

The Sphere of Music

Special to S.A. Jewish Chronicle

By JOSEPH KALUSKY.

THE JEW AS LISTENER.

As listeners go, the Jew is probably one of the best. We have but to attend any classical concert, be it vocal, orchestral or instrumental to verify this, and we will find that in all probability the majority of the audience is made up of Jews. It is his peculiar conceit to boast of his love for music, and his conceit is not without justification, for as a people the percentage of genuine music lovers is very high.

There are probably some very good psychological reasons for this, not the least being the centuries of repression and the suffocation of every other artistic outlet, firstly by the persistent persecution, and secondly by the edict of the rabbis when they forbade the making of craven images.

Being of Eastern origin the Jew has the Easterner's love of melody, and as a race they love a good time. The fondness for chromatic intervals can also be traced to his Eastern hereditary. As much as the European loves harmony so much again does the oriental love melody, and he has developed it to such a fine art that he is capable of singing in quarter tones, a feat that at present is simply impossible to the European.

The Jew, coming as he does between, seems to have acquired a good deal of each, with perhaps a slight preponderance of the oriental. It explains, I think, to a great extent why it is that most of the modern experimentalists in quarter-tone works are Jews. One has but to listen to the constellations of the average chazan on some festive occasion to observe the strong melodic line, with its almost excessive use of chromatic intervals, that every now and again seems to suggest the use of smaller intervals than the semi-tone.

Being synthetic rather than analytic, I do not think that on the average the Jew is very fond of music of the type of Bach. It seems to me that his learning is more in the direction of the sensuous, and operatic and colourful programmatic music will make a much greater appeal to him than the more calculated kind.

These remarks refer, of course, merely to the average, as the more intellectual type has no limit to his comprehension and assimilation. The fact that the Jew is such a good listener makes him a very valuable patron and many a musical venture owes its origin and permanence to his enthusiasm.

JEWISH MUSICAL CELEBRITIES:

MISCHA ELMAN.

Because of its direct emotional appeal, I think, that it will be found that the violin is the Jews most popular instrument. Such being the case, it is not surprising to find among Jewish celebrities a great number of fiddlers. Probably one of the greatest, although not of the same style as Jascha Heifetz, is Mischa Elman. The son of a Jewish school-master, he was born in Southern Russia in the year 1892, and like Heifetz manifested in very early childhood a strong love for music.

At the very early age of five he played in a village concert and made a tremendous impression, such an impression in fact that interested parties saw to it that his rare talent

should not be lost, and he was given every facility to develop it.

When his proud father first took him to a professor he instructed young Mischa to tell the gentleman that he had been learning three months, and was only five years old. In the confusion and nervousness of the interview he told the professor that he was three months old and had been learning five years.

There are many interesting and amusing tales related about his childhood, and this one is worth repeating. When he was seven years of age his art had reached such a point of perfection that he was invited to play at the home of a Russian Prince. He played the Kreutzer Sonata, and this work has a number of long pauses when the fiddler has to wait whilst his accompanist carries on. An old lady sitting near him thinking he kept losing his place, patted him on the shoulder and said: "Never mind, dear, play something you know."

Mischa Elman was first sent to the Imperial School of Music in Odessa and afterwards became a pupil of the great Leopold Auer.

Being a Jew he had great difficulty in obtaining permission to stay in St. Petersburg, and it was not until Auer threatened to resign that the Czar gave his consent and allowed Mischa and his family to reside in St. Petersburg. Auer gave the young musician every opportunity, and before long his name became a household word. He became so great a rage in London that as far back as 1906 he was able to command a fee of £200 per night for playing at a private party. He limited himself to five of these functions per week. He has an immense technique, but mere virtuosity has never tempted him aside. His manner is simple and quiet and he plays on a fine old Amati violin of great value.

COLUMBIA RECORDS.

Ignore No. 3, played by Queens Hall Orchestra and conducted by Sir Henry Wood (L.1978/9). This is a fine record. Sir Henry Wood has brought the very best out of it and there are some splendid contrasts in tone colouring.

Piccadilly Revels in "The Vagabond King" and "Nesting Time" (4378). Two bright and happy numbers. The first a valse and the second a fox-trot. You will like them.

"Crying for the Moon" and "Hugs and Kisses" (4381). Of these two the former is the best.

HIS MASTER'S VOICE RECORDS.

Arthur de Greef and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra (conducted by Sir Landon Ronald) playing the Grieg Concerto in A Minor. It is the most important work in this release this week. De Greef has always been associated with the Grieg Concerto, and his performance has always been considered most authoritative as he was a personal friend of Grieg's and was instructed by the composer personally as to its performance. We must be very grateful for this recording, and students of the piano will find it invaluable.

"The Birds of the Blue" (Fox-trot) and "It all depends on you" (Fox-trot), played by Paul White-

man and his orchestra (D.5270). I am at one with Compton McKenzie when he picks this out as the best of the bunch in the lighter numbers.

It will be in everybody's home.

"Where do you work-a John," and "Weeping Willow" (B.5258). The former played by the Savoy Orpheans is very jolly and naturally the recording is splendid for dance work.

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