war Mr. Godowsky experienced trials similar to those of so many refugees, with great difficulty securing funds enough to take him out of Belgium. Once safe in London; he might have been put in a concentration camp, but for his Russian birth and his American citizenship. The latter helped especially in the procuring of funds for taking himself and his family to America. But how to sever connections with his official Austrian post?

A Wartime Ruse

Notification could not have been made directly by mail, so he employed an ingenious ruse. He sent communications to pupils in various European cities stating that he was not able to fill the teaching post which he had been expected to occupy. It was not possible to use the term "government position," for the letter might have been taken up as coming from a spy. But some one or more of his pupils took the hint and notified the Vienna government of his inability to continue as head of the Master School, whereat Emil Sauer was chosen as Mr. Godowsky's successor.

"That is a wonderful school," said Mr. Godowsky, "and one of the finest things it has done is offering free instruction to talented students of other nations. For instance, it has given scholarships to some young Russians who, owing to the fortunes of war, are now fighting against Austria."

One who can beguile Mr. Godowsky into a reminiscent mood will hear illuminating anecdotes which are the fruits of his rich experience. For instance, he may tell how as a young pianist he occupied for a short time Widor's post as organist of St. Sulpice in Paris. Or, perhaps he may relate that at one concert in Moscow he had to hurry away from

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