

# GODOWSKY LAUDS RUSSIANS' MUSICAL BROTHERHOOD



## Good Fellowship of the Slav Artists Might Well Be Emulated, Declares the Famous Piano Master—His Friendship with Hofmann, de Pachmann and Other Eminent Musicians

RUSSIAN musicians have set an example of good will and good fellowship that might well be emulated the world over. This is the opinion of Leopold Godowsky, based on personal experience.

"Russian artists have a way of saying good things about one another," Mr. Godowsky remarked, when the subject of the brotherhood of artists was broached to him, "that I have not noticed in other countries. Glazounoff, Cui, Rachmaninoff, to mention only a few of those I have known, always spoke a good word for the other Russian artists."

Among musicians who have had a peep behind the scenes, Mr. Godowsky himself, perhaps more than any other virtuoso of the day, has made the brotherhood of artists something more than a phrase. He has not gone about preaching it, but he has lived it, until it has become almost axiomatic that wherever Godowsky is, there will cluster other luminaries of the virtuosic firmament.

Whether in Berlin, Paris, Vienna, New York, Chicago or California—wherever he has sojourned during his exceptionally varied and cosmopolitan career—his abode has been the favorite haunt of musicians of fame, without regard to their nationality. Perhaps no other great artist of the day has been visited in his home by so many of his contemporaries—in a sense, his rivals.

From Russia, Poland, Austria, Germany, France, Italy and America, whatever their homeland, they have grouped about Godowsky, enjoying his personality and admiring his art, and by their presence illustrating how music tends to make brothers of the men of all lands.

But getting Godowsky to preach what he practices isn't easy. For one thing, he has a way of interviewing an interviewer. He always seems hungry for information and he cross-examines like a lawyer. Indeed, his mental acumen suggests that he might have been the keenest of attorneys, if he had not decided, in his knee-pants period, to become one of the greatest concert pianists and master teachers of the day.

It was with the hope of persuading this magician of the keyboard to talk regarding the bond between artists, as proved in his own life, that the writer sought Mr. Godowsky out at the Biltmore.

A young American pianist, Ferdinand Wachsmann, was with Mr. Godowsky when the latter answered the rap on his door. Every few minutes the telephone rang to bring him word from other musicians. A message came from Pablo Casals, the great Spanish 'cellist. These interruptions, as much as anything Mr. Godowsky said, emphasized the friendliness of his relations with other artists. The interview began with a bombardment of questions by Mr. Godowsky which had to be disposed of before the conversation could be swung to the pianist's own friendship with other famous musicians. He laughed when the word "brotherhood" was used.

"Why talk about the brotherhood of

men in any walk of life," he asked, "when they are fighting more today than ever before? The peace conference gave them so many new things to fight about—things they hadn't thought about before.

"Certainly, musicians, like other folk, have their petty jealousies—maybe more of them, maybe less. The stronger the personalities, the less apt musicians are to be chummy. They see things differently and each wants his way. Of course, if I like a man and he likes me, we are friends. That is the same in music as out of it. Perhaps I think highly of his work and he of mine, and in that way music acts as a common bond between us.

### The Russian Spirit

"With the Russian composers and artists, however, there seems to have been a real bond in their music. With the exception of one or two men who held aloof, there has been good fellowship and good will between them. They have played each other's works, and have put in a good word for one another. All the world might emulate the Russian musicians in this respect and it would be a better place to live in."

This prompted a question as to Mr. Godowsky's reported friendship with Sergei Rachmaninoff.

"Yes, we are friends," Mr. Godowsky replied. "We might have been friends long before we were, if Mr. Rachmaninoff hadn't been so shy. Not until long afterward did I learn that he had heard me play at my first appearance in Moscow, many years ago. I did not meet him until some time later, at a reception in Berlin.

"Years ago, Mr. Rachmaninoff dedicated to me the charming polka I have used on many of my programs. I did not learn the story of this composition until after I had been playing it for some time. Later I was informed that it was designed to typify me. It was originally a bit of ballroom music composed by the elder Rachmaninoff. The son elaborated on it in a polyphonic way, with the idea of making it personify his idea of my playing. I liked it and used it without knowing that I was illustrating myself when I played it."

Residents of Berlin at the time Mr. Godowsky sojourned there were Josef Hofmann and Josef Lhévinne. They were visitors at the Godowsky home. Hofmann and Godowsky became particularly close friends and have remained so.

Mr. Godowsky could not recall when he first met Josef Hofmann. "I heard him play somewhere when he was very young," he said, "and I also knew his father. I have met him all over the world. Among so many meetings I can't recall which was the first. We have been much together."

Asked if he had shared any of Mr. Hofmann's hobbies, Mr. Godowsky said he was sorry that he had not. Aviation, he confessed, was one of his own special interests, and he believes he is the only virtuoso of the piano who has looped the loop.

Mr. Godowsky told an amusing incident of his acquaintance with Paderewski.



Leopold Godowsky, eminent pianist. Above some characteristic sketches of him as a teacher reprinted from "Music and Musicians" of Seattle

"Once, when Mr. Paderewski was coming to our house for dinner, I thought it wise to warn my little daughter, Dagmar, against showing alarm or fright at the gentleman's very unusual head of hair. Dagmar listened very attentively. When Mr. Paderewski came, he took the little girl in his lap, all kindness, and fondled her. She looked up at him trustfully, and then, in her childish voice, she piped out: 'Mr. Paderewski, I'm not the least bit afraid of your long, long hair.'"

One of Mr. Godowsky's most interesting meetings was with Busoni, on the steamer which first brought the latter to this country.

### The Meeting With Busoni

"Neither of us had ever heard of the other," Mr. Godowsky said, in describing this meeting. "We were fellow passengers, without either knowing that the other was a pianist. As the steamer neared the end of its voyage a concert was arranged for the benefit of the crew. Mr. Busoni was too seasick to play. I was able to do my little part, and Mr. Busoni came over to me with expressions of amazement. Only then did we find out that we were fellow virtuosi of the piano. That was the beginning of our friendship."

Vladimir de Pachmann is another of the great pianists whom Mr. Godowsky regards as a personal friend. Pablo Casals, the Spanish 'cellist, and Mr. Godowsky have been more than acquaintances. Mr. Godowsky told how Mr. Casals had gone to the trouble to telegraph to him information regarding Spanish hotel accommodations. This information was to have been handed to Mr. Godowsky at

the station as he was leaving Holland, where he and Casals had been together, but the 'cellist arrived at the station just as the train was pulling out. By using the telegraph he had the information in Mr. Godowsky's hands at the next stop.

Among violinists Fritz Kreisler is apt to be found in Mr. Godowsky's company. So is Mischa Elman. Jascha Heifetz, too, is in the circle of those close to Godowsky.

"I am not sure but that I like violinists better than pianists, anyway," Mr. Godowsky remarked. His eyes twinkled as he said it. OSCAR THOMPSON.

### Merle Alcock Leaves for Extensive Recital Tour

Merle Alcock, contralto, has left New York for a series of appearances with important musical clubs. She will be heard in Norfolk, Va., Newport News, Va., Fayetteville, N. C., Pittsfield, Mass., Sewickly, Pa., Greenville, Ohio, and St. Joseph, Mo. Five engagements are scheduled for New York, these being with the Schola Cantorum, the Oratorio Society, a concert at the Manhattan Opera House, and the Women's Philharmonic.

### St. Olaf Lutheran Choir to Tour

M. H. Hanson announces that the famous Choir of St. Olaf Lutheran College, Northfield, Minn., will start a five weeks' concert tour on April 5, at the Milwaukee Auditorium. During this tour they will appear in the most important Eastern cities. The choir toured Scandinavia with great success during the early years of the war.