

# Music and the Old Year

Viggo Kihl, Pianist

VIGGO KIHl is a Dane, who has lived fourteen years in London and is now teaching piano in the Toronto Conservatory of Music, where he gave his first public recital recently. I heard only the Chopin and Liszt numbers, though he gave also a Prelude and Fugue of Bach, Variations of Beethoven, and three pieces by Mozart, Schubert and Mendelssohn. His four things of Chopin were the Sonata in B flat minor, containing the celebrated Funeral March, the Ballade in G minor, Nocturne, F sharp major and the well-known Polonaise in A flat major.

To be a Dane is not primarily to be an interpreter of Chopin. Mr. Kihl is a man of stout, solid build, blonde of hair, ruddy of cheek and blue in the eye, a typically unemotional dweller by the Baltic on the North Sea, to judge by his merely physical appearance. Yet in his Chopin he demonstrated that he knows how to pull out the big climaxes, how to get the purling melodies and the rippling rills and a good many of the delicatessen of which Chopin was such a master. His playing of the Sonata was a broad, serious, constitutional piece of work, devoid of frills and furbelows; a plain, honest and capable rendering of a big piece. He did not twiddle and dawdle with the Funeral March, as some do.

In the Ballade he demonstrated a sure capacity for climaxes. But in the cantabile passages his tone seemed at times to lack sustaining quality. It seldom floated in a liquid way. It was often short and blunt. For Chopin is a tremendous test of a pianist's ability. He demands the hammer of Thor and the caress of a butterfly's wing—notably in the Polonaise, when on the numerous climaxes Kihl's front wisp of hair flagged over his eyes and he almost stood upon the pedals. But here, again, he seemed to fail in the poetic passages.

It is in the more ethereal delicacies of tonal subtlety and in the broad aspects of rhythm that Mr. Kihl has whatever shortcomings he has—and they are few. He gave a programme of big, catholic interest, and in doing it he demonstrated his possession of most of the essential qualities of a big, serious-minded player, not lacking in either technic or imagination.

## Hambourg Concerts

MADAME LEGINSKA, a truly remarkable lady pianist, reappeared in Massey Hall at the final concert of the Hambourg Concert Society, a spectacular wind-up to a brief season. She made her first appearance in the Hambourg Concert Society Series some weeks ago. The Tschaikowsky Trio played by this talented lady with Messrs. Jan and Boris Hambourg is probably the biggest thing ever done in that exact form. It is almost symphonic in the variety of its contents and the treatment of its thematic material. It was superbly done. One apparent defect may have been part of the composer's intention. The trio sounded a good deal of the time like a piano concerto with violin and cello accompaniment. To be sure many of the principal themes are given to the piano as much as to the other instruments, and in all probability it would be difficult to subordinate the piano part enough to remove the concerto impression.

On the other hand, whatever may be said of the really splendid way in which the Hambourgs handled their material, it must be conceded that Leginska is a remarkable young woman at the piano. She plays as no woman player has ever done in this country. And she is young. She has some characteristics of genius.

The Hambourg Concert Series is finished after a season of exceptional brilliance, bringing out many new big works in chamber music. The last containing the Schumann Quintette was perhaps the most evenly brilliant of the series. The concert prior to that was the least important. The net result of this third season of chamber music by the Hambourgs

has been an added crescendo to the stimulus given that sort of music by this talented aggregation when they began their good work in this country three years ago. Messrs. Jan and Boris Hambourg will go on tour in Canadian and American cities after the new year.

THE famous Flonzaley Quartette will be heard again this year on Jan. 10 in Toronto. This is the fourth visit to Canada by these distinguished players, who are maintained by the munificence of one man to do nothing but play the best chamber music in the world. Their visits to this country have had considerable to do with the immense development going on in stringed music, a department now being as well organized in conservatories and colleges as the piano.

## Defending Melba

Amherstburg, Ontario.

Editor "Canadian Courier":

Dear Mr. Editor.—In looking over a recent musical column in your usually just and courteous magazine, I find a criticism which I cannot but think harsh and unkind. It is the column entitled "A Great Disappointment." If your critic did not want to coincide in his views with other Toronto music critics towards the Melba concert, I think his criticism could have been written in a much more polite and gentlemanly manner.

A woman like Mme. Melba does not deserve such rude and jocose treatment from "Canadian Musical Critics." If your music editor would just think for one moment what Melba has been to the musical world during the last two decades, how she has preserved pure singing during this age of Salomes and Electras, I know for certain he would be more gentle in his writings about this truly great woman. Gratitude for what she has done during her years as a singer ought to prompt any critic to be kinder than to remind that famous artist of her advancing years.

I admire and appreciate Mme. Melba's art as do thousands of others, and although she may be growing on in years, I sincerely hope she remains supreme in the domain she has reigned over so many years, for at least a while longer, that the rising generation may not hear of her as of a past joy, but may at least hear some of her unparalleled tones before they pass into oblivion.

Yours truly,  
PHILIP MACOMB MULLEN.

## Opera in Hamilton

Editor Canadian Courier:

Dear Sir,—I greatly enjoyed a recent musical column in your paper, but was greatly surprised at your omitting to mention the Hamilton Operatic Society, of this city, in your remarks on "Light Opera."

This society is not a new organization, as it was started in 1907 or 1908, and played The Mikado to three well filled houses at Bennett's Theatre (now the Temple). Since that time it has presented Erminie, The Geisha, Florodora, San Toy, and the Runaway Girl at the Grand Opera House here, and some of them, I believe, in other Canadian cities. This society is now preparing The Mikado again, which will be presented on Nov. 17th and 18th.

The Hamilton Operatic Society was a competitor in the Earl Grey Competition in 1912, on which occasion fifty-two members went to Ottawa to play Florodora, without a professional on the stage.

Although the personnel of the society has greatly changed during its history, it has ever been under the able leadership of C. L. M. Harris, Mus. Doc., of this city, who takes a great interest in amateur productions.

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