

"MOST MUSICIANS ARE TOO ONE-SIDED"

—Xaver Scharwenka

Success in Piano-Playing a Matter Chiefly of Brains and Comparatively Little of Hands, Arms and Fingers—Famous German Authority Points Out Danger of Cultivating Music Alone to Exclusion of Interest in Other World Activities

"THE trouble with the great majority of pianists, piano students, and I think I may say musicians in general, is that they concern themselves too much with music and too little with other interests in life."

Such is the dictum of the eminent German pianist, Xaver Scharwenka, as delivered by him to a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA at the Hotel Prince George on the day after his arrival from Europe. Mr. Scharwenka was in such exuberant spirits at the idea of being back in America and at the changes which he found to have taken place in New York since he was last here ten years ago that it seemed almost a pity to distract his thoughts for a short discourse on the ways of pianists. Since the previous evening he had effected an inspection of almost all the principal skyscrapers in the city which had come into being during his absence, and much of the following was delivered as he stood at the window gazing, with a look of beatific rapture, upon the beauty of Twenty-eighth Street. Mrs. Scharwenka shared her husband's enthusiasm and insisted that she had wept for joy when the steamer came up the bay.

"Yes, musicians are still too one-sided," eventually proceeded the distinguished artist. "To be a great one it is necessary to have a thoroughly big and wide horizon, a broad and general culture to sharpen the intellect. You see matters have come to such a pass that to-day the successful pianist finds that his art is really a big matter of brains and a comparatively small question of arms, hands, fingers and all that sort of thing. This is not yet appreciated so fully as it ought to be, but I am very worthy strides in the right direction during late years. Formerly they used to conglad to say that we have made many note-fine themselves to technical matters much more than we do now. Nevertheless, there are numerous people who, when they have decided upon a musical career for their child, imagine that by cramming him with music to the exclusion of other cultural influences they are fitting him for an exalted position in the ranks of musicians. Nothing could be more harmful. You can't be a great musician by closing your eyes to other world activities.

"The pianist who reaches the top is, I repeat, the one who uses *this* (tapping his forehead), not the one who bases all his confidence in these (twirling his fingers). Every human being has the qualifications necessary to execute rapid runs and such things on the piano. Anybody can, after a certain amount of practice, move his fingers fast enough and in the correct manner to play a scale smoothly. But emotion is innate. If you haven't got it, you simply haven't, and all the finger agility and arm or wrist technic in the world won't make you a pianist worth the name.

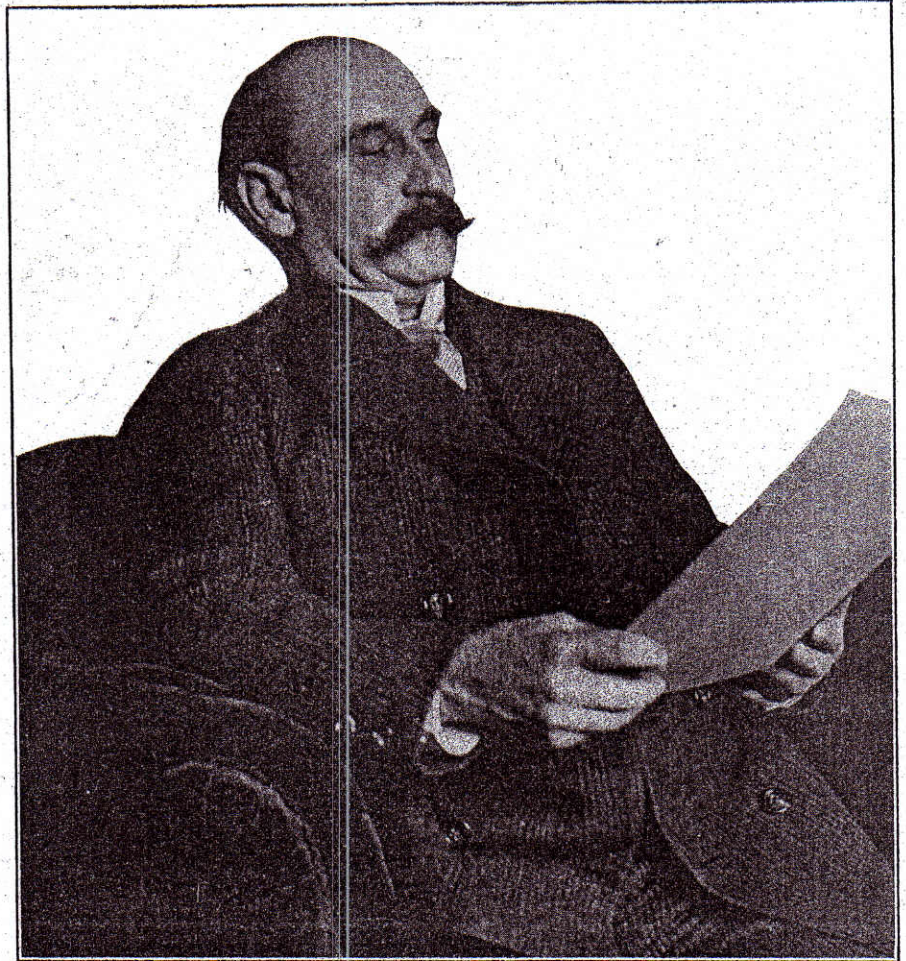
"One thing I must admit about present-day technic. It has a distinct advantage over that of former times in that we have come to understand the physiology of the

factors concerned in the production of tone. It used to be the custom to play only with the fingers. Now we have come to comprehend the uses that may be made of the whole arm, and I am proud to say that

such anatomic knowledge will enable a vocalist to accomplish any better results.

"I have no use for soundless keyboards and all that sort of thing that some teachers seem to fancy. They are all rubbish. (*Lauter dreck sind die.*) What a pianist is concerned with primarily is the tone he produces. Now what can be learned about tone coloring, dynamics and so on from a dumb instrument. A Mr. Virgil, I know, devised one that gave a faint sound when struck, and claimed it was invaluable for the teaching of rhythm and tempo. But then he went to the extreme of insisting that students should use the thing for a whole year without touching a real piano in the meanwhile.

"I am told much about a correct 'method.' There is no *one* such; there are merely methodical ways of doing things.



Xaver Scharwenka, the Distinguished German Pianist Now in America

I was instrumental in bringing about the teaching of these matters to pupils. I firmly believe that a pupil should understand the physiology of the members used in piano playing. This is a matter which a singer, for instance, may overlook with impunity, and that because his vocal organs are not under the immediate control of his will, as are the hands and fingers. The singer by some wonderful but mysterious physio-psychological process adjusts his vocal cords for the production of a tone which he must previously have heard mentally. With a pianist that is different. His tone-producing mechanism requires none of this assistance of his inner consciousness. That is why I think a pianist should know just how he works or should work in order to play, whereas no amount of

Nor can I give any sort of a definite answer to the flat-footed question as to whether this or that is the only correct hand or finger position. How should I be able to? Some people have long fingers, some people have short ones; some find it easier to play with the fingers one way, some another. In a very general way I can say that an extended position in striking the key, provided it leaves the fingers flexible, is desirable. And also that the keys should be struck with the tip of the finger, and that this should not be curved to such an extent that the nail hits the ivory. But such matters are elementary. I could not give *complete* information on so vast a subject in a course of two dozen lectures, much less in an interview of half an hour."

FIRST CONCERT FOR

(Schneider). (e) "Ectasy" (Rummel), Mme. Galski; Edwin Schneider, accompanist; Overture,

were both immensely popular. A reception for Miss Yaw was given by Mrs. Mary Carl Moore, the composer, following the