

STUDYING WITH LESCHETIZKY AS IT IMPRESSED CLARENCE BIRD

American Pianist Returns from Prolonged Residence Abroad,
First in Vienna and Later in Florence—Piano Recitals Not
a Flourishing Institution in Italy

By HARRIETTE BROWER

THE American pianist, Clarence Bird, has just returned to his native land after a prolonged residence abroad, and will be heard in New York and other cities during the season.

"I feel I must get acquainted with America," said Mr. Bird in a recent conversation, "or I might say with New York and the East. I was born in Wisconsin and went to Europe when very young. I have lived a good part of my life on the other side.

"I studied a year with Heinrich Barth in Berlin, and then went to Vienna to Leschetizky. You can imagine the contrast I found between the two masters, the one so quiet, thorough, phlegmatic almost, the other so full of fire and flame, so spontaneous, so inspiring.

"Leschetizky was a wonderful teacher. He united in himself the characteristics of various nationalities. He had the German thoroughness and classic spirit, plus the life and fire of the Italians, the elegance and poetry of the Poles, for he was really a Pole. He knew how to adapt himself to people of each nationality, to each student, to bring out the best that is in him.

"Of course one had to undergo some preliminary training at the hands of a *Vorbereiter*, before going to the master for a lesson. One had to form the hand in a rounded position, with the finger joints firm, the wrist and arms supple and so on. There are various technical exercises written down, a couple of études from Czerny, Op. 74, a classical selection and a modern piece to be studied. When these were learned, not before, could the student present himself for a lesson. The Schuett Romance is a good illustration of a modern piece in simple form, as it is such a contrast to the classical number. Schuett was a great friend of the master.

A Lesson with Leschetizky

"All lessons were private, though there were often listeners present. Leschetizky did not play your piece through for you, but illustrated passages at his piano. He expected you to go to his side and see just how he did it, ask questions and be alive to every point. Nothing exasperated him so much as silence or passivity. He talked to you on all subjects, the theater, the opera, facial expression of actors and so on. But everything he said was made to illustrate a point in the music. You would play a very little in the lesson, or you would play a great deal. He sometimes said, 'You think you have had a good lesson because you have played much; one may learn more by listening attentively and not playing.'

We spoke of persons gifted with so-called "natural technique."

"I do not believe there is really such a thing as a natural technique," said the pianist. "A natural technique merely means a natural aptitude and ability to assimilate quickly technical forms. But I have found that those who acquire so easily do not play with the depth of feeling and sincerity of those who have to labor diligently for what they gain. I know that I have had to labor for what I have acquired.

"In regard to memorizing, Leschetizky, as you know, advises learning a bar at a time, or a phrase or two, away from

the piano. I have not followed this plan, simply because, when I know the piece well enough to play it, I know it by heart. When I am sure it is memorized,



Clarence Bird, the American Pianist,
Who Has Just Returned from a Long
Residence in Vienna and Florence

there is no need to test the memory constantly by practising without notes. If I should do so, I might find, after a month, that I had unconsciously been playing the wrong note somewhere; therefore I generally place the notes before me, so as to be quite sure. I always take them with me when traveling; I cannot imagine an artist going on tour without his music. I often read over my pieces with the notes, away from the piano; one does not always need actually to play the notes when studying the piece.

The Fear of Forgetting

"The common fear of pianists is that they may forget when playing in public. The singer or violinist has an accompaniment to help him out, but the pianist is there on the platform, quite alone. It is fatal for him to wonder what is coming next, or anticipate difficulties. He has ear and hand memory to assist him. Having prepared himself thoroughly, he must go before the audience and just play, throwing fear to the winds.

"As to the relative advantages of music study in America or Europe, I suppose one goes to the teacher he selects, wherever that teacher may be. If Leschetizky had lived in America, I would probably not have gone to Vienna. There are plenty of splendid teachers now in America, and surely the best piano playing in the world is to be heard right here in New York.

"I am not making a specialty of mod-

ern compositions, because I do not find many that attract me, that seem to me of great value. I love the old music, Mozart, Haydn and the other old classics. I fear, however, the public doesn't care much for them. Do you think they would relish a Haydn sonata, not one of the brilliant ones, but one that is just simple, sweet and beautiful? There are some bagatelles of Beethoven that appeal to me; not only the seven of Op. 33, but later things. There is a set of eleven, Op. 119, and others, Op. 126. Some of these are charming and not familiar, for no one plays them. They prove that Beethoven when composing the great sonatas and works of his later period, still found time to write delightful, simple, naïve pieces.

Four Years in Florence

"I remained with Leschetizky four years and they were wonderful years. I worked very hard and went through everything that any one could. Subsequently I went to Italy, and resided in Florence. The Italians do not seem to care greatly for piano music; piano recitals do not flourish there. I had heard so much piano music, however, that I was glad to study other phases. Italians live on the opera, and I heard a great deal of opera and many singers during my long sojourn there. Naturally this reacted beneficially on my piano studies. I taught a little, also, not Italians, but Americans, English, Russians or French.

"I have steeped myself in all the beauty and art of Italy for the last four years. Now I am here in my own land once more. I find New York wonderful!"

As Mr. Bird has played in many continental cities with pronounced success, we shall expect much from him this season. (All rights reserved.)

STIEFF BALTIMORE SERIES

Two Programs Given by Popular Artists
with Much Success

BALTIMORE, MD., Nov. 13.—The second in the series of the Stieff public concerts given in the Grand Room of the Stieff Building in North Baltimore Street, took place on Tuesday evening. An exceedingly interesting program was given by Mrs. W. K. Bunbaugh, soprano; Sara Lemer, violinist, and Newell Albright, accompanist. Mrs. Bunbaugh sang songs by Dell'Acqua, Foote, Sickles, Chadwick, MacFadyan and Ardit. Miss Lemer played a group of five numbers by Schubert, a Spanish Dance by Sarasate and a Ballade by Vieuxtemps.

The first recital in the series took place Oct. 28 and consisted of a piano recital by Newell Albright. Mr. Albright played numbers by Brahms, Couperin, Daquin, Debussy, Cyril Scott, Moszkowski, Poldini and Liszt. This series of concerts is proving to be particularly interesting and well attended. It will unquestionably take its place among the important musical events of the season here.

Tulsa, Okla., Faces Busy Musical Season

TULSA, OKLA., Nov. 10.—Local musical activities are gradually increasing. On Nov. 19 Charles W. Clark will appear in recital at Convention Hall, where on Nov. 30 John McCormack will be heard.

Under the auspices of the Hyecha Club, the Girls' Glee Club of Kendall College will give its first concert of the year on Dec. 7, under the direction of Robert Boice Carson. On Jan. 11 a song recital will be given by the Hyecha Club in honor of Mrs. F. S. Clinton, who has been president of the club for ten years. Mr. Carson has been engaged to give the entire program. The Apollo Club will give its first concert in February, under the direction of Charles Dierkes, with Paul Reimers, the tenor, as assisting artist. Other attractions for the season are Paderewski, the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York, the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Lulu Jones Downing and others.

Charles W. Graeff, a singing teacher formerly of New York and more recently of Budapest, has now settled in Berlin.

MUNICIPAL COURSE OPENED IN PORTLAND

Organist Macfarlane and Mr.
Witherspoon Heard Jointly
in Maine City

PORTLAND, ME., Nov. 13.—The first concert in the Municipal Series was given on Thursday evening with Herbert Witherspoon as the assistant artist. Will C. Macfarlane, the municipal organist, must have been delighted at the warmth and sincerity of his welcome by the great audience. At his appearance a huge basket of flowers was carried to the stage by four men as a token of the great esteem in which he is held. He chose as his opening number Wostenholme's "Sonata alla Handel" and gave a very scholarly performance.

Mr. Witherspoon delighted his audience with his magnificent voice and singing. Preceding his singing of the French aria, "Le Tambour Major," he gave a brief outline for the benefit of those who do not understand the French language. The audience appreciated this and it added to its enjoyment.

The last section of the program was taken up by "Wotan's Farewell" and the "Fire Music" from "Die Walküre." It showed off the orchestral qualities of the organ to perfection, and both Mr. Macfarlane and Mr. Witherspoon were at their best.

The Music Commission is delighted at the way the course tickets have sold. This makes the success of the series a certainty. The report of last year's concerts was most encouraging. The Commission began the year with a substantial balance in hand, and after paying all the expenses of the concerts, including the salary of the organist and the repairs on the organ, they have almost an equal balance to carry over to next year. A. B.

"KAGURA" MUSIC FOR MIKADO

Ancient Ghinto Composition Performed
at Ceremonial of Worship

Emperor Yoshihito, the Crown Prince and the other members of the imperial family worshipped to-day before the imperial sanctuary in the Giyuden Hall, one of the temporary structures erected on the grounds of the ancient palace of Kioto for the accession ceremonies, says an Associated Press despatch of Nov. 11 from Kioto, Japan. A brilliant assemblage of aristocrats and officials filled the hall, and the scene was one of great beauty and color, the dominating note, solemnity.

Throughout the ceremony the "Kagura" music sounded, a Ghinto composition handed down from the dim ages. Tradition has it that the Kagura music was played first while her attendant deities danced before the Sun Goddess, the Emperor's ultimate ancestor, to appease her wrath. The airs now blended in the Kagura music were selected from among ancient songs by Emperor Ichijo, and number thirty-eight. The principal instruments used are harps and flutes. In playing the Kagura the musicians take their seats in two groups, one facing the other.

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