

Life During Russian Revolution Described by Thelma Given

Brilliant Young Violinist Tells of the Eventful Days When Russia Threw Off the Romanoff Yoke—How Trotzky Rode About in the Czar's Gold Chariot—Student Days with Leopold Auer at the Petrograd Conservatory

IN the list of "wholly delightful people to interview" one usually places the younger artists last, for musical prodigies art apt to be a bit difficult. But an interview with Thelma Given—the latest of the Auer disciples to make her bow to the New York public—is a joy.

She is a charming, unaffected girl, with an engaging simplicity of manner and a schoolgirlish delight in the good times she has been having since her return to New York. Curled up in one corner of the davenport, with her slender, nervous hands depicting the scenes of which she talked, Miss Given described the difference she found in life here and the conditions under which she had lived during her last months in Russia.

"After all, you were too far away to be very deeply touched by the war conditions," she said. "Yet I think the greatest surprise the traveler from Europe experiences is to find life here going along in about the same comfortable fashion that Europe knew four years ago. In Russia, poor, desolated Russia, one almost forgets that peace and comfort and security are possible."

Miss Given was studying with Professor Auer in Petrograd when the revolution came, and lived in Russia during the Kerensky régime, leaving about the time that the Bolsheviks came into power. She has carried with her some unforgettable pictures of the scenes she witnessed when the revolution broke out.

"We were living in a hotel at the time, not far from the master's studio," Miss Given related. "Most of the people we knew felt the revolution in the air, but none of them dreamed that it was so near. There had, of course, been rioting in the streets for two weeks, but the night that the revolution came found most people quite unprepared. We heard a noise like the humming of gigantic swarms of bees, then the crowd gathered around our hotel and started firing on the upper windows in the evident impression that there were police in the place. All the servants had gone by orders of the revolutionists and the house was quite in darkness; the guests had gathered in the lobby in the instinctive dread, I suppose, of dying alone in their own apartments. The rioting continued all night long and in the morning members of the mob went through the hotel seeking the police, but they did not molest the guests. Then a detachment of soldiery came and guarded the hotel. The servants had looted the great pantries and taken practically all the food, so we had to skirmish for food as best we could. One might see dainty ladies searching through the pantries in the vain hope of finding a store of foodstuffs, and one of the really laughable incidents—for there were some in the midst of all the tragedy—was the sight of an officer of high rank trying to fry himself an egg over one of the huge ranges in the hotel kitchen.

Wore Red Cross Garb

"A friend and I donned the uniform of Rumanian Red Cross nurses, and in this garb felt comparatively safe. I wanted to go out in the streets, but my



Upper Picture: A Picnic in the Forest Outside Petrograd. In the Group Are Miss Given and Her Mother and Students of Leopold Auer. Lower Picture: Thelma Given, Latest Auer Pupil to Make New York Début

mother would not let me. Comparatively few people ventured out, and some families, trying to get back to their homes or bring their children from the schools, were stopped in the streets and their carriages taken from them by the mobs. One of the most appalling sights we saw was the burning of the great prison which was just a few blocks from our hotel. You know, the revolutionists freed all the prisoners and then burned the buildings. In this prison they had forgotten to release the people imprisoned on one of the lower floors and the poor souls all perished in the flames. Can you imagine what it was like to live from day to day in constant fear of our lives and listen always to the crackling of machine guns in the streets outside?

"Every day parties would go through the hotel. I was so afraid they would take my fiddle that I hid it under the buffet in our apartment. Either they considered it valueless or didn't see it, because it was not taken and I brought it away with me when we left Russia. Through the American Embassy we finally had arrangements made to get into Finland and from there to Christiania, from which city we sailed for America.

"I believe if the Kerensky government had been strong enough to control the situation, Russia would have been able to cope successfully with its reconstruction problems, but no one came forward strong enough to control the aroused mob spirit. The element that followed Trotzky hailed him as a savior, and one of the most incongruous sights that I recall was the spectacle of Trotzky driving about the streets in the gold chariot of state that once was the czar's."

Studied with Auer Seven Years

Miss Given holds the unique position of being the only Auer pupil without previous training to be accepted by the master. She went to Russia seven years ago, at the age of fifteen, to begin her work with him and has studied with the great violin master since that time, with the exception of the winter of 1914-15, which she passed in Dresden. During the other years she studied with Professor Auer in Petrograd during the winter months and at his summer place the rest of the year.

"Petrograd is a wonderful place in which to study," said Miss Given. "I cannot describe it, but there is such a freedom from the tense life one finds

In Red Cross Garb Miss Given Lived Through First Week of Revolution — Russia Ideal Place for Study, She Says—Children Begin Musical Work When Five Years Old

and most kind with beginners, but when one is farther along the road he makes greater and greater demands. I have seen him take a piece of music from a student who has made one mistake, tear it to bits and throw it in the fire. But the pupils at the Conservatory simply adored him. 'Hush, hush,' they would say one to the other, 'here comes the master,' and they would scuttle off the stairs like little rats and stand on either side, watching him with bright, adoring eyes."

Miss Given returned to America with Professor Auer last February and has studied with him through the summer, making her début in Carnegie Hall early in November. The gifted young violinist will be heard in New York again at one of the Metropolitan Opera Sunday night concerts, and will also make a tour of the Middle West that will include Columbus, Ohio—her birthplace—and a concert in Decatur, Iowa, in which city Miss Given passed her early years before going abroad to study.

MAY STANLEY.

MUSIC FOR NEW FILM

George W. Beynon Prepares Setting for "Cannibals of South Seas"

For the new film, "The Cannibals of the South Seas," produced by Martin Johnson, the services of George W. Beynon of New York have been secured to prepare the musical setting. Mr. Beynon, who has won a reputation in this field and who was the first to arrange a full orchestral accompaniment for moving pictures synchronized, has spent considerable time and thought in assembling the material for the score of this picture and has also written a number of original compositions for it. At the private viewing of the film in the grand ballroom of the Hotel Astor, New York, on Nov. 19, Mr. Beynon conducted the orchestra. To insure the proper interpretation of the music when it is done in Toronto at Massey Hall on Nov. 23, Mr. Beynon has been engaged to conduct that performance. In addition to his activities as a specialist in the setting, conducting and arranging of film music Mr. Beynon is also editor of the Music Department of the *Moving Picture World*.

Matzenauer Opens Star Concert Series in Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 15.—Mme. Margaret Matzenauer, contralto of the Metropolitan Opera Company, opened to-day the Ten-Star Concert series of T. Arthur Smith. An enthusiastic audience greeted the singer, whose rich tones charmed in a varied program of French, English and Russian songs. Groups of Grieg and Debussy compositions were especially delightful. Frank La Forge, gifted accompanist, presided at the piano and added much to the musical interpretations of the songs. He also gave in finished style two solos, *Impromptu* in F Sharp, Chopin, and *Study in Octaves*, Boothe. The closing numbers of the program also called Mr. La Forge forth for a share of acknowledgment as they were two of his own songs dedicated to Mme. Matzenauer, "Supplication" and "Nocturne." W. H.



Photo © Victor Georg

here at home. The snow falls softly, hushing every sound, and the daylight dies in the early part of the afternoon. It is all soft twilight and long silences—the most wonderful surroundings for study and practice. And how they do practice there! Students at the Conservatory really live in their work. Even in our little outings and student parties some one was sure to bring along a new transcription that Professor Auer had made, or a new work of some of the great Russian composers, and then we all became absorbed in work once more. Why those little Russian Jews, mere infants in some cases, came to Professor Auer absolutely perfect so far as their technique went. I remember when Jascha Heifetz came and I heard him first! How I marvelled at the perfection of his technique, but I marvelled still more when after a few lessons he developed that wonderful singing tone which the master alone seems able to impart.

"Yes, certainly, I was frightened when I first went to Professor Auer for my lessons. In fact, I am still frightened and often stand outside the door getting up my courage to go in. He is gentle

MEHLIN
PIANOS

Are considered by expert judges to be the finest now made. They contain more valuable improvements than all others.
Grand, Inverted Grand and Player-Pianos
Manufactured by
PAUL G. MEHLIN & SONS
Warerooms 4 East 43rd St., New York
Send for Illustrated Art Catalogue

KURTZMANN Pianos

Are Made to Meet the Requirements of the Most Exacting Musician—SOLD EVERYWHERE

C. KURTZMANN & CO., Makers, 526-536 Niagara Street BUFFALO, N. Y.

BUSH & LANE

Pianos and Player Pianos
Artistic in tone and design
Bush & Lane Piano Co.
Holland, Mich.

WEAVER PIANOS

AN ARTISTIC TRIUMPH
WEAVER PIANO COMPANY, YORK, PA.