

What the Actor Learns from Vocal Study

Walter Hampden, Noted Exponent of Shakespearian Rôles, Tells of His Debt to Music—Favors 'Cello, but Finds It a Difficult Instrument—A "Hamlet" Who Has Studied Counterpoint

Walter Hampden, the American actor who has gained prominence in plays of Shakespeare, derives much pleasure from music in moments seized from a busy life devoted to the theater. His sincerity and scholarly attainments have won for him an enviable reputation in his profession. In the following interview he makes manifest the value of a musical training to the actor who is serious in his art. —Ed. MUSICAL AMERICA.

BY R. M. KNERR

JUST off Broadway, in the unreal and oddly-scented regions backstage, one could hear an orchestra at work upon an authentic Elizabethan air. The players were heralding the nuptials of *Katharine the Shrew*, and *Petruchio* had already donned his fantastic garb of patches. A late renaissance mustache, a gaudy magenta cap, ear-rings of mammoth size, and a most modern cigarette in a shapely holder of a pattern Boccaccio never knew, adorned the determined wooer. Through the swarthy simulation of an Italian complexion, however, peered the eyes of Walter Hampden, noted American interpreter of Shakespearian rôles.

"I have really studied the 'cello," he says, for music is the subject of a dressing-room conversation. "But as very few persons to-day are masters of this instrument, I shall not be so confident as to say I play it. In the latter days of Seidl's reign at the Metropolitan, I had as teacher the first 'cellist of his or-



Walter Hampden, Well-Known Shakespearian Actor, Finds Relaxation in Playing the 'Cello

Photo by Bain News Service

chestra. And then, since you ask, I have given some time to harmony and counterpoint, and in the past have done some composition—small pieces, of course. For some years there has been very little time for this, or even for hearing much music.

"Few persons, perhaps, realize the similarity between the arts of song and of drama. My period of vocal study in Paris was very helpful as a training for the reading of lines. The foundation of the singer's equipment is his legato, and much the same thing is the basis of a good dramatic delivery. The poetry of Shakespeare is a kind of music; it has its periods, its changes in what may be called pitch and tempo. Crescendi in music correspond to the impassioned climaxes with which drama abounds. This art of the greatest English poet is a very effective one in its sensuous aspect alone.

"BECAUSE I believe in the peculiar effectiveness of the Shakespearian verse when properly spoken, I do not approve of the intrusion of music, in theatrical representations of these plays, beyond the strictest limitation of the term 'incidental.' In the Balcony Scene, for instance, a musical accompaniment could only serve to distract. Nor do I put on the scenes in 'Macbeth' in which the supernatural element is presented to any prolonged lugubrious measures; only the thunders and lightnings called for by the text are used. Trumpet calls with the character of *motifs* are used in the latter day to symbolize the sovereignty to which the titular character aspires. These were arranged by Louis Siegel, composer and pupil of Ysaye, and employ the ancient Danish modes, which are said to antedate most European melodic material. In 'Macbeth' also, when the apparitions of the murdered kings pass in procession, the same motif is sounded with a harmonic distortion which is eerie and effective. The Grave-digger's Scene in 'Hamlet' has also been provided with music by Mr. Siegel, but as this calls for an organ contribution, it is difficult to present. One can't buy, beg or borrow an organ and, failing this,

in our productions we are forced to fall back upon Tchaikovsky and the orchestra.

"Speaking of 'Hamlet' reminds me that I have several genuine Elizabethan recorders, the wind instruments of Shakespeare's time resembling flutes. In the scene with the musicians, *Hamlet*, after examining their instruments, compares the human being to an instrument played upon by Fate. I have given this scene with music offstage on these old instruments preceding the entrance of the musicians, with a crescendo effect as they approach. But, alas, these old instruments can be played by very few musicians to-day. The cost of incidental items of this kind in a production in most cases, prohibits them.

"I CONSIDER it a mistake, at any rate, to turn the Bard's plays into music dramas. Shakespeare used music in his plays, but in the form of introduced songs, dances, serenades, and the like, when the action called for them. The plays are dramas, of course, primarily, and the introduction of too many lyric bits would have weakened the sustained art of these histories of conflict. Contemporary writers for the stage used the literary form of the masque, examples of which are often of great poetic value in a lyric sense. But the material of 'Hamlet' is different from the stuff of a song-cycle: it is climactic, an organic growth—like the sonata, an artistic and involved whole. Indeed, one of the qualities that mark Shakespeare off from the other Elizabethan poets, including even Marlowe, is the subordination of action, pure plot, to the profound analysis of character. The greatest literary mind we have had was not concerned with incident primarily, much less with the evolution of a framework upon which to hang musical interpolations. I should say that it is as grave a mistake to over-orchestrate the heritage contained in the famous Quarto Edition, as it is to overload with scenic investiture the presentations of these plays, which were originally produced, we are told, with placards to indicate a change of scene."

The person intrusted with the calls here came discreetly to the door of the

Appreciation of Elizabethan Verse Aided by Early Training in Art of Song—Singer's Legato a Basis for Good Dramatic Delivery—Music in the Poet's Lines—The "Incidental" Score

dressing-room. "Now, Mr. Hampden!" The calcium lights were burning garishly in the clearing beyond the "wings"; and, with a suave defiance of Hymeneal convention, *Petruchio* advanced in rags to his wedding.

MANY SAILED SATURDAY

Bori, Ysaye, Stojowski and Other Notables Go Abroad

The White Star liner *Olympic*, which sailed from New York on Saturday, June 4, took several prominent musicians on board. Among these were the following: Lucrezia Bori, soprano of the Metropolitan, who will go directly to her home in Milan for rest and study and who will appear in opera in several European cities before returning to New York next December; H. T. Burleigh, the composer, who will remain in Europe for three months. While there, Mr. Burleigh will appear in recital with Roland Hayes, the young Negro tenor, who has won a marked success in London this spring, featuring his arrangements of Negro spirituals. Albert Spalding, violinist, will spend all next winter abroad, being heard in concert from Norway to Egypt. Also aboard were George M. Spangler, business manager of the Chicago Opera Association, and his assistant, Harry Cahill.

Other prominent artists who sailed on June 4 were A. Buzzzi-Peccia, composer and teacher of singing, by the Pesaro; Salvatore di Stefano, harpist, by the Providence; Claude Gotthelf, accompanist for Geraldine Farrar, by the Roussillon; Sigismund Stojowski, by the Oropesa, and Eugene Ysaye, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony, and Lee Pattison, pianist, by the Lafayette.

Joseph Schwarz, the Russian baritone who was heard in recital last season and with the Chicago Opera forces in San Francisco, and who will be a regular member of the company next year, sailed on the Manchuria on June 2.

Singers Sued for \$3,000 Damages by Favorita Company

A summons and complaint, filed by the Favorita Grand Opera Company, Inc., in the County Clerk's office against Gaetano Tommassini and Nina Frascani Tommassini on June 1, asked damages of \$3,000 for alleged breach of contract because the tenor and mezzo-soprano did not appear for performances of the company in the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, on May 21 and 28. The defendants' answer, filed the same day, specified the engagement, contrary to terms of their contracts, of other singers of dubious artistic ability as reason for dismissal of the complaint.

Atlanta Urged by Mayor to Provide Home for Musicians

ATLANTA, GA., June 4.—The urgent need for a home for musicians in Atlanta was emphasized by Mayor Key in an address to more than 400 members of the Atlanta Federation of Musicians, assembled at dinner on May 30. W. A. Sutton delivered an address on the musical attainments of the Atlanta chapter, and commended the efforts of this order in taking steps to bring about the realization of a hall to be devoted to musical art. Mayor Key in his address said that a home of the character suggested was one of the most vital needs confronting the organization and promised to lend his aid.

Ambitious plans were laid, and an executive committee appointed with the idea of going forward with the work immediately.

L. K. S.

President Serenaded by 60,000 Children as Capital Holds Music Week

WASHINGTON, June 8.—As a climax to Music Week 60,000 school children, gathered on the great ellipse, south of the White House, and led by five massed bands, serenaded President Harding on the afternoon of June 3.

Dr. Abram Simon, president of the District of Columbia Board of Education, in presenting a floral lyre to President Harding expressed the appreciation felt at the cordial aid given the cause of music by the President.

"In this beautiful close of Washington's Music Week," said the President in reply, "is the most remarkable climax ever known in music. I am profoundly touched by the scene before me. I have heard many kinds of music in my lifetime, from the croon of the mother's song, great choruses, trained soloists and wonderful bands and orchestras, but I have never heard such music as that of the sparkling school youth of Washington. When I heard it that was the supreme music of all my life."

The children sang patriotic songs, pronounced allegiance to the flag and finally joined in singing "America." Robert Lawrence of the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music directed. The Marine, Navy Yard, Third Cavalry, R. O. T. C. of Howard University and the Community Centers Bands participated.

A. T. M.