

# PABLO CASALS ON SPANISH MUSIC

**Intricacies of Its Rhythms, Says 'Cellist, Have Made Spanish Music Inaccessible to Outside World—Not Even Chabrier and Debussy Have Caught Its Real Essence, He Declares—Kinship with American Ragtime—Victoria as Preceptor to Palestrina**

PABLO CASALS has said that the national folk music is the greatest heritage for a musician and that on it depends his power to move men. This same thought expressed in varying ways can be attributed to any number of great men. "The greatest of the earth often own but two aims, the fatherland and song," are the words of William Butler Yeats, the famous Irish poet and dramatist. It is from the native land and its expression through the art of its people that these men draw their breath of life and their inspiration.

To understand the art of such a man as Mr. Casals, then, it is necessary to know something of the music of the land that has nourished it. Pablo Casals loves to talk of the music of Spain, as he loves to speak of anything connected with his native land. Intense devotion to the fatherland characterizes the Spanish people, and in Casals is augmented by an innate loyalty and fervor. Even though the Spanish music is comparatively little known and little developed, he finds it an inexhaustible subject.

"It is hard for us Spaniards to realize or admit that Spain is a country of the past, for she is warmly and vividly alive in our hearts," said Casals, "but it is true that she falls back on her former glories and hence has developed little in the past few centuries. She broods over her great gleaming jewel, the Mediterranean, nursing an ancient sorrow and an invincible pride. Yes, she is too proud to polish up her blade and go forth into the modern fields of competition. But there are latent possibilities, especially in her musical life, that are awaiting the enkindling touch of progress. It is true that there is another reason for the lack of her musical development.

### Intricacies of Spanish Rhythm

"Real Spanish music—that which is part of the warp and woof of the life of the people—is to a great extent inaccessible to outsiders. The song and dance music—which is usually interchangeable—is the most typical. It creates the greatest part of its effect through the rhythm, and the intricacies of these rhythms make it almost impossible to note them down on paper. The people all know these songs and dances, for they are very illiterate and their only literature are the *cantanes* and *coplas* (folk-songs), which are handed down and take the place of the folk lore of other nations. Their songs are mostly of love—wild, passionate, intense and melancholy—a complete expression of their own nature and the forces that have influenced it. In them there can be traced the oriental voluptuousness of the Saracen invaders, and the wild freedom of the gypsies who wandered over Spain in the fifteenth century. But strive as they may, this music is hard to get and harder to note down.

"Chabrier and Debussy both comment on this almost insurmountable difficulty—and it is so. The smell, the sound, the look of Spain, they have caught marvelously well—but the rhythms, no. They create pictures of Spain, but not Spain itself, for, as I have said, the rhythms are the essence. I must explain why this music is hard for outsiders to

get. It is because the audience contributes almost as much toward the success of the event as the performers. The audience must be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the dancers and music makers; the presence of an unsympathetic being is felt at once, and if the performers do not actually stop, they are so constrained that the music loses all its character.

"The Spanish audience cheers and encourages; is breathlessly absorbed; works itself to as great heights of emotion as the actors—and often joins in the dance itself, as is the case with the "Sardanas" of Catalonia. The peculiar frenzy and naive eroticism of it is very often alien, even repulsive, to the Western nature. It is this peculiarly national appeal and character that makes it difficult to transplant successfully. Even the *Zarzueta*, a comic opera of popular character, the one class of theatrical music that can be called purely Spanish in form, has not been successfully produced in an alien soil.

"In the case of the music of Andalusia and southern Spain, the rhythm of the



**Pablo Casals, the Famous Spanish 'Cellist, an Intense Lover of His Native Folk Music**

dances is marked chiefly by heel-tapping, which has a counterpart in the rhythms of the drumming of the African negroes in their ceremonial dances. It is not at all unlikely that American ragtime and this Spanish music have the same ori-

gin, for the Saracens who invaded Spain in the eighth century included many of the African tribes. If this were true, it is indeed interesting to note how differently the two races have incorporated and developed this heritage.

"Spain, however, reached her greatest world importance in another sort of music than that which we have been discussing. In the sixteenth century lived Victoria, the greatest figure in the history of Spanish music. He was the crown of that school of church music which was so closely allied with the Roman school that it is sometimes not distinguished from it. However, Spain formed and largely influenced that school—Palestrina himself learned more from his Spanish predecessors and from Victoria, who was his preceptor, in fact though not in name, than from his own teachers. And Palestrina, great as he is in many ways, was never able to attain the depth of individual or national expression that marked the work of Victoria. He caught the mystic spirit of asceticism peculiar to Spain, as only one other Spanish genius, Santa Teresa de Jesús, the poetess and most celebrated of all women, has succeeded in doing. To his composition for the funeral of the Empress Maria I can compare only a few of the greatest things in music. The immense exaltation, dignity and beauty that that music is still able to convey, renews the belief in the value and persistence of great art.

"Spain's musical outlook at present is very promising—in the last decade she has produced many interesting, if not startling composers and there is an ever growing movement all over the world for the purpose of making known and utilizing Spanish music. But modern Spanish music is a pet subject of mine and there is too much to be said of it to do it justice in a few words. Another time I shall speak of it."

### AMERICANIZATION BY SONG

**Patriotic Women Doing Worthy Work in Yonkers—Theaters Co-operate**

YONKERS, N. Y., July 27.—An "Americanization" committee of patriotic women recently appointed one of its number, Mme. Jane Arctowska, as a committee of one to help realize the aims of the organization by teaching the people the words and music of American patriotic songs. It was felt that many were ignorant of the words and music of the "Star-Spangled Banner," because they had no opportunity of learning our National Anthem and that, therefore, the general public would be willing to co-operate.

The management of Proctor's, the Hamilton, the Orpheum and other picture houses willingly granted permission for song leaders to teach patriotic songs to their audiences and, accordingly, enthusiastic singing may be heard in Yonkers theaters two or three nights each week. The committee has supplied the different amusement houses with slides of the words of the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "America" and new slides are being added from time to time. At times the song leaders also sing patriotic solos.

Mme. Arctowska has worked hard to make the undertaking successful and has received the almost unanimous support of Yonkers musicians. Among those who have already given their services in this undertaking are Percival G. Entwistle, Alfred Shaw, George Bagdasarian, Elsie Gobell, Audrey Launder, Hubertine Wilke, Mrs. Margaret Sands, Miss Zimmille, Mrs. Pierson and Robert W. Wilkes. R. W. W.

**Ida Geer Weller and A. B. Davis Give Admirable Recital in Johnstown**

Ida Geer Weller, mezzo-contralto, and Alan B. Davis, baritone, with J. Warren Erb at the piano, recently gave an excellent recital at the high school in Johnstown, Pa., under the auspices of the Johnstown College of Music. Mrs. Weller scored in old English songs by Bishop and Dowland and in American songs by Marion Bauer, Ross, La Forge, Spross, Woodman, Hammond, Crist, Burleigh and Lieurance, all of which she

sang with artistic feeling and vocal excellence. Mr. Davis's offerings were also admired, including the "Pagliacci" Prologue, H. T. Burleigh's arrangement of the old Swedish song "The Dove and the Lily," his Negro spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and Burleigh's songs "The Gray Wolf," "In the Wood of Finvara" and "Little Mother of Mine." Mr. Erb played the accompaniments for both singers in his wonted artistic style.

**Opportunity for Amateur Musicians in New York Guard Band**

Amateur musicians of this city, and especially of Brooklyn, have an opportunity by enlisting in the 14th Infantry (New York Guard) band. Bandmaster A. Kotz will receive applications every Monday evening at the armory, Fourteenth Street and Eighth Avenue, Brooklyn.

## AN EDITORIAL TRIBUTE TO

**LEON**

**RICE**



**AMERICAN**

**TENOR**

*AN EDITORIAL from  
The Peekskill, N. Y. News, July 9, 1918*

### THE RICE SONG RECITAL

Any music lovers in Peekskill who absented themselves from the song recital given at the South Street Methodist Church last evening merely deprived themselves of a musical treat.

The credulous public is often imposed upon by transient performers until a cynicism has been evolved that precludes the retention of very much faith in the integrity of announcements concerning entertainments. For the song recital given last night by Leon Rice, of New York, the promise scarcely measured up to the performance.

Mr. Rice is an artist, an artist plus personal ease and charm of manner on the stage. His program was varied, well balanced and altogether delightful. His voice has resonance, sufficient volume, sympathy and timbre, and the cultural finish of his work is such as to satisfy the demands of the exacting and the sophisticated in music. His phrasing is almost faultless.

Mr. Rice seems equally free and at home with the sweet, simple ballad or Irish ditty, and the classic. His rendition of "I love you" was exquisite, while the number from "La Boheme" was truly an artistic surprise. The latter number was given in a manner to compare most favorably indeed with that of more noted and highly paid but no more accomplished singers.

LEON RICE'S PERSONAL ADDRESS IS  
THE BELNORD, Broadway and 86th Street, New York

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