

MUSICAL GIANTS OF THE PRESENT DAY

Italy Leads With Three, Leoncavallo, Puccini and Mascagni. Their Early Struggles and Subsequent Fame



MASCAGNI, PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN ITALY LATE LAST YEAR

BY DEXTER MARSHALL.
With Edward Grieg, the Norwegian, dead, in 1907, and Edward Alexander McDowell, the American, dead, less than a month ago, the world can boast of very few really great living composers. Of these, Richard Strauss is so old that he has quit writing music, and Dudley Buck, the American, practically went into retirement a few years ago when he retired as organist of Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, where he had been musically supreme for upward of a quarter of a century.

Italy, with her trio, Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Puccini, easily leads the list of the nations in living composers of international fame. Then there is Richard Strauss, of "Salome" fame or notoriety, just as you care to look at it. In these men we undoubtedly have the six most famous living composers. Among those of lesser fame, but more or less widely known, are Reginald De Koven, George W. Chadwick and Edgar Stillman Kelly. Americans all, the last named being located in Berlin, where he is looked upon as a celebrity. Italy's three all had the traditional hard time of it before their fame smiled on them and led them to walk along the paths of Easy street. All are under 40. Mascagni is the youngest, being only 32. Each of his country patriots is seven years older. Puccini is the only one who comes of a musical family; there were four generations of musical Puccinis in a line before him. All three, however, early in boyhood displayed a strong liking for music, and each has done nothing much in this world but dream music, play music and write music.

Leoncavallo's Egyptian Adventure.

Ruggiero Leoncavallo did dream once of a military career, but the appearance of English rifles speedily dissipated the dream and in so doing probably saved the Neapolitan the world of music. Leoncavallo at this time was in Egypt, whither he had gone as a boy to live with his uncle, who was director of the press in the Foreign Office. Through his uncle he got the position of piano player to the court of Mahmoud Hamdy. That swartly son of the Nile fell so much in love with the Italian's melodies that he promised him a regimental appointment and a big salary at the proper time.

But before Mahmoud could get around to the brass button business there was an uprising against the English. Mahmoud cast in his lot with the instigators of the trouble. The British are still in Egypt—Leoncavallo had to flee in disguise. He made his way to Port Said, and at the first opportunity took boat for foreign soil. He landed eventually in France. But before he could get aboard ship—he was penniless when he reached Port Said—he had to raise the necessary passage money by giving a concert. All the time he was playing he was in mortal terror lest some Tommy AT-

kins should swagger in and arrest him. The concert netted him between 300 and 600 francs.

About the time that Leoncavallo reached Paris he made the discovery that he was again flat as to pocket-book. The first work that offered itself was seized quickly and so Leoncavallo became an accompanist at a cafe. In the course of time he filled similar positions in other cafes. Then he began to teach singing, and a little later, to work up artists in their repertoire.

In the midst of his struggle to make a living by doing such odd musical jobs he wrote a poem called "Medici." Fortunately for his future, he got an opportunity to read his lines to Mascagni, who advised him to go to Milan and read them to Ricordi. That is how Leoncavallo came to pawn the fortune of his flat—that he might have enough money to get to Milan and before M. Ricordi, who commissioned the cafe player to write music for the poem, the pay to be 400 francs a month for 12 months. This meant that the work must be done in a year, and it was. Then Leoncavallo, anxiously awaited the initial production of his great effort. He waited in vain for three years.

Meantime he took up teaching again in order to keep from starving. Meantime, too, Mascagni sprang into instant popular favor with his "Cavalleria Rusticana." As Mascagni's fame increased Leoncavallo got bluer and bluer. Then one day he decided not to wait any longer for the production of "Medici," but to cut loose from Ricordi and try to write something that would make him famous also. That was how he came to compose "Pagliacci" in five months. On May 17, 1892, it was produced for the first time, and the next morning the name of Leoncavallo was being coupled with that of Mascagni. Leoncavallo was 24 when Italy learned of his existence. Mascagni was 25.

Composer of "Madama Butterfly."

Giacomo Puccini, composer of three popular operas, "La Boheme," "La Tosca" and "Madama Butterfly," got his musical education at the Conservatoire of Milan, and incidentally while there lived the life of a true Bohemian, because the War Lord had dared to select an Italian instead of a German to write a pet opera for him. Outside of Berlin, Leoncavallo and his works are pretty highly thought of the musical world over.

During the three years that he was a Conservatoire student his food consisted largely of coffee, milk and bread. He, his brother Michael and a friend all lived together in a top-floor hall



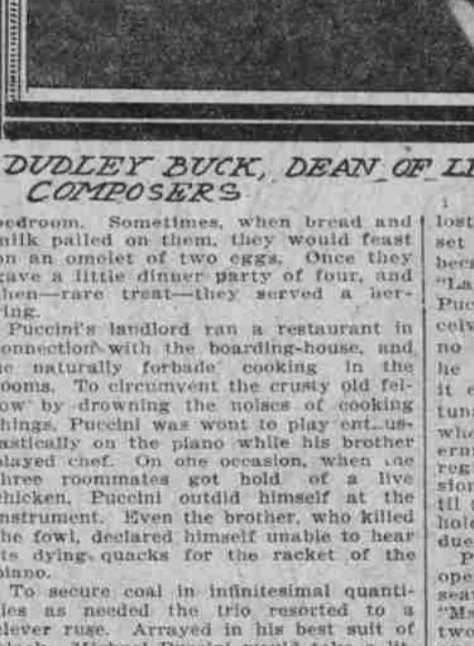
LEONCAVALLO, WHO WROTE THE KAISER'S PET OPERA



PUCCHINI, WHO WROTE "LA BOHEME"



MASCAGNI, PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN ITALY LATE LAST YEAR



DUDLEY BUCK, DEAN OF LIVING AMERICAN COMPOSERS

bedroom. Sometimes, when bread and milk palled on them, they would feast on an omelet of two eggs. Once they gave a little dinner party of four, and on rare treat—they served a herring. Puccini's landlord ran a restaurant in connection with the boarding-house, and he naturally forbade cooking in the rooms. To circumvent the crusty old fellow by drowning the noises of cooking things Puccini was wont to play out-of-doors on the piano while his brother played chess. On one occasion, when one of three roommates got hold of a live chicken, Puccini outdid himself at the instrument. Even the brother, who killed the fowl, declared himself unable to bear its dying quacks for the racket of the piano. To secure coal in infinitesimal quantities as needed the trio resorted to a clever ruse. Arrived in his best suit of black, Michael Puccini would take a little black traveling bag in his hand and he would be away as for a trip by his fellow conspirators. At night, when all the house slept, Michael would softly steal back to the little top-floor room with the black handbag full of coal. Michael, poor fellow, went to South America to seek his fortune and died there of yellow fever, just when Giacomo was coming into his own. Many of the incidents of his life as a conservatoire student Puccini has woven into "La Boheme."



REGINALD DE KOVEN, AN AMERICAN COMPOSER WIDELY KNOWN THRO' HIS LIGHT OPERA



CAMILLE SAINT SAENS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO THIS COUNTRY

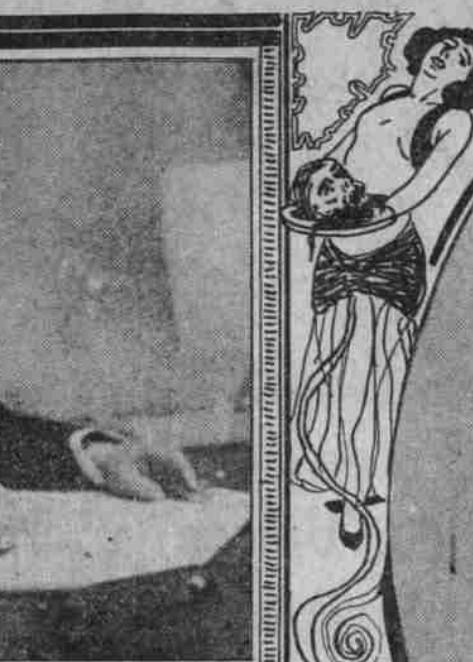


RICHARD STRAUSS COMPOSER OF "SALOME"



THE LATE EDWARD ALEXANDER MAC DOWELL

lost, but nothing discouraged, they set to work on another opera, which became Puccini's first sustained effort, "La Villi." For the time and labor Puccini put in on the score he received the munificent sum of \$80, and no sooner was it handed to him than he was compelled to part with all of it except a few dollars to his importunate landlord. This same landlord, when Puccini was studying on a Government pension, used to take the registered letters containing the pension installments to Puccini, until the latter opened the mail, and then hold out his hand for the board money due. Puccini has made so much out of his opera that he now has three country seats, a motorboat, bearing the name "Madama Butterfly," an automobile or two, and other luxuries of the rich. One evening while he, his wife and son, now 10 years old, were out for a spin in their auto, the chauffeur drove it over a 30-foot embankment, and Puccini's leg was fractured. Eight months passed before the leg healed sufficiently to permit its owner to go to Paris for special treatment. It was while he was convalescing that he wrote the greater part of "Madama Butterfly."



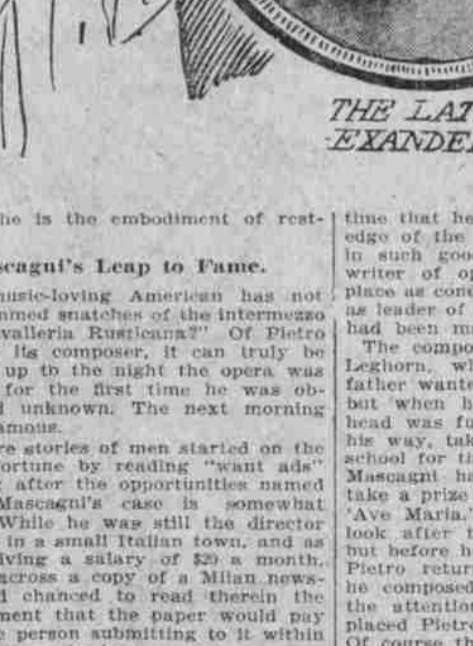
THE LATE EDWARD ALEXANDER MAC DOWELL



RICHARD STRAUSS COMPOSER OF "SALOME"



CAMILLE SAINT SAENS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO THIS COUNTRY



DUDLEY BUCK, DEAN OF LIVING AMERICAN COMPOSERS

What must-loving Americans have not heard hummed snatches of the intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana?" Of Pietro Mascagni, its composer, it can truly be said that up to the night the opera was produced for the first time he was obscure and unknown. The next morning he came across a copy of a Milan newspaper and chanced to read therein the announcement that the paper would pay \$20 to the person submitting to it within a certain time the best one-act opera. All the while he had been leading the band Mascagni had been studying music and composing. Thoughts of having \$20 all his own fired him to enter the contest, especially as he was then having a harder time of it financially than ever before; and he had been shy of money from his youth up. He succeeded in getting two friends to adapt a novel for the libretto and in the eight months that ensued he wrote "Cavalleria Rusticana." His joy when he received word that he had won the prize can easily be imagined. Mascagni traveled down to Rome to be present at the opera's production. The public, the critics, everybody, went wild over it. Mascagni was hailed as a genius. His managers rushed to congratulate him. "Thank God," he exclaimed fervently, as they poured out their words of praise, "now I shall be able to buy my wife a new dress!" As soon as he could break away to a telegraph office he sent her this message: "Come, bring the children, that I may know I am the same man."



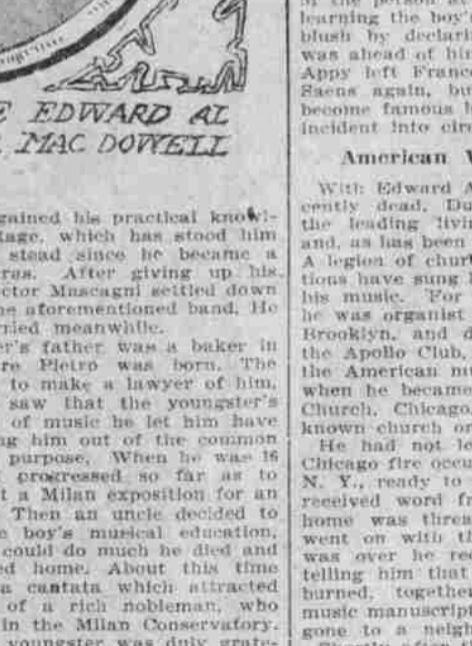
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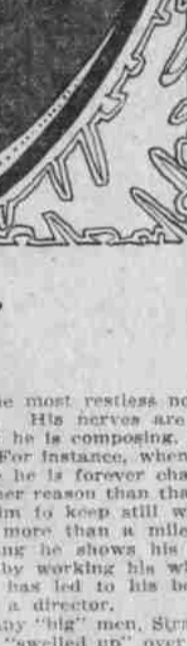


THE LATE EDWARD ALEXANDER MAC DOWELL

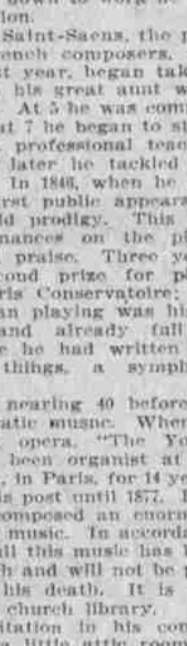
at work he is the embodiment of restlessness. Mascagni's leap to fame. What must-loving Americans have not heard hummed snatches of the intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana?" Of Pietro Mascagni, its composer, it can truly be said that up to the night the opera was produced for the first time he was obscure and unknown. The next morning he came across a copy of a Milan newspaper and chanced to read therein the announcement that the paper would pay \$20 to the person submitting to it within a certain time the best one-act opera. All the while he had been leading the band Mascagni had been studying music and composing. Thoughts of having \$20 all his own fired him to enter the contest, especially as he was then having a harder time of it financially than ever before; and he had been shy of money from his youth up. He succeeded in getting two friends to adapt a novel for the libretto and in the eight months that ensued he wrote "Cavalleria Rusticana." His joy when he received word that he had won the prize can easily be imagined. Mascagni traveled down to Rome to be present at the opera's production. The public, the critics, everybody, went wild over it. Mascagni was hailed as a genius. His managers rushed to congratulate him. "Thank God," he exclaimed fervently, as they poured out their words of praise, "now I shall be able to buy my wife a new dress!" As soon as he could break away to a telegraph office he sent her this message: "Come, bring the children, that I may know I am the same man."



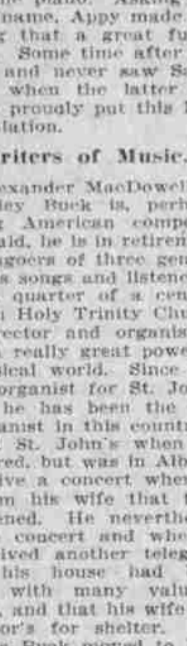
RICHARD STRAUSS COMPOSER OF "SALOME"



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He probably is the most restless noted composer of today. His nerves are on edge not only when he is composing, but at all times else. For instance, when he is in an automobile he is forever changing seats, for no other reason than that it is impossible for him to keep still while the machine spins more than a mile or two. While directing he is shown his picture nervously by working his whole body. This habit has led to his being called eccentric as a director. Unlike a great many "big" men, Strauss has not been a bit "swelled up" over his success. He is as simple and unaffected as a child; fond of his home; a lover of the outdoors, to which he escapes at every opportunity; an ardent, athletic and expert skat player. Like Puccini, he does most of his composing at night, and once he has settled down to work he will not brook interruption. Charles Camille Saint-Saens, the premier of living French composers, and who visited us last year, began taking piano lessons from Strauss when he was 3 years old. At 5 he was composing little waltzes; at 7 he began to study the piano under a professional teacher, and subsequent performances showed his organ in addition. In 1846, when he was 11, he made his first public appearance in Paris as a child prodigy. This and subsequent performances won him such a reputation that he was invited to give a concert when he was 14 years old. He was 16 and already full of honors. Meanwhile he had written numerous difficult things, a symphony among them. Saint-Saens was nearing 40 before he composed any operatic music. When he composed his first opera, "The Young Princess," he had been organist at the church of St. Mary, in Paris, for 14 years. He remained at this post until 1877. During this time he composed an enormous quantity of church music in accordance with his contract all this music has been left with the church and will not be published until after his death. It is now inaccessible in the church library. Strauss' habitation in his conservatoire days was a little little room almost as barren of furniture as the Salizeta in trees. One day, as the boy was musing, he heard a noise and when he heard and was so charmed with the melody of the notes that he climbed up several flights of stairs to get a sight of the piano. He saw a man and when he learned the boy's name, Appy made him blush by declaring that a great future was ahead of him. Some time after this Appy left France and never saw Strauss again, but when the latter had become famous he proudly put this little incident into circulation. American Writers of Music. With Edward Alexander MacDowell recently dead, Dudley Buck is, perhaps, the leading living American writer of music. As has been said, he is in retirement. A legion of churchgoers of three generations have sung his songs and listened to his music. For a number of years he was organist in Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, and director and organist of the Apollo Club, a really great power in the American musical world. Since 1887, when he became organist for St. John's Church, Chicago, he has been the best known church organist in this country. He had not left St. John's when the Chicago fire occurred, but in Albany, N. Y., ready to give a concert when he received word from his wife that their home was threatened. He nevertheless went on with his concert and when he was over he received another telegram telling him that his house had been burned, together with many valuable musical manuscripts, and that his wife had gone to a neighbor's for shelter. Shortly after this Buck moved to Boston, where he became organist in St. Paul's Church. It was here that he met Theodore Thomas, who persuaded him to go to New York as assistant conductor of the Thomas concert. This was in 1878. That year Buck became an organist in Brooklyn and from then on until his retirement his work was solely in what is now Greater New York. After Buck, Reginald De Koven is, perhaps, the most widely-known American composer; what theatergoer has not listened time without end to DeKoven's comic opera and orchestral music? The son of an Episcopal clergyman, it is interesting to note that DeKoven turned to the stage for his career. As a member of New York's "49" he is as successful as he is as a writer of light operatic music. Forty-six years of age, he is a Yankee by birth, Connecticut giving both him and Buck to the musical world. He got his college and conservatoire education in England and Germany respectively. MacDowell, who died in January, like Buck, took to music as a boy, and unless watched would neglect his piano practice and compose instead. Unlike Buck he made his musical reputation abroad, where, in company with his mother, he went to study. When he returned to this country, in 1858, after an absence of 12 years, he found that his fame had preceded him home. From then on till the day of his death he was called by the critical America's best composer. He was 46 when he died, and he passed away with his mind like that of a child's, a sad occurrence due to overwork. (Copyright, 1908, by Dexter Marshall.)