

SECRET OF MAKING VIOLINS LOST, SAYS THADDEUS RICH

With Arrival of 306-Year-Old Cello in U. S., Musician Asserts Old Fiddles' Tones Contain Genius

The 306-year-old cello which the young Hungarian artist, Rozsi Varadi, recently brought with her to this country raises once more the question debated in musical circles for more than two centuries: What was the secret of the old violin makers?

Wherever bow crosses strings certain names are held in almost breathless reverence and respect. Amati, Stradivari, Guarnerius; these titles upon a stringed instrument are tantamount, in fact, immeasurably superior to the star mark on silver. For, whereas the articles in the precious metal may be made at any time and place, and will continue to be made in the future, the instruments which came from the hands of the great violin makers are limited in number and priceless in value. The secret of their manufacture has passed away with the masters who fashioned them.

In Cremona, the ancient province in the north of Italy, there arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a school of violin makers that brought to the instruments the highest level ever attained. Andrea and Nicolo Amati, founders of the Cremona school, developed the old-fashioned violin into the modern violin, and their art and workmanship to the present day.

Stradivari Tops Them All

Most famous among the later of the Cremonese masters was Antonio Stradivari, who lived in the latter half of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries. His instruments generally are conceded by musicians to be the greatest examples of the violin maker's art so far produced.

According to Thaddeus Rich, concert-master of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the interval of time which has elapsed since the fabrication of these great instruments has had little to do with their excellence beyond a certain mellowing effect.

"Like the painting of the Old Masters," he said, in discussing the matter yesterday, "the virtue of the thing is inherent in it; the hand that made it had the touch of genius, it was great at the start and has remained so."

That is the whole truth of the matter. The old violin makers had methods and secret processes in their craft which have not descended to us. Their workmanship, their way of selecting and seasoning the wood, the design, the varnish, all contributed to the final result.

It could appear then that Miss Varadi's fine old cello is notable now because it was so when first it came into being under the hand of Antonius Amati, 306 years ago. Time has only served to mellow it a trifle.

Rich Owns Many Old Violins

Mr. Rich, himself, owns some very fine old violins. The gem of his collection is the Violentini Guarnerius, of the year 1705, which was used by Henri Vieuxtemps during his tour of this country in 1856, and later passed into the possession of Dr. Oliver Hopkinson of this city. Mr. Rich acquired this famous collection in 1912, among which were a very fine Amati and an equally good Montagnana.

These instruments are continually played in the concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra, in accordance with Mr. Rich's theory that continued use tends to improve a violin.

There is also a very rare Bergondi, of the year 1739, owned by another member of the orchestra, which is often played in concert. And Mr. Torelli, one of the basses, is the owner of a particularly fine bass viol which was made in Spain several centuries ago.

Mr. Penha, the cello soloist of the orchestra, is the possessor of a very old Italian instrument which is priceless. Of almost equal importance is the box with which the violin is played, although its recognition has been long delayed. As the active agent in the generation of the tone, its balance and degree of construction have the greatest bearing upon the quality of the performance.

Girl Motorist Hurts Man

An automobile driven by Nettie Hershkowitz, of Ellenville, struck Charles Weinberg, 3048 Girard avenue, at Sixth and Market streets yesterday afternoon. Weinberg suffered a sprained ankle.

SCATTER AS BULLETS WHIZ

Negro Hit Three Times on Christian Street—Assaulted Flees

Pedestrians and people standing in doorways on Christian street between Fifteenth and Sixteenth, scrambled for safety last night to escape bullets firing from a gun in the hands of a Negro who was shooting at another Negro, Frank Washington, Montrose street above Fifteenth.

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