

# Piano of Future Will Have Keyboard of Quarter Tones, Lhévinne Believes

Brilliant Russian Pianist Shares with Busoni View That New Scale Will Come as Ears Grow More and More Sophisticated—Piano Technique Now Near Its Zenith Unless New Resources Are Added to Instrument

THE day will come when pianists will play on a keyboard of quarter tones. This is the belief which Josef Lhévinne, the brilliant Russian pianist now in America, shares with Busoni and some others of the celebrated virtuosi of the instrument. But Mr. Lhévinne is not one of those who believe the new piano keyboard is something of the very near or even near future.

"There must first be a demand for music in semi-tones," Mr. Lhévinne said, in a chat with a MUSICAL AMERICA writer. "The public ear must have become so attuned that the lesser variations in pitch will appeal to it. The instruments of the string choir could play quarter tones now, if the desire to hear them existed in any considerable number of music lovers. But I believe that as ears become more and more satiated to all present and past combinations of tones, as the scale exists to-day, the quarter tone scale will come about. Probably the strings will be the first to make use of it. The piano, I think, will be quick to follow.

"I have often thought that it was strange that no real advance is being made in increasing the artistic resources of the piano. Doubtless the piano, as a commercial instrument, has been greatly improved and there are more good pianos to-day than ever before. But there were individual pianos in the past just as beautiful. I have played on some very old pianos that were of beautiful tone and superbly responsive. Chopin used some very fine instruments.

"Of course, it can be said of the violin, also, that no real improvement has been made in it for an even longer period. But does the violinist feel the need of improvements? He could, of course, have additional strings. He doesn't want them, because he doesn't need them. With other pianists, I have felt the need for some way in which to produce a real crescendo on individual tones. Beethoven's compositions show that he felt the same need. In several of them—the A Flat sonata, as an example—there is an approximation of a true crescendo effect achieved through the repetition of individual tones, each tone a little stronger than the preceding one, but this is, of course, only an approximation."

### Art Must Retain Individuality

Mr. Lhévinne expressed himself as much interested in suggestions that have been heard recently regarding the possibility of doing away with the hammer stroke by some means of electrical control of the vibrations of the strings. He believes, however, that whatever improvements are made in the piano should not be purely mechanical in their use, but should be responsive to the individual musician, as the keys and pedals are to-day.

"There must always be individuality," he said, "or art will suffer."

Asked whether he thought the ultra-modernists were increasing the scope of piano technique, he said he thought not.

"Are such compositions as those of Ornstein, Prokofieff and others like them more difficult to play than standard piano music?" he was asked.

"No. They are more uncomfortable to play, perhaps, but not really more difficult. Of course, if the hands are in an uncomfortable position there is an additional tax upon the pianist, but much of this is just a question of becoming used to those positions."

Mr. Lhévinne expressed himself as believing that piano technique has been brought very close to its highest possible point. Much of the latter-day development in technique he credited to Godowsky. The modern French writers, he thought, represented a mood, rather than any marked development in piano technique or pianistic resources.

"It is because I believe the piano is by far the most important of all individual instruments," Mr. Lhévinne said, "that I believe it will at some future time be greatly increased in its scope. The orchestra is, of course, the world's greatest musical instrument. Then comes the piano. Only the piano can approximate the orchestra in the music it plays. Today, I think, the violinists are in their heyday, with more than their usual popularity, but the piano goes on, from generation to generation, as the basic and



Josef Lhévinne, Celebrated Piano Virtuoso

most important musical instrument. I would not say that appreciation of the piano is deeper in this country than when I was last here, for there always has been deep appreciation of it in America. But I do think it is more general. Countless Americans, who are not in any sense musicians, are feeling the need of music in their lives as never before."

OSCAR THOMPSON.

## FIRST CIVIC CONCERT ROUSES INDIANAPOLIS

Middleton Assists Male Chorus in Opening Program of Series—Hear Zimro Ensemble

INDIANAPOLIS, IND., March 24.—Big success attended the first concert of a new series of concerts given to the people of Indianapolis by the park and school boards and, judging from the size of the audience, there is real appreciation here for good music. On Sunday afternoon, March 21, a local male chorus known as the Indianapolis Male Chorus, conducted by Glenn Friermood, with Arthur Middleton, bass-baritone of New York, presented a program appealing to both classic and popular tastes. This chorus should prove an asset to the musical life of the city. It was heard in Grieg's "Olaf Trygvason," with the incidental solo being sustained by Dwight Murphy; "The Arbutus Tree" and "The Girl I Left Behind Me," arranged by Louis Victor Saar; "Evening," Sullivan, and "The Desert Sands," Bartlett. In his part of the program Mr. Middleton selected the recitative and aria "I Feel the Deity Within" and "Arm, Arm Ye Brave," Handel; "Where'er You Walk," Handel; "Nature's Adoration," Beethoven, and "I Am a Roamer Bold," Mendelssohn; two groups, one consisting of the

Hall. The three high schools were represented by a team of ten girls and boys. The contest was based upon fifty compositions selected by a committee a few months ago. The Orloff Trio, composed of Jean Orloff, violin, Genevieve Hughel, cello, and Mrs. Clarence Coffin, piano, played twenty of the original fifty compositions on which the contestants were judged. With the aid of a phonograph, the contest was continued. The victors were Helen Pritchard of Shortridge, who won the first prize offered by the Musicians' Club; Margery Von Staden of Shortridge, the second prize, offered by the Matinée Musicale, and Wilma Harrington of Technical, the third prize, offered by the Community Service.

P. S.

## DANCER AND PIANIST IN ATTRACTIVE PROGRAM

Helen Zagat and Hans Barth Combine Their Artistic Talents to Delight Audience

Helen Zagat, an interpretative dancer of the school of Isadora Duncan, and Hans Barth, pianist, combined their artistic talents to give a delightful program at the Little Theater on Friday, March 19. It was the more welcome in that it did not presume too much.

Miss Zagat proved herself a dancer with a talent for visual suggestion of musical sentiment. There was much beauty of line in her posturing. The graceful simplicity of her conceptions scarcely emphasized technique at all. Her interpretations of Chopin, Bach, and Schubert numbers, with Mr. Barth at the piano, were refreshing and youth-some. She also danced a Prelude by Isabel Swift, with the composer present to play for her, and brought the latter forward to share in the applause. At the conclusion of the printed program, she added several extras.

Hans Barth is a pianist of comforting skill. In addition to the numbers for the dancing he played a Chopin group, including the Valse, Op. 70, the F Major Nocturne, and the C Minor Etude, and numbers by Liszt and MacDowell, with attractive tone, sensitive feeling for nuance, and grateful clarity. He was very cordially received.

O. T.

## TENOR STIRS MILWAUKEE

5,000 Applaud McCormack and His Aides in Auditorium

MILWAUKEE, March 20.—One of the most inspiring events of the Milwaukee musical season was the concert last week given by John McCormack, which attracted a huge audience, filling the concert division of the Auditorium, which seats about 5,000. This concert was given under the management of Marion Andrews, who has brought most of the stars to the city this season except those appearing in the courses offered by Margaret Rice. Mr. McCormack was in fine fettle and the audience was perhaps more deeply aroused than at any of his previous appearances here, and that is saying much. Waves of applause swept over the audience, and there was a demand for encore after encore, following each programmed group. The assistant cellist, Lauri Kennedy, displayed a particularly rich tone. Edwin Schneider, as usual, provided inspiring accompaniments.

C. O. S.



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