

Music and the Home

PROPOSAL TO PERMIT SERIOUS-MINDED STUDENTS TO ATTEND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA REHEARSALS

If Orchestra Programmes are so Educational, Why Not Throw Open the Educational Advantages of the Rehearsals

Every now and again there comes to the front some good suggestion aimed at the widening and deepening of the educational influences at work developing the love of music among the general public. This time the suggestion hails from New York, which city poses as the hub of at least some fairly important musical activities. And on the face of it, it looks worthy of further discussion by the leaders in the musical life of every Canadian centre that possesses an orchestra.

The sponsor of the proposal is Herbert F. Peyser, who says: "One superlatively important thing might be done which is not. The educational value of orchestral rehearsals is curiously and persistently overlooked. There are naturally many practical reasons that prohibit the indiscriminate use of the rehearsal period. But the measure these hours can contribute to the educative benefaction of deserving students is a matter suited to very serious recognition. We have in New York at least three orchestras of the highest pretensions that could enlighten by illustration the understanding of the pupil or the nascent composer as six months of the class-room discussion could not. By opening to the properly accredited hours of rehearsal they would forfeit nothing and aid much. If the symphony concert is in the surest sense an institution of cultural force, why so—and from a most constructive standpoint—is the preparatory labor that goes to mold interpretations, insure executive smoothness and generally illuminate works of the understanding of those who present them.

"Beyond question rehearsal attendance would appeal to the prospective composer in his desire to study at first hand the value of timbres, of combinations, of balance, of effects. And there is no strictly valid reason why the admission of unobtrusive observers should be distasteful to the conductor or instrumentalists. At need a very nominal fee could be charged, a slight increment, perhaps, but not to be altogether scorned. For quiet and becoming behaviour adequate provision could easily be made. At need a system of credentials might be devised to assure the conductor of the seriousness and merit of his auditors.

"Some years ago, when there was less music but more taste than to-day, the custom of 'public rehearsals' was an approved one. These rehearsals, which at best approximate the actual concert conditions, were of recognized interest and value. The term has practically vanished to-day. It was, to be sure, only to final and hence fairly finished rehearsals that admission was made. But as the architect is engrossed in the minutiae of

construction so is the tonal builder in the handling of his materials from the ground up. It is not without significance that many of the supreme masters of orchestral revelation lived, as it were, in the orchestral pit in their impressionable days."

Out of Tune.

It's a well known fact that before musicians are ever able to play in harmony, they must first have learned how to tune their instruments. They were taught in the beginning that being out of tune brought only discords and confusion, and that if they were to be successful musicians the question of getting in tune was the most important thing to learn. Their welfare depended on being in tune; out of it, they stood no chance.

So does the same principle apply in life to those of us who have never learned to tune up our minds to harmony and sweet music, but, instead, are always playing discords and dirges. On and on we go playing the funeral marches and singing: "There's no justness about anything; no good ever comes to us; every one else is better off, so what's the use of living." Never tuning up, we go on condemning and wishing we were dead. What an orchestra to belong to—a regular dutch band.

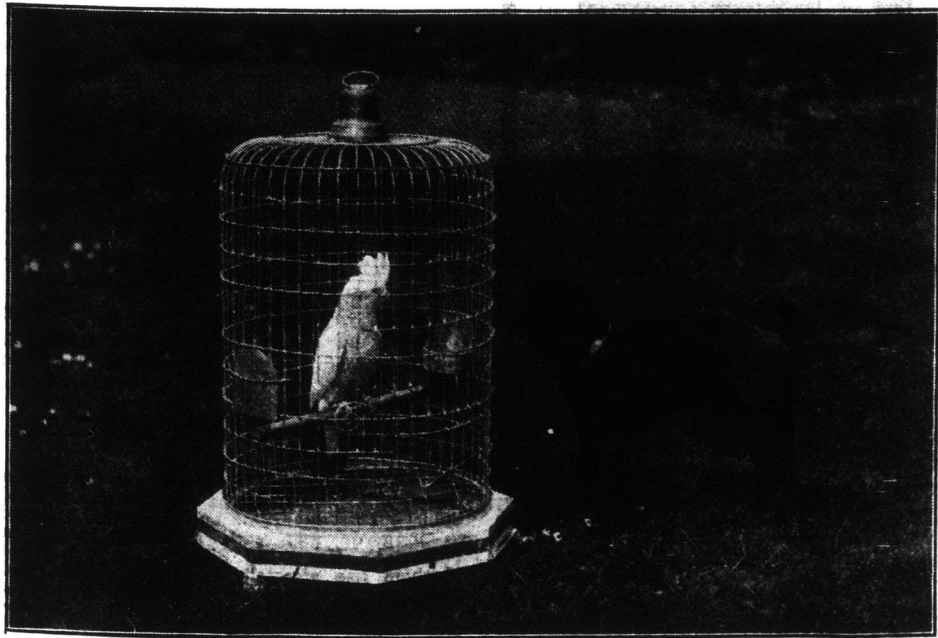
Can't we, poor players, see that we're always going to play discords and funeral marches until we get to know something about music? Our instruments are becoming weaker and weaker every time we play the dirges; and the more we play them the more incapable we will be of ever learning how to play the kind of battle marches that stir up the blood to worth while action. Until we can so tune and play our instruments, so long will we be a member of the dutch band.

If we, unmusical players, say it's circumstances, environment, uncongenial work, or lack of opportunity that is preventing the playing of sweet music and leaving the ranks of the dutch band—then it's up to us to get in and renovate our old instruments, put on new strings, tune up, and begin to play the battle marches that'll inspire us to charge and make prisoners of all the opposing enemies. By continually playing this kind of music a seat in the big orchestra will eventually be discovered.

In trying to get into this big band, it is well for us out-of-tune musicians to remember that all the famous players who belong to it had to do a lot of strenuous tuning before they were ever admitted; but, instead of complaining about it they kept right on tuning their tones until harmony and sweet music was played. Marching to the beat of time and tune gradually overcame all bad notes, and finally they became leaders of the big orchestra.

It was often hard for them to keep step in that marching, the road was so steep and rocky, and often they staggered and fell; but they always knew

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