

Dohnanyi Builds Opera About Voivode's Tower

Hungarian Composer-Pianist Finds Artistic Taste in America Greatly Improved After Twenty Years—Will Return Next Season After Summer in Budapest—Premiere of His Opera in Europe Next January

By P. CHARLES RODDA

AMERICA has made vast strides in music during the last twenty years. There were vocal and instrumental giants two decades ago just as there are to-day, giants who appreciated the importance of the American tour and who received due reward in the demonstrative appreciation of the public, to say nothing of more tangible encomiums. There were audiences to hear them, but there were not so many audiences and not so many stars to twinkle for their delectation as there are to-day. "Quantity!" ejaculates your earnest proclaimer of the joys of other days. Truly, we do in a measure suffer the evils of reaching out for a musical constellation. We get much of lesser magnitude, but we get the "bright and particular stars" as well; we suffer many mediocrities, but we have the opportunities of acclaiming genius just the same. The splendid thing about it all is that there are so many audiences. A taste for good music is widespread, and America has become the land of the golden fleece for innumerable Jasons, and a land where the artist who bears real gifts is welcomed with open arms.

AMAN who has had a unique opportunity of judging something of the artistic progress of the United States is Erno Dohnanyi, the celebrated Hungarian composer-pianist. Mr. Dohnanyi visited us twenty years ago and was hailed as the great musician he is. He went back to Europe and did not come to America again until early in the present year. He has just completed his brief visit—he sails homeward again this week-end—but during the few months of his stay he gave many recitals and his travels took him as far as Chicago. He was greatly impressed by the change in his audiences. "The artistic taste of the public is much improved," is the way he puts it. "Your audiences are much more cultivated than when I was here before!" He sees in this change the result of a healthy growth that is still continuing. "I think this musical development will go on. Your orchestras are fine. All I have heard are first-rate. And your opera affords very fine performances." Mr. Dohnanyi did not have the opportunity of hearing much music by American composers. One extended work he did hear did not impress him as bearing any qualities that might be described as peculiar to this country. "But I heard so little, unless you want me to talk about what they play in the dining rooms." This with a smile. "I was



Erno Dohnanyi Pauses for a Moment to Enjoy a Cigarette and Talk a Little About His Opera

left with so little time, as my engagements kept me so busy!" And then Madame, who is "listening in" at the interview, interjects. "It takes a little time to get used to your American tempo! We are accustomed to living more slowly in Europe!" But Madame Dohnanyi, if she finds the tempo a little exacting, nevertheless likes the tune. She has visited America before and is looking forward to yet another visit. But meanwhile the order

is Eastward Ho! for the summer and a rest in Budapest! "To rest in Budapest," says her husband. "That is to compose! I shall have time to compose!"

DOHNANYI'S idea of a rest is a change of work, and it is serious composition that he is looking forward to. But this rest means more than the opportunity to give expression to his creative impulse. First of all it means

his return to the conductorship of the Philharmonic Orchestra, a seventy-year-old organization of Budapest, which in recent years has claimed much of his time and which he has been able to place on a sound footing. He is to conduct one concert of the Philharmonic, but during the summer he will arrange the programs for the next winter season of the organization. Then, in October he will be back in America for another brief visit.

He came here this year in a crowded season, but his high artistic accomplishments made his name stand out among the many visiting celebrities. Dohnanyi was remembered by many concert-goers as an artist of great attainments, but to others he came as something new. He conquered immediately, and although he wished to pursue his work in Europe he was unable to resist the demands for a return visit next season. In the two and a half months he is to devote to his American admirers when he comes again he will have a strenuous time. "I must be back in Budapest by Christmas," he says, with a positive note in his voice, and then Madame Dohnanyi explains the particular reason. "In January will be the premiere of my husband's opera!"

AS a medium of self-expression Dohnanyi obviously prefers the piano to talk. However, he is induced to say something about his music drama which is to be given by the National Opera in Budapest. Madame is a ready aid. The work goes to Hungarian legend for its story, and its title is "The Tower of the Voivode." A voivode, *vajda* in Hungarian, is defined in literal translation as a leader of an army. He is not exactly a king, since he has no kingdom, but he is a sort of potentate, the ruling chieftain or leader of his men. The story is based on an old pagan superstition. The particular voivode who is the concern of Mr. Dohnanyi determines to build a tower. There enters a sinister ghost who dwells in the mountains, and he declares that the purpose of the voivode will not be attained unless a human sacrifice is made. It is determined that the first woman who comes over the bridge that leads to the site of the tower must be walled up by the builders. The poetic possibilities of the story are fully exploited—there is love interest to heighten the effect—and the composer has treated the tale in modern mode.

"It is music drama," Mr. Dohnanyi explained. "But not so much in the Wagnerian style. I have used the *leit motif* sparingly and very carefully. For the rest I have sought to give expression and musical color to the drama." Those who had the opportunity of hearing some of Mr. Dohnanyi's music this year, the music he included in his programs, must feel more than a little interested in this opera. He is a sincere and serious artist as a creator of music, with a sense of color decidedly individual and a definite appreciation of orchestral effects. The premiere of "The Tower of the Voivode" should be an event of importance. There is another Dohnanyi opera yet to be heard; a work in lighter vein with a comedy story. "The Tenor" is the title.

MR. DOHNANYI has been bringing much enthusiasm to his work in Budapest. He has great faith in the will of Europe to effect a musical recuperation. He regrets the exodus of artists from the old world, but looks upon the situation to-day as a passing phase. "The adjustment will come of itself," he declares. "In one sense the war is not yet over, but things will get better and conditions for music will improve. As it is now the exchange rates are all against Europe. The concerts and the opera houses are crowded, but what does a crowded audience mean? About fifty dollars when you measure it from the American standpoint. But Europe has the taste and the will for music. The rest is a matter of time."

Paderewski, Rancher De Luxe, To Re-Enter Political Arena

LOS ANGELES, CAL., April 16.—For the time being the former Premier of Poland is a California rancher. A rancher *de luxe*, it is true; possibly one had better say a "gentleman rancher." Only, the Eastern "gentleman farmer" does not expect to make money—while Rancher Ignace Paderewski is preparing to garner wealth from the California soil and sunshine.

Immediately after his return to Paso Robles, Paderewski visited his land holding in the neighborhood. He has taken up his residence, as formerly at the Paso Robles Hotel, where he has beautiful quarters.

First came a visit to the San Ignacio Rancho five miles from his hotel, on the Adelaide road. On this ranch he has 12,000 bearing almond trees. Farther out is the Santa Helena Rancho, the property of Mme. Paderewska, which was visited next. And nearly every day since Paderewski has visited these properties, consulting with his manager and ranch foreman, "Daddy" Hemphill.

The pianist-statesman does not view things at long distance, either. He gets right in among the horses, cows and chickens and talks farm lore with his old farmer like a confirmed ruralist.

Paderewski first came to Paso Robles about 1913, seeking rest and the curative properties of the hot springs for a troublesome neuritis. He came back year after year and finally made large investments in the neighborhood. These were followed by the acquisition of other ranch lands farther south, in the Santa Maria district, which are thought to contain oil.

Shortly after acquiring the Paso Robles lands, he planted the largest portion with almonds, thus becoming a pioneer grower of that tree in his section of the country. On the San Ignacio rancho there are 250 acres of orchard, largely almonds, but with areas devoted to pears and walnuts. Of course there are the usual farm buildings and live stock, in which Paderewski takes much interest; and he is no novice in the game as he has raised blooded stock and prize winners on his country place in Switzerland.

No more is the sound of piano heard from his room at the hotel. He says his piano lid is down permanently—but who



Wide World Photos

Paderewski as He Appears To-day

can tell? In these two months on his estates he is resting—and making plans for his beloved Poland, for he is a member of the Polish Diet from the Warsaw district, and is absent only on three months' leave.

He must return to Poland in the autumn for the session of the Diet at which a president is to be chosen. Pilsudski is the provisional president, but the office is to be filled this fall for the seven-year period. If Paderewski's name is presented, he may be chosen, in spite of the non-support of the Socialistic party and the antagonism of all with pro-German leanings. The name and fame of Paderewski and the affection in which he is held in Poland may make him a still greater figure in European politics than he has been.

Meanwhile he is resting, farming, attending motion picture shows in the evenings, rambling with Mme. Paderewska and playing a game of piquet with his companion and quasi-business manager, Mr. Strakacz. W. F. G.

Detroiters Plan Civic Opera Company

DETROIT, MICH., April 23.—A plan whereby Detroit is to have its own opera company is being worked out by the board of directors of the Detroit Symphony. The present idea of the board is to have a civic company, utilizing local talent strengthened by outside artists for leading rôles. It is proposed to have an open season of six weeks following the symphony season. The plan is to give opera at prices comparable to those in moving picture houses.

The directors of the Symphony also plan to give sixteen pairs of orchestral concerts instead of the fourteen pairs given heretofore.

D. A. R. Object to "Star-Spangled Banner" as National Anthem

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 27.—Members of the Daughters of the Revolution, in convention here, strongly object to the bill introduced by Congressman J. C. Linthicum of Maryland, making the "Star-Spangled Banner" the national anthem. They claim that "America" is and always has been recognized as the national anthem.