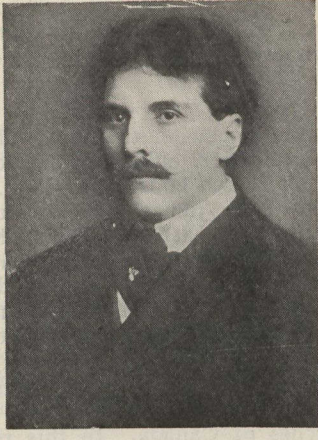




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PLAYERS
ON THE
VIOLIN FROM
MANY
LANDS BUT
ALL
CANADIANS

The Development of String Music

By LEO SMITH

THE importance of string music in the history of all civilizations—though perhaps not of the magnitude of the chant—is nevertheless of great moment to all who favour that form of musical art. For we find evidence, in the innumerable treatises written on the subject by the Chinese, that the string instruments were both numerous and important, while the wonderful invention and skill displayed by the Hindu in the making of his "Vina"—an instrument showing remarkable insight into the use of the sounding board—and the "Sarindas" or "Sarungis," with their sympathetic strings, proclaim the fact that the music of the string instrument was of great moment and significance in the history of his life. The wonderfully preserved delineations on the monuments and buildings of the Egyptians show us that the string instrument was favoured above all others. It is also of great interest to note that the depiction of groups of performers, evidently acting in concert, has been found, suggesting that ensemble music was practised and performed as a courtly luxury or social diversion. The Greeks, with their sculptured monuments and popular legends, have handed down to us many stories of the magic to which they ascribed the power of their favourite string instrument, "The Lyre." Orpheus, with his Lyre, "stayed the rocks of the Symplegades which threatened to break up the ship Argo; at the sounds from his instrument the guardian of the Golden Fleece became harmless; even Hell itself was moved, and delivered Eurydice." A great French scientist, in fact, has likened the musician of ancient history to the expert, "whom the individual or the social group called in on occasions of difficulty." A mere cursory glance, therefore, would tend to show with what significance the ancients regarded, not only the power of the singer and the chant, but also the skilled performer on his instrument.

Turning to early mediaeval music we find, among the northern peoples, the bards, whose minstrelsy probably always involved the use of instruments. Of these the harp was the most popular, but the crwth was another striking example which was much used. According to musical historians this habit of song with instrumental accompaniment was common to all classes and was of considerable social importance.

String music, therefore, has played its part in history at all times, and the efforts of the modern day musician to further and cultivate a general liking for this branch of the art, must, in the light of precedence, be open to the greatest encouragement. The path, however, as most of us are aware, is not an easy one to tread. For chamber music—the medium in which the string player is most fitted to display the beauty of his art—as typified from the time of Haydn until that of yesterday, is essentially of the classical school. The quartettes of Beethoven, perhaps more than any other music, exemplify Schopenhauer's saying: "We seem to see all the feelings reduced to their pure state." To the Anglo-Saxon mind, more prone to tack on a libretto to his music—usually in the shape of oratorio—this pure untranslatable thought has rarely appeared to be indigenous or to take root very firmly in the people's

affection. Consequently it is that one must look to foreign sources for the wonderful literature which permeates the life of the ensemble player of to-day. Nevertheless there have been signs of a glowing appreciation of the value of this both in England and her sister states. Towards the end of the last century the efforts of Joseph Joachim at the Monday Popular Concerts did more than anything else to popularize this "highest branch of the art." In the north of England the appearances of the Brodsky and the Schiever quartettes have exercised an increasing interest along the same lines. In Canada the increased interest in the string and instrumental player has been the outstanding feature in musical development of the last five years. Pre-eminently responsible for this are, of course, the artists—many of wide reputation—whose photos appear in this issue of the CANADIAN COURIER. In conclusion, we may note that Montreal, helped perhaps by a French population, with a taste a priori for strings, has its own quartette and chamber concerts. Toronto, likewise, has had splendid series of orchestral and chamber music concerts, and it may be that future activities in this city will result in placing this great branch of the art on a par with the position it holds in the great continental cities of Europe.

Four Violin Sketches

LUIGI VON KUNITZ, born in Vienna, studied under Johann Karl and J. M. Gruen; in Prague, Bohemia, with Sevcik; leader of string quartette of the Tonkuenstler Verein when Brahms was president; concertmaster Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, under Emil Paur, and head of a school of expression in Pittsburgh; afterwards principal of the violin staff in the Vienna Conservatory; now head of string music work in the Columbian Conservatory, Toronto.

Frank E. Blachford, born in Toronto, studied both violin and piano at the Conservatory; afterwards violin under Hans Fitt in Leipzig. Returning to Canada he became chief of string faculty in the Conservatory, organized the Toronto String Quartette and became concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Alfred de Seve, French-Canadian, born in Montreal; at a very early age studied in Europe under Sarasate, Mossart and Vieuxtemps; afterwards in Boston for nineteen years member of Boston Symphony, leader of Philharmonic Club, concertmaster Philharmonic Orchestra, professor of violin, New England Conservatory; now in Montreal.

Jan Hambourg, born in Russia, went with his father to London; studied violin Belgian School, under Ysaye and also under Fritz Kreisler; gave a series of historic violin recitals in London and Europe; in 1910 came to Canada; a year ago became chief of violin department in the newly-organized Hambourg Conservatory.



Mr. Camille Couture, Solo Violinist, Winnipeg.



Roland Roberts, Toronto String Quartette.



Saul Brant, Conservatorium of Music, Montreal.



Alfred Bruce, Violin Department, Columbian Conservatory.



Mrs. Dreschler Adamson, 1st Violin, Toronto Symphony.



Miss Nora Hayes, Concert Violinist and Teacher of Violin.



Miss Lina Adamson, Toronto Conservatory of Music.



Miss Lena Hayes, Teacher of Violin.