

# NEW SCHOOL LEAVING DEBUSSY AND RAVEL BEHIND

Famous French Modernists Surpassed in Audacity, Says Arnolde Stephenson, by a New Company of Young Composers in Paris—Musical Creativity in Wartime—Soprano a Propagandist for American Songs in France and French Songs in America—Spirit of the France of To-day

To be French in spirit these great days one need not be French born. A brief residence suffices to bestow upon the ordinarily most intransigent foreigner that high enthusiasm, that tranquil but indomitable confidence, that sublime sense of a new life and that dauntless and indefatigable energy to meet its exactions, which are the most distinctive traits of the contemporary Frenchman. It is as though the stranger had perforce to share the regeneration of the native. The American returning from France at this time is a different being from the one who has stayed at home—we had almost said a better one.

Arnolde Stephenson, the soprano, who made her New York debut singing French songs at Æolian Hall last week, is such an American. But having passed many years of her life in France and having been in Paris through all these woeful times, her feelings and her point of view are as fervently Gallicized as though she had been born and reared on the Avenue Henri Martin or the Boulevard Haussmann. She communicates that feeling of upliftment and inspiration which appears to have become the heritage of one and every Frenchman to-day. From the company and discourse of such a person anyone not hostile or hopelessly neutral derives gratification beyond words.

Miss Stephenson has labored much for France. She has given concerts and taken part in entertainments of divers sorts and for various "aides" and "secours." She is a "marraine" with a dutiful "fillet" at the front, who writes her from the trenches whenever he gets the chance. On the day preceding her recital, she was busily occupied in knitting a sort of armless sweater of "horizon-blue" wool for this same "god-son" and finding considerable satisfaction in the task. What with her singing and charitable works, she had plenty to keep her busy while she was in Paris. Her mother and sister entreated her to return to America when the war began, but to no avail. She did allow herself to be prevailed upon sufficiently to go to Italy, but found anxiety at a distance more harrowing than the apprehension of perils at close range. So she went back to Paris, to her apartment near the Etoile.

And in Paris Miss Stephenson stayed. What she had occasion to see and hear, until she sailed on the Touraine back to America, would make some of the reports that have traveled as far as this country pale in comparison. But the underlying fact of all she relates is the heroic calm of the Parisians and a fortitude in the face of which she had much ado to govern her own intensely stirred emotions. She passed through the ordeal of one of the Zeppelin raids when, failing to obtain artificial courage even through a good-sized swallow of brandy, she found the remedy from her badly disheveled nerves in the utter cheerfulness and almost light-hearted curiosity of a crowd that had gathered in the blackness of the unlighted Place de l'Etoile toward midnight, after she had fled from her room when the falling bombs burst and fire engines sounded the danger signal.

### Enthusiasm for Modern French Music

But it will not be possible here to dilate upon Miss Stephenson's war-time experiences and observations. From Europe she brings a strong enthusiasm for modern French song composition and her temperament, equipment and training have fitted her pre-eminently for the task of revealing its most characteristic elements. That must not be construed



as intimating that she is not at her ease in songs of other schools—which she is said most decisively to be; but, things being as they are, she may well be regarded as pre-eminently a leader in the exposition of French musical thought, in the elucidation of its most distinctive messages. While in Paris she contrived whenever possible to bring forward the songs of Americans and has already sung many of the productions of Blair Fairchild and Campbell-Tipton. Since her return she has been familiarizing herself with the work of John Carpenter, who as a modernist of the truest dye, pleases her considerably even on a basis of short acquaintance.

"I love the modern type of song especially," she declares, "and, without in any manner neglecting the classics, have bent some of my best efforts to the study of the latest products. It has meant arduous work. Mastery in this sphere signifies a period of unremitting application and study. Until one has grown accustomed to the strange character of rhythm and intervals the difficulties seem insuperable. I am told that I overcame them in an unusually short time. To me it seemed quite the reverse. But once my perseverance had borne fruit, I loved the songs of Debussy, of Ravel and the rest with all my heart.

### The Gifted Darius Milhaud

"Some of the songs which I am introducing to America are no doubt of unusual complexity, and the piano parts are enormously intricate. I refer in particular to those of Darius Milhaud, who, though he is but twenty-three, has shown amazing gifts and has had the honor of publication by Durand. Then, too, there are remarkable things by Louis Aubert, by Koechlin, by Ravel. In France there has grown up a whole company of young composers whose works are scarcely known here, but who will be found to deserve marked consideration once they are introduced. For such it is one of my foremost ambitions to labor. Musically, their manner is that of Debussy and Ravel—only more so. In audacity and modernity they are leaving these composers behind. Contrary to a widespread belief, there is quite a little musical creation going on in France just now—some of it in the very trenches. One song was written for me as near the firing line as Nancy—which is frequently bombarded. It is a remarkable fact



Recent Paris Snapshots of the American Soprano, Arnolde Stephenson. To the Left, in Her Home. Above, Buying Flowers for the Hospitals on the Place de l'Etoile. Below, in the Bois de Boulogne

that while some thus revert to creative effort by a sort of reaction there are others in the war who, when they return to Paris, receive a shock when they notice the calmness and see the interest many persons take in artistic activity. They appear almost to resent it.

"Not a few of the artists and composers at the front have unfortunate experiences in which their want of practical sense plays them embarrassing tricks. On one occasion Ravel, who was doing some manner of guard duty, was ordered by an officer to light a fire. After ineffectual attempts he declared he could not. 'Can not,' exclaimed the officer furiously, 'why, what are you?' 'A musician,' humbly answered Ravel, upon which the officer swore some forcible

oaths and vented some remarkably uncomplimentary opinions about musicians and their uses. And he completed the poor composer's discomfiture by calling to his aid a man who had been a laborer and was adept in the performance of useful duties."

As a sort of indispensable house companion, an ugly little black doll, with woolly hair and a fallacious costume, accompanies Miss Stephenson. It is never far from her and when she practises she holds it in her arms. The doll has assumed the office of a mascot in her household. She brought it from Paris, where refugees make them and sell them as an infallible guarantee against the blues. Miss Stephenson tacitly vouches for its efficacy. H. F. P.

## DR. CARL GIVES RECITAL OF "PARSIFAL" MUSIC

An Uncommonly Eloquent Exposition of Wagner's Drama Celebrates Dr. Duffield's Anniversary

To produce with the means at his disposal such full and glowing tonal effects as were heard at his "Parsifal" recital, Dr. William C. Carl, the noted New York organist, must have contrived to borrow a bit of *Klingsor's* own magic. It was an "anniversary recital" given to commemorate the twenty-fifth year of the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Howard Duffield at the Old First Presbyterian Church, which Dr. Carl has also served for a long period. Dr. Duffield contributed in no small way toward heightening the effect of the recital by presenting comments upon Wagner's sacred drama.

With such splendid aides as Margaret Harrison, soprano; Andrea Sarto, baritone; Alix T. Maruchess, violinist; Charles A. Baker, pianist, and William I. Nevins, who played the chimes, Dr. Carl offered the following excerpts: The Prelude, Entry to the Hall of the Grail, *Amfortas's* Lament, the Voice from on High, Chorus of the Flower Maidens, *Kundry's* Narrative, the Good Friday Spell and March of the Grail Knights. The instrumental numbers retained not a little of their gorgeous orchestral hues

as Dr. Carl and Mr. Baker played them. The dynamics were finely graded and the interpretations, in general, were thoroughly enjoyable.

Mr. Sarto gave a poignant reading of the "Lament" and Miss Harrison sang *Kundry's* Narrative with authority and vocal opulence. All the collaborators, in fact, proved excellent. The church was thronged. B. R.

### Kreisler Fills Scranton Theater

SCRANTON, PA., Dec. 1.—Fritz Kreisler played to an immense audience Tuesday night at the Strand Theater. The violinist could not prolong his program enough to satisfy his hearers. The recital was the second of a series given by Chauncey Hand. W. R. H.

RICHARD

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