

MUSIC.

RICHARD STRAUSS.

A RUMOR was current last July that Richard Strauss had been engaged by Emil Paur for a series of concerts in American cities. Inasmuch as Mr. Paur is himself an orchestral conductor and not a capitalist who could risk such an experiment, the well-informed smiled at this obvious canard. To others the announcement seemed plausible enough, for had not Mr. Paur been Richard Strauss's chief apostle in America? Had he not persisted in placing on the Philharmonic programmes compositions which drove many of the hearers — and not only the conservative ones — from Carnegie Hall?

Strauss subsequently wrote a letter to a friend in New York in which he declared that he had received two offers from America, but had not made up his mind whether he would accept either. Should he refuse both, there can be no doubt that we shall hear him another season. Nor can any one doubt that a visit from him would be as profitable as it would be interesting; for Richard Strauss is the most prominent and best advertised of all living composers. Whether he is the greatest, or one of the greatest of them, is a question to which widely divergent answers are given; but no one can deny that he admirably represents several recent tendencies in musical composition and performance.

Five years ago, when the name of Strauss was spoken or written, everybody, as a matter of course, thought of the waltz-king, Johann Strauss. The rapidity of Richard Strauss's rise to fame is revealed by the fact that to-day he is meant in nine cases out of ten if the name of Strauss is heard or read, although Johann is as popular as ever. Popularity is not always synonymous with vulgarity. Johann Strauss, although he was a writer of waltzes and operettas only, was cordially admired by musicians differing as widely in taste as Brahms and Wagner; and when he died, the Viennese rightly buried him near Beethoven and Schubert. Last summer, when Richard Strauss accepted an invitation to conduct a few concerts in Vienna at a resort in the Prater where serious (or what some people are pleased to call "scientific") music is not

usually heard, some journalists criticised him severely for thus "lowering the dignity of art." He retorted that a place good enough for his great namesake was good enough for him.

INTERPRETERS VERSUS TIME-BEATERS.

The result was suggestive and significant. Abstruse and complicated compositions like his "Pranks of Till Eulenspiegel," "Death and Glorification," and "A Hero's Life," which had puzzled and bewildered dignified Philharmonic audiences in many cities, were, under his eloquent direction, made so clear and impressive to the frequenters of the humble popular resort in the Prater that they aroused, according to local journalists, "an almost southern enthusiasm." Had they been played under an old-style conductor they would probably have fallen flat. The old style of conducting consisted in taking everything in strict unchanging time, and emphasizing the beginning of each bar. This is appropriate to dance music, which calls for metronomic regularity, but deadly to modern compositions of a higher type. The new style of conducting both modern and classical works, of which Wagner was the first aggressive champion, consists in ignoring the bars and placing the accents on the emphatic words and syllables, so to speak, of the *musical idea*. In other words, instead of recalling the ball room, the new style suggests the poetic drama. The old-fashioned conductor is like an actor who would recite his verses as a schoolboy declaims a poem, strongly emphasizing each accented syllable:

"Once upon a *midnight dreary* as I pondered *weak* and *weary*," etc.

Had not Wagner brought the new fashion of conducting orchestral music into vogue, Liszt would have done it. Independently of him he had adopted the same principles of interpretation in his pianoforte playing, largely under the influence of Chopin and his *tempo rubato*. The first great conductors who followed in the footsteps of Wagner and Liszt were Hans von Bülow and Hans Richter. In more recent times the chief exponents of this new tendency have been Anton Seidl, and, to a less extent, Theodore Thomas in America, and Nikisch, von Schuch, Weingartner, Lohse, and Richard Strauss in Germany. These conductors have placed orchestral interpretation on a level with the piano playing of great artists like Liszt, Rubinstein, and Paderewski, by infusing into it individuality and temperament, and by recognizing the fact that the substance of music lies in its kernel and not in its shell. There are still some conservative critics and professionals who seem to think that the orchestra is of more importance than the conductor, though they would

hesitate to say that the piano is more important than the pianist. Yet even they could hardly fail to see the humor of the admonition given to Richard Wagner by his superiors in authority when he first began his original way of interpreting music: "The Kapellmeister should follow the orchestra, not lead it." The old tendency in orchestral conducting, as compared with the new, is admirably summed up in that comic admonition.

ORCHESTRAL COLORING.

Equally comic and antediluvian is a chapter in Herbert Spencer's latest and last book in which the eminent philosopher laments the monotonous coloring of our orchestral music, alleging that the violins have a practical monopoly. Every musician who comes across that chapter will open his eyes wide in astonishment and ask himself: "Has Mr. Spencer kept company with Rip van Winkle for a half, nay, three-quarters, of a century?" It is undeniable that in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and even Beethoven, the four instruments of the violin family — violin, viola, violoncello, and double bass — predominate almost always; although even here the wood wind-instruments and the horns are sometimes used entrancingly. But two of Beethoven's contemporaries, Weber and Schubert, recognized the charm and the emotional significance of the most diverse clang-tints; and the hints given by them were exploited and developed by Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and their followers, until the violins, instead of enjoying a quasi-monopoly, were in danger of being swamped, and had to be greatly increased in numbers to enable them to hold their own against the surging waves of sound poured forth by the trumpets, horns, trombones, and tubas.

It is claimed by the champions of Richard Strauss that he represents the climax of this modern tendency toward rich and varied orchestral coloring. Perhaps he does, inasmuch as he sometimes seems, like Berlioz before him, to put gorgeous colors on his canvas for their own sake, whereas Liszt, and still more Wagner, chose their colors less for their sensuous charm than for their emotional significance and appropriateness. The difference is not in favor of Strauss. It explains why his colors, with all their diversity and opulence, do not warm the heart of the audience as do those in Liszt's "Faust" symphony, Wagner's "Tristan," or the finale of the "Götterdämmerung," which no other colorist has ever approximated.

Expert musicians can hear with their eyes — that is, by looking at a score they know how it will sound. What is more remarkable still,

they may be haunted by tone-colors which their ears have never heard, but which they want for a certain emotional effect. In such a case Wagner became an Edison and invented the instrument his mind's ear heard; for example, the wooden trumpet in the form of an oboe, to emphasize the emotional change in the shepherd's melody, in the third act of "Tristan." I have often wondered why the hint there given has been so little heeded. The bagpipe has been introduced in some operas very effectively; in one of his waltzes Johann Strauss makes charming use of the zither; Richard Strauss even has a "windmill instrument" in his "Don Quixote." Now that the possible combinations of existing instruments seem to have been nearly exhausted, it seems likely that composers will turn their attention more and more to extraneous or exotic sources of orchestral colors. Some of the obsolete mediæval instruments, whose number is great, might be advantageously revived, and many new ones are possible. A German composer, Dr. Alfred Stelzner, some years ago constructed two new instruments, to which he gave the names of violotta and cellone, and which he used with much effect in his opera "Rübezahl," which had its first performance in Dresden last June. They differ from other instruments of the violin family somewhat as the viola differs from the violin or from the violoncello; and the audience was much pleased by the new clang-tints thus introduced into the orchestra.

MUSICAL REALISM.

Before Weber, the chief aim in music had been euphony — beauty of sound. It was Weber who first clearly recognized the fact that under certain circumstances music should not be beautiful so much as characteristic, or, indeed, frankly ugly. When the poet Tieck denounced the gruesome Wolf's-Glen music in the "Freischütz" as "the most unmusical noise that ever raged on a stage," he fancied he was writing a crushing condemnation of Weber; but, in truth, he was complimenting him on knowing his business as a musical dramatist. When Beethoven looked over the score of this same romantic work, he was so excited that he struck it with his fist and exclaimed that thenceforth Weber "must write operas, nothing but operas." He admired the way in which the music tells whenever "the devil puts in his paws." "Weber has certainly written devilish stuff here, in the scene of the Wild Hunt. When I read it, I have to laugh, and yet I feel that it is the right thing."

"Devilish stuff — and yet I feel that it is the right thing." Had the musical critics of Europe heeded these words of Beethoven, the Wagner war need never have been fought; for it was the "devilish stuff" in

Wagner's music that chiefly offended the conservatives. "All music should be sweet," they told him, and he retorted that "music should be sweetly melodious in sentimental scenes, as I have made it, but gloomy and poignant in tragic moments, and harsh and ugly when angry passions are portrayed, as in the scenes between Alberich and Mime in 'Siegfried.'"

It has been said that it is a woman's privilege to be ugly, but that some women abuse their privilege. Not a few critics who admit that music may and should be, on occasion, characteristic to the verge of ugliness declare that Richard Strauss, in his recent symphonic poems, has gone too far. He might retort that he has simply carried to its logical conclusion the tendency toward musical realism which he found in the operas of Weber and Wagner; and that, if he has gone beyond them, so have Liszt in "Mazeppa" and Grieg in his "Bells" (especially in Seidl's admirable orchestration of that curious composition). The pages in Strauss's autobiographic "A Hero's Life," in which he makes fun of his critics and indulges in warlike cacophony, reminded me strongly of some of the Chinese music I have often heard in San Francisco. Some distinguished musicians, for instance, Paderewski, like that kind of music; why, then, should we censure in Strauss the "devilishness" we approve of in Weber, Wagner, Liszt, Grieg, and the Chinese players? It was unheroic, to say the least, on the part of the New York Philharmonic audience to run away from that musical Autobiography of a Hero!

PROGRAMME MUSIC.

It cannot be denied that as a musical realist an opera composer has a great advantage over a writer of symphonies or symphonic poems (tone-poems). Had the battle-music in Strauss's "Heldenleben" been written by Wagner for Siegfried's fight with the dragon, no modern opera-goer would have taken offence at it, for he could not have helped recognizing the appropriateness of such orchestral cacophony to such a scene; whereas in the concert hall the hearer has nothing but a note printed in the programme (and not always that) to tell him what the hubbub is about. Notwithstanding this drawback, programme music has been steadily gaining in favor and vogue for nearly a century, and the indications are that its apogee is not yet.

In its crudest form programme music is as old as the hills. The ancient Greeks had flute players who anticipated Wagner in trying to depict in tones a fight with a dragon. We hear of Italian and French composers in the sixteenth century who attempted to reproduce the sounds one hears in St. Mark's Place, Venice, or the trumpet calls, the clashing

of swords, and other sounds of a battle. This was done vocally. Jannequin's "La Bataille," for example, is a chanson for four voices, relating to the battle of Malegnano. Modern programme music is instrumental. For a long time it was not in good repute, and some worthy musicians have not yet quite got over their abhorrence of it. Haydn was rather ashamed of the essays in this direction which he made, by request, in one of his oratorios. Even Beethoven, after writing the Pastoral Symphony, with its fine thunderstorm and other realistic touches, was frightened at his own audacity and hedged by declaring that it was to be taken as an expression of feeling rather than an attempt at tone-painting. His example, however, gave courage to his successors, Mendelssohn and Schumann; while Berlioz, Raff, Liszt, and, with the exception of Brahms, all the prominent modern composers have taken special delight in working in this borderland where poetry and music meet. Beethoven himself had a plan, some years before he died, of giving poetic titles to his sonatas and their movements.

By a perhaps pardonable confusion of ideas, Wagner is often classed among the writers of programme music. Does he not make the orchestra flicker like flames, rustle like the leaves of forest trees, patter like the rain on the roof, whistle and howl like the stormwind? He does; but it is the very essence of his theory and practice that this musical realism should be accompanied and elucidated, or emphasized, by the scenery, the poem, and the action, *at every moment*, whereas the writer of programme music leaves to the hearer the task of dove-tailing the music with the incidents described in the printed programme. Wagner found fault with the dramatic symphonies of Berlioz on account of the difficulties and frequent confusion to which this task gave rise.

Liszt, in his symphonic poems, improved on Berlioz by choosing simply a suggestive title, like "Mazeppa," "Orpheus," "Battle of the Huns," "Tasso, lamento e trionfo," and sketching a familiar story in broad, vigorous strokes. One of the first to follow his example was the French Saint-Saëns, whose "Phaëton," "Le Rouet d'Omphale," "La Jeunesse d'Hercule," and "Danse Macabre" are, in suggestiveness, conciseness, and pictorial realism, models of what a symphonic poem should be. Dvorák, Paine, Tchaikovsky, and a host of other major and minor composers in all countries have written symphonic poems, overtures, and orchestral fantasias illustrating the pictorial power and tendency of modern music. Richard Strauss has erred in some instances in choosing too abstruse and elaborate programmes for his symphonic poems, thus confusing, as did Berlioz, the connection between the music and its poetic

substratum; but, on the other hand, he has a rare faculty for graphic portrayal, in which his skill as a colorist plays an important rôle.

THE MUSICAL SHORT-STORY.

There can be no doubt that the art-form of the future for orchestral music is the symphonic poem as constructed by Liszt, Saint-Saëns, and Dvorák. I would add the name of Richard Strauss were it not for the shortcoming just referred to, and his disposition to choose metaphysical subjects — “Thus spake Zarathustra” — which are utterly unsuitable for musical treatment. Most of his symphonic poems are, moreover, open to the charge, which, to be sure, can also be brought against some of Liszt’s, of being too long. Dvorák once said to me that in his opinion even symphonies should never last over half an hour. He has not quite lived up to his conviction on this point; but it is well to have modern composers understand, at any rate, that over-elaboration is not a virtue, but a vice. Beethoven undoubtedly improved on the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart in many important respects; there is more thought, and food for thought, in one of his than in a dozen of theirs. But his doubling the length of the symphony was a grievous error, which has done a great deal to retard the evolution of music, and has consigned to oblivion many works that might have lived had not their composers, with his example before them, been tempted to stretch out their material to tedious lengths.

As the three-volume novel has had its day, so the four-movement symphony is doomed to extinction. It is too long. Its writers usually labor under the strange delusion that genius consists in taking some insignificant theme and developing it interminably with the utmost display of technical skill and ingenuity. Genius, on the contrary, consists in the faculty of originating significant ideas, expressing them in the simplest possible way, and stopping short when all that is new has been said, whether it makes one page or a dozen or more. In architecture there is some excuse for skyscrapers, because, if not beautiful, they are at any rate useful and profitable. But long symphonies are the reverse of useful and profitable. A very talented composer, who died six years ago, the Viennese Anton Bruckner, practically wrecked his whole career by writing skyscraper symphonies lasting up to an hour and a half. No conductor dared to risk the success of a whole concert on such works, and, consequently, they were ignored, and the poor deluded man died broken-hearted. He had been unable to read the signs of the times.

At the Metropolitan Opera House in New York; the Boston Symphony

Orchestra produced, a few years ago, a symphony by Mrs. Beach. It was constructed on German "classical" models and seemed interminable. I sat in a box with Anton Seidl, who fled in dismay before it was half over. The emotions this feminine symphony aroused in me were, successively, curiosity, surprise, impatience, indignation, wrath, despair — which, I submit, were hardly what the composer had intended. Yet there were some happy thoughts and details which might have been worked up into an effective short orchestral piece, lasting ten minutes instead of an hour.

Apart from its usually excessive length, the symphony has the fatal defect of not being an organic form of art. With a few exceptions, there is no more connection between its four movements than there is between four Pullman cars; less, indeed, because the best Pullman trains are vestibuled, whereas Haydn made the blunder of entirely detaching the symphonic movements; and this blunder has been perpetuated to the present day, although Mendelssohn, Schumann, and a few more recent writers have, in single instances, run their movements together and also tried to connect them organically by employing, to a slight extent, the same thematic material in two or more of them. But the symphony can hardly be saved by that device. It is too artificial in structure to survive much longer.

When Richard Wagner was twenty-seven years old, and the music for his first characteristic opera, "The Flying Dutchman," was fermenting in his brain, he wrote a fanciful novelette entitled "A Pilgrimage to Beethoven," in which he took the liberty of making that composer say: "If I were to write an opera after my own mind people would run away; for they would find in it none of the arias, duets, terzets, and all the stuff with which composers now make up their operatic patchwork." Beethoven, of course, never dreamed of such a thing. It was Wagner himself who discarded the arias and changed the opera from a patchwork, or mosaic, into a work of art organically connected in all its parts by means of recurring leading motives. Liszt did the same thing for the concert hall when he invented the symphonic poem, in which one leading thought permeates the whole unbroken piece, and substituted it for the symphony with its four detached movements. Wagner, in his essay on Liszt's symphonic poems, cordially recognized the great improvement he had made by discarding the symphony, with its aboriginal dance and march rhythms and its stereotyped structure, and adopting in its place a type of composition based on poetic motives and capable of endless variety of subject and form.

It is for the various reasons here indicated that the tendency of ad-

vanced composers has been more and more toward the musical short-story, the symphonic poem. Richard Strauss began as a conservative follower of Beethoven and Brahms, as his first fifteen works, including a symphony, show. In 1885 he "shed his skin," and thenceforth followed the banner of Liszt and the symphonic poem. He has himself said: "I am the legitimate successor of Liszt"; and last winter he gave much pleasure and satisfaction in Berlin by conducting, for the first time, all of Liszt's symphonic poems in chronological order.

PIANOFORTE MUSIC.

In the realm of the pianoforte the musical short-story came into vogue sooner than in the orchestral field. Although here, too, Beethoven impeded progress with his artificial, incoherent sonatas, which were foolishly proclaimed as the perfection of musical form, there was fortunately a strong countercurrent in the admirably constructed short pieces of Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and others. Schumann declared, about half a century ago, that the sonata had had its day; and it is most significant that his principal follower, Johannes Brahms, the leader of modern conservatives, wrote only three sonatas, and those among his first five printed works, while his more mature powers were given to waltzes, Hungarian dances, ballads, rhapsodies, capricci, intermezzi, and other short pieces.

Two tendencies are to be noted in modern pianoforte pieces as in orchestral music. Some composers follow the example of Schubert and Chopin in simply calling their pieces valse, impromptu, mazurka, polonaise, and so on, while others give them poetic names after the manner of Schumann or Liszt. This newer procedure is rapidly superseding the other, because of its obvious advantages. As already stated, Beethoven himself had a plan of adding descriptive titles to his sonatas and their movements. In all probability one of his reasons was the excessive popularity of the "Moonlight" sonata, which he knew to be inferior to some of his other works, and which obviously owed its greater vogue to its title, although it was neither appropriate nor given by the composer himself. Such titles are not only suggestive and inviting to the purchaser, but they are much easier to remember than "sonata opus 37, No. 2," or "sonata in F sharp minor" or "B flat major."

If Beethoven had given his sonatas poetic titles after they were written, he would have followed the method which was subsequently adopted by Schumann. Liszt's way of first choosing a subject and writing appropriate music to it is obviously preferable. It gives the com-

poser of pianoforte pieces the advantage enjoyed by the writers of songs and operas of having a poem, a scene, or a story to stimulate the creative fancy and conjure this or that mood. A further advantage is suggested by the manner in which Edward MacDowell names and groups his short pieces. His love of nature suggested to him a series of "Woodland Sketches," and "Sea Pieces," each comprising half a dozen short compositions illustrating different phases of the subject. In the "Woodland Sketches," the last number recalls the melodies and harmonies of the others, thus, in a manner, welding them together. In his later groups he did not repeat this process, probably because he felt that a sufficient bond of union was supplied by the subject itself. While all the pieces in such a group are thus related poetically, any one can, nevertheless, be played separately. Quite recently Prof. MacDowell has added two more of these characteristic groups to his list of works. The first, entitled "Fireside Tales," comprises six numbers: "An Old Love Story"; "Of Br'er Rabbit"; "From a German Forest"; "Of Salamanders"; "A Haunted House"; "By Smouldering Embers." The other, entitled "New England Idyls," contains ten pieces — "An Old Garden"; "Mid-Summer"; "Mid-Winter"; "With Sweet Lavender"; "In Deep Woods"; "Indian Idyl"; "To an Old White Pine"; "From Puritan Days"; "From a Log Cabin"; and "The Joy of Autumn."

The poetic element in these compositions is further emphasized by a procedure which makes them hover, as it were, half-way between pianoforte pieces and songs. At the head of each number are placed a few lines of suggestive verse from the author's own pen. "To an Old White Pine" has this motto:

A giant of an ancient race
He stands, a stubborn sentinel
O'er swaying, gentle forest trees
That whisper at his feet.

The composer's summer workshop is easily recognizable in the lines that head "From a Log Cabin":

A house of dreams untold
It looks out over the whispering tree-tops
And faces the setting sun.

This method is an improvement not only on Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words," but also on Schumann's way of grouping a dozen or more short pieces and giving them titles which are often more fanciful than obviously appropriate. A more important question, to be sure, is whether the American composer has also succeeded, like his German

predecessors, in saying something new musically. This must be answered most decidedly in the affirmative. MacDowell is the sworn enemy of the commonplace; he prints nothing that is not new. What distinguishes him from most of his contemporaries is that he has a fresh melodic vein. Saint-Saëns once wrote a book in which he pleaded for the recognition of the great importance of harmony in music. In a recent essay he declares that since he wrote that plea the situation has changed so completely that it now seems necessary to say a word in behalf of the neglected melodic factor. In MacDowell's music melody is never slighted, while the harmonic setting always has the spice of the unexpected; and his modulations are as novel and as delightful as those of Schubert or Grieg. Moreover, while many of his compositions make the highest demands on the technical skill of the pianist, he never piles on technique for technique's sake, as so many of his colleagues do, partly to hide their lack of ideas, partly to astonish the natives. The climax of this most reprehensible tendency is reached in the Chopin arrangements of Leopold Godowski, formerly of Chicago. As if to show that for the modern virtuoso even the Chopin *études* are not difficult enough, he has rewritten them, combining two or three of them into one — a procedure that should be a state-prison offence.

LYRIC ART SONG.

In the department of the *Lied*, or art-song, neither MacDowell nor any other living American or European has been able to make an absolutely new departure, for the simple reason that Schubert and Liszt seem to have exhausted all possibilities in that line. In fact, when Schubert in the year of his death (1828), wrote his "Doppelgänger," he left little even for Liszt in the way of making the music cling to the text word by word. There are nearly as many forms of the *Lied* as there are of poetry, and Schubert was master of them all, from a simple folksong, like "The Rose on the Heath," to a mood-picture, like "Death and the Maiden," and a dramatic ballad, like "The Erlking."

The champions of Richard Strauss claim, indeed, that with him the German *Lied* has entered a new phase of development. Speaking of the latest collection (opus 49) of his songs, Dr. Leopold Schmid, of Berlin, declares that "his aim is no longer invention, in the traditional sense of the word, but rather a more and more subtle and free absorption of the words in tones [*Vertonung der Worte*] without any reference to the rules relating to keys or measures." But so far as this free *Vertonung der Worte* is concerned Strauss has not been able to go beyond Liszt's

"Loreley" or Grieg's "From Monte Pincio"; and his "not aiming at invention" is simply another way of saying that he often writes when he has no new melody to suit his chosen poems, and so contents himself with "impressionistic" harmonies — chords and arpeggios. This is not true of all his songs; some of them are admirable in every way; but, on the whole, fresh, enchanting melodies are much rarer in his songs than in those of Grieg and MacDowell, who may be safely pronounced the greatest of living song writers. They have plenty of new ideas, and new ideas are, after all, much more important than new forms.

More important, too, are atmosphere and national or local color. It is in these directions that song literature has been chiefly enriched since the days of Schubert. The new strength and beauty of the songs of Schumann, Franz, and Jensen lie chiefly in their abundant ideas; their color is, like Schubert's, always German. New color — Hungarian, Polish, Oriental, Russian, Bohemian, Irish, Norwegian — was introduced by Liszt, Chopin, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Dvorák, Stanford, and Grieg, respectively. But while these masters undoubtedly added fascinating exotic melodies and quaintly novel harmonies to the main current of European music, we must be careful to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Some of these composers, notably Chopin and Grieg, have not yet received full credit for their marvellous originality, because the amateurs and critics have ignorantly accepted as national peculiarities traits created by these masters themselves. If American composers are at a disadvantage with the European in so far as they have no national folk-song to draw upon for color — for Indian and negro tunes belong to a different class and have little artistic value — they do not run the risk, on the other hand, of losing the credit for their original contributions. At present, the chief trouble with most American composers is that they rely too much on foreign models. However, a good beginning has been made, and there is no reason to doubt that our music will become more and more racy of the soil, and that a few decades hence experts will be able to detect the bouquet of an American song as well as that of an American wine or an American story.

OPERA AND OPERETTA.

It has been written a thousand times that Wagner paralyzed operatic composition; that the novelty, beauty, and power of his works were so great that no other writer has been able to compete with him. This is true in the sense that in face of Wagner's music-dramas most recent operas have seemed like foothills as compared with Alpine summits. At the

same time, there are more peaks than the critics and the public are aware of — peaks which have remained hidden under the clouds of adversity. In his recent volume on "English Music in the Nineteenth Century," Mr. J. A. Fuller-Maitland has some remarks, which managers would do well to take to heart, on the usual fate of new operas. All theatrical productions, however enthusiastic their reception may be, begin to attract the public, as he truly says, only when they have been on the stage for some time. "The second performance is usually given before empty benches; and, in the case of non-musical plays, the manager knows this so well that he proceeds with the run of the piece until the public has had time to form its real verdict." Operatic managers, on the contrary, lose heart after the second or third night, and shelve their new score for good; although it is known to all that new music, above all things, needs to be heard repeatedly before it can be understood and admired. "Even such successes as those of 'Faust' and 'Carmen' were only achieved by persistence in performing the works to audiences which at first were very meagre." Mr. Fuller-Maitland might have added the third of the three most popular operas of our time, "Lohengrin," the fate of which, when first produced at Weimar, in 1850, was so extremely uncertain that Liszt stipulated at the beginning that there must be at least three performances of it; and he encouraged the singers by dining and wining them. I am convinced that there are now at least a dozen operatic scores, not so good as "Lohengrin," but still very good, gathering dust on library shelves because they had insufficient hearings; whereas, if they could have been forced on the public attention for a season or two they would have proved permanent and valuable additions to our lamentably limited repertory.

Under such circumstances, one could hardly blame the composers if they shut up shop altogether; but the possible rewards of success — though a mere lottery chance — are so great that they persevere. But what policy are they to pursue? If they write operas in the pre-Wagnerian style, the critics call them old-fashioned and the public ignores them; witness, for instance, poor Rubinstein, whose melodious operas deserved a better fate. If, on the other hand, they follow in Wagner's footsteps, they are decried as imitators. Even regarding so fine a composer as Goldmark, a prominent German critic has written that his "Queen of Sheba" "succumbs to the powerful Wagnerian attraction," and that on his later work, "Merlin," Wagner's style "exerted a positively fatal influence." Two of Wagner's imitators — Bungert and Kistler — went so far as even to attempt to induce their friends to build new theatres for the special performance of their operas, *à la* Bayreuth.

Bungert was finally glad to get his Homeric Tetralogy accepted at Dresden, and Kistler his "Kunihild" and "Till Eulenspiegel" at Sondershausen and Würzburg.

Rubinstein was still another composer who dreamed of having his own theatre. This, however, was a consequence of the peculiar character of some of his stage works — sacred operas, or theatrical oratorios — rather than conscious imitation of Wagner. The chief trouble with Rubinstein was, in fact, that he did not imitate Wagner enough. Had he been willing to swim with the current, his melodic genius might have made him as popular as Mendelssohn was in his day. Tchaikovsky also might have fared better as an opera composer had he adopted the best modern methods in time. Particularly instructive is the case of Verdi. After writing genuine Italian operas until he was fifty-four years old, he waited four years and then composed his superb "Aida" in the Parisian style. After that he took a long rest of sixteen years; and when he appeared in public again, with his "Otello," and six years later still, at the age of eighty, with his "Falstaff," it was obvious that he had done a good deal of thinking in the meantime and had come to the conclusion that Wagner was right in banishing from the opera not only florid vocalism, but the elaborate aria as well, and making the music cling to the poetic text closely at every moment.

Italian opera-goers, unfortunately, derived little direct benefit from Verdi's improvement of his style through the adoption of the new German tendency in operatic composition; for when he wrote his last two operas he was so old, and had so long allowed his mind to become rusty, that he had lost the faculty of creating original melodies, for which reason these two operas never became popular. Indirectly, however, his example had important consequences, for it encouraged the younger composers of Italy in their inclination to adopt German methods. Oddly enough, these men, though young, seemed to share also the least desirable trait of the aged Verdi — his lack of melodic spontaneity. This is true of all of them, including the most gifted of the group, Puccini, who not only knows how to write for the voice, but has so admirable a gift of harmony and orchestral coloring that he might have become what all these young men were longing to be called — the Italian Wagner — if he had only had Wagner's rich melodic vein. Thus time brings its revenges. The one thing which Wagner was accused of not having, but of which he had a superabundance — melody — is the one thing the present-day Italians actually lack.

No doubt there is plenty of melody in the best-known of recent

Italian operas, Mascagni's "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," but it is of that cheap, trivial kind which musicians call "tune." The light but strenuous tunes which abound in this opera would, moreover, hardly suffice to account for its extraordinary popularity. Mascagni was so lucky as to appear at the moment when thousands of opera-goers had become eager for something to act as a counterpoise to the sweeping current of Wagnerism. Meyerbeer and Wagner, the rulers of the stage for half a century, had brought into vogue those four-hour operas which many listeners, tired after a day's work, found too much of a strain on their attention. Hence a shout of joy went up over this young Italian who had condensed the material for a grand opera into a sort of tragic operetta, an operative short-story, lasting only an hour. Such an opera could be coupled with a pantomimic ballet — or with some Italian opera of the older repertory which no longer sufficed by itself to draw a paying audience — and still leave plenty of time for social features. Mascagni, furthermore, was clever, or lucky, enough to choose a subject based on incidents of modern life, which gave his opera an aspect of novelty, inasmuch as his colleagues usually based their librettos on historic or mythological subjects.

All these things combined led to the astonishing success of "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," a success which had the regrettable consequence that a host of imitators sprang up in all countries who adopted and exaggerated the worst features of Mascagni's work. Thus arose the so-called Veristic School of opera, a school seemingly based on the idea that the only emotions true to life are those inspired by stories of jealousy, adultery, and murder. All these operas seem to have been "written with a dagger." Luckily their vogue was but short. The movement began in 1893 and may now be considered a matter of history, although those who participated in it are still living. Mascagni is even about to produce some of his operas in our American cities. Inasmuch as none of them except the first was successful abroad, it will be interesting to observe what their fate will prove to be on this side.

As for Mascagni's colleagues, they are at a loss as to what tendency they should follow or originate now. Their latest manoeuvre has been to seize upon some popular play and feverishly set it to music before its vogue ends. French composers have followed these same tendencies; but Saint-Saëns, who is forever bemoaning the conquest of Paris by Wagnerism, prefers historic subjects for his operas, which ought to be better known than they are outside of France. In America and England there is absolutely no encouragement for composers. The production of new operas is usually too unprofitable to commend itself to our commercially

minded managers. An exception, like Paderewski's "Manru," only proves the rule. Had it not been for his great popularity as a pianist, it is not likely that we should have heard that delightful opera till much later in its career. In constructing his opera, Paderewski, as a matter of course, followed to a considerable extent Wagner's treatment of the voice and the orchestra, as every up-to-date composer of dramatic works must do. Its melodies, however, are his own, and the spirit of the music is as different from Wagner's as is that of "Carmen." The atmosphere is entirely Polish and gypsy.

To return to Germany for a moment, it would be easy to name recently produced works illustrating every variety of operatic procedure. The most prevalent species seems to be the fairy tale, which Humperdinck made popular with his fascinating "Hänsel and Gretel," a curious mixture of folk-tune-like simplicity and modern orchestral splendor. That same tale, to be sure, had done musical service long before Humperdinck chose it with which to make his fame and fortune. Indeed, one might say that the fairy-tale opera is simply a branch of the mythological opera favored by Wagner, although he was by no means its originator. Not only Weber and Marschner were his predecessors, but the countless Italian composers who for more than two hundred years based most of their operas on stories drawn from Greek mythology. There is such a thing as operatic evolution, but from some points of view its curve looks like a ring!

Concerning present-day operetta, it is hardly worth while to waste any words in a serious paper on modern music. If all grand opera had suddenly become "veristic," that is, "yellow," it would have had a fate like that which has befallen operetta. Look at a few dates: Strauss's masterworks, "The Bat" and "The Merry War," were produced in 1874 and 1881 respectively; Lecocq's "Fille de Mme. Angot" and "Giroflé-Giroflá" in 1874; Suppé's "Fatinitza" in 1876; Planquette's "Les Cloches de Corneville," known here as "The Chimes of Normandy," in 1877; Audran's "Mascotte" in 1880; Millöcker's "Beggar Student" in 1882; and Sullivan's "Mikado" in 1885. That was the golden age of modern operetta. For once the wail about the good old times is justified. Where are the successors of those composers? In this country, for a time, excellent work was done by Reginald De Koven, Victor Herbert, and a few others. To-day chaos reigns. The operetta has been absorbed by the vaudeville, the variety show. It has been superseded so thoroughly by this woefully inferior species of entertainment that when a work is produced which, like "King Dodo," resembles a real operetta, the critics

rub their eyes in surprise, call it old-fashioned, and wonder if it will succeed. Music has been reduced to what the French call *musiquette*, and plot or coherence is not asked for. What was once the operetta stage has become a mere excuse for the exhibition of girls — ugly ones, strange to say, for the most part; and the newspapers tell us just how many chorus girls are to be on view in each of these remarkably silly and vulgar shows — sixty in one, 100 in another, while two forthcoming “attractions” announce that they will have 300 and 500, respectively! Much has been written about the Americanization of Europe; but how about the Orientalization of America?

HENRY T. FINCK.

SCULPTURE.

IN the matter of the arts of pure form, a marked change in the position of the artist and of the public has been noticeable during the course of the last twenty years. Indeed, the most notable advance in the art of sculpture in America is in the nature of the demand made upon the sculptor. It is the sculptors themselves who have caused the change: it is the contemplation of the works of art which they have set up in America, and of those to which we all turn for stimulus in France, that has wrought it; and now the new conditions seem to be working beneficially for all. The artists are not so apt as of old to model "Greek" or other "Slaves" or "Captives," or Egyptian or Palmyrene queens, or statues called by such fanciful names of no signification. Such pieces, with the statues and busts known as the Dawn, or the Dew, or the Sunflower, or the Nymph Sabrina, are the natural product of a time when but few persons think of asking for sculpture in any of the ways likely to lead to serious and significant work. When there is no demand, that will be the supply.

But with the beginning of the last quarter of a century it became evident that out-of-door monuments were increasing in number. Even in 1880 a list of statues and groups set up in the open air would have required some care to make it complete, and the increase ever since has been in a growing ratio. Indoors, but permanently set up, as in the choirs of churches or the corridors of state houses, works of sculpture are not rare. Ideal sculpture, too, impersonations and embodiments were asked for, and were set upon business buildings as well as upon public buildings. Through the decades just named these enterprises in the way of the sculptor's art have increased in number in all parts of the country, until now the handbook or guidebook representing almost any little city big enough to have a guidebook written expressly for itself names three or four pieces, one or more of which may be of artistic importance. Sculpture immediately applied to the structure of a building, as carved spandrels and wrought doorpieces, is much more rare because of the prevalence of a certain architectural style making such sculpture difficult to introduce. In place of this, however, we find the statue or