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Jews in the Realm of Music

Many Notable Contributions

THE death of Rubin Goldmark, for many years head of the Department of Composition at the Juilliard Graduate School of Music in New York, directs attention to the large number of Jewish musical geni that have appeared in the course of the past century. The Jew's love for music goes back to ancient days, and explains the elaborate musical service in the Temple, for which the Book of Psalms, with its numerous musical directions and references, served as the hymnal. In the long days of exile, with their many repressions and woes, this noble sentiment lingered, even though little opportunity was afforded for its development and practical application. Instrumental music was not permitted in the synagogue on the Sabbath, but full sway was given on the Haz-zan to display his talent in connection with the service he intoned, and his melodies would be carried home by the members of the congregation and repeated time and again by the workingman during his labours and by the clerk in the counting-house. There were always present in every Jewish community the professional musicians (Kle Zemer), who would be hired to play at weddings. Untutored though most of these were, many possessed real musical talent and performed on their crude instruments with much feeling and with a technique derived entirely from intuition and experience. With the opening of the portals of the larger world to the Jews during the nineteenth century, the Jewish genius for music asserted itself not only among the regular supporters of the music halls, but also among the virtuosi and composers, as well as among the directors and producers of music throughout Europe and America.

The more famous uncle of Rubin Goldmark, Karl Goldmark, in his memoirs, which were translated into English by his kinswoman, Mrs. Alice Goldmark Brandeis, wife of Justice Brandeis, tells of the great composers and musicians with whom he came in contact during his long and distinguished career as music teacher and composer. One is astonished to note how many of them were members of the Jewish race, if not of the Jewish religion. A voluminous book, published several years ago, under the title of "Famous Musicians of a Wandering Race," by Gdal Saleski, himself an internationally celebrated cellist, contains sketches of more than three hundred outstanding Jewish composers, conductors, violinists, pianists and singers. Because of the political and social conditions in Europe during the past century, many of them publicly renounced their ancestral faith and joined the dominant church, primarily for the purpose of obtaining recognition and position in their chosen sphere, while many

others suppressed, consciously or unconsciously, their Jewish origin and affiliation, without formally through the baptismal ceremony "blood" searchlight recently emanated by the race theorists of Germany revealed many a hitherto unknown member of the Jewish family standing in the forefront of music whose Jewishness had not been suspected either by the community or even, at times, by himself.

Richard Wagner endeavoured to show that the predominance of Jewish talent among musicians brought about a deterioration of the purely "Aryan" art of music by the infiltration of the Judaic spirit into compositions and renditions. The Jewish composers brought to their art a heritage of centuries of culture to which they cannot do themselves, and this heritage had a profound effect upon their choice of subjects as well as upon their composition. This influence, however, instead of lowering the musical standard, gave it new vigour and greater appeal. In their appreciation of music, even of the type produced by Wagner, Jews have shown their sympathies and untrammelled understanding. It is pathetic to recall the almost obsequious worship and adoration with which Karl Goldmark speaks of his meeting with the master, and, of course, we know it was Taussig, a Jew, who raised the money for the erection of the reuth Temple, and that it was Leopold Damrosch, born of Jewish parents, who has done so much to introduce the Wagnerian opera in America. Joseph Stransky, who died recently, was one of the foremost conductors of Wagnerian and symphonic music. Giacomo Meyerbeer, against whom Wagner was believed to have directed his shafts of invective in excoriated what he called "Jewish Music," gave financial aid to Wagner, and this was never refused.

—"Jewish Exponent"

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

In order to ensure timely publication, correspondents are requested to send in all reports, notices, etc., to the "Zionist Record" as early in the week as possible. Material intended for each issue must reach this office at the latest by the first post of Wednesday of each week. Material received after that time will be held over until the following issue.