

SIEVEKING AS TEACHER-COMPOSER

The Dutch Pianist Discusses His Artistic Theories at His Summer Home on Long Island—Emphasis Upon the "Dead-Weight" Principle—Importance of Environment to the Musician

By HARRIETTE BROWER

"COME down and see me on Sunday afternoon—there will be music," wrote Martinus Sieveking, the Dutch musician, from his sylvan retreat on Long Island. The invitation was alluring, the day proved fair and we went.

Mr. Sieveking has chosen not to locate on the seashore, but a little inland, where green lawns and shrubbery abound. With him are Mrs. Elliott and Inez Elliott, her daughter, who has studied in Paris with the distinguished teacher for the last ten years and will probably make a concert tour of America. Mr. Sieveking considers Miss Elliott a thorough mistress of his method, and thus far the only authorized exponent of it in this country.

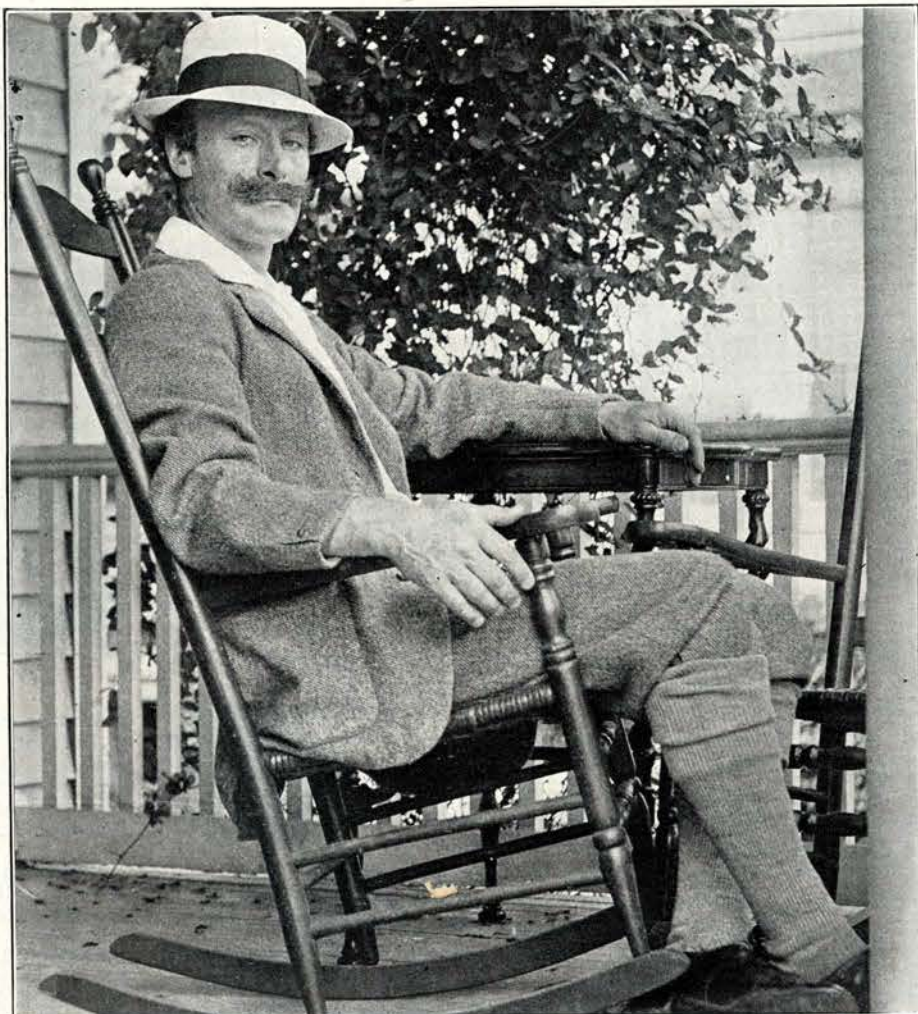
When we arrived at the villa sounds of a piano met us before we reached the gate. Bach was being played with amazing fluency and velocity. We paused to listen and waited till the music ceased before pressing the bell. The player responded and led us into the parlor, which serves as music room. It is a square room, with several windows looking out upon the green. On a small mantel shelf stand a few drawings, prominent among them a photograph of Adelina Patti which she sent to Sieveking in commemoration of her seventieth birthday. Two concert grands take up the major portion of the room, though the whole space seems dominated by the presence of the pianist himself. You feel that here is a big personality; a man who has thought much, studied deeply; one who has suffered too—which he says is a necessity if one would do anything worthy the name of art.

In answer to some of my questions the artist said:

"I was surrounded by musical influences from the beginning of my life. My father was a thoroughly trained musician, a conductor and composer, my mother was a singer. I have always lived in a musical atmosphere; I think this is one of the most essential things if one would become a musician. At a very early age I began to study the piano—before long I began to compose. At twelve I played organ in a church. Later I went to Vienna, to Leschetizky. The Professor took great interest in me and was especially kind. There were six of us, singled out of a class of ninety, to be his favorites; they were Hambourg, Gabrilowitsch, Goodson, Schnabel, Newcomb and myself.

Early Struggles

"Well, after those days I gave concerts everywhere, and came to America also. But I was not satisfied with the success I had won, nor with what I had achieved. I felt there were deeper principles underlying my art which I had not fathomed. So I set to work to discover them. The method I have evolved is the result of fifteen years' hard work. But I am happy with the result; I feel I have won out. I feel I have gained the correct principles of true piano technique. Life has been a bitter struggle at times. I have had to go hungry, I have even had to starve! All that is over; I have no financial worries. My aim is to benefit others with my discoveries. I want to help teachers to teach better, and players to play better. Of



Martinus Sieveking, the Distinguished Pianist, Teacher and Composer

course I have to charge a fee for my work, but it is not my aim to make money. For I often give much time to those with talent who are deserving and yet unable to pay. I want to be surrounded by talented, congenial people, whether I live in America or in Europe."

Yielding to our request, Mr. Sieveking began to play. First his "Souffrance," written three years ago when his son was very ill. It expresses a father's anxiety for the recovery of the stricken one. After this Beethoven, Op. 27, No. 2, the "Moonlight." Then a Bach violin Gavotte, transcribed for piano by himself. Next some Chopin, and finally, one of his latest compositions, a Nocturne, which has an appealing, haunting melody.

"Women like this piece," he remarked, in answer to our openly expressed admiration. "This and the 'Souffrance' have, I think, the right to exist; they are modern but not futuristic, for I cannot write in that style. The Nocturne is somewhat after the manner of Chopin—I quite frankly acknowledge it. It certainly does not copy the Polish master, for it is distinctly modern; but it is in his spirit. I wrote it while staying in a beautiful place, where there was a lovely garden with flowers and fruit, blue skies overhead and sunshine and moonlight. I have expressed in it the feeling this environment made upon me. Some composers write from the heart, like Beethoven; some from the head, like Strauss. Wagner expressed both head and heart."

Sieveking's Method

A little later Mr. Sieveking brought the manuscript copy of his piano method and we fell to discussing the material and doing the exercises. After each one had been tried, he would say: "Do you approve of this? Do you think it will help? Is it not a good exercise? Any one who can play this with endurance and velocity has technique." The scale exercises were especially interesting and helpful.

The master constantly speaks of the "dead weight" principle; he says the arm hangs on the finger tips. While all this is true, the term dead weight does not, to my mind, convey the whole truth, and may mislead those who are not initiated. It gives no idea, for example, of the required firmness of the fingers, nor of the extreme muscular energy with which each key is to be depressed in all finger exercises. It is this element of energy, combined with arm weight, which gives power and sonority to the tone. Sieveking, as is well known, uses an instrument with wider keys; he insists on high, large movements of fingers for all tech-

nical exercises, and wants all the sonority that can be brought out. His whole mentality is built on large lines of thought; even his handwriting corresponds. Yet he can caress the keys of his instrument delicately, when he wills to do it.

Later in the afternoon we had tea and delicious cakes made by Miss Elliott's fair hands. Sieveking was genial and full of anecdote. He wished me to examine the hand of his pupil and note its beautiful development. "She plays with the greatest perfection," he said. "You shall hear her; I shall insist that she make a career."

When tea was over we visited Miss Elliott's studio on the floor above, with its grand piano piled with music, its comfortable chairs and couches, a pleasant work room indeed.

We feasted our eyes on a glorious sunset as we left the villa and walked about the wide, quiet streets, bordered with green hedges and gardens, and dotted with pretty villas and cottages.

"I love the country here," Mr. Sieveking said, as he pointed out this or that view or bit of color. "It is so quiet and restful and I can work so well. There is a group of students working with me. I teach three hours each day, but no more—the remaining time is for myself."

A consultation of time tables showed that we must soon be on the wing. Our genial host insisted on accompanying us

to the train, and seeing us safely aboard. As he stood there, waving us a farewell, his tall figure looming dark against the amber sunset sky, the whole made an "impression" not to be forgotten. Had we only possessed the necessary gift, the scenes of the afternoon might have served as the basis of a futurist tone poem. Fortunately, or otherwise, we could only keep the group of pictures in mind to hang on memory's walls. (All rights reserved)

MINNIE TRACEY RE-ENGAGED

Will Continue to Instruct Cincinnati Conservatory Students in Opera

Minnie Tracey, the American prima donna soprano, who has been a member of the vocal faculty at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music during the season just passed, has been re-engaged by that institution for the season of 1916-1917. Miss Tracey's production of Meyerbeer's "L'Africaine" with her students at the operatic performance given at the Conservatory on May 26 was so notable that it will doubtless bring many students to the Cincinnati Conservatory next season to study grand opera with her.

At the summer concerts of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, under Cavalier Spirescu, two of Miss Tracey's pupils have been soloists, chosen from a large number who applied to the conductor. Emma Noe, who was the *Selika* in the "L'Africaine" performance, sang during the opening week, while Marguerite Hukill, another Tracey pupil, sang arias from "Manon" and "Butterfly" at one of last week's concerts.

SELLING NORDICA'S EFFECTS

Diva's Wraps, Gowns and Furs Offered at Public Auction in Newark

Personal effects of Mme. Lillian Nordica are fast finding their way into the hands of the public. An announcement of an administrator's sale, held early on the afternoon of July 14, at 24 Clinton Street, Newark, N. J., set forth a tempting array of apparel from the estate of Mme. Nordica. Among the numerous articles offered at this public venue a few of the rarer ones were selected for special mention and were advertised as follows:

- One Irish Lace Gown.
- One Cerise Evening Cloak.
- One Rose Point Lace Dress.
- One Diamond Spangled Dress.
- One Black Jet Gown.
- One Gold Cloth, steel embroidery.
- One White Velvet Brocade.
- One White Satin Evening Wrap.
- One Russian Sable Coat (six tails), velvet coat attached.
- One Hudson Bay Sable Coat.

Notable Amateur Production of "Pirates of Penzance" in Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH, July 8.—As a testimonial benefit for Harold J. Reihill, a local tenor, who is an invalid, an amateur production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance" was given last night in the Nixon Theater by the Pittsburgh Opera Company. The performance was consistently smooth, being declared one of the best amateur productions heard here in many years. Thomas F. Kirk directed the work; Emil O. Wolff conducted the orchestra. The principals were Emma F. Curran, August Adrian, Edward P. Coyle, F. William Saalbach, Margaret V. McCann, Helen Flatley, Mary Kelly and Katharine Curran. The chorus also sang well.

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