

SCHARWENKA'S GREAT SUCCESS IN ST. LOUIS.

Celebrated Composer-Pianist Appears with St. Louis Symphony Orchestra as Conductor and Soloist—Public and Music Critics Enthusiastic—Representative Audience Attends Concert.

Xaver Scharwenka, the celebrated composer-pianist, achieved a remarkable success in St. Louis when he appeared in conjunction with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra December 30. The music critics of that city vied with each other in eulogistic encomiums, excerpts of which are appended as follows:

One of the most delightful concerts in all the long history of the Symphony Orchestra was that of last night at the Odeon, when Xaver Scharwenka, both as composer and solo pianist, captivated a great audience and received such proof of his triumph as warmed the cockles of one's heart to contemplate.

Scharwenka is a big, rugged, black-mustached and grim-eyed man, broad of chest and aggressively masculine. There isn't a bit of "pose" in him—put a brass helmet on his head and clothe him in the Kaiser's uniform and he'd be the Prussian soldier to the life, simple, direct, formidable in suggestion.

Even as he appeared last night, with the conductor's baton in his hand instead of a saber, or seated at the piano instead of at a mess table in camp, and wearing conventional evening attire, he seemed much more the embodiment of the strenuous than of the emotional. One studied his face and figure with something of amazement.

And then he proceeded to show us an old truth made new—the combination of strength and gentleness in its very highest is best found in the male when all conditions favor. Strong of body and soul, the man is tenderness itself when the occasion warrants.

He directed the orchestra's interpretation of the prelude to his own opera, "Mataswintha," with a hand as light as a feather and a manner almost startling in its contrast of delicacy against the brusqueness of his general aspect.

A little later, seated at the piano as the evening's soloist, there were moments when one could have imagined that the wistful Paderewski himself, the very incarnation of plaintive masculine genius appealing to women for appreciation, was touching the keys.

But this was only for a moment now and then, because, after all, the "man note" is the dominant note of Scharwenka as composer and player alike—and it was the "man note" that conquered its hearers last night. The grave eyes that looked out from so rough-hewn a visage as then fronted the applauding multitude were frankly manful eyes, with no hint of that feminine fiber so often found in men of artistic soul-fabric.

All of which, as you may easily imagine, made the evening of Scharwenka's first St. Louis appearance a peculiarly interesting evening.

It was interesting from the very moment when Scharwenka gave the baton signal for the beginning of his "Mataswintha" prelude, a splendidly dramatic and melodious foreword for his musical setting of Felix Dahn's majestic story of the Goth invasion of ancient Italy, the score bringing into play an especially masterful employment of the piccolo, flutes, oboes, English horn, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets and trombones, with a fine underswinging of the strings—a composition of undeniable greatness alike in its message and in the manner of the message's delivery.

It was even more interesting when Scharwenka became the solo figure of the succeeding number, his own world-famous piano concerto in F minor, so particularly beautiful that it held its hearers spellbound in the sincerest enjoyment of its changing phases. And it was here, especially in the score's first and second movements, that the exceeding gentleness of the big and militant man at the piano became so amazingly evident, attaining effects so lovely in emotional quality that one marveled, rapt, as one's soul conceded the fact of the achievement.

Modesty, too, is one of the big elements of this exquisite score—and of its interpretation—the modesty of the composer, who, dreaming mainly for the one instrument, nevertheless weaves into the substance of his work a splendid use of the full orchestra; and that even rarer modesty of the solo performer, who, in despite of the moment's tempting, refuses to exalt his work above that of his fellows, remaining instead an orchestral unit of the most devoted unselfishness.

Precisely here did Scharwenka most surely prove his greatness—for which reason I rejoiced with a great rejoicing that the Odeon audience went wild over him, applauding and applauding until the soloist responded with three charming encores, Schubert's impromptu, Liszt's polonaise and his own "Polish Dances," completing his night of triumph.—St. Louis Dispatch, December 31, 1910.

wenka piano concerto with full orchestral accompaniment, requires much time, thought and practice. As many months as we can give it weeks are generally devoted to this elsewhere. Making this allowance, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's presentation last night was a high collective achievement, which measurably enhanced the status of the organization and conferred the lasting benefit of increased confidence on all participants.

In his concerto for piano and orchestra, known as No. 4 in F minor (op. 82), Scharwenka gives a fine valuation to the solo instrument. Many other leading composers seem intent to keep the piano constantly in the foreground, making the orchestra of seventy men little more than an accompanimental body. Scharwenka makes the piano an integral part of the orchestra, or an added instrument of rare orchestral power, an adjustable, inherent quantity. He does this more by his manner of presenting his own work than by the interpretative requirements of the work as it stands. A Paderewski, a Rosenthal, or any of a dozen other great pianists playing the Scharwenka concerto, would subordinate the orchestra. It is to the novel and everlasting credit of this fine Polish virtuoso that he takes the contrary view.

Last night's audience quickly seized this feature of the presentation of the evening's epochal number, at the conclusion of which



XAVER SCHARWENKA.

the house fairly rose in homage and ovation; whereupon the guest of the evening entered the third phase of his genius, becoming a pianist by giving Schubert's "Impromptu," Liszt's great polonaise (A flat) and Scharwenka's "Polish Dances" as encore numbers. True ability, long experience and good sense have made Scharwenka's manner before the audience and while playing a positive delight. The man has little, if any, pose; no mannerisms; nothing at all detracts from the quickly gained impression of genuineness. He unaffectedly acknowledged his pleasure at his reception and unreservedly declared that his next visit to America would bring him to St. Louis very, very soon after landing.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

For Xaver Scharwenka, composer, pianist and music pedagogue, last night's St. Louis Symphony Orchestra concert at the Odeon resolved itself into a great personal triumph. It was one of those peculiar tests in which the precedent fame of a stranger as a musician in a foreign land had to be brought before an audience through the medium of a body of instrumentalists whom he had met but shortly before for the first time. A moment after it was his task to reveal himself as a pianistic interpreter and then as a player of celebrated scores. In his orchestral prelude to the opera "Mataswintha," Herr Scharwenka evidenced a fine control of the band, he played his concerto for piano and orchestra in masterly style and the encore numbers were aptly chosen for general effect, these alone being needed to turn the Symphony Society subscribers entirely in his favor.

Scharwenka's opera, "Mataswintha," is the tonal setting of Dr. Ernst Koppel's libretto made from Dr. Felix Dahn's "Kampf um Rom" (The Struggle for Rome), a sixth century topic gleaned from the Gothic invasion of Italy. It is a story of war, love and intrigue, which gives the musical transcriber every opportunity for the exercise of the highest poetic fancy. Scharwenka makes use of the entire orchestra, weaves many stirring tone pictures, and last night led the men like a veteran.

In some respects this concert likewise was in the nature of a supreme test for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. It is well known that preparation for such an event as the presentation of two entirely novel works, a Scharwenka orchestral prelude and a Schar-

Inspired by the presence and participation in the concert, both as soloist and conductor, of Xaver Scharwenka, one of the greatest pianists of the age, as well as composer and teacher, the Symphony Orchestra at the Odeon last night seemed to take on extra speed toward excellence. Scharwenka directed his prelude to the opera, "Mataswintha," and Max Zach's men obeyed the new baton in a style that must have warmed the cockles of the heart of their regular leader. It spoke volumes for his constant and careful training, the fidelity with which he devotes himself to his task, to make the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra the peer of any of the great orchestras in the country. Wonderful was the rendition by Mr. Scharwenka of his concerto for piano, No. 4, in F minor, with orchestral accompaniment. The pianist used the Baldwin piano, and the exquisite tones, especially in the pearl-like treble runs which he evolved from the instrument entranced the audience. Orchestra and piano were as one in this great work, and Scharwenka was showered with recalls at its conclusion. He responded first with a composition of his own and followed that with Liszt's polonaise and his own "Polish Dances."—St. Louis Times.

A man past sixty is Scharwenka, yet he has preserved in all its charm his great power as a virtuoso of the piano.

Though the highest form of great imagination or poetry of emotion are not among the qualities of Scharwenka, his playing is solid, graceful, clean workmanship. It reveals sincerity and dignity and his tones are sweet and pure.