

Musical Mention

John Randolph.

Truly the vicissitudes of the singer in have a thorough understanding of the grand opera are many and varied. There is no more common mistake among those unacquainted with the difficulty of getting even a footing upon the operatic stage at all, than to suppose that a young girl with an agreeable voice has only to study singing for a year or two in order to become a prima donna. Of course if the singer has, like Patti, the most beautiful voice in the world, she may like Patti, learn a few operas and sing them over and over again—ad nauseam I was about to say. But the most beautiful voice in the world can in the nature of things belong to a comparatively limited number of young girls. If the impression of an unimportant member of the musical fraternity, one who has not been a successful public singer but only a teacher and an observer of the successful and unsuccessful in this branch of art may not be wholly without value, I should like to set down an opinion as to what nowadays constitutes a successful singer. In the first place one must of course have health and a properly trained voice, besides an attractive appearance and that sine qua non which (in want of a better word) we call "temperament." One must also be able to act at least a little and have a repertory of operas, oratorios, church music, or concert numbers, if song recital be the specialty undertaken. But this is not all, even if it requires years to secure this position as it undoubtedly will do with talent and the most competent instruction. I contend that in addition to these things the singer must nowadays be a musician. The time has past away when ten operas of the grade of "Martha" and "Lucia di Lammermoor" constituted a stock in trade, when a competent (?) professional singer required coaching at the pianoforte in the rudimentary matters of rhythm and pitch. A more intellectual, a more enlightened day has come, and a really successful singer must, be he a choir singer, concert, oratorio or opera singer, be a musician who can think his part in solo and ensemble, and understand as well the instrumental accompaniment. For one has but to glance at the score of modern vocal works of much less difficulty than Wagnerian music drama in order to see that there is a great difference between the old tinkling harmonies and simple rhythms of Bellini and his school and the complex rhythmic and tonal difficulties of Rubinstein, Brahms, Massenet, Maccagni, MacDowell, or any of the ultra modern composers. Nor can one sing Beethoven or the art ballad of Schubert unless he is a musician. I do not mean that one must be a professional pianist or organist in order to sing well, but I do mean that in addition to the technique of singing and to the physical equipment, the singer must first of all be able to think at sight any ordinary music he may have to sing. This implies the study of intervals and what is commonly called "solfege," or sight reading; and also purely mental effort in the same direction, besides absolute rhythmic certainty. I know many singers who are inartistic solely on this account—because they are unsafe to hold steady rhythm with such slight variations as may be required by the emotional stress of the moment. These unrhythmical singers are the bane of accompanist, organist and director alike. In the second place the singer must

underlying principles of the theory of music; chords in their relation to each other; what is commonly called "Harmony." In the third place he must be able to play the piano sufficiently to make some application of these principles—a purely melodic instrument like the violin, while a valuable assistant is not adapted so well to the study of chords. In the fourth place the singer must be not only a capable soloist, but a tower of strength in ensemble music. The first soprano must, absolutely must, be able to maintain an untroubled way through rhythmic and tonal difficulties though other voices shriek above and bellow beneath. No one can be a musician, or even a reasonably artistic singer, unless he can play second fiddle as gracefully and well as he can take the first part, I speak, of course, metaphorically. Unless, in other words, he possesses absolute independence of the other voices, and ability to steer his own voice easily and safely with a safety born of sound musicianship, he need not expect success save as a matter of the accident of a beautiful voice or of personal attractiveness which affect the average audience but not the critic. And yet how few of our concert or church singers possess these requirements! I need only to point to Rieger and Clementine de Vera of New York, to Knorr of Chicago, to Homer Moore, of Omaha as instances of really successful and artistic singers because they have their power fully in hand and always at command.

But I had not intended to wander so far from my text, which was the vicissitudes of the average opera singer. Take for instance the case of Scalchi, for many years the most prominent contralto before the public. I do not imagine she can ever have been so great as Alboni or Viardot-Garcia, but she has been and is a singer of eminent authority. To be sure, at present the freshness of her voice is gone, but she is still a competent artist with operatic traditions at her fingers' ends. She was for years the principal contralto of the Metropolitan Opera company in New York, besides her many successes with Madame Patti in Mapleson's troupe. I see that after the failure of Mapleson's recent season in this country, and after a short engagement with Nordica's concert company, this veteran singer is piecing out her season in Western "music halls!" It is only a step from this to the regular vaudeville stage, whither so many of our actors are drifting in the present deterioration of taste.

Mme. Scalchi is beginning the inevitable decadence which the old opera singer fights so hard against; the failing powers and loss of public admiration, the deterioration of voice last of all to be perceived by the singer herself. Ilma di Mureka died in poverty, so did Emmy Fursch-Madi, one of the greatest dramatic sopranos who ever trod the boards—while Lilli Lehmann and Adelina Patti still lag almost superfluous before audiences which have grown indifferent. Truly the last end of the successful operatic singer is not pleasant to contemplate.

On April 3rd, at his home in Vienna, Johann Brahms, the greatest composer of music since the death of Rubinstein and Wagner, died at the age of sixty-four years.

Johannes Brahms was born on May 7,

1833, at Hamburg, where his father played in an orchestra. From him his first instruction in music was received, although later he studied under Edouard Marxsen at Altona. In 1853 he undertook with a Hungarian violinist a tour, as his accompanist, and in this way first met Joachim. It was on his recommendation that Brahms went to Dusseldorf and by the performance of his first composition—a sonata for the piano—gained the greatest praise from the famous composer, Schumann. This appeared in Die Neu Zeitschrift für Musik, and through this article Brahms first became known. After a short stay with Listz at Weimar, Brahms accepted a place as director at the court of Lippe-Detmold, and here he remained for several years. Afterward he spent a short time in his native city and in 1863 went to Vienna, where he became a teacher in the conservatory. The Austrian capital had been his home practically since that time, although when he gave up his post in 1863, Brahms visited Hamburg, Zurich, and Baden-Baden. But after five years he returned to Vienna, and has lived there ever since. During these years of travel Brahms was prolific in composition, and also appeared in public as a pianist. From 1872 to 1875 he was the director of the concerts of Die Gesellschaft der Kunstfreunde in Vienna; in 1864 he was made a member of the Academy of Arts of Berlin, a Doctor of the University of Cambridge in 1877, and the same degree he received from Breslau at about that time. He was a member of the Prussian Order of Merit for Art and Science, and had received distinction from nearly every European country. He had been active in all fields of music but the dramatic. He has written songs, piano symphonies, and music of every character outside the domain of opera. He had been ill for the past six months.

It is too soon to say whether Brahms' name will go down posterity coupled with those other great "B's"—Bach and Beethoven—but in any case his place in the music of the century soon to pass away, will not be a small one. He is perhaps the last great composer in the old classical form. Sonata with symphony with their architectural severity of shape appealed to him. He was not affected by the influence of Richard Wagner: the so called music of the future did not mould his genius. But he was none the less a composer of profound learning and no less profound originality.

J. R.

The following recital is to be given in the chapel of the state university, on next Wednesday evening. The public is cordially invited to be present, and it is hoped that, as many of Mr. Randolph's advanced pupils assist, the concert may be interesting to musicians as well as to the friends of the participants.

Part I.

Quintette, from "The Bride of Darrington"—"Our Home Shall Be on this Bright Isle." Henry Smart
Elsie Beaver, Bessie Turner, Oda Clason, Jessie Lansing, Ethel Galley.
Sop. solo—Air from "Maritana".....

.....W. V. Wallace

Bessie Turner.

Sop. solo—"The Juniper Tree".....

.....Victor Hollander

Lydia Andrews.

Bass solo.....

(a) "Love's Woes".....Felix Arons

(b) "Thy Star".....Pietro Mascagni

Carl Frohlich.

Sop. solo—Two Ballads.....

(a) "Once I was singing".....

.....Jakobowski

(b) "The Minstrel Boy".....

.....H. R. Shelley

Eleanor Raymond.

Two duets for two sopranos.....

(a) "Sul l'aria".....Mozart

(b) "Qual anelante".....

.....Marcello, (1686)
Edith Risser, Elsie Beaver.
Tenor solo—Aria from "Jephtha".....
.....Handel
Juergen Albers.
Mezzo soprano—"The Heart's Springtime".....F. Von Wicke
Oda Clason.

Part II.

Duet for soprano and contralto from

"Mefistofele".....Boito

Eleanor Raymond, Ethel Galley.

Sop. solo—"Tell me my Heart".....

.....H. R. Bishop

Edith Risser.

Contralto solo—Romanza from "La

Gioconda".....Ponchielli

Eugenia Getner.

Mezzo soprano—"Where the Linden Bloom".....Dudley Buck

Winifred Hearn.

Soprano solo—"L'ardita".....Arditi

Elsie Beaver.

Contralto solo.....

(a) "A Dream".....J. C. Bartlett

(b) "Lovely Spring".....Coenen

Ethel Galley.

Sop solo—Recit. "Ah! for this eve"

Polonaise "I am Titania"

from "Mignon".....A. Thomas

Irene Davison McMichael.

Trio—"Ave Maria".....B. Owen

Bessie Turner, Eugenia Getner

Juergen Albers.

Foster—"Dudley offered to bet old Bullion a hundred that he would marry his daughter."

Lenox—"What did Bullion do?"

Foster—"Raised him."

(First publication April 10)

SHERIFF'S SALE.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, THAT by virtue of an order of sale issued by the clerk of the district court of the third judicial district of Nebraska, within and for Lancaster county, in an action wherein Asa H. Ballah et al, plaintiffs and Solomon Heckler, et al, defendants. I will, at 2 o'clock p. m. on the 11th day of May A. D. 1897, at the east door of the court house, in the city of Lincoln, Lancaster county, Nebraska, offer for sale at public auction the following described lands and tenements to-wit:

North half (n¹/₂) of block twelve (12) in Mill's addition to University Place Lancaster county, Nebraska.

Given under my hand this 7th day of April, A. D. 1897.

John J. Trompen,
Sheriff.

(First publication April 10)

SHERIFF SALE.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that by virtue of an order of sale issued by the clerk of the district court of the Third Judicial district of Nebraska, within and for Lancaster county, in an action wherein Sarah Waters is plaintiff and Fabien S. Potvin et al, defendants. I will, at 2 o'clock p. m., on the 11th day of May, A. D. 1897, at the east door of the court house, in the city of Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, offer for sale at public auction the following described lands and tenements to-wit:

The east half (e¹/₂) of the northeast quarter (ne¹/₄) of section twenty-eight (28), in township ten (10), north of range six (6), east of the 6th p. m., in Lancaster County, Nebraska. Given under my hand this 7th day of April A. D. 1897.

John J. Trompen,
Sheriff.

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