

After Midnight Thoughts

On Leopold Godowsky

etc.

By Paul Howard

To The Members of The International Godowsky Society.

Instalment 6.

**The Twenty-four Walzermasken**

The Twenty-four Walzermasken is a collection of 24 waltzes by Leopold Godowsky, arranged in six groups of four. The waltzes are in various keys and time signatures, and are characterized by their intricate and often virtuosic piano technique. The collection is a testament to Godowsky's mastery of the piano and his ability to create music that is both technically demanding and artistically beautiful.

THE WALZERMASKEN - 24 WALTZ-MASKS, IN THREE-QUARTER TIME.

*those?* "I was gone 70 years of age when I discovered  
~~the~~ whose wonderful Walzermasken of Godowsky.

I made a selection of six of them and practised them assiduously several hours every day for seven years. They revived my interest in life and art when I had thought all the possibilities of pianoforte playing were exhausted."

(Vladimir de Pachmann.)

THE 24 WALZERMASKEN OF LEOPOLD GODOWSKY.

1. Karneval.
2. Pastell (Fr. Sch.)
- OK* 3. Skizzo (Joh.Br.).
4. Momento Capriccioso.
5. Berceuse.
6. Kontraste.
7. Profil. (Fr.Ch.)
8. Silhoutte (Fr.L.)
9. Satire.
10. Karikatur.
- OK* 11. Tyll Ulenspegel.
12. Legende.
13. Humoresque.
14. Franzosisch.
15. Elegie *u.*
- ✓ 16. Perpetuum Mobile
- OK* 17. Menuett.
18. Schuhplatter.
19. Valse Macabre.
20. Abendglocken.
21. Orientale.
22. Wienerisch.
23. Eine Saga.
24. Portrait (Joh.Str.)

Notice Prefixed to Leopold Godowsky's "Walzermasken".

(Translation by Very Rev. Fr. O'Byrne, O.P. from the German.)

The following twenty-four tone fantasies may be regarded as one composition forming a cycle of linked pieces. The composer, however, sees no objection to a smaller or greater selection of the Waltz Masques therein contained, being made according to choice. It *well*, of course, be desirable *with* in arranging any selection, to avoid a series in the same key, as otherwise the effect might prove more monotonous than pleasing...It will be well, then to have those pieces of a more solemn character followed by something gayer, and those of a slower, give place to those of a more sprightly tune.

As the entire collection played without interruption would probably take up too much time for one item, it is recommended to the performer who intends to play the 24 pieces at one sitting, to pause at the end of each of the numbers of the set, giving a longer interval at the end of the 8th (Silhouette) and the 16th (Perpetuum ~~M~~Nobile).

It is of the highest importance that the pedal work be most scrupulously careful and studied, that its fundamental notes, accords, and middle parts are so written that they can be thoroughly brought out (ausgehalten) neither by the right nor the left hand, this being supplied by the pedalling, so that the point should be made of continuously sounding (fortklinger) the fundamental notes where the duration of the grounding (?) is not indicated by italics, except where perhaps a staccato effect is aimed at. The piece No. 20 (Abendglocken) can well serve as a sample and exercise for delicate pedalling, for it offers a compendium, as it were, of all that is at once elaborate and dainty in pedal work. The composer has given his views on this complicated art of pedal work, concisely but sufficiently, in his study No. 45 of the Chopin Etudes.

(The Master said to me later that the translation was very well done.)

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Programme Notes by Paul Howard on the "Walzermasken", for the 24th-27th  
Pianoforte recitals at St. Dominic's Priory, North Adelaide, 5th,  
11th, 13th, 17th, December, 1918, at 8.30 o'clock.

Here are four more programmes of works which I have not played to you before, and at last the "Walzermasken" which I have thought it fair to you to give in three groups, for taking such a set of works entire at the first hearing would, if listened to with due concentration, tax the resources of the most enthusiastic and seasoned musician, since those Walzermasken are not to be taken lightly.

Technically they explore and expand the resources of the keyboard and open up digital possibilities (some just possible) beyond anything else extant.

Before these works appeared Godowsky had been hailed by all the higher musical world as the most important technician since Liszt, but it takes time for artists to discover new important works, and many renowned touring virtuosi I have discovered in conversation with them, do not seem to have been aware of the famous Pole's mighty Sonata in E minor, the immortal and bewildering "Walzermasken", and other works, but only seem to have known of his original Etudes on the Chopin Etudes.

There is perhaps some excuse for avoiding the works considering the hair-raising expenditure of time and labour their study involves, and I doubt whether there are half a dozen artists in the world who play them.

Friends Piastro and Mirovitch recommended to me Balakirew's "Islamy" as the most difficult work in existence for Piano. This Eastern <sup>n</sup> piece of fanaticism, crazy hysteria, and smouldering oriental passions, certainly is a tyrant, but it is mostly ~~in~~ the madness of the pace that kills, and this can be met by direct action.

only

Resounding...



The "Walzermasken", however, defied conquest even after two years of daily battlement and it is now nearly four years before I can claim maturity and pleasure in performance. Put this against the fact that I worked at Beethoven's Op. 2, No. 3, for the first time the other day, memorized and polished it in a week, and achieved the same with the "Pathetique" in two days. That gives you just the ratio. Godowsky's music mostly sounds as if three independent hands were employed on the keyboard, and sometimes more. He has discarded all packing and more accompaniment; he writes pianistically, and yet as though for orchestra. Right through, from high to low - and often he uses the entire length of the keyboard simultaneously for pages at a stretch - is the body of his music filled with voices which sing their lines with the freedom of speech of a string quintette. And as the dynamic technique of this Goliath, so his astounding learning to clothe new thoughts. These "Walzermasken" mask a kaleidoscope procession of emotions and thoughts; often a smile conceals a sob, a gay word, a breaking heart, and sometimes mock tragedy is the sport of sprites. The veiled allusions of this deep music quicken a fierce interrogation, the answer to which often stares from one's own heart. The gorgeous and mighty "Karneval" of Monarchs, the tender thought of him who left us the great "Unfinished"; the fine allusion to the mystic and giant Brahms, with its beautiful questionings and elfishly capricious moments leading to the crooning "Berceuse". Never did sweet baby rock off to slumber, falling more gently from consciousness through space, with the world melting out of shape, than here. A flight by way of Kontraste", then a "Profil" of beloved Frederick. Sure 'tis he, refined and decorous. He has other aspects of course. And No. 8, a volcanic, sky-splitting, sinuously enchanting "Silhouette" of the only Franz Liszt, meteor and conquerer.

And now "Satire", of what? The spirit of satire and in the next "Karikatur" assail pedantry and everything else, and yet make beautiful music. "Oh well, of course", you may say. Not so fast however, look at the score and see what is there and how it is handled to make it what it is instead of a sepulchre. If old Albrechtsberger might rise to hear them he would doubtless drop dead again. "Till Ulenspiegel" is lovely music, nearer average understanding but depicting magnificently that strange figure of ancient European lore, who under a facetious surface, was a man of deep wisdom. "Legende" is strong and strange whispering of the Ardennes, the fabled giants, and quiet of the forest, or anything else you would like to read into it.

"Humoresque" is a most ingenious invention based entirely on four notes announced in the first measure, twisted, turned, inverted, and involved in every sort of complexity, making a brilliant work of fine breadth, depth, and freedom.

"Franzosisch". How appropriate this Sursum Corda, homage to France under Feuton title; beautiful music of happiness, heroic and poetic spirit. What says Roland's song? - "Sweet France shall not lose her fame today": and it reminds me of what someone says of French, "Divine harmonious tongue, idiom of love, so sweet that speech therein moulds women's lips to smile."

This "Elegie" is a beauty - reminds me of Caruso singing Massenet's "Elegie" to which it is akin in strength, but in the Godowsky idiom - always other voices there. Now here a "Perpetuum Mobile", a class of work which paradoxically and mercifully comes to a close. This one is charming enough to listen to, but to play is perversity bedevilled, fulfilling its name in its searching movement more than I have seen.

amy



The "Menuett" is very lovely - stately dance of days gone by - and then the Tyrolesian rollicking "Schuhplatter" - the peasants slap the soles of their feet with their hands as they dance.

The reaper in "Valse Macabre" is a grim and inexorable reaper, ingeniously designed with fine pedaling effects and will majestically cut off your head with no compunction at all. As balm in Gilead comes the Angelus Bell, the choir, bowed head and genuflection, holy emotion, new resolution, and a transcendental exercise in delicate pedalling. The piece was written at Ischel in Bavaria on the Tyrol border, on the 25th anniversary of Liszt's death, 31st. July, 1911.

"Oriental" recalls to me the little Chinese gentlemen of "Kismet", in silks, bargaining through the market place of Baghdad a thousand years ago.

"Wuenerisch" - picture of Viennese splendour, languorous and capricious beauty. "Eine Saga", inscrutable wizard, seer of gleaming eye, with eerie shadowed background of owls, hobgoblins, and strange passing tones, hurls his awful prophetic thunderbolts - we have seen them fulfilled. The piece does not end exactly with a perfect cadence.

A gorgeous close to the series is the "Portrait" of Johann Strauss, a daring bravura work of charming grace and great brilliance, ending with a clever reversion to the opening "Karneval".

Godowsky was born at Vilna, Poland, 1870 - father a physician. He only just managed to get away from Belgium in 1914 on the outbreak of war and he is now (1918) in America. His last position on the Continent was at the historic Vienna Conservatorium, where he was engaged on his own terms, which he made prohibitive when invited to state them, as he was not desirous of changing his address.

Later Notes (1943) on the Walzermasken which I will call "Some After Midnight Thoughts on Godowsky by Paul Howard"

(A saucy lady replied, "Gracious, what had you for supper?" And I find that in a letter to Sr. Cecelia I referred to them as literary haemorrhages.)

KARNEVAL

The Walzermasken opens with this richly caparisoned pageant of Kings, in blazing sunlight. Banners curl and snap in the gay breeze; the colours are blood, green, gold and azure, and the legions of the ages pass, their glittering pennants diminishing with distance to infinity; and "Sultan after Sultan..."

Oh Leopold! Where do you get all this? I bow down in very deepest reverence and love, and it is repentent that I know you so well, and that you knew and so prized my devotion; and all that without our having never met...

Taken not too fast, its colossal orchestration moves with an expansive dignity, deep, full-throated sonorities speaking from the rich lower centre of the piano, at the same time that the double basses are supporting silver trumpets up in the air, all speaking together. You are quite right, no two

no all Europe

of bargaining

no all Europe  
- WITHE



hands could do any such thing. It is impossible, preposterous. You'll have to get the score, study it yourself, teach it to others and listen to it, and find not less that six hands could be expected, and you will realize that you have counted without Godowsky, the wizard, the seer, the prophet, the Buddha, who has so often and again done the impossible.

In a letter of January '41, Leo Pavia wrote to me, "I will give you the complete Sonatas of Haydn (with Dussek, Steibelt, and Hummel thrown in) for that superb bit of pagentry called Karneval. Robert Schumann, had he lived to hear, would have swooned of combined envy and ecstasy." And Loe Pavia knows, for he has composed grandly.

The same imperishable subject in another key forms the closing page of Portrait, the 24th of the Masques, and places the seal of unity upon the most tremendous, learned, melodious, intriguingly exciting, two hours programme.

oOo

I name these "After Midnight Thoughts" because they were usually written after midnight, when I would turn to my desk and write notes about the work I happened to be practising.

The question being raised in London of my making records of some Godowsky works, the Sonata and the 24 Walzermasken that do not seem to be played by others, has driven me to an orgy of revision.

After the turmoil of the past five years during which I have studied, memorized, and to some extent matured nineteen of the Master's later works, and counting the whole of the Suite for the Left Hand Alone as one work, and still having "In the Streets of Old Batavia" to finish, I find that I must cease further conquests while I revive the mighty 24 Walzermasken. And life is too short to do anything casually or carelessly, or to leave one atom of error or discrepancy in the wake. This applies also to the mood, atmosphere, and soul of the works as well as their notation, for they bristle and sparkle with innuendos, quips, little gales of amusement, the rush of laughter, a little cynicism, a shrug of the shoulders, and a thousand such colours.

oOo

#### PROFIL (Fr. Ch.)

I wrote notes on these Walzermasken 25 years ago, (see Pages 58 - 59), but still find surprises in them. I am restudying "Profil (Fr.Ch.)" This is the soul of the greater Chopin even though in waltz measure with Frederick writing for Countesses and the Royal Ballroom; but soon the Master invests Frederick with greater mentality and richness of context, and takes it into Allegro, and then a perfect bedevilment Vivace. He would do that: the fourth and fifth fingers of the right hand have to play the Vivace almost by themselves and they are rubbing up and down each other like a fly washing its front legs with chromatic diligence. He glides into the major mode with such loveliness as his brother Pole never surpassed, and with alternations of a tempo, allegro, and a closing vivace rounds off a most entrancing and sparkling work.



Then he taunts Liszt in "Silhouette" which must needs be a profile, and Liszt's profile was - well, what was it? It could be anything - saintly, satanic, heroic, patrician, knigly.

### SILHOUETTE (Fr. L.)

The Silhouette opens allegro impetuoso, say a measure to the beat at about 90, jumping from end to end of the piano; and in a second line full of 32nds., two measures are a flash of lightening, a blind sulpheric explosion; and there, in decorous waltz rhythm in centre stage, is the mocking red fiend, with evil grace, polish and insolence.

Intensely rhythmic, with nuance and rubato erratic, unstable, vacillating, he sets this varying tempo; a magnificent rejoinder in octaves, "My captain splendid, my serenade was not for you intended", and patrician Liszt in profile throws up his chin, smiles sardonically with white mane aflow and develops a whirling maestrom to the maddest waltz; pandemonium reigns, but Godowsky, polyphonic and orderly, makes a soul-satisfying pandemonium. Brass flames curl and writhe to the mad dance, and strings wail and race, tubas belch their defiance, resolute cellos endeavour to restore order for a measure or two alternately, but the tide rises to a frenzy of demonic drums and broiling to altissimo on a swaying trellis of octaves, in a flash, dives through a hole in the ground and leaves one trembling and bewildered, wondering where it has all gone, or whether indeed, it was a nightmare. Compared with this sky-rocketing, death-defying, contrapuntal bravura, Beerlioz's Fantastica is but a pedantic exercise.

Oh, great Master, what have you done? Could the magnificent Franz of Raiding change colour like the high stepping horse in the palace of the "Wizard of Oz", or would he in his tomb turn the richest green of envy.

Programmatic, you say. How else could he portray, caricature, or saterise the great Abbé, who was programmatic to the core of everything he did, Poem, Idyll, Etude; or even Sonata, in which, as Huneker said of this musical St. Anthony, he was ever on his knees either before a woman or a crucifix.

### PASTEL (Fr. Sch.)

The Master's thoughts immediately turn to his beloved Schubert, this time the Mask covering in Ternary form, dainty stepping minuet-like subjects. A pastel indeed, with all the most delicate of pastel shades, an amazing transition from the splendour and panoply of Karneval. More delicately and lovingly than would be possible in any water colour, does he etherealise the spirit of the gentle Franz, and make us feel that he is still with us, that he is our friend, and an essential part of all the happiness that we have or hope for.

No other collection of compositions could afford a greater array of contrasts in style, mood or colour; and you will, in this programme, spend a delightful session of laughter, tears and happiness (unless you get mad with my playing).



SKIZZE (Jh. Br.)

I am <sup>e</sup>working on Skizze - Sketch of Brahms - Walzermasken No.3, restudying, learning, - yes, and finding a tie or an inversion here and there. Am I careless, indeed? Well, you try and learn a few programmes of Godowsky's greater works yourself, and see where you land. That is always so with Godowsky. However well you think you know a work, you can always find something in the score which you can swear was not there before, and delight in the task of revision, as though it were something you had just discovered; nothing of his can sate.

What a glorious sketch of the great Brahms; he shines free from the thickness and muddy muddle he sometimes wrapped himself in, a transcendent and glorified Brahms, majestic, masterful, but just as profound, with all the heavenly azure of his divine inspiration; sweeping cantilenas with long flowing arpeggio undercarriage, interspersed among the subjects carrying his massive, tall, vertical music of tremendous chordal progressions, with the energetic stampings of the folk dancing, the very essence of 'the terrible old man of Hambourg'.

As I play, I hear the bones of Jh. Br. creaking as he fidgets and tries to turn over, and his thick voice rumbling through his beard, "Let me up, let me up, Leopold has shown me what it was I wanted to do".

MOMENTO CAPRICCIOSO. No. 4.

This ~~No.~~ 4 is a break before Berceuse, and a capricious moment indeed, in C minor, prancing about in the upper voices, while in the cello making a big contrabass bestir himself in glee that must leave him sweating enough to satisfy Alexander Jemnitz: but he is given a moment's respite for a delightful viola-like pizzicato passage, before repeating his assurances that his elephantine majesty really is the mask of a ballet-dancer.

KARIKATUR. No. 10.

Here is a one page impudent and dandified tatterdamalion who snaps eyeglass into place with technical precision, and with the dignity of a Hyde Park fop, leans on bent cane. Is this a caricature of a Gavarni King of Jesters? He apes stately steps to the accompaniment of his side kick, thrums a doleful and atonal-like dirge on a Mandoline that has been out in the rain all night; or maybe it is some old drunk playing his own requiem among the tombstones. And do I see Charlie's shuffling feet in the four groups of falling chromatic sixteenths near the eerie close? No, Charlie was still at school, but was perhaps foretold.

These twenty eight intiguing measures of vinegar are the essence of delightful ridicule of so much, and will make you sweat and rage galore for a year or two to realiably memorize, and long to fully absorb. And if, after years of use, you leave it alone for six months, you will have to learn it all over again.

oOo

These notes are not in numerical order as I wrote them from time to time on what I happen<sup>ed</sup> to be



practising. So I may as well insert here a letter I wrote to Sorabji in July 1942. Of course I know and understand him much better now, as I have his *Le Jardin Parfumé* and the *Clavicembalisticum* to work upon. With regard to the former, 27 pages, on 3 staves and a new language to me, I cabled him making an appointment to meet him at 150 years hence to play it to him and the fixture is accepted, But Gray-Fisk in sending the *Opus Clavicembalisticum* said that would take me 150 incarnations and I think he is right.

### ABENDGLOCKEN.

As Gray-Fisk said he could not stand Sorabji's long sentences, I thought I would give him (Sorabji) one to go on with in a long vocative, with a dwarfed letter, and long P.S. referring to the Angelus to which I have only referred to briefly on page 58.

"Very dear, mountainous, and to me, enigmatical Genius - you see I only know you on circumstantial evidence, indisputable, irresistible and terrific as far as it goes, only it does not go far enough - nothing can reveal the actual charm of composition but the written note itself, and for me composition must have its charm as well as power, since I am a creature of very deep emotions, which sometimes sweep me with typhoonal violence, (what is emotion and whence?) - subject to ecstasies, exaltations of spirit and occasional immersions in the depths of stygian gloom, though that does not last long, thank God; I think there must be a lot of the dork about me, I always pop up again, so much so, that I don't think I could be used to stop a champagne bottle; or in other words,

2 Ave Signor (i.e. Forgive me if my bawling somewhat short is falling of anthems sung in Heavenly places.)

After mailing a letter to you yesterday I find that I must send you a couple of letters received from Agnes Dobson, actress, daughter of actress, her father a veteran of the stage, and an old friend of mine, and a descendant of generations of stage players. Agnes is a very charming woman, easy to look at, and an interesting conversationalist, and as you will notice from her correspondence, as mad as a hatter.

Anyway, it is worth the postage stamp if it hands you a smile.

Most cordially,

(Sgd). Paul Howard.

P.S. Last night I played to a visitor the Valse Macabre and merged it into the *Abendglocken* (both *Walzermasken*) so substantial and quite a few pages, a transcendental Etude on everything *Donatello's* figures of the Annunciation (the Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary) fixed themselves in my mind especially during the central cantilena of clarion tones, and a storm overwhelmed and shook me, and it seemed as if each note had boundless depth and significance, and was blazoned across infinity. (Ghastly if to the matter it sounded but as the squeaking of a mouse). Full stop

After I finished it took minutes to quell my breathing, and regain composure, hiding my ridiculous



lacrimose condition by making a cigarette in a further corner. <sup>G</sup> good thing the music room is one of distance and deep shadow.

Why should I get like this? Whether it was my visitor's capacity for reception, or association of Donatello's genius, or the combination of them with the composition itself, I do not know. Ha! I wonder whether Godowsky again visited me!

How amazing the figures and faces of Donatello's Angel and the Virgin - one can gaze at them long, so unfathomable, so alive and urgent, faces that will hold at Donatello is that of St. Leonard. <sup>F</sup> tension, speculation, and awe, for all centuries to come. Another similarly compelling face by Donatello is that of St. Leonard. Some of Michaelangelo appeal less to me, but I find the Donatello so satisfying. And all carved out of life <sup>Life?</sup> Annunciation must be realised as the most colossal and outstanding moment of all history, dwarfing every other great event. Even to those not of the Christian faith, this aspect must appeal if the circumstance be accepted for the moment only for its limitless dramatic value, as did Godowsky.

(Sgd). Paul Howard."

#### BERCEUSE. No 5.

This is unique, the left hand commencing each measure on the third beat, which is tied to the first beat of the next measure, robbing it of its bar accent. Therefore the bar line might as well for that voice be shifted a beat to the left. The upper voices commence on the first beat of the next measure, each two measures being phrased to make it practically 6/8, beginning a beat later than the 3/4 of the base, a polyrhythmic effect most alluring. It is an oasis, a slumber land, a sanctuary wherein to find perfect peace, its coda's soft dissonances completing the passing from consciousness to slumber, with a sense of a world melting and fading out among the soft pillows, a pianissimo 5th. in the bass speaking last on the 3rd beat.

In fact, you go to sleep with the baby and don't sit up with the wide awake nurse.

#### KONTRAST. No. 6.

Bursts on the stage after the soothing Berceuse, with the first and only intimation of the Master's Russian background; for his native Vilna in Poland near the border must have had its early influences, and he may often later have turned an eye to Rimsky K. at whom this may be a sly dig, for every school and manner of all times come within his orbit.

In B flat minor, the skirts of the Ballerina are faster than the eye, as are also the 4th. and 5th. right hand fingers traversing the triplets with stretched-out thumb, for the swift whirlings.

A 'grazioso e tranquillo' adorns the centre, with many most melodious and ingenious transpositions and surprises; and doesn't he love to make his contrebasses bestir themselves with pizzicate agility and their sonorous heart swellings, and the busy piccolos <sup>o</sup> again command the wild dance, and the episode skyrockets in agitato.



It is a brilliant light relief to close the first quarter of the suite, a perfect group making an important quarter of any programme, while the next two, Profil and Silhouette, may be added for a bigger group, or as a third of the programme before interval, if the 24 are being presented at one hearing.

*il or iii see page 55+57*  
TYL ULENSPEGEL.

The legend must be of a formidable figure, a much greater one than a court jester, or a familiar witty figure of children's story books, to have inspired the mighty Symphonies of that title which exist, as well as this magnificent work.

The fascinating little man who wept going downhill thinking of the difficulties of climbing again, thinking of the ease of descending, and spoke great truths in parable or as jset, and with tongue in cheek, must have been a figure of gargantuan measure.

Or do legends such as this, and Faust, etc., originate in the far back mists from some trifling domestic event, dream, of old wives' tale, and snowball as the ages roll, fed and grown by the fertile minds of genius after genius?

Or shall we bow down in the blind credulity with which Chesterton accepts pure hearsay concerning the place and date of his birth, of which it is impossible for him to have first-hand knowledge, and accept as a fact that the figures of legends originally existed at some time in all their present circumstances?

This composition is capricious to the nth. degree, glorious phrases of a hundred moods tossing hither and thither as an enterprising and erratic dragonfly.

Many philosophies are propounded, and difficult situations perfectly solved with glee, and with the internal sparkle typical of all the Master's compositions, and which distinguishes his playing of other composer's works.

WIENERISCH. No.22.

The days of melody are not dead; it welled from Godowsky in a ceaseless stream. I pause to wonder how this ravishing Wienerisch subject came to him: whence, oh whence!

It is Vienna's soul, written in Godowsky's happiest days in Vienna soon after the dawn of this century, when he was young, happy, triumphant, and Vienna was Vienna. No wonder Kreisler transcribed it for violin and played it throughout the world, and no wonder Jascha Heifetz plays it round and round the seasons. It soothes, lulls; it is an oasis, nepenthe, a heaven wherein to forget and be happy awhile in the damned hell wherein we are flung. *p. 58*

Schubert, and many devine singers of the dim past, had sublime melody, none more so than Godowsky, and none had his polyphony; and his polyphony is divine as the main subject. Never are his supplementary voices mere conveyance for body, and taken alone, dry, but are by themselves all satisfying.



Should today's conflagration and destruction spread, and by some foul twist Vienna be destroyed, its memories will survive in nothing more poignantly lovely and consoling than in Wienerisch, and the 24th Walzermasken, Portrait, Joh.Str., Alt Wien in the Triakontameron and the 4th movement of his mighty Sonata.

Said Leo Pavia, "Godowsky was actually plus Viennois que les Viennois, and his works must be sung, caressed, wood out of the piano. The man was marvellous: he left the great Johann Strauss far behind."

And Leo is right - he knew, he lived in Vienna, and has himself composed exquisitely in the idiom.

PORTRAIT. Joh.Str. Walzermasken 24.

The crowning glory of the most magnificent suite ever penned for the piano. Allegro Con Fuoco! A night of victory, wild mad gaiety. Where are the fingers that can play it? Only the Master's miraculous digits, now alas no more? Anyway mine try, but I don't know who else has the pluck. I may be forgiven for that conceit, for the Master wrote to me many years ago:-

"You must be a formidable pianist even  
to attempt my 24 Walzermasken."

Don't touch it if your heart has a leaky valve, or there is a touch of blood pressure, not unless you have a broad torso that can carry strong arms and swift subtle fingers and wrists, through the delirious activity and serpentine twistings, with thistle-down touch; nor unless you can do all the above in contrapuntal bedevilment.

Avoid it unless you have the Viennese conception of grace, speed and sting, the frequent sudden sforzandos with immediate dramatic fermata, followed by a one measure PPP rall., then away again on the wind, riding a broomstick through the deep blue sky of feverish carnival night; unless you know ecstasy, rapture, utter and complete joyous abandon, and have the stay to do all that for fourteen pages in six minutes with clearness of articulation, and without noise. You must be free from asthma and bronchitis, for easy perfect breathing is imperative.

To play at pace, the sforzandos, pianos, the rallentandos and sudden pick-ups in such close succession, the innumerable sudden short crescendos, accents and nuances - it isn't what you say, but how you say it - needs everything, especially if you are playing the whole 24 on one session, for you must still be fresh to commence this one. There will be no time to fascinate by flinging your hands in the air, as some travellers love to do; you will have to stay on the keyboard all the time - pass by if you can't.

After an orgy of the loveliest Viennese themes, Godowsky's original themes, the Portrait closes with a transcendentalisation (that word belongs to Gray-Fisk) of the opening work, Karneval. (Ah, friend C.G.F. You are stonkered; I find the word transcendentalism used by Huneker in Steeplejack last century.)

Joh.Str. only pointed the way. He never knew the giant was coming who would elevate the idiom



to the skies.

Godowsky didn't know he was writing a work that would so soon be ready to celebrate the resurrection, the rebirth, of his beloved Vienna.

"Portrait" may be murdered, played 'efficiently', churned out, as they so arithmetically churn. Bach, who doubtless was hearted and human, and if he could hear one of the churners now, would probably slay him with a chair. If he heard some of the Gramo. records I have, he would splinter the contraption. If you can't add poetry to polyphony, it is worthless, and you had better try Fitting and Turning.

This, dear Member, completes the Walzermasken notes for the present. The next Instalment, No 7, will be some Letters, and the following No. 8 will be on the Java Suite, the Suite for the Left Hand Alone, and a letter to Clinton Gray-Fisk re. "Is Godowsky Box Office?"

Sincerely,

Paul Howard.