

The Supremacy of the Jew in Art



Answered by
Laszlo Schwartz
Eminent Violinist Composer.

In An Interview
for
The Zionist Record.

László Schwartz, the eminent Hungarian violinist-composer, whose Jewish songs, "Israel," "Kinder Kinder," "Fraume," etc., also numerous Jewish melodies arranged as violin solos, have won him international fame in Jewish art circles, arrived in Johannesburg on his third world tour. The Hungarian artiste will soon be heard with his celebrated fellow-artiste, Dawn Asheton, an eminent singing actress, in a series of novel musical entertainments, "International Musicales." These splendid cultural treats will serve to introduce not only the best in operatic arias and violin solos, but also including the folk and character songs of all musical lands, beloved Jewish melodies and folk music of Russia, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, Roumania, also all other European countries, Miss Asheton will also sing in brilliant national costume songs of the Far East, such as Burma, Java, India, China, Philippines, etc. However, to Jewish music-lovers of greatest interest will be the ancient and modern Hebrew melodies, which will acquaint them not only with László Schwartz, the Jewish violinist and composer, but will also give the Hungarian artiste an opportunity to present himself as the spirited speaker who is known as the "Wit of the Musical World."

It was to László Schwartz, the Jewish thinker and writer, that we put our question: "Why does the Jewish race give the world so many great artistes?"

He mused over it for a few moments, then gave the following interesting analysis: "I would like to answer you in an impersonal manner, for I believe the subject demands it. But"—and here a healthy broad smile spread over his features, a real Jewish smile—"but how can I be impersonal when I speak of the 'Jew in Art'? I have two very strong reasons for being personal. No. 1: I am a Jew. Indeed, that's the best part of me. No. 2: I am an artiste, and so I ask you how can a Jewish artiste speak only through his brains and not through his heart, when he is asked to decipher the Jew's success in Art?"

"Perhaps it will be best if we include Heine, one of the greatest Jewish artists. in this interview. Let me answer your question with his words. Heine tells us that the Jews is so intensive that he is bound to gravitate toward the antipodes

of extremes—soaring to dizzying heights as he sinks to lower depths. It is the identical intensity that carries him up or down.

"If you met as many species of the Jew as I have met, such great variety of conditions in all corners of the world, you too, would accept Heine's diagnosis.

"And what does that mean? It means that the Jew is very emotional. Now 'emotion' is one of the main requisites in art, especially in musical art! But that alone is not sufficient for the makings of truly great artists. You must have patience and perseverance. Sir thousands years of persecution and suffering have enriched the Jew with those qualifications as well."

At this point the artiste paused, and while he blew a cloud of smoke overhead he again fell to musing. Then continued in a mellowed voice: "You know . . . it just occurred to me that the Jewish race is like an ancient master-violin. Old violins that have not been played by true artistes are really of little value; but it is the violin made by a master-craftsman and played on throughout the ages by great artistes, those are the precious heirlooms of the musical world.

"Well—such an instrument is the Jewish race. Ever since Moses created it, the will of Fate has played upon it the most heartrending, dramatic, tragic, poetical, tender, blood-curdling and inspiring tunes that ever was wrung out of the soul of any race.

"And now—now that old fiddle is so highly sense-tryed that it responds to the finest nuances on the human emotional scale.

"And there you have another indispensable asset—if the artiste is to speak for the joys and sorrows of all his fellow-men he must be highly sense-tryed. But may I point out to you that even all these qualifications I cited are not sufficient to account for the large quota of famous Jewish artistes.

"It is my humble opinion that it is the Jewish artiste's sense of humour that adds so much colour and originality to his art. Those in the audience may never give this psychological angle a single thought, but I can assure you that without the Jewish artiste's sense of humour he could never humanise and humorise his art as well as he does.

"Nor does the role of humour end by playing its impish pranks with interpretative as well as creative artistes of our race. Namely, the dividing line between 'humour' and 'pathos' is still an undiscovered region. Just as great joy and sorrow blend somewhere, so does humour and pathos. Take Charlie Chaplin, take Schildkraut, do they not pitch us from rollicking hilarious moods into the depths of the abyss of gloom?"

"And can you conceive such a thing as a great artiste in whose message pathos does not find its allotted role?"

"But then—we've gone far enough in our stocktaking. Sometimes I think that the manifestation of great art is like the blessings of great love. It is not well to delve too deeply in its analysis. One should rejoice with the great embellishing and uplifting messages that art brings to the soul just as we should glory in our happiness when we find the bliss of great love. Israel has given the world great artistes because we can still love our art for the sake of art, and just as long as our artistes will worship in the walhalla of Art as we do before the Spirit of Israel, that which serves as the guiding torchlight in our humble work, the world will ever have a great quota of Jewish artistes and Israel will rejoice with tears of joy."

TALMUD TORAH SUNDAY. Prizes for Leading Collectors.

The United Hebrew Schools of Johannesburg held a social and dance in the H.O.D. Hall on Wednesday in honour of the workers who had been occupied on Talmud Torah Sunday in a house-to-house canvass, and over 300 guests attended and danced to the strains of Gaby Peimer's orchestra.

The results of the house-to-house canvass, which were announced, reflected that over £200 had accrued to the funds of this institution, and prizes, which had been provided by Mr. B. P. Marks, president, Mr. M. Sand, vice-president, and Mr. H. Wittert, hon. treasurer, were awarded. The convener's prize for the largest amount collected by any district was awarded to Mrs. S. Pincus (Yeoville), who brought in the sum of £30, and second and third prizes were awarded to Miss R. Wittert (Doornfontein, £26 5s., and Miss L. Hurwitz (Berea), £20 0s. 6d. Three prizes were awarded also to the pairs of canvassers who brought in the highest amounts, Miss I. Schlapobersky and Mr. M. Ginsberg (Belgravia), £5 18s. 6d.; second prize, Miss T. Sheinuk and Miss M. Marcus (Berea), £4 12s. 6d.; third, Miss F. Shapiro and Mr. I. Davis (Yeoville), £3 12s. 6d.

Dr. J. L. Landau (Chief Rabbi), life honorary president of the United Hebrew Schools of Johannesburg, voiced the appreciation of his council for the work of the collectors. Mr. M. Sand presented the prizes.

THE HEBREW ORDER OF DAVID.

The excellent good feeling and co-operation which exists between the A. P. Bender Lodge No. 9, of East London, and the Morris Kramer Lodge, of Kingwilliamstown, was exemplified when a large number of the brethren of the latter Lodge attended on Sunday, the 16th inst., for the installation of the newly elected officers of the A. P. Bender Lodge.

Wor. Bro. Sam Wilkin, President of the Morris Kramer Lodge, as Deputy Grand President, installed the following officers with the dignity befitting the occasion: President, Wor. Bro. D. Lazarus; Vice-President, Bro. J. Caplan; Treasurer, Bro. S. Malamed; M.C., Bro. A. Addleson; Hon. Secretary, Bro. J. Shwer; Inner Guard, Bro. A. Schiff; Trustees, Bros. L. Berliner and I. J. Abelman; Marshalls, Bros. H. Traub, Morris Hertz, D. Spiro and A. Malamed; Book Examiners, Wor. Bros. J. A. Davidson and I. Sapire; Lodge Chaplain, Bro. Rev. Ch. Katz; Committee, Bros. L. Aronowitz, M. Shwer, N. Strelitz and Wor. Bro. I. Sapire.

The same evening a reception was held at the City Hall, the function proving a great success. Felicitous speeches were made during the course of the evening.

Bro. J. Shwer was for a short time hon. secretary, and having now left East London to take up practice at Cathcart, Bro. A. Addleson has been appointed in his place. The Lodge's best wishes go with Bro. Shwer for a successful career.