

BEGINS WITH THE GREATEST OF MASTERS

Francis Richter of Portland Now a Pupil Under the Guidance of Leschetizky

In One Year He is Expected to Develop Into An Artist by His Own Right

Much Aid Comes by His Mastering the Braille System for the Blind



FRANCIS RICHTER ON HIS TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY, FEB. 15 1908



OSCAR STRAUSS, THE COMPOSER OF THE "WALTZ DREAM" WITH THE THREE LEADING PEOPLE



ARTHUR GUTTMAN, IN THE CHORUS "PICCOLO, PICCOLO"



BUSONI, WHO NOW FILLS SAUER'S PLACE AS TEACHER OF THE PIANO IN THE VIENNA CONSERVATORY

BY ALMA A. ROGERS. ANOTHER milestone in the musical career of Francis Richter has been successfully passed. His first lesson with Professor Theodor Leschetizky took place January 6, to the great satisfaction of all concerned. Mr. Richter, who has spent several months in acquiring the technique of the new method, was prepared some six weeks previously, but owing first to the absence and illness of the master, and later to the illness of his voracious, the lesson had to be postponed.

Considerable anxiety was felt by his friends regarding what was practically an examination not only in the Leschetizky method but in general musicianship, for upon its outcome depended his acceptance or rejection as a pupil of the master. Furthermore, the Herr Professor has never had a blind pupil, and had expressed himself as diffident at his age, with his many pupils, about undertaking the change of teaching necessarily involved.

These various considerations made us realize that merit alone could carry Mr. Richter through. That he not only proved himself equal to the test, but covered himself with honors as well, proclaims once again the genius which the master now liketh to recognize. It also evidences the splendid work done by Fraulein Prentner, whom Mr. Richter regards as one of the greatest teachers in the world, and I have no doubt like to. Mr. Richter has also had the assistance of her best pupil, a young Russian, Beno Moss, who comes for an hour daily to drill him in the notes and fingering and various other details which require a student of the method. Mr. Moss is expected to rank with the greatest in a few years, and a very pleasant friendship has sprung from between these two gifted young men.

Happiest Moment of His Life.

To go back to the lesson: I was not permitted to enter the music-room, as the master does not like strangers to be present, and spent the hour and more of waiting in the same anteroom lined with the photographs of famous people, where we waited so long on that July day last year for a first interview. But the delighted countenance of Fraulein Prentner when she and her pupil entered told the result before words. As to Francis Richter, doubt if he was ever so happy in his life as at that moment.

The lesson consisted of numbers one and thirty from Czerny's Art of Fingering, the second movement of Beethoven's Pastorale Sonata, and the Scherzo in E Minor of Mendelssohn. The master elucidated points by comment on the artistic principles involved, and illustrated his meaning by playing certain passages in the manner he wished them rendered, the pupil repeating after him.

Learning Braille System for Blind.

Francis Richter has accomplished another advance since coming to Vienna, which in some respects is perhaps the most important thing he has done. He has taken up the study of Braille, the language system for the blind, both in reading and in musical notation. The effect of the latter art will be to make him independent in his study of music. For with the compositions of the masters transcribed in Braille, he can sit at his piano and read by finger touch almost as readily as if he had sight. In a sense, therefore, the Braille has given him eyes, and has truly opened a new world to him. His joy in being able thus to express himself without dependence on a second person has been very great. He had already begun a sketchbook in which he writes down in the Braille the musical ideas that occur to him, which at some

future day will appear as motifs in his opera. When we called on Herr Labor last Summer to make arrangements for Mr. Richter's lessons in composition, he immediately said that the young man must take up the Braille, and sent him home with a slate, a stylus and the alphabet printed on a piece of paper. It was hard work at first, and slow. To train the sense of touch to distinguish the direction of lines and angles composed of punctures like a pin point, required much patience and persistence on the part of the pupil. Discouragement came, of course, but it has long since passed. Mr. Richter now has considerable facility in both the reading and writing of the musical notation. Not so much attention has been given to the language, the musical notation being the more essential at this time. For many weeks past his teacher has given him as part of his regular lessons in harmony from 12 to 15 examples to be read and worked out in the Braille. There is very fine instruction for the blind here. Mr. Richter called, and was most kindly received by the superintendent, who gladdened his heart by granting permission to play on the organ in the concert cases. When the present of other studies cut short his time, the organ had to be given up, but only temporarily.

The Bitter With the Sweet.

To reach the point where Francis Richter now stands has required not a little sacrifice on his part. Until the peculiar technique of the Leschetizky method was fairly well acquired, he was under strict orders not to play anything but the given exercises. This is a necessary discipline to which all students of the method have to submit. But in the case of the blind boy, the interdiction was particularly severe, cutting off as it did his one avenue of expression. To spend hours, weeks, indeed months on monotonous exercises calculated to make the fingers stand up when one's mind is full of musical pictures which are pressing for expression into melody, requires self-restraint, it evokes sometimes in nervous harassment that made the rule better honored in the breach than in the observance. But on the whole he kept to the discipline very well.

The bitter must come with the sweet, and Francis Richter has found it so even in the midst of his great opportunities. But all these things that were so hard and new and strange at first happily belong in the past. The next six months will undoubtedly mark a great progress in his art.

Having now the technique, there remain the fine points to be perfected—nuances, pedaling, the legato non-legato, and all the rest of the factors in artistic expression. When this is brought to a finish, Francis Richter will be ready to go before the world, not as a blind prodigy, but as an artist who ranks with the greatest of his generation. His teachers say it can be done in another year of study. It so chanced that Gabriellotti, who as a pupil of Leschetizky, was making a farrowed call on his friend and teacher and was present at Mr. Richter's lesson. By the way, he gave a concert during his visit to Vienna. The attendance was very small and criticism not very favorable. Godowsky, Rosenthal, Sauer and other piano giants familiar to the American public have also played here this Winter. Hubertmann, a young virtuoso of the violin and rival of Kubelik, so well known in America, appeared to a rapturous enthusiastic house a short time ago. This week Ysaye gives a concert. The Schubertbund, with 60 men singers, sang Strauss' waltz songs to an im-

mense audience last week. The proceeds are to be devoted to a fund for another denigral to Strauss. He has one already which is one of the most beautiful monuments of Vienna's public art. I refer to the statue in the Rathaus gardens. Strauss and Lanner, another favorite composer of waltzes, stand in life size before a marble colonnade on which are carved in low relief the whirling figure of men and women waltzing. The lines of the sculptures are exquisitely beautiful, and cut with a grace and delicacy which portray the literal poetry of motion. The rhythm of the Strauss waltzes is characteristic of music here of the lighter sort. Everywhere you turn you are agitated & Strauss; he is literally embodied in Viennese music. The operetta of today, such as the "Waltz Dream," a popular favorite, abounds in the rhapsody that sets the feet of the Viennese into the seductive measures of the waltz. Speaking of the "Waltz Dream" recalls an absurdity. The composer, who is a son of Strauss, has written a parody on his own production. It is entitled a "Polka Dream" and is a rather clever musical caricature. It is high in popularity, it means with the audiences that pack the variety theaters. At one of these, the Coliseum, the "Polka Dream" was being running for weeks. Arthur Guttman, an excellent comedian, dressed in waltzer's evening clothes, who made the greater part of the performance. One clever touch that set everybody laughing was the introduction in the catchy chorus beginning "Piccolo, piccolo" (In the "Waltz Dream" the word refers to a flute; it also means a little waltzer) of a dozen tiny boys, the last not much more than a baby, all dressed in waltzer's evening clothes, who march across the stage, each holding to the coast of the piccolo in front, and singing with all their might. The music of "The Merry Widow," an operetta which is now known in both hemispheres, has the true Viennese swing. It has made its composer, who is of this city, famous. A concert of unusual interest because of the reputation of the artist was given last week by Busoni, an Italian,

who now fills Sauer's place as professor of piano in the Conservatory. Just look at this picture and you will know how he plays. For he plays just as he looks—a big, powerful man, with muscles trained to astonishing technic, but lacking in sentiment and really fine feeling. He makes a vast amount of noise and won't stop in return from his admiring auditors, who shouted themselves hoarse with bravo, and called him back again and again. For my part I had rather heard Sauer play once than Busoni a hundred times. Music-lovers of Portland may remember the little prelude of Chopin which Rosenthal played so perfectly. Busoni rendered this in a quick, tripping time that almost turned it into dance music, and entirely robbed it of its exquisite grace and charm. He is a pupil of Liszt. The general public of Vienna seems to be captivated on technique. We have again and again been surprised at the public taste as evidenced by applause. In America we are brought up to think that the European has some mysterious and divine right to an intuitive understanding of music, and some of the other fine arts which the civilization of the Western world is too young or too crude to grasp. I came here with that notion. But it is passing. From what we have seen I am inclined to the opinion that the public taste of the Americans is quite as good as that of the Viennese. And it is a cleaner taste, too. I was told by a musician long resident in this city that the musical status is deteriorating, and that the present generation has not had opportunity to hear music equal to that to which their fathers and mothers listened. The lack of good voices in the imperial opera was tantamounting, and that is certainly well taken. I believe this is the phrase that American women use in their clubs. It is hard to believe here that such a condition exists. All that the Viennese ladies seem to have in the way of developing their minds is to put on their best clothes and a suppositively of jewelry and sit for hours drinking coffee in the coffee-houses watching who comes and goes and growing stout in the diversion.

Well, about the point. The opera singers are certainly not stars. If by chance one appears an American manager is sure to swoop down and transport that one to New York, as has happened to Fraulein Kurta, who is the bright particular star of the Hofoper. Next year she goes to the Metropolitan. The voice of Eric Schmedes, a favorite tenor, has been impaired by a bad method. However, his voice is big and his acting excellent, two points which carry him through. Slezak, who ranks as first tenor, is said to have a wonderful organ, but that also is at the disadvantage of a faulty training. The same criticism is passed on Anna von Mildenburg, who was one of the Brunnhildes in the holiday production of the Wagner Ring. Demuth, the big baritone, is very good, also Mayr, the basso. I sometimes wonder if it is but the glamour of a first happy impression or a really sound judgment that makes me so correctly believe there are no singers in the Vienna imperial opera equal to those of the Hofoper orchestra, which is a little city like unto a dream of peace and beauty. No, I am sure we have heard no voices here equal to the Werdickind and Karl Burriam. But you mustn't say these things in Vienna, where you are supposed to have the cream of the universe. We almost offended one musician by recklessly expressing an unfavorable comparison of the Hofoper orchestra with that of Dresden. But of all the music in Vienna, it is safe to say that the orchestral is the best. It comes so close to perfection that it is enough. The criticisms which have been made on the vocal methods of the opera singers remind me that there is one person in Vienna who really knows how to train the voice. There may be more. I do not know. There are plenty of teachers with reputation. But I personally know of but one, and that is Frau Giampietro, who is herself a finished artist. She has the true Lilli Dehmann and Jean de Reszke method, which not only develops the finest qualities of voice, but preserves it remarkably in age. I happen to know several American students, and know she has done with them, and also to work her person-

ally through her interest in Francis Richter. Mr. Richter was invited to Frau Giampietro's beautiful home last week, and played before a company of her friends. She is giving a series of recitals, at which the young pianist will also play. It

Grandmothers Now in Fashion

They Are the Social Leaders of Today's High Society.

GRANDMOTHERS are fashionable. It is fashionable to be a grandmother. Society concedes these facts, and, in truth, bows down on message before the modern grandmother, who is synonymous with the social leader of today. She is not the grandmother of old time, the grandmother of the year 1868, but if the truth be told she has many fine traits in common with that individual of history with whose name are associated snowy puffs of hair, a folded kerchief around the neck, a marvelous cap of finest texture, which must needs always be carried by a faithful maid in any such insignia of rank to mark her as being noteworthy. She stands supreme as the leading lady of the time, as well as the social leader and the woman of affairs—indeed, in truth, she who must be obeyed. In New York society today there are many members of the most prominent families who are grandmothers and yet who look scarcely older than the debutantes, and this not through any artificial aids to beauty, but simply through being themselves. They may be larger and their figures built on more generous lines, although many of them are extremely slender, but it is their appearance of perfect health and beauty which marks them as notable examples of the best type of our American aristocracy. The grandmother of 50 years ago may have been vigorous and alert mentally and physically, but it was the fashion of those days to relegate her to the back seat. In these days there is no grandmother of importance whom anyone would for a moment imagine relegated to that position. She would be so obviously out of place that the mere idea would seem an absurdity. No, a front place in the front rank is where she belongs, a place accorded to her by universal consent of her own contemporaries, as well as of those of their next generation. In truth the next generation must needs take the back seat in preference, and to their credit be it said they make no demur thereat, but accept it as proper and fitting. It is so fashionable to have a grandmother, one who can be called upon in emergencies, polished out as really being one, that the position must of necessity be pleasing. It would seem as though the grandmother of today, realizing that point, took special pains to always look her best, to be always well groomed, and to also always be thoroughly at ease. It is the poise, the assurance and the charm of the true woman of the world, who has attained, who knows full well what life means, but who through life has gained life's knowledge and with it sympathy and breadth of thought that come only from association with the best and from experience of the best. The charm of a social leader is indescribable. She is born, not made, and the palm of leadership is accorded to her by common consent in any and every walk of life. But the grandmother who at the same time is the social leader has attained a

is a very good opportunity for him to meet some of Vienna's musical people of rank. Patronage seems to be almost as necessary here today as it was in Beethoven's time. Since everybody in Portland knows Francis Richter and is more or less interested in his progress, perhaps it may be excused for writing open letters to his friends, as that is the only kind possible. I must tell them, then, that a few days after the Giampietro reception he gave a recital at our Wohnung, to about 20 guests whom a friend invited to hear him play. Here is the programme: Rondo capriccioso, G-major, Beethoven. Andante and variations, F-minor, Haydn. Paraphrase on the waltz "Southern Rose" Chopin. "Grand Polka" Chopin. "Berceuse" Chopin. "Woodland" sketches by McDowell. "A Night's Pasture" by The Waterbury. "Hungarian Rhapsody" Liszt. XIV "Hungarian Rhapsody" Liszt. A good story is being told of Hamburg, the pianist, also a pupil of Leschetizky. Recently he made a concert tour in Poland. While in the City of Warraw he was asked by the revolutionists and carried blindfolded into a cellar, where he was placed before a splendid piano and told to play. He did play, and never to a more appreciative audience. They gathered around him at the last and told him his next concert would be an unsurpassed success. When the day came the hall was packed with an elegant and fashionable audience, who had perhaps more presentable, of course the inference of the story is that it was the revolutionists themselves who formed his audience, this time not in disguise. Vienna, Feb. 5.

position in the world of society and fashion which is much to be desired. Her word is law; her presence is followed, she is given the respect due to age with the admiration due to youth, and even the love that falls to the lot of her daughter in so far as years are concerned. For some time it has been fashionable for parents to have their children, their children may not have taken the same interest in their parents, but that has mattered little, and to be the proud possessor of a grandchild has been a thing in fashionable society. It is an open question as to whether their paternal instinct is very strongly developed when the children are young, but as they grow older and are perhaps more presentable, the American father joins with the American mother in his interest in the welfare of their sons and daughters and in plans for their future. The grandmother apparently takes even more interest, especially if the children be good looking, and openly expresses her delight in them. It is said one reason is that she has been brought up by the care of them and consequently enjoys them more easily, but, at all events, she delights in talking about them, just as did the grandmother of olden time. Are girls and even marrying younger than they did a generation ago? Unquestionably they are, although this may apply more especially to what are ordinarily known as society people, in whose ranks within the last five or eight years have taken place more marriages of young men and young women than has been the case since two generations ago, when it was not unusual for young girls to marry before they were 15, the present grandmothers in many instances having been married when they were 15 or a little older. The modern grandmother, she who is prominent socially today, and her daughter each having married young, the former is of necessity not a very aged individual herself, and, of course, well fitted to enjoy all the pleasures of social life. She has been in society all her life and consequently it holds her novelities for her. She has fought and won honors in the social arena and consequently is well prepared for any emergency that may arise (even that of being a grandmother), so that it is not surprising that she can take her place at the head. At all social gatherings of importance the women who are the most prominent are invariably the grandmothers; rather a sweeping statement it may be thought, but when in the list are included such names as Mrs. Goetz, Mrs. Henry Clews, Mrs. Luther Kountze, Mrs. Lorillard Spencer, Mrs. Douglas Robinson, a sister of President Roosevelt; Mrs. Charles Oelrichs, Mrs. Charles S. Brown, whose pretty daughter is a debutante of this Winter and who so closely resembles her mother they are often taken for sisters; Mrs. Seward Webb and Mrs. William D. Sloane, it can readily be understood that the modern grandmother is of necessity socially prominent, and these are but a few of those who have attained the proud pre-eminence. One and all are proud in their presence of their grandchildren and laugh with the world at large that they can be called grandmothers.—New York Herald.