

# INSTILLING IDEALISM INTO CONCERT MANAGEMENT

Loudon Charlton's Career of Twenty Years as a Music Purveyor Attests Practicability of a Policy Strictly Ethical and Altruistic—Meeting Musical Clubs and Local Managers Half Way

THE managerial career of Loudon Charlton attests the practicability of idealism. It is interesting and profitable to ponder this fact at a time when idealism has fallen upon evil days so far as to be confounded in the public mind with the rampant pseudo-idealism of world politicians. Twenty years of achievement significant in the history of American music prove the soundness of Mr. Charlton's philosophy. These years, if unattended by difficulties, have been unhampered by regrets. The thing might happen oftener and more extensively if the average manager were convinced of the efficacy of strictly ethical procedure and acted according to such conviction. Mr. Charlton has "had faith" and his faith has brought him abundant recompense. Content, if need be, to forego what appears to be an immediate business advantage, he has found that the ultimate benefit from the transaction vastly exceeds any momentary gain. In his own words a believer in the "bread upon the waters" principle, he has been privileged to witness its manifold return.

To the music-lovers of New York, Mr. Charlton is a familiar figure. Controller of the activities of some of the foremost artistic personalities of the country (consider names like Bauer, Gabrilowitsch, Helen Stanley, Thibaud, the Flonzaley Quartet, to take only five at random), he differs, nevertheless, from his managerial colleagues through a kind of amiable self-effacement. Nothing in the tranquil manner of the man calls attention to the pre-eminent distinction he has attained. Perhaps his very reticence has helped to make him known. But there is an even more remarkable aspect to the case. Mr. Charlton seems to avoid the vicissitudes which confront even the most prominent in his field. Managers have their ups and downs, their periods of eminence and depression. He is one year what he was the last. But then his success is one year what it is the other.

Mr. Charlton does not bind his artists by conventional contracts. Instead they have "understandings." And in no case has there been any failure of obligation on anyone's part by reason of the absence of a binding agreement. The "understanding" is sufficient unto any emergency. Here, truly, is something new in the practice of musical management—new, that is to say, because no others have yet felt encouraged to emulate it. But it has served Mr. Charlton these twenty years.

## Spirit of Co-operation

"Every artist connected with this management works with me in a spirit of ideal co-operation," declares the manager. "It is not a question with them or me of personal advantage, but rather a joy in the fulfillment of a high purpose. And whatever we undertake we do with a view to the benefit of the country from a standpoint of musical cultivation and encouragement. The idea is, as it were, to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. And I have been privileged to see this idea develop and to observe that the artists took as keen a delight in the thing as I did. All of them in greater or less degree take pleasurable pride in giving local managements with whom they come in contact the advantage of their wide experience in regard to the best methods they have observed of developing a strong local scheme of concert presentation, and thus render genuine material assistance as well as artistic. The process of education has involved no debasement whatever of art, no forfeiture of a singer's or player's artistic self-respect. In practically every case, the artist having appeared in a place once has returned there again and



Photo by E. F. Foley, New York

Loudon Charlton, Noted Concert Manager

again and had occasion to note the unfoldment of taste and musical understanding since his first visit. This development has been very great.

"It is far better, it seems to me, to meet musical clubs, colleges and local managers half way, to find a way to help them to secure an artist for what they can afford to pay, rather than to demand a fixed price and to refuse their services if that price is not forthcoming. In this way their gratitude is earned and the artist is sure of future demand. On the other hand, I do not expect an artist to appear against his will or under circumstances that might prove ungenial. I can merely advise. But in the end I respect the musician's wishes.

## Twenty Years Ago

"I do not mean to intimate that my way was made without a struggle. For the last twelve years the sailing has been fairly smooth. The previous eight presented many obstacles. Twenty years ago I was earning a meager wage at Shubert's music store on Union Square. As time passed I began to realize that this sort of thing would lead me nowhere. It was during this period of uncertainty that I met Clarence Eddy, on one of his visits to the shop. At his invitation I went on the road for him. That was the start of my manager's career. It was modest enough, but I carried through my work for Mr. Eddy successfully. And then there came to me Mme. Nordica, whose confidence in me enabled me from that time on to work steadfastly by the principles that I follow to-day. I have tried to make every artist under my management feel not that I was handling them for considerations of profit to myself, but that we were all laboring together in a common cause—that of the diffusion of musical culture. For my part I have never flinched from unrelenting work in order to build up an artist or an organization in which I had faith. The Flonzaley Quartet is a case in point. It stands today the accredited representative of all that is highest and best in chamber music.

"But it was not always so. A dozen years back, newspapers dismissed its concerts with the bare remarks that it had played. And there was to be overcome the prejudice of the critical body, for nearly twenty-five years nourished on

the performances of the Kneisels—performances thoroughly finished, to be sure. To-day the Flonzaleys hold a pre-eminent rank. But the public discovered the excellences of the organization before the critics—or, at least, it signaled them more emphatically. A person with an eye to gain would not have cared to help the Quartet to weather those lean years. Yet who could fail to have been inspired by the example of these four men, who voluntarily renounced brilliant individual careers out of their devotion to the loftiest branch of musical art."

## What Smaller Communities Want

Singers and opera companies are, in Mr. Charlton's view, the first attractions in the smaller communities of the country in point of popularity. Thereafter follow in order violinists, symphony orchestras, pianists, cellists and chamber music. The demand for this last has grown of late, and no better indication exists of the musical development of a people.

Mr. Charlton is an exception among American managers in the taste and knowledge of music which he evinces. As a result he has been of material assistance to some under his management, though he will, as a rule, allow them full leeway to exercise their own tastes and preferences in the matter of constructing programs. He is exceptionally adroit in knowing how to devise a program that is at once popular and artistically unassailable, and finds pleasure in suggesting, discussing and evolving unique schemes with his artists. He did much to smooth the troubled pathway of the late Gustav Mahler when that misprized genius was conductor of the Philharmonic and he its manager. Mahler's programs having been criticized, Mr. Charlton undertook diplomatically to advise him while Mahler was in Vienna for the summer. "I had to do it carefully," he recounts, "and at that I thought Mahler would turn upon me indignantly for my presumption in invading his province. I made programs, taking as a nucleus some standard symphony of which I knew the music-loving public was genuinely fond. The programs began with an overture—it is really useless to begin with the symphony; your entire audience is never seated for the first

A Manager Whose Relations with His Artists Are Bound Not by Contracts But by "Understandings"—Fostering the Spirit of Co-operation in Working for the Country's Musical Cultivation and Advancement

movement and so the integrity of the work suffers. After the symphony would come the soloist and then something brilliant to send people home in a joyful humor. To my surprise Mahler wrote me a most cordial letter, insisting that the programs had delighted him in practically every respect and that he would play them the following season. So indeed he did.

"I have for a long time entertained a notion that something could be done to raise the musical standard of concerts given in the Hippodrome. It must surely be possible to give a crowd of the sort that frequents those affairs music of a kind calculated to please them and yet to be artistically irreproachable. I am to sponsor such a concert in October. Mme. Stanley and Mr. Lhevinne will be the soloists, and Walter Henry Rothwell conductor, of a symphony orchestra. The program scheme we are working on is one calculated to bring the most unmusical auditor to his feet, while at the same time being completely critic-proof. We shall see!"

In a retrospect of Mr. Charlton's career, it is noteworthy that while he has been associated with many of the most successful artists or organizations whose standing in the musical world did not require his constructive co-operation, the greater part of his work these twenty years has been devoted to the constructive development from the very beginning of all of his now famous artists, everyone of whom at the beginning of his association with them was comparatively unknown and doubtful of achieving any such success as has since been achieved. In his share of all of these developments of artists who if now removed would make a disastrous gap in the musical world, Mr. Charlton takes more pride and satisfaction than he does in any pecuniary benefit that he has derived from the development of these successes. H. F. P.

## Werrenrath as Symphony Soloist

Reinald Werrenrath has been engaged for four performances with the New York Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Walter Damrosch for the coming season, 1919-20. There will be one performance in New York, one in Brooklyn, one in Washington and one in Baltimore. The Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, has also engaged the baritone for two performances. He has been re-engaged for the third season with the New York Oratorio Society.

## Wanamaker Cycle of Organ Music Announced

The Concert Direction of the John Wanamaker Auditorium has announced for the season of 1919-1920 a cycle of organ music for the cities of New York and Philadelphia, on a scale not hitherto attempted, with Charles M. Courboin, the Belgian virtuoso organist as honorary guest soloist. The organ in the New York Auditorium is being reconstructed for this purpose.

## Buzzi-Peccia on Vacation in New Jersey

A. Buzzi-Peccia, the noted singing master and composer, is at West End, N. J., where he has taken a cottage for the summer. With him are a number of his pupils, who are continuing their studies throughout the vacation months. In addition to his teaching, Maestro Buzzi-Peccia is writing two musical comedies, which will be produced during the coming season.

## A Correction

In last week's issue of MUSICAL AMERICA on page 5 it was stated in the cut-line under the picture of the newly elected board of the National Federation of Musical Clubs that the fourth figure from the left was Mrs. John F. Lyons of Fort Worth, Tex. The lady was not Mrs. Lyons but Mrs. George Hail of Providence, treasurer of the Federation.