

The MUSICAL WEST

A comparison between the 1917-18 cycle of \$1000 Concerts to be given in the West, by headliners from six countries, and the native music of the Prairies

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

A CERTAIN cartoon intended to take a genial whack at Mark Hambourg now hangs in the writer's house. It shows Mark sitting on the ground dressed up and hairified as the original man of the can period, or about that time, playing with a pair of clubs a thingumbob on the ground which is supposed to be the first piano. The cartoon was made by an artist in the famous Savage Club, of London, celebrating an evening when Mark, at a house dinner, occupied the chair.



How would Chief Sweet-grass feel if asked to play on a modern grand piano?

This shows the continuity of music over a few thousand years. The facts recently stated by Boris Hambourg, the 'celloizing brother of Mark, concerning the West and its music for 1917-1918, involve just about as long an interval of time in actual character, but less than one generation in years.

It seems that seven or eight cities on the prairie this season, not mentioning any on the Pacific, are to engage a series of headliners to give concerts. The ring of cities begins at Winnipeg, takes in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Calgary, Edmonton and one or two others in a grand sequence of twelve concerts each; nearly every programme to be contributed by one of the men popularly regarded as a world-artist. In cold mathematics, the cost of these 100 concerts or a little less will run close up to \$100,000. A number of these artists are in the habit of charging \$1,000 a time. Here are some of them:

Ysaye—Violinist Maestro.

Godowsky—Piano Technician Amazing.

Elman—Virtuoso of the Sob and Glory Fiddle.

—, Baritone of Expression.

Percy Grainger—Australian Tone Poet.

I have not heard the rest mentioned except that one of the lot includes a pair of well-known brothers Canadian, the Hollinsheads, in a recital of monologue, caricature and song. The other six, however, are in the same class—if any musicians are ever in the same class.

And this is remarkable!

A few years ago a Toronto critic, commenting on a great performance of the Mendelssohn Choir and the Chicago Symphony, in Massey Hall, said:

"And just to think—that a hundred years ago Indians camped on the site of Massey Hall!"

Which, of course, they did no such thing; not within a hundred years. But consider it, all ye Easterners who think you are in such a giddy maze of evolution. Thirty years ago Crees did bang the tomtom on the site of the Edmonton music hall; and the Sarcees with the Piegiens wailed the thirst dance within a block of the Calgary opera house; and in all the other places mentioned the tunk of the tomtom is still a matter of yesterday. Almost any day of a big carnival Crees or Blackfoots may go careening along the main street of almost any of these towns, toggled in the glory of war.

Now, the object of any rude remarks on this subject is to show that the Ysaye-Godowsky-Elman-

Grainger crowd, in all their \$1,000-a-night virtuosity, have some real musical going to achieve before they can equal the recent strenuities of our Indian friends in those neighbourhoods. There is, be it not forgotten, an everuating continuity of music as the Hambourg cartoon expressed it. Herbert Spencer—wise English philosopher—said, not many years ago, that the emotional content of a great song in its effect on the performer could be traced back to the tail-wagging of Carlo the dog. That's an emotional contract to unravel. But it illustrates—extremely. Ysaye's performance of the great Beethoven Concerto, Op. X, No. Y, will have to get up on its hind legs of ecstasy and power to equal the grand ensemble of the Indian tomtoms at the thirst dance. Grainger will have to tone-poetize himself into a blind rhapsody of glory on the piano to convey anything like the folk-song tragedy of that dance of the red man. Godowsky, prize-winner of cold and chaste technic, never can outdo the unfaltering precision of those tomtoms reverberating by day and by night for six times 24 hours, never once varying the tempo in all that time. Oh, ye Westerners, remember these! And neither the Hollinshead brothers nor Mr. Baritone of Expression will ever surpass the grandiloquent wail of the Ah—ah—ah! droned down the noses to that skintom accompaniment and taken up every little while by the congregation of squaws sitting on the place where the grass used to be, with the gift pole in the centre and the dancers in the lodge decorated all manner of ways, never once eating or drinking in all that 144 hours.

It can be confidently maintained that the \$1,000-a-night syndicate of talent travelling in Pullmans and putting up at the de-luxe hotels could not, even if they should all appear and perform ensemble in one paralyzing programme, out-do the big annual May festival of the red man.

Music? The West was full of it before Ysaye was born. It was a form of perfect art. I don't know but it was better art, because it was more spontaneous than some of the stuff the moderns put over in swallow-tails and white bosoms. As for regalia and rigouts, the red man decidedly had it. There, indeed, you had the glory of clothes—or the absence of them. No décollete dame from Riverside Row driving down in her limousine ever eclipses the

About the way one of the Godowsky-Ysaye crowd might feel performing on a tomtom.



damsel of the dance. No rouge of a society lady ever came up to the vermilion of Chief Dead-Man's Eyes. No limousine ever rolled to a concert with half the glory of a caravan of carts honking away from the camp lines to the grand campus of the big dance in the moon of leaves.

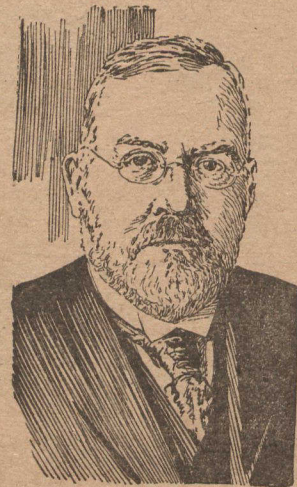
No, the odds are all in favour of the music that was in the West. We mean no disparagement of the 1917-18 phalanx when we say this. The West does not need to take off its hat to the moderns for good and great music. And we feel sure that if Ysaye

could only be in the West when the great thirst dance is on, he would get as many thrills from that as any of his audiences get from his playing of the biggest concerto in the world.

Personal Power Plant

One of Supreme Chief Ranger Hunter's hobbies for 25 years has been the humanizing of insurance statistics

A NY man who can infuse interest into a thesis on actuarial science or arouse enthusiasm over a recital of insurance statistics is, according to the average man's conception of these things, a wonder worker of the first order. Most men would say such things cannot be done,



and yet William Howard Hunter, B.A., the newly-elected Supreme Chief Ranger of the I. O. F., has been accomplishing just such feats for the last quarter of a century. It would be difficult for a mere outsider to determine the exact quality of the quickening force which "W. H.," as they call him in the big building which stands almost opposite Toronto's city hall, took with him when he first ventured into the valley of dry bones which, to most of

us, represents insurance affairs. But even a glimpse of the big, burly man as he pads about the passages of the big building, charging the heads of the many departments with his own particular kind of driving force, inspires the idea that it must be a personal quality.

He is one of the very few dynamo types. There is nothing about him to suggest a steam-engine—no fuss, no hot air—and he wasn't built to be side-tracked. He is just what he needs to be—a personal power plant capable of creating the high voltage of energy necessary to drive the machinery of the great international institution at the head of which he has been installed. And, which is more, he knows how to direct that energy. He mastered the mysteries of insurance affairs many years ago and for over two score years has been recognized as a leading authority in Insurance and Commercial Law. His familiarity with actuarial science came to him as a natural heritage from his father—the late John Howard Hunter, K.C., who was the Provincial Inspector of Insurance and prime minister of insurance reforms. He is an honours graduate of the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall, and for the last twenty-five years has been one of the most prominent members of the Toronto bar. He became a member of the Supreme Court of the Independent Order of Foresters in 1898 and for the past ten years has been the supreme counsellor.

And now he has taken up the mantle shed by the great Oronhyatekha which was worn for a while by Elliott G. Stevenson, and in the words of one of his intimate associates: "He brings to the responsible and arduous duties of his office, high ability, wide experience and a devotion to the principles of fraternity for which the order stands. It is the expectation of his brothers that no desire of ease or fame; no fear of criticism or opposition will swerve him a hair's breadth from his aim to make the great society, that has honoured him with the highest office in their gift, a yet more efficient agency for good."

Mrs. Green (whose husband has given her a black eye) to District Visitor—"Well, miss, matters might be a sight worse; I might be like you, and 'ave no 'usband at all."

Lecturer—"Of course, you all know what the inside of a corpuscle is like?"

Chairman of meeting—"Most of us do, but ye had better explain it for the benefit of them as have never seen inside one."