

The

NEWSLETTER

Vol IV

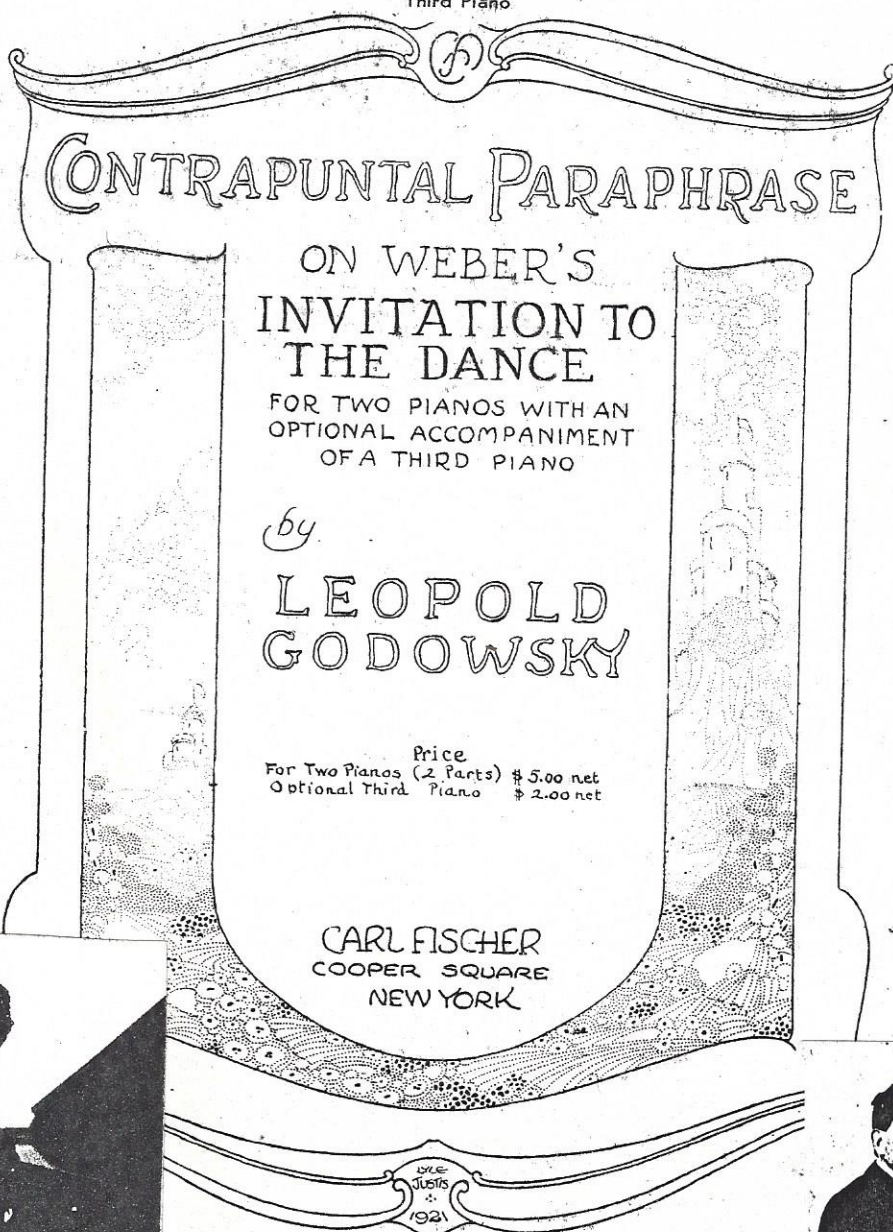
GODOWSKY SOCIETY

No 1



H. A. Bauer

Third Piano



CONTRAPUNTAL PARAPHRASE
 ON WEBER'S
**INVITATION TO
 THE DANCE**
 FOR TWO PIANOS WITH AN
 OPTIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT
 OF A THIRD PIANO

by
**LEOPOLD
 GODOWSKY**

 Price
 For Two Pianos (2 Parts) \$ 5.00 net
 Optional Third Piano \$ 2.00 net

CARL FISCHER
 COOPER SQUARE
 NEW YORK

OP. 104
 JUSTIS
 1921



THE GODOWSKY SOCIETY

Patrons:

Shura Cherkassky

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji

Ronald Stevenson

This should, of course, have been written last October - way back in 1983. My apologies - but fear not, I'll try to do my part to make 1984 a bumper one by producing three newsletters throughout this year.

I mean a bumper year for Godowsky, of course, as this year should see the publication of the first ever published biography of Godowsky. **Written by** Jeremy Nicholas who, for the purposes of researching this book has forsaken the reaches of the Thames not to mention the companionship of George and Harris and Montmorency (whom we shall not forget). For those deaf to the delights of Radio 4, may I inform readers that Mr Nicholas is sometimes to be heard in Stop the week with Robert Robinson and that his music is on occasion to be heard played by the Grimethorpe Colliery Band. I look forward to reading his book and as he is being kind enough to send me a review copy on publication, a special edition of the Newsletter will be issued containing a review of the book along with full publication details. And it can't come too soon.

Since the last edition of the Newsletter, Gordon Fergus-Thomson has been once again on Radio 3 playing Godowsky, and this time, an original work - not a transcription: The Gardens of Buitenzorg, no 8. from the Java Suite was given a performance which can have done the Godowsky cause nothing but good. More recently, Mr. Fergus-Thomson was to be heard playing Anton Rubinstein's Fourth concerto: it is good to hear of a young pianist exploring the byways of piano literature. And he is not the only one, for I have had a letter recently from another young pianist who is programming Godowsky's Artist Life paraphrase - this is Thomas Wakefield who is based in Manchester. Is there to be a Manchester School of Godowsky?

After writing that, what can I do but report a recording by a Japanese pianist Shigeo Neriki who was not trained in Manchester. Mr Neriki has had the thoughtful idea of bringing together transcriptions of the twelve Chopin Etudes from Opus 10, and the ones which he presents are as follows: Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 22. Any pianist attempting a programme like this either has a most secure technique or is a fool: Mr Neriki has the technique to give more than adequate accounts of his chosen items. In the first Study, he gives a good sturdy performance, but play after it Jorge Bolet's account and note the latter's imperious arrogance at bar 69 (marked by Godowsky "In the coda the player must not show the slightest sign of fatigue") to see that the transcriptions possess musical value besides the purely pianistic interest - although it must be said in all honesty that the musical interest is variable - especially with many of the left-hand transcriptions which, although fascinating from the pianistic point of view add nothing to the original, and it is only in those free versions, represented here by nos 6 and 21 that Godowsky really creates something with his own creative personality written all over it.

This recording is not generally available through the usual channels, but copies may be obtained from:

Phyllis E. Stender
Executive secretary
Pianists Foundation of America,
4001 E. Blacklidge Dr., 1
Tucson, AZ 85712
U.S.A.

for a cost of seven dollars 50 plus postage which works out at three dollars 98 for Air mail and one dollar 58 boat rate - this takes about two months to arrive which is a bit on the slow side.

And while on the subject of records, there is news that will make anyone believe in miracles. It is on four LP's, this legendary work for piano solo by our revered - not too revered, for he is too lively for that - Patron, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; the work recorded, is the Opus Clavicembalisticum. This recording is available through Harold Moores 2 Great Marlborough st. London W.1. The pianist (and he surely deserves a mention(!)) is Geoffrey Madge.

Mr James Methven Campbell whose book Chopin Playing from the Composer to the present day I wrote about in the last issue has been good enough to contact me regarding Godowsky's re-working of the Chopin F minor Concerto. His source of information was Zbigniew Drzewiecki's remarks on Godowsky in a booklet contained in the (Polish) Muza Records set The Golden Pages of Polish Pianistic Art, which comes from his personal reminiscences. Mr. Methven Campbell also tells me that the book mentioned in the last Newsletter - Chasin's Speaking of Pianists is currently available in paperback - warmly recommended to all interested in the piano - which you must be to subscribe to this.

Apropos to my comments regarding transcriptions in the last issue, I would like to add one more voice - and a weighty one too - to the champions of transcriptions.

This is an extract from a letter of Ferruccio Busoni to his wife dated 22 July 1913:

"Transcription occupies an important place in the literature of the piano; and looked at from a right point of view, every important piano piece is the reduction of a big thought to a practical instrument. But transcription has become an independent art, no matter whether the starting point of a composition is original or unoriginal. Bach, Beethoven, Liszt and Brahms were evidently all of the opinion that there is artistic value concealed in a pure transcription; for they developed the art themselves, seriously and lovingly. In fact, the art of transcription has made it possible for the piano to take possession of the entire literature of music. Much that is inartistic, however, has got mixed up with this branch of the art. And it was because of the cheap, superficial extimation of it made by certain men, who had to hide their nakedness with a mantle of "being serious", that it sank down to what was considered a low level."

From. Ferruccio Busoni, Letters to His Wife, translated by Roasmond Ley, Edward Arnold & Co. London 1938.

This Newsletter contains a selection of golden oldies bound together by the fact that all the authors knew Godowsky personally - all, that is, bar Paul Howard. However, although Howard never actually meet Godowsky, he corresponded with him for over twenty years. This piece of Howard's is a prime example of his pungent advocacy. And it is good, I think, to have the two personal tributes to Godowsky the man.

Harry Winstanley,
31 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh, EH1 3PA Scotland.

9 March 1984

EULOGY FOR LEOPOLD GODOWSKY by EDWARD G. ROBINSON

Given at Memorial Service, Wilshire BLVD. Temple -
November 28, 1938, Los Angeles, California.

The first meeting with a great soul is a revelation and becomes a precious memory. I recall my first meeting with Leopold Godowsky, not only because it made an indelible impression upon me, but because it presents the complete man, rather than a profile. One day more than twenty years ago, a friend guided me to the Hotel Ansonia where the Great Godowsky, prince of pianists and master-wit, was "at home" to friends, colleagues and aspirants. At the height of his powers and his fame, almost a legendary figure for learning and virtuosity, I expected to find a difficult, unapproachable man, accepting incense from his admirers as his natural right. I was more than nervous and regretted my temerity in accepting my friend's invitation to the gathering. Who was I and what did I have to offer? Just another visitor! Imagine then my surprise when I saw in the center of the long and spacious music-room a short man with a dominating forehead, twinkling eyes and a smile that put you immediately at your ease. Around him a group of interested people, young and old, from varied walks of life. He moved quickly from individual to individual; listened, talked, parried, examined the compositions of budding talents, and, if only for an instant, he gave of himself to each one in the room. Everyone addressed him as "Popsy" and it did not take long to realize that in that nickname was embodied their reverence for his wisdom and understanding. He took me aside and questioned me on my work and plans. And in that moment, although I was out of place in any groups of musicians, I felt the relationship of disciple to master. From that meeting I gained also the realization that it is not a man's speciality that makes him great - that true greatness embraces and helps all with whom it comes in contact.

Years later, when he conducted those master classes in this city which became a Mecca for musicians, I asked permission to attend some of his classes. He graciously consented. Again I listened to him as a lay disciple. I could not understand the technical details of his discourses, but I was more than rewarded by his flashes of insight, his philosophical digressions and rich ideas which made him truly a teacher in the largest sense. But apart from his genius in music, he had a genius for living. His absorption in music did not keep him from realizing fully all that life had to offer.

He was sensitive to every infringement on human dignity and co-operated with the fight against intolerance, ugliness and falsehood. He was a co-worker with Albert Einstein and other representative men in measures to ameliorate the lot of Jews in the twilight of Europe. He co-operated equally with organizations dealing with humanity as a whole. He responded to all that was of worth, regardless of labels, creeds, accident of birth or occupation. His advice, eagerly sought by all and sundry, was so simple, wise and gracious, that he reminded me of one of the Gaonim in whom were combined learning, wit and humility. Our great American critic, James Huneker, called him "The Brahma of the Keyboard".

That characterization is a profile and a true one; but the full face, which radiated loving-kindness, suggested to me an active sage rather than a brooding spirit. It is no exaggeration to describe his features as luminous, and this light shone on his relations with people, as in his works and teaching.

It was easy to love Leopold Godowsky, and the love and friendship he aroused in those who knew him paid great rewards. There was nothing so warming as the joy he took in the friendships he made. He was responsive to the

affections of his friends in so simple and unaffected a way, that even casual and transient meetings with him were enriched into unforgettable moments. I value above all things the memory that I have of "Popsy". Popsy --- high spirited, almost boyish, simple, unaffected - lovable, and charged with a power to make all things great and small, absorbing and significant.

Edward G. Robinson

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EULOGY FOR LEOPOLD GODOWSKY by LOUIS GRUENBERG

Given at Memorial Service, Wilshire BLVD Temple -
Nov. 28, 1938, Los Angeles, California.

We, the composers living in Los Angeles, have gathered here in humility and with full hearts, to do homage to a great, departed soul that while living on this earth, was called Leopold Godowsky.

And this great soul was so vivid, so beautifully alive, so witty and so brilliant, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find proper words to adequately express the impression that one had, one who had the great privilege and good fortune to come in contact with it.

And yet -- perhaps there WAS one predominating impression that was so compelling that it over-shadowed all others in spite of their brilliancy, just as there is one star that overshadows all others in the heavens above. And this predominating impression was the glow of Humanitarianism, the glow of unpretentious generosity that emanated from this soul; and this was so evident, so all-prevailing, that many, many persons gave this soul a name of their own. A name all of us associate with something unselfish, warm and beautiful. We called this soul Popsy. Just that.....Popsy Godowsky.

And when we called him that, we wished to express our love, and we wished to express our admiration. And the love was for the man, and the admiration was for a creative artist. Make no mistake about it....this little man with a great soul was perhaps the greatest composer for the piano since the days of Liszt and Chopin. I feel sure that posterity will grant him this position when in the course of time his compositions will have stood the test of repeated evaluations and repeated hearings.

I remember full well some thirty odd years ago, when he burst on us like a meteor at a concert in Berlin with his Chopin transcriptions, and actually became famous in one night. I remember vividly how the audience stood up as one man to gaze in astonishment at the figure on the stage that was performing miracles at a piano.

Yes, they were miracles, for we were hearing not one, but two and three etudes by Chopin played at the same time, and with only ten fingers. Today, thirty years later, we still regard these transcriptions as miracles of ingenuity; yes, perhaps we regard them as personal creations of the highest order.

For personal creations are those that reflect the personality and convey the aspirations of the creator, and these transcriptions founded on etudes of Chopin are surely great personal experiences in musical art. In fact, they are more personal and more individual than many a so-called original work by a more famous composer.

His extraordinary technical pianistic achievements were almost legendary in his lifetime, and the technical proficiency displayed in his piano works, shows an equally astonishing craftsmanship.

As an example of his artistic integrity, I recall one day when he asked me to listen to his newly completed arrangement of Weber's "Invitation to the Waltz", and intrigued by the spectacle of six pianists (three of them must have been turning the pages!! Ed.) playing at three pianos, I, in a moment of flippancy, suggested that still ANOTHER bit of counterpoint could be introduced, but that it would need the services of still another pianist. And to my astonishment, he took the matter seriously and toyed with the idea for a long time. In other words, he, a true seeker of truth in art, wherever it may be, was ever eager and ready to make every effort to create a shimmer of what he considered beauty.

I should like to see the memory of Leopold Godowsky perpetuated by something more permanent than mere words, for he stood for integrity, humanity and humility. The last is significant, for all really great artists are inwardly exceedingly modest. They realize as no one better, the utter impossibility to actually achieve the actuality of their dreams, and that makes them meek. And with all his world fame, his stupendous technic, both as a pianist and composer, Leopold Godowsky was a man of humility,

And how his memory is to be perpetuated I leave to more capable hands. I only know that now, more than before, it is the duty of every decent man and artist in this world of tears, to perpetuate the name of a great human being. And Leopold Godowsky was a great and good man.

I beg of you, those who loved him, to bow your heads silently for a moment, in order to pray to the ALMIGHTY LORD above, of all human children, that HE take the soul of Popsy Godowsky to His great heart.

Louis Gruenberg

Editor's note : a reminder regarding Godowsky's treatments of Weber's Invitation to the Dance.
1905: contrapuntal arrangement dedicated to Ferruccio Busoni
1922: contrapuntal paraphrase for two pianos with an optional accompaniment of a third piano. Dedicated to Guy Maier and Lee Pattison. This later transcription is very closely related to the earlier work in that it is a fairly straightforward two-piano arrangement.....plus.

IS GODOWSKY BOX OFFICE?

Very Dear Friend Gray-Fisk,

You say do I think Godowsky will ever be Box Office, and I have given that the deepest thought, under favourable conditions, because I have been for months in the throes of rehearsing vast Godowsky repertoire ready to play to visitors I expect to stay in the house a couple of weeks at Christmas, to wit, Professor Alexander Hmelnitsky whom I call Shura, Leonard Harrop, Flight Commander, formerly lecturer in Spanish at the Perth University, and others.

The answer is emphatically Yes.

I don't know that the Sonata can be used complete with the immortal 5th. Movement for the hoipoloi, but the first three Movements would have terrific effect. The 4th. and 5th. could be added to a very good audience.

In fact, if omitting the 5th, the 4th Movement could be played before the 3rd. and be an excellent foil between the highly symphonic 2nd and the sky-rocketing 3rd.

5th. Movement of the Sonata can be played by itself, its incomparable five sections all PPP, the Retrospect, the Lamentation, Fugue, Dies Irae, and the sublime, yes, that is the only word, sublime, closure, can be used as an opening number for a programme or a centre number.

The only reason I fear the whole Sonata for a common recital audience is that the recitalists have ruined their audiences with programmes consisting of a succession of wornout tit-bits. On this argument I will enclose my letter to Harold Bauer who wrote me that "either through his fault or misfortune he has never acquired the necessary technique to play Godowsky."

Of course, Godowsky being Box Office depends upon the recitalists acquiring a higher technique, not an increase of the mad scale and arpeggio racings and bangings and vulgar flying hands, but a higher technique of producing still greater effects, deeper and fuller in the work of Godowsky, by greater independence of finger and better and clearer dynamic part playing which all depends on clearer thinking.

Of course you means is the Godowsky music sensational enough

It is.

The 24 Walzermasken can be used as one whole programme, takes about two hours to play, or they may be used in groups, or single works from here and there.

Each one is beautiful, interesting, arresting, intelligent - I mean all that to the man in the street.

Many of the Walzermasken are most terrifically sensational, breathtaking; for instance, the Liszt Silhouette, and the Strauss Portrait - Godowsky's own subject themes, not theirs.

Please read here my After Midnight Thoughts on these two in Instalment 6 (Newsletter Vol. II no.1.)

Many of the Java Suite are captivating, others are sensational, carrying everything before them, so rhythmically, insistently intriguing, that the

listener will be breathless. The achievement of relaxation that I have not yet seen in any pianist is needed, because without relaxation from toe to scalp the works could never be delivered.

The Poems, the Waltz-Poems, the Capriccio (Patetico), and so many other works of exquisite delicate tracery are useful for inner brackets among the bigger ones. There are his six transcendentalizations of the Bach Violin and 'Cello unaccompanied Sonatas (Suites), greater, fuller, more resonant, than any of the big Bach works as arranged by Tausig and d'Albert and others.)

And that is without touching on his Strauss Metamorphosian, Wein, Weib und Gesang, etc., five of them, and the Gipsy Baron, about 27 pages of terrifying bravura for the left hand alone.

Look at the sensational effect of anyone playing the Suite for the Left Hand Alone, so full and orchestral. " The Scriabin trifles for the left are themerest junk, and the Saint-Saens Suite for the Left Hand looks and sounds by comparison like some Czerny exercises. There is the Master's Prelude and Fugue for Left Hand Alone, a riproaring opening number and would get any audience on its toes.

I have only touched on the subject and could go on with pages of this, for his works are legion, and in them he has been all things to all men.

Godowsky is not only Box Office, but he is outstanding, incomparable Box Office, and for the artist, ah! there is the rub, the artist - the real thing - with the brains, the heart, the stamina, the confidence, the strength of purpose, and the indomitable will to command the mastery of these super works, Godowsky means transcendent triumph, and the great little man's Godlike charitableness will lift the artist to the highest pedestal yet achieved on the concert platform, just as the Master's own appearance in Berlin caused the sensation of the century.

Haste the day when we shall be able to sit in reverence to a pianoforte recital of dignity, majesty, charm and excitement.....

Well, that answers one line of your letter: I know there is a lot more and I will get to it anon.

Affectionately,

(Sgd). Paul Howard

13 December 1944.

The following is an extract from Great Pianists on Piano Playing,

Study Talks with Foremost Virtuosos

By

James Francis Cooke

(Theo. Presser Co. Philadelphia, PA; (c) 1913.)

The Real Significance of Technic = Leopold Godowsky.

Ideas Upon Technic Often Erroneous

"It is quite impossible in a short talk to earnest music students to do more than discuss a few of the more important points in the subject proposed. It may safely be said at the start, however, that the popular conception of technic is quite an erroneous one and one that deserves correction. It is highly necessary that the student should have a correct attitude of mind regarding this matter. First of all, I distinguish between what might be called mere mechanics and technic.

"The art of piano playing as a whole seems to divide itself into three quite distinct channels when it is considered from the educational standpoint. The first channel is that of mechanics. This would naturally include all that pertains to that branch of piano study which has to do with the exercises that develop the hand from the machine standpoint - that is, make it capable of playing with the greatest possible rapidity, the greatest possible power, when power is needed and also provide it with the ability to play those passages which, because of fingering or unusual arrangement of the piano keys, are particularly difficult to perform.

The Brain Side of Piano Study

"In the second channel we would find the study of the technic of the art of playing the instrument. Technic differs from the mechanics of piano playing in that it has properly to do with the intellectual phase of the subject rather than the physical. It is the brain side of the study not the digital or the manual. To the average student who is short-sighted enough to spend hours hammering away at the keyboard developing the mechanical side of his work, a real conscious knowledge of the great saving he could effect through technic, would be a godsend. Technic properly has to do with Rhythm, Tempo, Accent, Phrasing, Dynamics, Agogics, Touch, etc.

"The excellence of one's technic depends upon the accuracy of one's understanding of these subjects and his skill in applying them to his interpretations at the keyboard. Mechanical skill, minus real technical grasp, places a player upon a lower footing than the piano-playing machines which really do play all the notes, with all the speed and all the power the operator demands. Some of these instruments, indeed, are so constructed that many of the important considerations that we have placed in the realm of technic are reproduced in a surprising manner.

The Emotions in Piano Playing

"However, not until man invents a living soul can piano playing by machine include the third and vastly important channel through which we communicate the works of the masters to those who would hear them. That channel is the

emotional or artistic phase of piano playing. It is the channel which the student must expect to develop largely through his own inborn sense and his cultivated powers of observation of the playing of master pianists. It is the sacred fire communicated from one art generation to the next and modified by the individual emotions of the performer himself.

"Even though the performer may possess the most highly perfected mechanism, technical mastery which enables him to play great masterpieces effectively, if he does not possess the emotional insight, his performances will lack a peculiar subtlety and artistic power that will deprive him of becoming a truly great pianist.

Inspiring the Student

"Exercises for the mechanical side of pianoforte playing abound. Czerny alone wrote over one thousand opus numbers. There have also been valuable attempts to provide books to assist the student in his technical work, but it should always be remembered that this depends first of all upon understanding and then upon the ability to translate that understanding to the instrument.

"There can never be any exercises in the emotional side of the student's work other than the entire literature of the instrument. One may as well try to capture the perfume of the flower as define the requirements of the emotional in pianoforte playing. A great deal may be done to inspire the student and suggest ideas which may bring him to the proper artistic appreciation of a passage, but it is this very indefinability which makes the emotional phase one of the most important of all. Attendance at the recitals of artistic pianists is of great help in this connection.

"The student, however, may learn a vast amount about real piano technic and apply his knowledge to his playing through the medium of the proper studies. For instance, in the subject of touch alone, there is a vast store of valuable information which can be gained from a review of the progressive steps through which this significant phase of the subject has passed during the last century. The art of piano playing, considered apart from that of the similar instruments which preceded the piano, is very little over one hundred years old.

Changes in the Mechanism of the Instrument

"During this time many significant changes have been made in the mechanism of the instrument and in the methods of manufacture. These changes in the nature of the instrument have in themselves doubtless had much to do with changes in methods of touch as have the natural evolutions coming through countless experiments made by teachers and performers. Thus we may speak of the subject of touch as being divided into three epochs, the first being that of Czerny (characterized by a stroke touch), the second being that of the famous Stuttgart Conservatory (characterized by a pressure touch), and the third or new epoch which is characterized by weight playing. All my own playing is based upon the last named method, and I had the honor of being one of the first to make application of it when I commenced teaching some twenty years ago.

The Significance of Weight Playing

"In this method of playing, the fingers are virtually 'glued to the keys' in that they leave them the least possible distance in order to accomplish their essential aims. This results in no waste motion of any kind, no loss of power and consequently the greatest possible conservation of energy. In this manner of playing the arm is so relaxed that it would fall to the side

if the keyboard were removed from beneath it. Since the hand and the arm are relaxed the back (top) of the hand is almost on a level with the forearm.

"The high angular stroke which characterized the playing of the Czerny epoch and which could hardly fail to cause tired muscles and unbearably stiff playing, is seen very little in these days. By means of it the student was taught to deliver a blow to the keyboard - a blow which permitted very little modification to the requirements of modern technic.

"In my experience as a pianist and as a teacher, I have observed that the weight touch allows the greatest possible opportunity for the proper application of those all-important divisions of technic without which piano playing is not only inartistic, but devoid of all interest. Weight playing permits nothing to interfere with discriminative phrasing, complicated rhythmical problems, the infinitely subtle variation of time for expressive purposes now classed under the head of agogics, all shades of dynamic gradation; in fact everything that falls in the domain of the artist pianist.

Moulding the Fingers to the Keys

"In weight playing the fingers seem to mould the piano keys under them, the hand and arm are relaxed, but never heavy. The maximum of relaxation results in the minimum of fatigue. In legato playing, for instance, the fingers rest upon the fleshy part behind the tip rather than immediately upon the tip as they would in passage work when the player desired to have the effect of a string of pearls. The sensation in legato playing is that of pulling back rather than striking the keys. In passages where force is required the sensation is that of pushing.

"Much might be said of the sensibility of the finger tips as they come in contact with the ivory and ebony keys. Most every artist has a strong consciousness that there is a very manifest relation between his emotional and mental conditions and his tactile sense, that is his highly developed sense of feeling at the finger tips of the keyboard. However, the phenomena may be explained from the psychological standpoint, it is nevertheless true that the feeling of longing, yearning, hope or soulful anticipation, for instance, induces a totally different kind of touch from that of anger, resentment or hate.

"The artist who is incapable of communicating his emotions to the keyboard or who must depend upon artifice to stimulate emotions rarely electrifies his audiences. Every concert is a test of the artist's sincerity, not merely an exhibition of his prowess, or his acrobatic accomplishments on the keyboard. He must have some vital message to convey to his audience or else his entire performance will prove meaningless, soulless, worthless.

"That which is great importance to him is to have the least possible barrier between his artistic conception of the work he would interpret and the sounds that are conveyed to the ears of his audience. If we obliterate the emotional side and depend upon artifice or what might be called in vulgar parlance "tricks of the trade," pianism will inevitably descend to a vastly lower level. By cultivating a sensibility in touch and employing the technical means which will bring the interpreter's message to the world with the least possible obstruction, we reach the highest in the art. Those who would strain at gnats might contend that with the machinery of the instrument itself, intervening between the touch at the keyboard and the sounding wires, would make the influence of the emotions through the tactile sense (sense of touch) is wholly negligible. To this I can only reply that the experience of the artist and the teacher is always more reliable, more susceptible to finer appreciations of artistic values than that of the pure

theorist, who views his problems through material rather than spiritual eyes. Every observing pianist is familiar with the remarkable influence upon the nerves of the voice-making apparatus that any emotion makes. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the finger tips possess a similar sensibility and that the interpretations of any highly trained artist are duly affected through them?

Individuality, Character and Temperament

"Indeed, Individuality, Character and Temperament are becoming more and more significant in the highly organized art of pianoforte playing. Remove these and the playing of the artist again becomes little better than that of a piano-playing machine. No machine can ever achieve the distinguishing charm that this trinity brings to pianoforte playing. Whether the performer is a 'genius' who has carefully developed the performance of a masterpiece until it evidences that distinguishing mark of the authoritative interpretation, or whether he is a 'talent' who improvises as the mood of the moment inspires him and never plays the same composition twice in anything like a similar manner, he need not fear the rivalry of any machine so long as he preserves his individuality, character and temperament.

Genius and Work

"The fault with many students, however, is the very erroneous idea that genius or talent will take the place of study and work. They minimize the necessity for a careful painstaking consideration of the infinite details of technic. To them, the significance of the developments of Bach, Rameau, and Scarlatti in fingering means nothing. They are content with the superficial. They are incapable of comparing the value of the advances made by Von Bülow, Tausig and other innovators whose lives were given to a large extent to the higher development of the technic of the instrument. They struggle laboriously at the keyboard, imagining that they are dealing with the problem of technic, when in reality they are doing little more than performing a drill in a kind of musical gymnasium - a necessary drill to be sure, but at the same time quite worthless unless directed by a brain trained in the principles of the technic of the art.

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From: Famous Musicians of a Wandering Race

by Gdal Saleski (Bloch Publishing Co., N.Y., 1927)

Leopold Godowsky was born in the ancient town Vilna (in the Lithuanian province of Russian Poland), on February 3, 1870. The ruins of the old castle which stands above Vilna have staunchly withstood the storms of many centuries. It was in this old-world atmosphere, in this town of talmudical seminaries and debating cabalists, that the child spent the first decade of his life. Here, at the early age of nine, he gave his first public concert, having shown an extraordinary aptitude for music since he was three years old.

Apparently, at that time, the youth already possessed definite opinions about pianoforte teaching, for when in 1883 he attended the Hochschule in Berlin, he found the instruction so dull and conventional that he left after a few months, entering upon an American tour when but fourteen years of age. In the United States he concertized with Clara Louise Kellogg and Emma Thursby, also appearing a number of times at the Sunday Orchestra Concerts given at the New York Casino. He subsequently toured the United States and Canada with the violinist Ovide Musin.

But the young pianist's wish was to study with Liszt, who was then in Weimar. One can imagine with what sadness and disappointment the boy learned, after arriving in Europe, that Liszt had just died. This was in 1886.

A year later he was presented to Camille Saint-Saëns["] who, having heard Godowsky play his own compositions, took the warmest personal interest in his musical education. Unfortunately, Saint-Saëns' restless spirit led him frequently to foreign countries, and this prevented the eager student, who remained in Paris for three years, from fully availing himself of the advice of the distinguished master. Thus Godowsky is practically a self-taught musician.

Returning to the United States in 1890, he married Frederica Saxe of New York, in 1891. After a sojourn of several months in Europe with his young wife, he again set sail for America. He soon appeared at the Lenox Lyceum Orchestral Concerts conducted by Theodore Thomas, with such success that he was offered numerous engagements, followed by an extensive tour during the succeeding seasons.

At this time he was appointed instructor of the piano teachers at the Broad Street Conservatory, in Philadelphia. This was the beginning of his career as pedagogue. He did not neglect his concert engagements, for it was his ambition to co-ordinate these two lines of artistic endeavor. Thus it was natural that he should accept an offer to direct the piano department of the Chicago Conservatory in 1894. Here, at the age of twenty-four, he took up the duties relinquished by William H Sherwood, the famous American pianist.

Like Saint-Saëns["], Leopold Godowsky is of a restless spirit. In 1900 he decided to challenge European opinion. The most distinguished pianists of the day had long urged him to do this. His debut in Berlin on December 6, 1900, will forever remain memorable in the annals of the piano-playing world. In one night Godowsky's name was firmly established in the musical firmament. There followed nine years of concertizing through-

out the world, meeting everywhere with the greatest possible recognition of his stupendous talents, until in 1909 he resumed his pedagogic activities by becoming director of the Master School of piano playing at the Imperial Conservatory in Vienna. This post was previously held by Emil Sauer and F.B. Busoni. In 1912, he returned to the United States and established a reputation as the greatest piano pedagogue on that Continent.

Godowsky is a firm believer in work. "The fault with many students," he says, "is the erroneous idea that genius or talent will take the place of work. They minimize the necessity for careful, painstaking consideration of the infinite details of techniqueBut this is not all, Individuality, character, and temperament are becoming more and more significant in the highly organized art of piano-forte playing. Remove these, and the playing of the artist becomes little better than that of a piano-playing machine.."

The one thing in the world to which Leopold Godowsky objects most emphatically is being called a pianist! This seems strange in view of his worldwide reputation as such, but an explanation from Godowsky himself throws a new light on the matter. A pianist, according to him, is one whose sole medium of expression is the keyboard, one whose instrument is the be-all and end-all of his existence, and the end as well as the means of his artistic expression. Godowsky, on the other hand, has a broader concept of art; and while the piano has served him as an excellent medium, he finds an equal, if not surpassing, satisfaction in composition and travel. Back from the Orient, where he concertized again during the season of 1924-25, just long enough to complete his Java Suite, he made ready to leave New York once more in September of 1925, this time for a tour of Egypt, Assyria, and Palestine.

"I consider," he said, "that the years I spent in teaching were an unfortunate choice of my early career. Of course teaching is a noble profession, but I have found that the results are not in proportion to the time and effort spent. It is so futile to teach where there is no pure gold - like preaching in the wilderness. Great genius is exceedingly scarce, and I have not yet found one supreme talent. It is discouraging to realize that there is not one Chopin or Liszt living today who has created a new art for the piano."

And so, since the average pupil is in the majority, Godowsky has always favored class-teaching, as this involved a lesser expenditure of the teacher's time and has many advantages for the pupils. He believes that a group of pupils will make a greater effort to be intelligent than a single person with no competition. When Godowsky was director of the Master School of the Imperial Royal Academy in Vienna, he taught only in classes.

"It is more inspiring," he insists, "for the teacher to talk to a group. I had forty in my piano classes, fifteen who played, and twenty-five who listened. It was a wonderful master-class, the quintessence of piano-playing in Europe. The pupils who played received the benefit of the criticisms from the others. Also, we were able to cover a greater field of compositions when everyone was learning a different work. Thus class teaching is the only means of embracing a large repertoire. Also, it is an incentive to the student to distinguish himself. There is a competitive spirit, a feeling of friendly rivalry, that causes a class pupil to put forth a greater effort than a private pupil who has no basis of comparison for his work. There is a certain amount of alertness in classes, while I have always found that private lessons are bound to drag. It is more difficult to go beyond mere mechanics with a private pupil. For one or the other, self-consciousness stands in the way, whereas aesthetics can prevail in a large class.

"And that leads me to say that I have no use for the conventional type of

class teacher, the horn-rimmed type so academically stiff! Perhaps it was this which caused me to make musicians and artists out of my pupils, rather than pianists. I am also in favor of class lessons in the field of composition. The pupil gets a better perspective of his own work. And speaking of composition, I am tempted to confess that my greatest wish is that I had begun earlier to realize the tremendous satisfaction derived from this angle of music as an artistic outlet."

Godowsky as a composer is quite as delightful as he is in the role of pianist. His Triakontameron, Renaissance, and Waltzermasken, to say nothing of his prolific transcriptions, are features of almost every piano repertoire today. In August of 1925, the three first volumes of his newest work were brought out.

Since he is of the opinion that travel is one of the finer arts and also that music can be descriptive, he has put two and two together and, with his usual ability as a jongleur de mots, has invented a synonym for sound journeys and named his new compositions, Phonoramas.

"In order to eliminate the cheap clap-trap endings to programmes, sending the audience away with a little melodramatic excitement," says Godowsky, "I am doing a series of travelogues, ranging from 'Java' to 'Jazz.' The 'Java' Suite is now complete and will be heard on many programs."

"Next I shall record my musical impressions of Egypt, Assyria and Palestine, as well as those of several European countries. Then I shall come back to America and start on the American suite I have already planned. This American suite will begin with a polyphonic sketch entitled the Melting Pot in which early America is shown as a combination of Old World elements. There will be a skyscraper movement to denote the energy and power of America and its significant aim to reach the skies. A description of Niagra Falls will symbolize the momentum of American life, and there will be local descriptions involving the Negro rhythms of the South and the Indian color of the West. Such elements as the cowboy and miner will be treated carefully. The final sketch will be my conception of glorified jazz."

It has been six long years (1921-27) since New York has heard Godowsky play, and it will be at least one more before he will play there again. It is not because he is giving up his pianistic career. On the other hand, he gave concerts in all parts of the world, some near and familiar, others remote and strange, because he prefers to absorb the ideas, musical and otherwise, of the entire universe rather than to stay in one little circle in New York.

"For instance," he says, "a visit to Java is like entering another world or catching a fleeting glimpse of immortality. Musically, it is amazing. One cannot describe it because it is a simple sensation as difficult to explain as color to a blind person."

"The sonority of the gamelan is so weird, spectral, fantastic, and bewitching, and the native music is so elusive, vague, shimmering, and singular, that on listening to this new world of sound I lose my sense of reality. It is the ecstasy of such moments, possible only through world travel, that makes life full of meaning and raises art to the pedestal of the Golden Age."

When Vladimir de Pachman made his sensational re-appearances in the United States in 1924, he was asked by an inquiring New York reporter whom he considered the greatest pianist. To this the old master replied in his characteristic way, "Next to myself comes Leopold Godowsky."

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