

A New Violin Star

NEW YORK star-gazers have got a new orb of the violin; a star for which they have been yearning ever since Elman began to grow dull by repetition; since war put Kreister under the ban; since Ysaye, the demi-god, began to seem a bit too human and familiar.

Jascha Heifetz is his name. He came from the East; from Russia; a tall, fuzzle-haired youth, with liquid, deep eyes and a soul-searching fiddle—all the sorrows of Russia, it would seem, compressed into that little music box. And jaded, enthusiastic New York that never goes up except to a big sensation, has gone up.

So Current Opinion, not a musical sheet, says:

What appears to be the great sensation of the musical season is the American debut of Jascha Heifetz, a young Russian violinist, which took place in New York on October 27th. If press superlatives count for anything, there has not been within the memory of living critics a musical success so immediate, so sweeping, unless it be the surprise sprung upon Chicago by the discoverers of Galli-Curci last season.

The element of surprise should, however, have been lacking in this instance, for Heifetz has been heralded through the press all summer long. A fortune is said to have been spent on his "advance publicity." Reviewers and public alike had their expectations keyed to the highest pitch. That there should not be the slightest note of disappointment in the comment is, under the circumstances, remarkable enough. But the unreserved eulogies penned by veteran critics, the blazing tributes paid by the younger reviewers, and the ecstatic response of the audience seems to leave no doubt as to the extraordinary significance of this artistic triumph.

In the Theatre Magazine "Mr. Isaacson" heads his list of Going to the Concert with Heifetz, and says:

Jascha Heifetz, a young Russian boy, admitting to nineteen years, came out on the stage of Carnegie Hall, lifted a violin to his chin, and without ostentation or display, made his debut to America. Unquestionably he is master of his instrument, a musician of the highest character, a poet under restraint of a mature sense of the fitting. Such purity of tone has not been heard in the memory of the younger concert attendants. That he made it warm for violinists, as Godowsky said, is apparent. I cannot agree with those who, on the inspiration of the moment, instantly sweep aside all the favorites of the day. Kreisler still remains my ideal of violinists, especially because he is more than a violinist. But Heifetz has the right idea. He is, as Joachim might have pointed out, "a violinist in sharp distinction to the fiddlers." He did not obtrude himself on the canvas of the composer, but threw down the gates to a sweeping, pure enunciation of the music itself. As he stood on the platform, so modest and calm, it seemed to me that instead of Heifetz, it was Music.

Again in Musical America, H. F. Peyser sings a paean to Heifetz, to a "total impression so complete, so overwhelming and indivisible, that a reviewer must long rather to expatiate on the glorious artistic entity than to dissect and particularize. It may, however, be proper to point out that the newcomer plays with a tone so lustrous and silken, so fragrant, so intoxicating sweet, that only the molten gold of Fritz Kreisler can be conjured up in comparison. But though it wrings the tears from the eyes by its lambent beauty, its vibrancy and infinite play of magical color, its nature bespeaks a singular aristocratic purity rather than an unrelieved sensuousness, though its power of emotional conveyance and suggestion is



MUSIC

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

unparalleled. And, however forcible the vigor of Mr. Heifetz's superb, sweeping bowing, not the smallest blemish of roughness nor the minutest impurity of any other sort mars its ceaseless enchantment. From the pitch the violinist never wavers by the breadth of even a hair. In his rhythm he is unfaltering, in his musicianship unchallengeable."

Henderson in the Sun cautiously says: Heifetz is not a phenomenon or a jingleur but a troubadour. The New York Globe says he is a modern miracle.

Krehtriell in the Tribune says that he rose above his instrument and the music written for it.

Well, we shall see. Heifetz, it seems, comes to Canada some time this season.

Current Recitals

WAGNER still manages to creep in to Canadian programmes. A few days ago Tattersall, organist of Old St. Andrew's, included among his organ numbers at a recital the Ride of the Valkyries. Last week at the second concert of the Hambourg Society, Boris Hambourg gave a cello version of the Prize Song from the Meistersingers. Both these artists have the best of taste, and they are both cosmopolitans. They believe that music is not so much national as it is universal. Incidentally they gave vivid renderings of the pieces named. But the cello is not pre-eminently suited to the Prize Song, and the organ has some inherent difficulty with the trombone effects in the Valkyries. Na-

turally any good French-Canadian organ made by Cassavant Freres should object to trumpeting out those elephantine blatancies.

However, it's all a matter of musical perspective.

Tattersall's best thing was a Widor Symphony (French) which he did in a manner worthy the genius of a man who at the age of 15 could compose such a thing. Widor is one of the colorful masters of the organ which he makes as orchestral as possible. And even in a Scotch-Canadian church the organ is becoming more and more an orchestral instrument.

A SURPRISE was sprung on a large audience who heard the second of the Hambourg Concert Society's programmes for this season. Jan Hambourg was in the stocking. He happened to be in Toronto for a couple of days' visit. Mr. Vigneti happened to be ill and could not possibly have filled his programme at the violin desk. Jan Hambourg, always game in such matters, undertook with little or no rehearsal to take his place, and to use a strange violin taken out of stock.

Under such circumstances the ordinary interest in the programme was somewhat disturbed. But the programme was exceedingly well chosen and most skilfully rendered. We have already alluded to the first of Boris Hambourg's group for the cello. The other three were a Prelude of his own, a very unusual duo-colored piece in the best of moods for the instrument; Hamilton Harty's Butterflies, which is much the usual kind of thing under

that name—except for the rendering—and Sinding's Ritornel. The hall in which he played is not suitable for the cello. I am wondering how that great instrument of Boris's will sound in St. Paul's Cathedral Church to-night—Dec. 13—but because there is a performance of the Messiah in Massey Hall the same evening, I will have to miss the cello in St. Paul's.

The Arensky Trio for piano, violin, and cello gave the three artists a fine chance to give the audience 30 or 40 minutes of perfect enjoyment which seemed only half long enough. To the exquisite and poetically eloquent effect of this beautiful piece Conradi at the piano contributed a high percentage. Conradi is a master of poetics in ensemble work. Jan Hambourg played in a somewhat subdued style but with all his old-time authority. And Boris never fails to fill in all the holes necessarily left in that sort of composition. This Trio is one of the finest things of its class ever written, and made a splendid finale to a most enjoyable programme.

FROM the average evangelical Christmas Sunday Service— heaven deliver us! Of all vaudeville performances in the name of music this is usually the worst. We don't object to winding up the day with the Hallelujah chorus; but we never have the physical courage any more to sit out a potpourri of Gounod, Wagner, Haydn, Mozart and about ten others, including selections from the Messiah which are usually beyond the virtuosity of the choir, and play hob with most of the organs.

What we need is a simplified and dignified musical service for Christmas.

When Percy Plays (Not)

CONSIDERING that Percy Grainger was to have played in Canada twice last week, and was prevented from so doing by military orders, perhaps the following lines written by an admirer will have to do in his place:

When Grainger plays, I hear the beat
Of drums and tread of martial feet,
I see a mighty host advance
Across the fields and roads of France,
When Grainger plays.

I see the men who've fought and bled,
Their colors waving at their head
Who, knowing that their cause is right,
March bravely forth again to fight,
When Grainger plays.

I see each youthful, raw recruit,
The nation's green and unripe fruit,
Shouldering his gun and heavy pack,
With head erect and unbent back,
When Grainger plays.

So eager they to join the fight,
They look not to the left or right,
I see their clear and forward glance,
As on they pass to fight for France,
When Grainger plays.

I hear the trumpet's strident blare,
I hear the guns which shake the air,
I hear the din and battle clash,
I see the smoke and blinding flash,
When Grainger plays.

I hear the nations one and all
Respond, "We come at freedom's call,"
I hear the shout of Victory,
The song of France restored and free
When Grainger plays

ARTHUR FARWELL is carrying on some of the community chorus work pioneered in New York by Barnhart, the blacksmith. Farwell is the man for the job. Barnhart has the right idea in the 90-per-cent. ability to sing of a common average crowd. But with his methods he doesn't usually get the crowd much further than Old Black Joe. Farwell, if he can keep the evangelical ideas of Barnhart, should be able to get some real music out of a huge crowd.