

## COMMEMORATING THE CENTENARY OF A NOTABLE JEWISH MUSICIAN

IN art, as in all else—we must have hills as well as mountains. And so, in paying tribute to those who have shaped musical history, we dare not neglect to honour also those composers who, though not ranked with the gods, have enriched our musical heritage with their lesser creations. Such a composer was Henri Wieniawski, a Jew, the centenary of whose birth was celebrated on July 10 of this year.

Wieniawski is not one of the accepted masters in music. But only a myopic vision would belittle his importance merely because his canvas was small and his brush had only a limited repertoire of strokes. As a personality and as a composer, he may not deserve a place with the lords of tone; but musical history is sufficiently plastic to include him among its great men. To-day, a century after his birth, his name is still effulgent—and we do him honour not only because he was one of the great violinists of his time but more especially because there were moments, in his composition, when he achieved unforgettable beauty.

Henri Wieniawski was born of Jewish parents in Lublin, Poland, in 1835. His father was a physician, his mother a lady of exceptional erudition. Young Henri was raised in an environment inherently Jewish, which embraced culture and refinement. When, therefore, at a very tender age, he disclosed a marked talent for musical expression, he found encouragement immediately at hand. He was given every opportunity to develop his talents. The rudiments of violin playing were taught him even before he learned to read and write, and he instantly revealed an amazing adaptability for music. On his eighth birthday, it was decided to send him to Paris to study at the Conservatoire. Here, under the sympathetic guidance of Massart, his progress was so swift that, after two years, he won the first prize for violin playing. Shortly thereafter, he launched upon a concert career.

### A Child Prodigy.

HENRI WIENIAWSKI'S success as a child prodigy was phenomenal. In a tour that covered the principal cities of Europe, he dazzled audiences with electrifying pyrotechnics and a mellow poetry of tender tone. However, notwithstanding his triumphs, Henri's parents realised all too keenly that precocity is far from being a great artist and that but one bridge could span this great distance: Study. Consequently, at the end of the concert tour, young Henri returned to Paris for further instructions at the Conservatoire. A few years of conscientious application to the development of style and to the study of musical masterpieces finally brought Wieniawski to maturity. At the age of fifteen, he was pronounced by his teacher ready to assume an artistic career; they confessed that there was nothing more they could teach him.



## HENRI WIENIAWSKI



### A Noted Virtuoso and Composer of the Last Century



By DAVID EWEN

For the next few years, Wieniawski was concertised throughout Europe. His reputation grew until he was accepted, without question of debate, as one of the great violinists of his time; there were those who even considered him the greatest—among them the eminent pianist and composer, Anton Rubinstein, who wrote in his "Memoirs" that "Henri Wieniawski is, without doubt, the first violinist of his time." For Wieniawski's technique was acclaimed as something almost machine-like in its infallibility. His left hand had an electrifying, breathtaking, perfection; his bow arm wielded not only a legato of the purest quality and a tone that sang in rich and immaculate phrases, but also produced dazzling staccato effects as well as bewitching pianissimo. Few violinists knew their instrument so thoroughly as Wieniawski did. He could make it articulate a richer language than it had ever done before—amplifying its vocabulary and enlarging its diction. He knew how to disguise its weakness and to reveal its strength to best advantage. Moreover, a profound musicianship and a colourful temperament

brought depth and magic to all his interpretations. In him, emotional and intellectual qualities were exquisitely blended; he could be, at turns, lusciously romantic and emotional and, in other works, scholarly and intellectual.

### Triumphant Russian Tour.

WIENIAWSKI'S triumphant concert tour ultimately carried him—in the year 1860—to Russia where he conquered, with bow and fiddle, as completely as in other cities of Europe. The Emperor of Russia was so delighted with his playing that he engaged him as his solo violinist at the palace. Thus, Wieniawski came to settle in Russia. For twelve years, it remained his home—twelve years which, as he later confessed, were the happiest in his life. Appreciation and fame were his; he lived in a musical environment—surrounded by such friends as Anton Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky.

In his book, "My Long Life in Music," Auer speaks thus of Wieniawski: "He was delightful company. He was always saying something that provoked laughter, always full of puns and anecdotes. He was never serious, save when his violin was in his hands, he commenced to practise; but he practised several hours a day. As regards the court, he was such a favourite there that no serious objection was made to his habitual late-coming to the performances. One day he had been asked to play at a soiree-musicale at the house of one of the richest bankers in St. Petersburg. At those affairs the Baron was accustomed to entertain the most aristocratic society of the capital. The day after the soiree, Wieniawski received a letter from the Baron containing a bank note for 100 roubles and the Baron's card on which he had written 'with a thousand thanks.' Wieniawski, furious, at once put the 100 rouble note in an envelope, together with his own card, on which he scribbled: 'I should have preferred a thousand roubles with a hundred thanks.' Baron X, delighted, sent him the 1,000 roubles the following day."

### In America.

WHEN Wieniawski finally left Russia, it was only because he sought to conquer new worlds with his art. Anton Rubinstein had received an invitation to concertise in America, and he urged Wieniawski to come with him. They would be able to appear separately; and, at other times, they might unite their arts in sonata recitals. The project appealed strongly to Wieniawski, who was growing somewhat weary of his sedentary life in Moscow. In 1872, therefore, he came to America to tour the country from coast to coast. Once again he tasted triumph. During eight months of his sojourn in the States, he made more than two hundred appearances and earned a hundred thousand francs.

From this time on, there came a sharp decline in Wieniawski's fortune. (Concluded on page 23.)

## Zionist Youth in the Free State

### TENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN BLOEMFONTEIN

ON Sunday and Monday last, the Orange Free State held its Tenth Annual Zionist Youth Conference at Bloemfontein. Practically every affiliated society sent delegates, showing the growing strength of the movement in the Free State. The public took a keen interest in the proceedings. A novel feature was the display of various show cards, which impressed upon the delegates and general public the importance of supporting all Jewish National endeavours.

Conference was opened by the Chairman of the O.F.S. Youth Executive, Mr. Eli Eliasov, who welcomed all present. Mr. Philips, on behalf of the Bloemfontein Jewish community, welcomed the delegates, and made mention of the important part the Jewish Youth were playing in the upbuilding of our National Home. Rabbi Dr. Moses Romm followed with an inspiring address in which he stressed the important part the Youth were playing in the upbuilding of Palestine and wished Conference every success.

Mr. Pencharz welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Bloemfontein Zionist Society, paying a tribute to the Chairman and the Executive for their zeal and yeoman services. He expressed the willingness of the senior Zionist Society to co-operate with the Youth and give them every assistance. Mr. Fogel, the veteran Zionist, then delivered a cordial message of welcome in the course of which he stressed the importance of the Hebrew language.

Mr. A. Abrahamson, Organiser-Secretary of the S.A. Zionist Youth Council, then, in an able and eloquent manner, gave a survey of the Zionist Youth Movement in the country, in which he pointed out that the Jewish spirit was going to rebuild our National Home. During the course of his address Mr. Abrahamson pointed out firstly that unity had been achieved in the Zionist Youth ranks, unity had been arrived at between the Youth Council and the Habomin, a unity which he felt would be everlasting. Secondly the success achieved by the S.A. Zionist Youth Council, as regards the steps taken in the direction of Hebrew, the importance of the Chalutz Scheme which had sent nine Chalutzim to Palestine, eight of whom were working on the land.

Mr. A. L. Lewis, on behalf of Conference, thanked the speakers for their messages and addresses.

#### The President's Report.

Mr. Eliasov then delivered his presidential report, which contained a detailed analysis of Young Israel activities in the Free State. The report showed clearly the position of every society, and the rapid increase in the number of affiliated societies. Mention was made of the passing of Dr. Shmarya Levin and Benzion Hersch, and all rose as a token of respect. The report showed the excellent progress that had been made as regards propaganda trips, and furthermore the great services the S.A. Zionist Youth Council had rendered in this connection. An addendum to the Chairman's Report was given by Mr. A. Abrahamson, in which he dealt with the more important matters and resolutions dealt with at the third South African Zionist Youth Conference.

The Treasurer, Mr. S. Davidowitz, then gave his report, which showed a deficit, this being due only to the fact that a liability of £40 had been incurred as a result of a motor accident on a trip by the Executive to Aliwal North. The Executive would have been financially in a sound position had this unfortunate incident not occurred.

One hundred pounds had been raised for the Chalutz Scheme during the past year.

A recommendation in the Treasurer's Report to the effect that £300 be raised

during the next 20 months, £200 for the Chalutz Scheme and £100 for administration purposes was, after discussion, unanimously adopted.

Mr. A. L. Lewis, Hon. Business Manager for the O.F.S., then presented his "Menorah" Report, which showed that great improvement had been made in the Free State. Starting with 13 subscribers, the Free State now had close on 196 subscribers.

The Chairman announced that Mr. Archie Davidson, the Free State representative to the Second Maccabiah, had presented a tennis cup to the Executive, to be competed for by affiliated societies.

#### Officers.

The following office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year: Chairman, A. L. Lewis; vice-chairman, Miss J. Berman; treasurer, Mr. W. Rubin; Joint secretaries, Misses B. Segal and Helen Lewis; Menorah business manager, Mr. J. Awerbuch; assistant, Miss B. Spiro; Chalutz commissioner, Mr. P. Davidowitz; sports commissioner, Mr. A. Davidson. Committee: Messrs. M. Sher, S. Davidowitz.

During the course of the Conference Messrs. A. Abrahamson and J. Greenstein delivered special addresses on the Chalutz Scheme in South Africa.

A competition, arranged by Mr. S. Davidowitz, ably assisted by P. Davidowitz, had realised a nett profit of £37 odd for the Chalutz Farm, the winner of the prize of £5 being Mr. B. Rosenberg, Box 236, Johannesburg.

A luncheon to delegates was held on Sunday, at the Phoenix Hotel. Sunday evening the Executive were "At Home" to delegates at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, and during the course of the evening £5 was raised for the Chalutz Farm. On Monday afternoon the delegates were entertained at Mazelspoort, and in the evening to a party at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Kimmel, of Waverley Road.

## HENRI WIENIAWSKI

(Concluded from page 21.)

tunes. Ill health weakened his heart, and thenceforth he was to know physical fatigue, nervous strain and pains which sapped his vitality. Moreover, gambling plunged him into debt, so that at one time he was forced to pawn his beloved Amati violin which, fortunately, was immediately redeemed by a good friend.

For a while, Wieniawski pursued a pedagogical career in Brussels. The need for money which was becoming more and more acute—and possibly hunger for further fame and limelight—tempted him to renounce this placid occupation for one more extensive concert-tour. He was, however, little suited physically to undertake a strenuous concert journey.

During this period, his health deteriorated to such an extent that there were concerts when he was compelled to sit while performing. In Berlin, at one engagement, he was stricken by a violent heart attack which compelled him to stop in the midst of his performance; Joseph Joachim, who was seated in the audience, leaped upon the platform and, taking the violin and bow from the sick man's hand, continued the programme where Wieniawski had left off.

THE end was not far off. Reaching Odessa, he collapsed completely; he was now a broken shell. A sentimental urge—Moscow once more—the city of his happiness and greatest success—drove him on. He was permitted by Fate one last coup d'oeil over his beloved city. He died on the day of his arrival—on March 2, 1880, at the age of forty-five.

The art of an interpreter being ephemeral, Henri Wieniawski's name would have hardly persisted to this day if he had been only a great violinist. He was much more; a composer who bequeathed an endearing heritage to the literature of violin music. Knowing his instrument intimately, Wieniawski had a rare gift for producing violinistic music whose effectiveness and brilliance could not be denied. His pieces have exhausted the expressive possibilities of the instrument, and have taught all composers who followed him how eloquently the violin could be made to speak. They possess sparkle, energy and irresistible fascination. At their best, they are marvellous expressions of a race full of the healthy gusto and the vigorous enthusiasms of peasant people.

It is the Wieniawski who produced these palpitably vital morsels who deserves a place in musical history. It is to this Wieniawski—and not to the great violinist—whom we are according homage on the occasion of the centenary of his birth.

—American Hebrew.

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