

BELIEVES WOMEN COMPOSERS WILL RISE TO GREATER HEIGHTS IN WORLD DEMOCRACY

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach Foresees Period of Development and Achievement in New Era That Will Come Out of the War—America's Foremost Woman Composer Analyzes Causes of Man's Superiority in Field of Creative Music—Woman's Standing in the Art as Reflection of Her Social Status

"HOW long has she been studying?" someone admiringly inquired of Mrs. Beach's piano teacher when the composer of "The Year's at the Spring" had just turned sixteen. "Twenty-five years," was the answer; and then, by way of explanation: "You see, she studied with the old masters." Mrs. Beach for her own part cannot recall the time that she was not playing or composing. Her memory goes back to her third year and musically the interim does not show a bald spot. It is just possible that interstices of the sort existed between the day of her birth and her third anniversary, but this point cannot be established for certain. For that matter, there is no evidence extant that any of the wonder-children, from Mozart to Erich Korngold, ever got seriously started before the fourth season of their mundane residence. So that nobody can justifiably challenge her right to priority.

But if she began early, she did not become surfeited with the exercise of her powers. Indeed the appetite increased by what it fed on. To-day Mrs. Beach, perhaps as popular a musical representative of her sex as ever put notes on ruled paper, rejoices in the maturity and variety of her musical endowments and interests. She loves to generate music and she loves to perform it. Some day she may abandon the latter practice to concentrate the full sum of her energies upon the former, though that time is not yet and the alternation of activities affords a good deal of the mental and physical diversion essential to artistic well-being. Whether her optimism has begotten her success or her success her optimism, the fact stands out that she is conspicuously provided with both.

Just now she is concertizing. Within a month or two she will withdraw to her native state of New Hampshire and there, duly sequestered, engage in composition till September comes to summon her back to the labors of an itinerant pianist. Naturally her summer productions will be nothing on a large scale. "For anything on that order I need a path quite clear of more or less distant concert duties and obligations," she declares. "After a few more years of travel and recital-giving I may settle down for a big, sustained effort—an opera, perhaps, if I can obtain a fine libretto. But I am too enthusiastic a traveler yet to settle down, too fond of my audiences to give them up. Toward these I feel like Carreño—'My dear public,' she calls it, and cannot endure the thought of severing relations with those she has through the years grown to love.

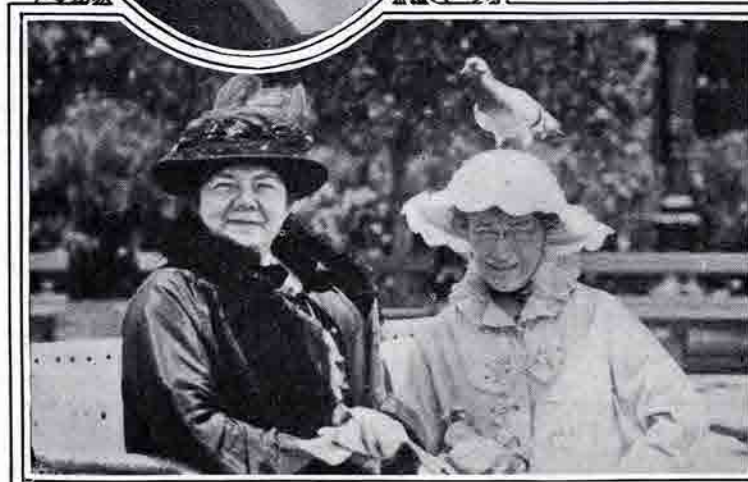
"Only the artist appreciates the meaning of an audience; only an artist understands the full significance of public affection and sympathy; only he can return it in kind. I do not wonder, like so many people, why different singers choose to remain on the stage long after the decline of their skill. The joy of giving of your highest powers is beyond description. Personally, I never experience the sensation of nervousness when I play—do not even know what stage fright is; only a limitless enthusiasm and enjoyment. There is no fear of anything going wrong, for when I am ready to play anything in public it means that it is absolutely a part of me and that uncertainty of any sort is out of the question. Were I in doubt of my ability to present a work to my completest satisfaction, I should not even consider playing it.

"For composition, I need absolute quiet. To work in a large city I find is impossible. I cannot chain myself down to a



—Photos by Apeda Studios

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, the Eminent American Composer and pianist. Above, Her Latest Portraits. To the Left, a San Diego, Cal., Snapshot, Showing Mrs. Beach with a Friend



creative task and really lose myself in the problems connected with it if I am haunted with the desire to hear some concert or opera performance that may be in progress conveniently near. Nor is it easy or practical to partition off a few morning hours. And if I work through the morning till about two in the afternoon, I become too exhausted to do anything else. So my method is to retire to a locality free from distractions of any sort."

Woman as Composer

The feminine composer continues to be regarded as a psychological phenomenon in most critical quarters. Times have changed since Gilbert satirized "that curious anomaly, the lady novelist," and painters of the feminine gender have for years been accepted without question. But the world still doubts the legitimacy of the woman composer, even though her tribe is steadily on the increase, and wonders why she never scales the heights attained by men. On this point Mrs. Beach hesitates to express a verdict.

"I frankly confess that I have never been able to determine the reason," she says. "I have often thought of the strangeness of such a fact, but can find no thorough explanation of it. It is certain that in the high flights of musical creation women do not begin to compare with men. But then, music is the superlative expression of life experience, and woman by the very nature of her position is denied many of the experiences that color the life of man. Nor has she the necessary strength to sustain the tremendous pressure involved in carrying through the problems involved in composition—mental labor exhausting enough to react with far-reaching physical effect. But these are only theories. A definite, comprehensive answer I cannot give.

"If the best known women composers have not come from Germany, where music has reached its highest evolution, I think the fact is due to the life of the average German woman—a life consecrated to domesticity. But I do expect that, in consequence of the great upheaval now going on and the enhancement of the social status of women in such countries as England and Russia, something of a noteworthy musical expression of the new condition will be evolved. If the Russian woman is as wonderful as we have a right to believe, I should not be surprised if she were presently to contribute not a little to the

art which will flower out of the present cataclysm.

Experiences in Germany

"In Germany before the war they were skeptical enough about woman's creative ability. I was summarily warned of the fate that probably awaited me when my 'Gaelic' Symphony and my piano concerto were played in Hamburg. The audience would be cold, the critics hostile. At best I could anticipate nothing better than a show of politeness. The Symphony was splendidly played but had only a courteous reception. And when Theodore Spiering, who conducted, came to me after the performance, he was not in a cheerful frame of mind. Immediately thereafter, I was to play the piano part of my Concerto. But I rejected the invitation to discouragement, 'got my mad up,' as we put it in New England, and determined to force the audience to like it. My resolve won the victory, and a very considerable one. The critics wrote well, and even the worst bear of them, Dr. Ferdinand Pfohl, was eulogistic. I had been obliged to hurry off to Berlin without seeing the newspaper notices and my surprise was great when friends began to telephone me congratulations from all sides. It was only then that I learned of Dr. Pfohl's magnanimity—something all the more unexpected inasmuch as I never saw the man.

"On another occasion, in Munich, my piano quintet was played by one of the leading quartets in the city. The comments were encouraging. But particular stress was placed by my friends on what one of the writers who was violently anti-American would say. The leader of the quartet had expressed particular pleasure in the work, declaring that good piano quintets were extremely scarce. The critic, surprisingly enough, was much gratified. He did, it is true, take exception to some matters, though in all he was well pleased. But he could not forget my Americanism and so ended his review by observing that 'since we have so very many fine piano quintets of our own, we fail to see the need of sending to America for any.'

A Meeting with Sgambati

"I have said I love travel. I have been through the fjords of Norway, on the one hand, and in Rome on the other. To counterbalance such extremes, I have regretfully to confess I never was in Paris and that four days in London was the only taste of England I ever had. In

Rome I had the joy of meeting Sgambati and his wife. A nocturne of his had for years been one of my most popular recital numbers. At the gathering where I first met the composer I suddenly played this piece after several works of my own. Both Sgambati and his wife were moved and delighted. A few days later I received from the master a copy of the nocturne inscribed with a beautiful dedication and containing certain amplifications, changes and new shadings he had made in the composition since he first wrote it. By a curious coincidence, they corresponded in many ways with various nuances which I had always made when playing the work."

It is not long since Mrs. Beach's symphony and piano concerto had a hearing at one of the concerts of the Boston Symphony in Boston. The experience of collaborating with Dr. Muck is one upon which the composer-pianist likes to dwell with joy and gratitude. But she is, for that matter, enthusiastic in the extreme over the excellences of the various symphony orchestras in this country, as well as over the innumerable women's clubs which, to her mind, have developed and fostered the love of music in America in such measure as to rank as paramount factors in the country's artistic growth. "Our war may now retard their work somewhat," she believes, "but it will not fundamentally enfeeble it."

H. F. P.

Bauer and Gabrilowitsch Give Impressive Recital in Wilmington

WILMINGTON, DEL., April 14.—Harold Bauer and Ossip Gabrilowitsch in a two-piano recital this week provided so genuine a demonstration of musical art in its finest estate that the audience, which was fairly large, was thrilled and insisted, in violation of all rules, upon an encore—and got it. The program was as follows:

Variations in B Flat, Schumann; Improvisation on a theme from "Manfred," Reinecke; Sonata in D Major, Mozart; Variations on a theme by Beethoven, Saint-Saëns; Romance and Valse, Arensky; "España," Chabrier.

T. C. H.

Fiqué Conducts Operetta in Brooklyn

A performance of "The Beggar Student," comic opera by Milloecker, was given at Prospect Hall, Brooklyn, on April 9, Katherine Noack Fiqué taking the leading part of Symon. In other rôles were Max Koeppel, Max Koeppel, Jr., Robert Henke, Jr., Augusta Nidrich and Herman Langhorst, Olga Demuth, Edna Meinken, Carl Johnner, Helen Becht, Harry Bluemer, Rose Manda and Clarice Holzhalt, all members of the Brooklyn Quartet Club. As in the case of previous musical productions, Carl Fiqué directed.

G. C. T.