

The Sphere of Music

Special to S.A. Jewish Chronicle

By JOSEPH KALUSKY.

The Jew has figured in European musical history with varying stress at different times, and has been instrumental in no small measure in carrying forward the torch of musical progress. Perhaps his most conspicuous period was just after the destruction of the Temple when, in the dispersal over the length and breadth of the European continent, he carried the oriental influences right into the very heart of the occidental church, which was then in its infancy and ripe for the absorption of any new or old formulas. He thus indicated the way for sacred music, and traces are still discernable even to-day in the common ritual of the Christian services.

For this he has received, what must be considered as due acknowledgment, although perhaps not without its grudging element. Then for a length of years, that come historically under the category of the "Dark Ages," the Jew is as inconspicuous as his fellows of other denominations, but looms again into the limelight in the persons of Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Halevy, Rubinstein, Bizet and others. Now, however, he is greeted with an antagonism as unfounded as it is unjust, which finds its culmination in the petty, vituperative, and unbalanced attack of Wagner, whose hatred was based upon personal jealousy. Then, leaving the nineteenth century to moulder in the mildew of its stale conventions, we come to the present day and find that the Jew is again conspicuously to the fore, and is unassumingly making history for himself in the persons of Mahler, Schonberg, Korngold, Bloch, and a host of others. As the perennial scapegoat, even in this our enlightened twentieth century he does not escape calumny and misrepresentation. One needs but turn to a review of a book written by Heinrich Berl, called "Das Judentum in der Musik," which appeared in a respectable musical journal, to confirm this. The slighting tone and contemptuous, off-handed manner in which this book is reviewed is pregnant with repressed antipathy, and is greatly to be deplored. The writer of this review is a well-known music critic and his lack of tolerance comes as a surprise to all who have always considered him far above such petty prejudice.

JEWISH CELEBRITIES— JASCHA HEIFETZ.

Is there a Jewish household throughout the world, I wonder, where the name of Jascha Heifetz is unknown? Breath but the word music to the average Jew, and he will ask you with rapture in his eyes whether you have heard Jascha Heifetz playing the Hebrew Melody by Achron, on the gramophone. He may not know who Achron is; he may never have heard of Bloch, Schonberg, Korngold or other illustrious Jewish composers, but you may be sure he will know immediately of Heifetz. Jascha Heifetz, the wonder fiddler, although a very young man has firmly established himself in a niche of fame that is quite unique. He has endeared himself to the masses in a way that few others have ever succeeded in doing, and his name is a byword not only with the Jews, but with all and sundry.

He was born at Vilna, Russia, on February 21st, 1901, and "Music,"

we are told, "had, from the start, a strikingly happy effect upon him." He was an infant prodigy of no usual order as we find that at the age of three he was already handling a quarter size violin, and making his tutors gasp with the dexterity of his natural talent.

At the age of seven he made his first public appearance, and played on a half size violin, and at the age of thirteen we learn that he attained to full size. We also learn that his student career was not all "pie," and that he went one better than Handel (who was discovered in night attire at the clavichord) by finding it necessary to practice his instrument under the bed clothes.

Through various vicissitudes he eventually reached the capable hands of Professor Auer with whom he studied, and when he left him his career proved one long succession of brilliant triumphs.

Jascha Heifetz has a most amazing technique. No living violinist possesses such absolute flawlessness, and he stands on the platform in a calm, cold, dispassionate way and performs his miracles of dexterity so that there are some who believe he is without emotion and merely wallows in beauty of tone. This idea is, of course, quite erroneous, as one needs but to hear him playing Achron's beautiful Hebrew Melody and the extraordinary rich tone of his G string in other works, to realise his depth of feeling and his magical artistry.

COLUMBIA RECORDS.

"O Peaceful Night" and "O Hush Thee My Baby" (4298). These are two unaccompanied part songs rendered in an unforgettable manner by the Salisbury Singers. The blending of the voices is as near perfect as one can hope for.

"In this hour of softened splendour" and "Italian Salad" (9194). This is another choral record sung by the famous Sheffield Choir, conducted by Sir Henry Coward. The latter is particularly interesting, as it is a skit on the use of Italian terms in music. Both numbers are well sung although the first is rather sugary.

William Murdoch playing the Appassionata Sonata in F Minor by Beethoven (L.1906). This is a very romantic rendering of a very popular work. Murdoch plays it with much fibre and vim, and although I am not prepared to agree with his ideas of interpretation, I must confess that it is a fine recording and is sure to appeal.

Waltz in F Major, and Etude in A Flat (Chopin) (D.1567). William Murdoch again, but this time in Chopin. They are very brisk and clean-cut performances. Perhaps just a little too sharp for the delicate Chopin.

The Vicar of Mirth, Vivian Foster in the "Parson and the Charleston" (4265). This is rather an amusing speaking record, and is very clearly enunciated. The electrical process has done wonders in that direction.

"Cavalleria Rusticana," Voi Lo Sapete and Vissi D'Arte from Tosca, sung by Eva Turner (L.1836). The Voi Lo Sapete is rather fine, but the latter has not recorded well.

PARLOPHONE RECORDS.

Trio in D Minor for violin, cello and piano (Mendelssohn). Played by the Edith Lorand Trio (E.10563). This is one of the best recordings of its kind I have heard. The piano and cello particularly have recorded excellently.

Pianoforte Concerto No. 4 in G (Beethoven) played by Karol Szeleter. (E.10563). This concerto has the famous Rubinstein cadenza and is not heard very often. We must therefore be grateful to the Parlophone Company for this recording, which is very finely performed by this almost unknown pianist.

"Blue Skies" and "In a Little Spanish Town," played by Sam Lanin and his players, with vocal chorus by that ever-popular artist Vaughn de Leath (3316). Two bright numbers that are the vogue at present.

"Where do you Worka John," duet sung by Ed. Smalle and G. Underhill Macey (5782). A very amusing number that is sure to make you laugh. The other side has "Bridget O'Flynn," also quite funny.

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