

## EXTENDING PIANO TECHNIQUE TO MEET DEMANDS OF MODERNISM

George F. Boyle Illustrates Departures from Traditional Methods that Have Arisen for Composer and His Interpreter

Baltimore, July 31, 1915.

THE composer-pianist of ultra-modern tendencies is blazing a trail for new ideals in pianism, establishing a new mode of expression, creating a new order to finger technique and developing the much neglected art of pedaling. American musicians are doing an active

modern idiomatic piano composition and to describe the technical departures from traditional methods which have arisen through the use of the new idiom. Said he: "Upon analysis of the modern composer-pianist's work one should find strong individuality of expression, produced through the employment of striking thematic material, subtle harmonization, with the use of shifting tonalities, although allegiance to the fixed tonal foundation must be noticeable.

### Economizing in Material

"In my opinion, there should be a desire to economize in material when creating a work. I often find an overflow of thematic ideas seeming to spring from the principal theme. But spontaneity and unity must be the outcome of my composition scheme. Therefore, no matter how attractive and sparking an effect may be in itself, unless it is the direct outgrowth of thematic development, reasonably related to the general scheme and in logical association with the melodic contour, I do not deem it worthy of use.

"Thematic treatment, counter and related themes, melody with accompaniment removed to an extreme register, interlocking, overlapping and rapidly moving counterpoints having fragmentary theme suggestion are some of the means employed in modern piano composition. Atmospheric effects and tone color are sought. Color is gained by attention to the penetration of accent, the extreme treble becomes ethereal, brilliant, brittle or sparkling, while the lower registers embody mysticism, warmth and richness of tone, capable of causing endless psychological suggestion. Just how well these effects are made apparent will depend upon what consideration has been given to the important matter of pedaling. Too frequently composers are afraid to use the blendings and the minglings of tone which result when combining higher figuration with basic harmony that apparently has little relationship. Still this blurring is not without charm and becomes unpleasant only when it is employed in too low a register. Effects gained through mingling high melodic figuration by adroit pedaling not only produce a subtle harmonic background, but, by modifying the shrillness of tone penetration, add to the coloring."

To illustrate his remarks Mr. Boyle began improvising at the piano. Each point was fully amplified either with an example from his own works or in a phrase from some modernist. Between puffs at his inseparable cigar, he began chatting about the technical demands made upon the modern player.

### Changes in Technique

"Since the advent of the whole tone scale, with its resultant progressions of augmented chords and the use of chords with added intervals, modern piano technique has indeed undergone changes. Just as the diatonic and the chromatic scale in the days of Dussek, Czerny, Thalberg and Liszt gave cause for concern, so do the devices employed at present give the player something to cope with technically. Many of the compositions of Liszt show experiments with the whole tone scale, but it has remained for the French school to carry this device to its present vogue. With César Franck its thematic employment may be noticed. True enough, the composer when using the whole tone scale, which permits of so much harmonic 'mirroring,' does so with caution and does not demand the speed expected of other scale figuration.

"The rate of speed, single or double notes, the phrase before or after, all



George F. Boyle, Composer, Pianist and Member of the Faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and His Wife, Who, as Avery Baker, Was His Pupil in Piano

share in the advancement of these ideals, as their creative efforts show a distinct character and style which point to the fact that music for the piano is in a state of evolution.

These ideals are embodied in the work of George F. Boyle, who, although an Australian by birth, by virtue of his long association with an American institution of musical learning, as a teacher at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Baltimore, may be considered an American by adoption.

Mr. Boyle was asked recently to define the essential characteristics of

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govern the fingering employed for this scale. As there are two foundation notes upon which it is formed, either the white keys or the black keys, it requires separate fingering. In a word, the same finger should fall always on the same key; generally the thumb is to be avoided on the black keys. For instance, beginning on C, ascending, the right hand would conveniently finger the six notes of the whole tone scale thus: 1, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4—descending in reverse order; beginning on C sharp, or its equivalent, D flat, ascending, the fingering would be: 3, 4, 1, 3, 1, 2—descending in reverse order. In the left hand, beginning on C, ascending: 1, 3, 1, 4, 3, 2—descending in reverse order; beginning on C sharp, ascending, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 4—descending in reverse order. Of course, this is the fingering that suggests itself as comfortable to me. Others may devise more suitable sequences to meet their needs."

### Mr. Boyle's Compositions

Mr. Boyle's piano compositions are decidedly modern in trend and are being universally played by prominent artists. Ernest Hutcheson has played Mr. Boyle's Piano Concerto many times in America and in Europe. Arthur Shattuck played this work in England recently with the Bournemouth and the Harrogate Symphony orchestra. Edith Kilminster has performed it in Australia with much success. Other compositions from Mr. Boyle's pen are in the repertoire of foremost artists. At present he is occupied in sketching a symphonic poem for orchestra which is planned upon large instrumental proportions.

Having conducted symphony orchestras in England, Mr. Boyle has gained an extended knowledge of orchestration

and his scoring always carries colorful significance. His growing classes of pupils, from year to year, show that his methods of instruction are based upon the soundest principles, for he not only follows ideals that lead him to be an artistic player himself but has the keen faculty of imparting his knowledge to others and inspiring them toward a similar goal.

FRANZ C. BORNSCHEIN.

Wilfred Glenn to Be Soloist with Handel and Haydn Society

Wilfred Glenn, the basso, who earned a decided success recently at the *Globe's* concerts in Madison Square Garden, New York, has been engaged for the February concert of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston. The Lowell Choral Society has engaged him for an appearance in the "Messiah" on January 25 and he will appear as soloist with the Troy Orchestra on January 20.

A number of American songs were introduced with much success recently by John Proctor Mills, the bass-baritone, in Montgomery, Ala. These included: "An Evening Song," Gilberté; "Alone," Foerster; "A Secret of Bacchus," Huhn; "I'm Wear'n Awa'," Foote; "Tis Spring Within Our Hearts," Spross; "Ma'y Jane" (Mss), Mills-Bingham.

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