

Feverish Pace of Life in America Retards Our Cultural Advance, Says Richard Hageman



Photo by White Studios, N. Y.

No. 1—Richard Hageman (center) "snapped" entering the Metropolitan for rehearsal with two colleagues: Roberto Moranzoni (left) and Pasquale Amato (right). No. 2—Mr. Hageman at Work (Photo by White Studio). No. 3—The "Might" and "Mite" of the Hageman Studio—Mr. Hageman and Miss Myers, his Secretary.

DAISY ASHFORD, had she met Richard Hageman on one of her extraordinary excursions into literary high life, might have described him thus: "Mr. Hageman was a tall, wellbuilt gentleman of or about 40 yrs with fairish hair long thin legs and a distinguished carriage. He was a musician by profession as well as by choice a man of many parts much in demand as teacher and as artists accompanist besides known as an effishent orchestra leader."

The adorable precocious authoress of "The Young Visitors" might have added that Mr. Hageman is a man of comparatively few words. So, at least, the interviewer found him. Of course, interviewers always find their victims loath to talk, about themselves (the interviewed), about their immense idealism and capacity for work, about their modest but perhaps not insignificant contributions to the cause of their art. But Richard Hageman, while he makes no absurd claims to being uninterested in himself, is genuinely far more interested in music, drama, literature, his adopted country, America, his native Holland, whence he came years ago, and the things that make for or hinder contemporary culture. In the hour that the writer spent with this many-sided musician, the conversation concerned itself virtually altogether with these matters.

"In my opinion America is still a backward country musically," said Mr. Hageman, bluntly. "This is perhaps not surprising in a young country when one considers that our efforts have necessarily been directed in so many different channels, but now is the time to remedy this condition. I know what you'll say, that there is a tremendous quantity of music made, played, sung, studied throughout the land, and that every year sees more and more advance in this respect. But what, after all, does this prove? That music has come to occupy its rightful place in the consciousness of the American people? Or that it is simply regarded among increasing numbers of people every year, as a refined and delightful and, of course, fashionable, mode of entertainment? I suppose I'll be looked upon as a pessimist, but my observations over a period of years force me to lean to the second view.

"We have little opportunity of advancing true culture as yet. Take the drama—how few are the advantages of enjoying adequate representations of Shakespeare or any of the classicists! America has no genuine school of acting, and it seems to me that until she has such a school, there cannot exist a true appreciation or love of great drama. With music, conditions are somewhat better; one has plenty of opportunity of

"We Live in a Perpetual Hurry," Observes the Metropolitan Conductor—Urges a Federal Conservatory Where All Will Have Opportunity to Gain Careful Training—Appreciation of Best Drama and Literature a Crying Need—America Rich in Vocal Talent

hearing great music in America, especially in a city like New York. Yet too many regard a concert or opera as a function. Instead of coming in a receptive mood for the composer's message, many listeners enter with distracted minds and, not having had the fundamental musical training, are not able to relax wholly and completely so that the music can enter their consciousness and enrich it. They fuss about with gloves or hats or trivial conversation, and before the concert or opera is half over are thinking about what they're going to do when they leave the hall. To come to a concert room with this mental attitude, giving perhaps one-quarter of one's thought to the music *per se*, is something like sacrilege. Real culture, real spiritual development, is not fed or furthered so.

We Live in a Hurry

"One great trouble with the American people (as I see it) is the intensity of their lives. We live in a perpetual hurry. When we are here we're thinking about where we're going next. The present literally does not exist for us. You would think that everyone were pursued by a sort of demon of haste. We are in too much of a hurry to die! This feverish kind of existence may suit certain temperaments, but, to my mind, it will never create the proper atmosphere for the appreciation or creation of enduring art. It is this habit of living life—or rather existing under high pressure—that is one of the handicaps to our becoming a genuinely musical race. A concert hall should be like a cathedral, a place of quiet and meditation, where sacred things are dispensed and worshippers gather. Instead, it is too often made to serve as time-killer between lunch and tea.

"As for musical education, it should of course be given freely and to all. Five years of age is not too early to begin teaching music to a child. The proper place, the only place, to instill musical principles is in the public schools. And there it must be done in the most serious and systematic fashion. Children should be thoroughly grounded in solfeggio and those that show themselves gifted must be given encouragement and every opportunity to develop their talents. I know that many philanthropic indi-

viduals, realizing that when people crave the best they should get the best, have done all in their power to stimulate love and appreciation for music and drama.

Needed: A National Conservatory

"Higher up in the scale of musical education belongs a national conservatory, which would help solve this problem. It is hard to believe that America has so far neglected to establish a great Federal school where poor, as well as rich, may find the finest training and work toward their goal without danger of falling into the pitfalls laid by quack music teachers. If only to discourage the springing up in every corner of ill-equipped, commercialistic teachers, many of them simply charlatans, a National Conservatory would be a boon. Of course, it will come; that is inevitable. But we need it right now."

"What do you think about the possibilities for American opera?" we asked the Metropolitan conductor.

"I don't know," he said. "When we have a really significant composer in this country, we will get a great American opera. Whether or not we get it during the composer's lifetime is another matter, but personally, I believe if a work bears the true marks of genius, it is only a matter of time and it will be acknowledged, whether it is music or literature. As for opportunity for the American composer to obtain a hearing, our leading orchestral conductors have shown a desire to find the best and produce it and I know that Mr. Gatti-Casazza has wished and shown his desire for many years to find a truly worthy American opera and we will soon have an opportunity to judge the Metropolitan's latest American acquisition, 'Cleopatra's Night.'

Rich Future for Native Singer

"The American singer? Well, about him (and her) I am a radical optimist; I think there is a rich future in store for the native singer. It is remarkable, the amount of naturally good voices we have in America, and the opportunity to be heard has never been so great. Our leading orchestras are engaging American artists. Glance at the list of American artists whom the Metropolitan has engaged for this season, a great many having had no experience until they were

engaged at that institution, and many solely educated musically in America. For example, we have Orville Harold, who has scored such a tremendous success this season at the Metropolitan. To a natural talent he adds a great capacity for and love of study, and he is advancing steadily toward the top. I should call Orville Harold an excellent model of what can be accomplished by talent and effort. He ought to be an inspiration to the hosts of other American singers and students. Their guiding motto should be: determination to succeed—constant application, work, the great redeemer!

"I suppose everything else I've said would give the impression that I look only on the dark side of things. In reality, I don't. But half-culture isn't real culture, and saying it is won't make it so, but will only retard its development. I should like, for instance, to see America possess a theater like the Théâtre Français. I should like to see the man-in-the-street eager for the masterworks of literature instead of devouring trashy 'best-sellers.' Yet, when all is said, Americans usually support something worth while in the way of music and drama. They realize when a thing is good; at least, enough people do to make one hopeful for the future. More education, more great art, more understanding of the sublime rôle that art plays in the life of man—these things will bring America closer to the goal of culture and all that it means to a race."

B. R.

Gurowitsch Trio Admirable Concert

An engrossing evening of chamber music presented by the Sara Gurowitsch Trio ushered in the second of a recital series (under Pi Tau Kappa Club auspices) at the studio of Florence McMillan, New York coach and accompanist, on Jan. 21. Dvorak's Trio in E Minor and Arensky's in D Minor, which comprised the program's numbers, were interpreted in admirable fashion. The gifted members of this trio are Vera Barstow, violinist; Sara Gurowitsch, 'cellist, and Alice Shaw, pianist. J. A. S.

Elshuco Trio Applauded by Students of Musical Art Institute

The fourth Artists' Recital to the students of the Institute of Musical Art was given at the Institute on Wednesday evening, Jan. 21. The program was provided by the Elshuco Trio, Willem Willeke, 'cello; Aurelio Giorni, piano, and Elias Breeskin, violin. The trios played were the Brahms in B and the Arensky in D Minor. Both demonstrated the fine technique and feeling for ensemble that distinguish this organization, and both were the Brahms in B and the Arensky artists being recalled many times. C. P.