

WILL THERE EVER BE A REAL AMERICAN MUSIC?

David Mannes Answers the Question Along with Numerous Others Pertinent to the Progress of the Art in This Country—The Artistic Temperament, Public School Music and the European Fetish

By DAVID MANNES

QUESTION—Will there ever be a real American music not borrowed? Negro music is essentially African and Indian music seems limited.

ANSWER—When we shall have evolved an entirely new harmonic and rhythmic musical structure, expressive of our ideals and redolent of our native air and feeling, then only shall we have American music. Until now the musical edifice has been reared in Europe and tells in outline and substance that which only Europe can tell us. A great religious faith first inspired and brought forth this great beauty. America must voice some day in a great art-expression, a new and glorious submission to something greater than her wealth and natural resources. Until we are able as a nation to feel such humility of spirit, our advance may be material, but surely not spiritual.

QUESTION—Do you believe a man can be a great artist without knowing anything but his art? Or must wisdom, philosophy and possibly logic enter? Can the alchemy of art make a genius a gentleman?

ANSWER—To reach the depths and heights of expression in art, one should have the fullest understanding of life. To obtain this the moral and mental growth must be limitless, and the broader the scope of knowledge the more ready is the artist to grasp the full message of his art.

The true artist is a man of reverence for his art and for the great meaning of life, and he who has reverence for something bigger than himself is sure to be a gentleman in the best sense of the word. It is, of course, possible for a man to have great natural musical gifts, to astound the world with the mastery of his instrument, and yet be a boor. But the message he gives will never be a lasting one, nor compare in beauty and influence with the performance of a truly great soul.

The Artistic Temperament

QUESTION—Do you believe in toleration of the artistic temperament—the thing which makes some great musicians and actors violate the entire decalogue?

ANSWER—Let us first determine what is the "artistic temperament." An artist, be he painter, musician or actor, suffers,

after the intense inward strain of creating or interpretation, a nerve reaction, a depression of spirit, the natural result of exaltation. In this condition he



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is apt to be absent-minded, even unstable, and his feelings then should be respected and understood. The wise artist, when in this mood, will either shut himself away from the public and suffer in silence, or, if he be a man of many resources, will turn to some other interest and so forget and "normalize" himself. The weaker nature, the egotistical virtuoso nature, will in this state of laxness indulge himself in every way, and so fall a prey to the lower forces within him. This latter so-called artistic temperament bears no relation to art, but to the animal side of man, and should never be condoned as a pardonable result of artistic performance.

QUESTION—Is it not true that an artist must have the creative element to immortalize himself?

ANSWER—Since it is only the written or printed page which leaves a record for posterity to judge, it is safe to say that only the creative artist, and not the interpreter, may become immortal—in the worldly sense.

QUESTION—Should real music be taught in the public schools? By this I mean both vocal and instrumental.

ANSWER—I believe that the perfect solution of music in the public school is in the way Gary, Wisconsin, has planned its system, namely, to keep the schools open all day, making them actual community centers, with opportunities besides the regular school curriculum, for

the study of music in all its branches—of painting, the arts and crafts—each child so following and developing its special bent, and thus helping to form that true culture which alone will give our country the soil from which a great art expression may spring.

European "Atmosphere"

QUESTION—Why is Europe superior to America from the student point of view? Isn't much of this European musical atmosphere which we hear so much about really only a heavy fog?

ANSWER—With thousands of splendidly equipped musicians in this country, there is absolutely no reason for the exile of so many young girls and boys from their own country in search of "musical atmosphere." Not until they have mastered the technic of their instruments—not until they have exhausted the artistic resources of their own country should they leave it for further study abroad. It were well could a record be made of the countless failures returning from Europe, men and women who went there to achieve distinction, only to find they had become expatriated, out of touch with their friends and country and the link that should have bound them in service to their native land broken—railing in their disappointment at the "lack of art appreciation" and "the want of real artistic atmosphere in American life." Europe has much to give to the mature scholar, but Europe is too old, too advanced for American children, and those generous givers, who wish to further talent by giving funds for study abroad, would do well to apply these funds for the encouragement of those who have in actual practical service shown beyond a doubt that study abroad would be the natural step to a wider and fuller activity.

QUESTION—Since American corporations do not go to Europe for their lawyers and since the men who run these corporations do not go to Europe every time they wish to consult a physician, why is it necessary to have the "Made-in-Germany" trade mark or "Educated abroad" slogan to insure success for our vocalists and instrumentalists?

ANSWER—That the "imported article" in the shape of singers and other performers is preferred in this country has a natural explanation in that we all like the unfamiliar. When artists come to us from other countries they have usually "arrived" in their art. The preparatory stage is over and we have not known them in their immaturity. An "American made" artist, on the other hand, has had to develop himself under our very eye. We are too familiar with his early imperfections, which adhere to him even after he has really outgrown them. The old saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt" holds good here, too. However, even these conditions are changing, and the home-made artist is finding a splendid field for his activities in his own great awakening country.

Concert Successes for Marie Stapleton Murray

Marie Stapleton Murray, soprano, who until she removed to New York was one of the best known Pittsburgh sopranos

and who has done much concert work in the middle West and at Chautauqua, has taken an important church position in New York, and has also been making concert appearances. Her most recent engagements were with the Troy Choral Club, at the Brooklyn Philharmonic Club, and at the composer's night of the New York Musician's Club. Mrs. Murray's voice and art were shown to excellent advantage at the Troy concert in the solos of the "Holy City," by Gaul, and three songs by Ward-Stephens. The latter, together with the aria from "Tosca," were also sung at her Brooklyn concert with great success.

Miss Ardini to Introduce New Songs in New York Recital

Having won success in opera as prima donna coloratura of the Boston Theater Company, which gave a season of Italian opera at the Boston Theater this Fall, Miriam Ardini, the gifted American singer, will make her debut in concert this Winter, giving a recital at Aeolian Hall later in the season. She is now working with her teacher, William S. Brady, of New York, and is preparing a recital program which will contain several arias, songs in French, German and Italian, as well as a group of new American songs. A feature in the Italian group will be Riccardo Zandonai's "Lontana," which will be sung for the first time in New York.

Impressed by Absolute Impartiality To the Editor of MUSICAL AMERICA:

Having studied on both sides and knowing conditions at home and abroad makes your propaganda extremely interesting to me. I can hardly wait for your splendid paper to come every week. Especially do I enjoy Mephisto's discussions. It is the only musical paper I ever read or care to read. What impresses me is your absolute impartiality to every one.

May you live to see the realization in the fullest sense of the splendid fight you are making.

Best wishes.
ELIZABETH G. JONES.
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