

Under the Seat

It is the matured opinion of most musicians that the inventor of the piano bench which conceals a receptacle for sheet music should be assassinated; not suddenly, but by some Oriental form of the art which would prolong his sufferings. The visiting pianist, perhaps, has played the accompaniment of who is Sylvia. Then she says, "Have you 'Deep River'?" "Certainly. If you will stand up I can find it for you." The owner turns up the bench lid and begins a search which may last twenty minutes, the pianist standing all the while. Everything is rammed in unholly confusion into this convenient locker—songs, popular and good, piano pieces unnumbered, "Collections," hymn books, exercise books, P.'s, Editions with the covers off, Editions with the covers half-off, music paper and note books. It is one glorious mess—a sort of limbo into which all things are swept, and from which scarcely anything can be recovered. A musical library soon goes to wreck when it is kept like a rummage pile. There are such things as music cabinets, and there are also such things as card indexes. On a shelf an inch high twenty pieces of sheet music can be kept. If there are twenty shelves a respectable library can be maintained at one's fingers' ends. A card bearing the names of all the pieces in each shelf is not difficult to prepare and it would save an infinity of annoyance and confusion. The phonograph manufacturers wrought wisely when they provided indexed receptacles for records. Pianists sometimes complain that the standard size or sheet music is difficult to preserve and just as difficult to handle without damage. This complaint will vanish in the future, for the American Music Publishers have determined on using the quarto form—like Peter's edition—for all music they issue from henceforth. That will simplify the task of maintaining a musical library in reasonably neat condition.

Why We Call a Musician an Artist

Anyone who submits to a child's cross-questioning is about sure to get floored sooner or later. Sometimes, very often in fact, the final thrust comes in the form of the most simple question. Not long ago a music teacher was just finishing the lesson with a little girl when the latter asked, "Why is a musician called an artist?" An answer was given but it did not enlighten the child and the teacher confessed to the writer that it was far from satisfactory to himself. "It was about equivalent," said he, "to saying in several sentences—because."

The incident had passed entirely out of mind when one day a young woman said to this same teacher, "Why would you say we call a famous musician an artist?" Again he was at a loss for direct concise answer. But one evening shortly after that he was looking over some of the books in his book-case and his eye caught a page in Florence Barclay's *The Rosary* which, he said, brought home to his mind the exact answer to the bothersome question. It was this in brief. A blind man was sitting in the moonlight singing this:

"The radiant morn hath passed away,
And spent too soon her golden store;
The shadows of departing day
Creep on once more.

"Our life is but a fading dawn,
Its glorious noon, how quickly past!
Lead us, O Christ, when all is gone,
Safe home at last.

"Where saints are clothed in spotless white,
And evening shadows never fall:
Where Thou, Eternal Light of Light,
Art Lord of All."

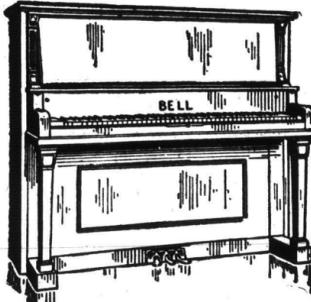
"These words came back to me," he related, "and to get away from despairing thoughts I began reciting them to an accompaniment of chords. And then, suddenly, I saw it pictured in sound! Just as I used to see a sunset in light and shadows and then transfer it to my canvas in shade and color—so I heard a sunset in harmony, and I felt the same kind of tingle in my fingers as I used to feel when inspiration came, and I could catch up my brushes and palette. So I played the sunset. And then I got the theme for life fading, and what one feels when the glorious noon is suddenly

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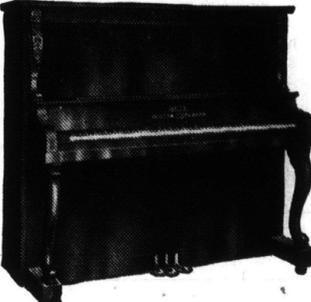
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plunged into darkness; and then the prayer. And then I heard a vision of heaven, where evening shadows never fall. And after that came the end; just certainty and worship and peace. You see the eventual theme worked out of all this. It was like making studies for a picture.

Then it all opened up. Music is sound pictures. It will, perhaps, be remembered that once Chopin had a picture in his mind of the nobility of Poland marching to his music. Stately dames

and lofty cavaliers swept past him and he saw Polish soldiers going into battle. The view transposed to a sound picture created either his *A Flat Polonaise* or the *Military Polonaise*. A person who was fond of music heard of *Welsh Rhapsodie*. To her it represented the mountains and rivers and glimpses of the sea; the sea-fowl wheeling and screaming in the wind; then the melody the *Welsh* songs of love and home sung by the common people as only the *Welsh* can sing them. It was a sound picture again.

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