

## SOME MUSICAL PERFORMERS.

By JOSEPH BENNETT,  
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Illustrated with Portraits.

OF the vocal artists whose portraits appeared in this magazine last month, under the heading, "Some Singers of the Day," all but two were mentioned as of Anglo-Saxon origin. It is significant that, of the eight instrumentalists to be noticed on the present occasion, all but three are of foreign birth and training. In one department of music, it would seem, the English-speaking race must own to inferiority, and the seeming is not a deception.

Wilhelmine Neruda (Lady Hallé) has had a remarkable career. Born at Brünn (Moravia) in 1840, she began her public life in 1846, as a wonder-child, and at that date made her *début* in Vienna. Believers in the transference of soul to successive bodies may be excused for fancying that in some former state the spirit of the little Moravian was that of a skilled violinist, for she took to the instrument as though it were a hereditary possession. Her progress was by "leaps and bounds," evidence whereof the curious may see in the London journals of 1849, when the gifted child first appeared in this country. Her second

visit to England was not paid till twenty years later, by which time Mdme. Norman-Neruda (she married Ludwig Norman, a Swedish musician, in 1864) had made herself an abiding European name. Her coming amongst us as a mature artist caused an immediate sensation, and had a curious as well as, no doubt, a permanent result. Few amateurs who attended the Philharmonic Concert at which Mdme. Neruda made her *rentrée* can have forgotten the enthusiasm she excited. At that time a lady violinist was a rarity. The sisters Milanollo, well known in England some thirty years earlier, were almost forgotten, and the spectacle of a graceful woman playing "like an angel" upon an instrument monopolised by men, was something new and strange. Moreover, it exercised the fascination often belonging to the new and strange. From that moment the movement began which has made the violin a fashionable instrument with the fairer half of English society. Mdme. Neruda is thus entitled to live in our island's musical story as the prototype and forerunner of feminine fiddlers, and as one who, in that capacity, has done very great service to the home culture of her art. Since 1869, the Moravian violinist has practically belonged to England, which "annexed" her by the force of enthusiastic admiration and that power of the British purse under the influence of which so many foreign musicians have readily come. By her marriage to Sir Charles Hallé, the gifted lady's relations with this country were naturally made closer and stronger than before.

As an artist, Mdme. Neruda is distinguished by special qualities, some of which may fairly be attributed to the influence of sex. No instrument approaches the violin in the closeness of its alliance with the individuality of the performer. It reflects every mood; answers to every impulse. The soul of the artist enters into it, and there finds the most complete and best medium of expression. Hence the fact that Mdme. Neruda's playing suggests the refinement and delicacy of cultured femininity. Hence, also, the result that she is better fitted for the interpretation of some music than any



MADAME NORMAN-NERUDA.

From a photograph by Barraud, Liverpool.

of her male rivals. Where the later works of Beethoven are concerned, connoisseurs would prefer the intellectuality and profound emotional force of a Joachim, but, on the other hand, Mdme. Neruda has no superior when the compositions of Schubert, Mendelssohn, and other composers of a lyrical tendency are concerned. The exquisite delicacy of her perception and feeling, and the absolute finish of her execution then shine out with peculiar strength; the feminine in music stands revealed in all its attractiveness. By virtue of this distinction Mdme. Neruda holds her place year by year at the Popular Concerts, practically dividing each season with the great Hungarian who is the strongest exponent of the masculine in executive musicianship. Mdme. Neruda's health, it is well known, has not been quite satisfactory of late, but every amateur hopes that the day is far distant when she will find it necessary to retire from a position the influence of which is wholly for good.

Born at Kittsee, near Pressburg, in 1831, of the ancient race which has given so many distinguished men to European music, Joseph Joachim began life under



JOSEPH JOACHIM.

From a photograph by Alex. Bassano, 25 Old Bond Street, W.

conditions exceptionally favourable. When only seven years of age he was a student at the Vienna Conservatory, passing, later, to the brilliant school founded by Mendelssohn at Leipsic, where David and Hauptmann were his masters. There could not have been a more satisfactory pupil, for Joachim became a man in art, while yet a boy in years. At the age of twelve he was a Gewandhaus soloist, and at thirteen played Beethoven's violin concerto at a Philharmonic concert, on the occasion of his first appearance in London. Connoisseurs heard him with astonishment, proclaiming that the lad was, as an artist, already mature. His composition master, Hauptmann, said the same. "He is thirteen years old," wrote the professor to Spohr, "and all but perfect." Again he wrote: "Joachim stands by himself. It is not his technique, it is not his tone, it is not anything that anybody could describe; it is the reserve of all those qualities, so that you hear, not Joachim, but the music. With all his depth of character, there is a rare modesty about him; he never makes a

fuss about himself, but he does make an effect, which is recognized everywhere." This language as well describes him now as it did in 1844, so truly was the child the father of the man. All through life Joachim has never made a fuss about himself, but remained the modest minister of his art. Self-seeking and pretentiousness he has carefully left to men less richly endowed. Enough for him that in his hands the standard of music has never been lowered in subservience to merely personal considerations. Joachim is the Bayard of his order; "without fear and without reproach." Among the Knights of the Round Table serving at the Court of Music he is the Galahad. Upon this rare distinction the critic feels most tempted to dwell, at a time when the charlatan in art is by no means an unknown person; especially would it be both easy and pleasant to show that Joachim never descends from the serene and lofty region where the highest thoughts, and purest principles of music are found. He can breathe, and enjoy his life in that rarefied air. As a violinist, Joachim may fearlessly be described as the best his generation has seen. In certain respects he has rivals, possibly superiors, but taken for all in all no other is so perfectly equipped. Judgment, taste, feeling, technique, all unite in this singularly well-endowed artist, who shines most when the demands upon him are greatest. No connoisseur can forget his playing in the so-called posthumous quartets of Beethoven. These often enigmatical utterances seem no mystery to him, and he interprets them with a profound reverence which strengthens the general impression of truthfulness. Joachim is now sixty-one, but there is no apparent reason

why, for years to come, he should not be an annual visitor to England, which country he, like his friend Mendelssohn, regards as a second home. England, on her part, practically says to him—

“Sir, you are very welcome to our house ;  
It must appear in other ways than words.”

And it does.

Louis Ries comes of a well-known family of musicians. He is the son of Hubert Ries, an accomplished violinist and composer (pupil of Spohr), and for some time director of the Berlin Philharmonic Society. He is, also, the nephew of Ferdinand Ries—Beethoven's Ries—who was for eleven years a professor in London, and he is the brother of Adolph and Franz Ries, both well known as artists and composers. Louis Ries, born at Berlin in 1830, came to this country in 1852, and has remained here ever since. During the whole of his forty years in England, he has been more or less prominently associated with the public performance of chamber music. In the first instance, he became connected with the Musical Union, an enterprise carried on by the late John Ella, but Mr. Ries is more especially distinguished as having held the post of second violin at the Popular Concerts from their institution to the first concert, February 14, 1859, and took Mendelssohn's Quintet in B flat ; his associates

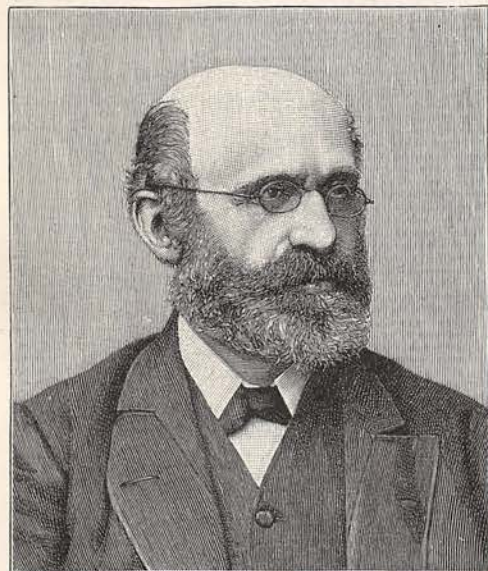


LOUIS RIES.

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry, 55 Baker Street, W.

the present time. He appeared at the part in the first piece performed—Mendelssohn's Quintet in B flat ; his associates being Wieniawski, Doyle, Schreurs and Piatti. It is noteworthy that of these five performers, three are yet living, and two—Ries and Piatti—may still be found in the positions they occupied so long ago. Mr. Ries unites to great ability in the playing of concerted chamber music an invincible modesty, which may have blocked the way to a more conspicuous position than that he actually holds. Assuredly those who have heard him “lead” a quartet at some private gathering, know full well that the second violin is not the measure of his powers. In his present capacity, however, Mr. Ries has rendered invaluable service. He is a studious musician, intimately acquainted with the whole ground of his labours, while as an executant, he is always steady and always safe.

Ludwig Straus, another pillar of the Popular Concerts, started in life under much the same auspices as his colleague and friend, Joseph Joachim. He is a native of Pressburg, near the birth-place of Joachim, who was four years old when his future associate first saw the light.



LUDWIG STRAUS.

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry, 55 Baker Street, W.

Like Joachim, he entered the Vienna Conservatorium when a mere child, and was taught by Joachim's master, Boehme. His scholastic career was, however, wholly confined to Vienna, where he made his *début* in 1850. Straus first visited England in 1860, playing at the Musical Union and Popular Concerts. He returned in

1861, and, three years later, he came to stay, being engaged as permanent solo violin and *chef d'attaque* in connection with Sir Charles Hallé's Manchester orchestra. Since then, he has been largely *en évidence* throughout these islands, but is best known to metropolitan amateurs as viola player, and occasional first violin at the "Pops." Mr. Straus resembles his countryman Ries in modesty as an artist, and in studiousness and conscientiousness as a musician. Perhaps it may not be said that he possesses brilliant qualities. He does not play as one inspired, nor does he show signs of a deeply emotional nature. On the other hand, he knows his work and does it with the characteristic thoroughness of his race. If he do not always astonish, he generally satisfies, while his work with the viola at the Popular Concerts is of the most valuable description.

With some observations upon Alfredo Piatti, reference to the Popular Concert quartet must come to an end. Of their necessary character no manner of doubt can exist, since here again we meet with a consummate player and devoted musician who unites



ALFREDO PIATTI.

From a photograph by W. & D. Downey, 61 Ebury Street, W.

to high qualities a charming naturalness, simplicity and modesty. Of the Italian 'cellist's supreme attainments it is hardly necessary to speak. They have been commented upon, written about, and admired in England for nearly half-a-century. Enough if the opinion of a contemporary writer be quoted with hearty endorsement of every word: "With an absolute command over all the technical difficulties of his instrument, Piatti combines a faultless intonation and a rare purity of tone which, without any apparent exertion, never fails sufficiently to assert itself in the most delicate passages, while the exquisite taste with which he phrases invests the simplest melody with infinite charm." As a composer, Piatti, from time to time, shows a lyrical talent of no mean order. His violoncello solos, and his songs with violoncello obbligato are charming compositions, instinct with true Italian melody, as well as with the refinement and delicacy so obvious in his playing, and so clearly a part of his nature. In social life, Mr. Piatti is by no means demonstrative. Devoted to his art, and, by the way, to the collecting of books and prints, he finds more pleasure in his study than in the haunts of men and women. He knows the book-stalls well; not a few of the compositions rescued by him from oblivion and brought forth to the light being the reward of patient hunting among "unconsidered trifles." This variously gifted Italian keeps a *piéd à terre* in his beautiful native land. He has a pretty villa on Lake Como, and there, after each London season, he retires to spend a holiday amongst his books and pictures, and in the enjoyment of scenery the infinite variety of which no custom can stale. It should be added that the subject of these remarks was born at Bergamo in 1822, his father being a leading violinist of that town. A grand-uncle, Zanetti, was his first teacher, and at the age of seven, he made his first appearance in the orchestra. In 1832, he entered at the Milan Conservatoire; in 1837, began his career as a solo performer, and in 1844 came to England, where, during the musical season, he has ever since remained. It has already been stated that Mr. Piatti appeared at the first Popular Concert in 1859, and has held the post of principal 'cellist ever since.

Among the English pianists of to-day, Miss Fanny Davies holds a distinguished place, the full importance of which, perhaps, has not yet appeared. Miss Davies was born in Guernsey, but she belongs more to Birmingham than to the Channel Islands. It was in the capital of the Midlands that she received her early instruction, and it was from Birmingham that she went, in 1882, to study at the Leipsic Conservatorium. The present writer had an opportunity of hearing her play, shortly before she left

England, at the house of a common friend. Miss Davies was then comparatively untrained, but an experienced observer could easily see in her the making of an artist *hors ligne*. Her stay in Leipsic was short. Dissatisfied with the conditions of study there, Miss Davies removed to the Frankfort Hoch School in 1883, and worked for two years under Mdme. Schumann, with whom she has, ever since, kept up the closest personal relations. She reappeared in England in 1885, and from that date to the present time has gone from success to success till, now, Miss Davies is the foremost English pianist. A more intensely musical nature than that of Fanny Davies can hardly be conceived. The occasions are somewhat rare in which a woman abandons herself entirely to the pursuit of art, giving to it her whole thought and feeling. This, however, can be said of the young lady in question. Music possesses her. In it she lives and moves and has her being. The result appears in rapid progress and high attainment, also in devotion to the noblest manifestations of her art. A pupil of Mdme. Schumann is never likely to affect the tinsel and trickery of music, but Miss Davies draws an impassable line between that which is classical and all other. She lives her life with the great masters, many of whom are reading. Among these, Schumann stands out our young countrywoman is more thoroughly



MISS FANNY DAVIES.

From a photograph by Elliott &amp; Fry, 55 Baker Street, W.



HEINRICH LUTTER.

From a photograph by Emil Tiedemann, Bremen.

now to her as an open book, for daily naturally prominent, and it may be that at home with him than with any other. But nothing comes amiss to her that genius has consecrated, and she can range from Bach to Chopin with assured steps. Before the public, Miss Davies combines with lofty musical qualities a singular unaffectedness of demeanour. She has unconsciously formed herself upon Mdme. Schumann, and therefore does her work without fuss or pretence—certainly without any of the tricks which tend to drag "pianism" down below the level of art and place it upon the showman's platform. To sum up, we have in this lady an artist of whom to be proud, and to whom may safely be confided the task of representing English musical ability in foreign concert-rooms.

The name of Heinrich Lutter is, as yet, scarcely known in England, but as the artist has been heard here provisionally, and will shortly make a public appearance, some particulars regarding him may prove interesting. Mr. Lutter was born at Hanover in 1854, and, at an early age, studied both the violin and organ, subsequently giving up those instruments and devoting himself wholly to the pianoforte. He became a pupil of Liszt in 1876, and resided at Pesth, near that master, at the same time taking lessons in composition from Robert Volkmann. There are many pupils of Liszt, and not a few so called on the strength of one or two casual lessons. But Mr. Lutter

remained for years under the care of the great *virtuoso*, not leaving him until 1885, since when he has resided at Hanover as pianist, professor and concert-giver. That Mr. Lutter acquired from Liszt an admirable technique need scarcely be insisted on. His qualities as an executant are of a high order, and he is quite capable of taking a place among pianists of the "sensational" order. Happily this artist's facility and brilliancy are associated with good taste and appreciation of what is best in music. He, therefore, plays less like a *virtuoso pur et simple* than like a pianist whose execution is secondary to the interpretation of a master's ideas. This is the right thing. Mr. Lutter has the music of the great writers for the piano not only under his fingers but in his mind, and he plays all with intelligent appreciation of its meaning; consequently, with clearness and distinction.

It is difficult to say anything new about J. J. Paderewski; and of that which should be familiar, in point of dates and facts, the recognized sources of information afford extremely little. No pianist is now more famous, yet his renown has been acquired so



J. J. PADEREWSKI.

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry, 55 Baker Street, W.

rapidly that the latest compilers of biographical dictionaries of musicians knew him not when their works were going through the press. The supplement to Grove's Dictionary published in 1889, is silent concerning him, but his name may be found in an appendix to the *Cyclopadia of Music and Musicians* (New York, 1890). Even there no date or place of birth is given, and the description is simply "pianist and composer." Paderewski's case is, therefore, one of sudden fame—in so far, at least, as concerns the executive branch of his two-fold profession. This may be said of most phenomena. They are necessarily striking, and, like "a bolt out of the blue," attract all eyes. Paderewski has abundantly proved himself the possessor of qualities which fascinate the crowd, in that respect bidding fair to rival Paganini, and by much the same means. Like the great violinist, the Polish pianist has astonishing powers of execution; also like him, he presents to the public an interesting personality. It is beyond question that Paganini traded

upon his weird appearance; it may be that Paderewski is not insensible to the value of a pallid face in a frame of fiery hair. At any rate, a distinctive individuality is a marketable commodity when dealing with the "general," and, as it cannot be put on and off like a coat, it must needs exercise an influence. Here, however, we have less to do with Paderewski the man than with Paderewski the pianist. In his capacity as an executive musician he presents two phases—the one all display and "sensation," the other purely artistic. Whatever the crowd may do, the connoisseur does not care for the first. He may wonder, like the rest; he can hardly admire, for, sooth to say, the sensation pianist does not strictly belong to music. He is an entertainer who works through music, as a conjurer works through his apparatus. Were Paderewski merely a sensation pianist he would hardly be discussed with seriousness, but he is that only when it suits him, and, *au fond*, he is very much more—in point of fact, a great artist who knows the mind of inspired composers, and can interpret their works with authority. This is his distinction; the rest is mere "leather and prunella." It may be that Paderewski's more easily appreciable qualities do good service in drawing crowds within the influence of his higher gifts; but whatever may be said on this score, when the Polish pianist sits down to play a classical piece in his artistic mood, the connoisseur recognizes the true interpretive genius, and is grateful accordingly.