

## GOTTSCHALK'S THOUGHTS ON MUSIC

SELECTED BY H. J. STORER

ANY one who has read the diary that Gottschalk kept during his concert tours will be impressed by the fact that he was a thinker, not only upon musical but upon sociological matters, and a keen observer of humanity and human events. Some excerpts of his thoughts on musical matters are given, and while the reader may not agree possibly with all of them, he will be interested in reading them. Gottschalk appreciated the development of music that was going on in America fifty years ago, and prophesied the Phenomenal growth that has taken place since his death. Here are some excerpts of his random thoughts: —

"WE, all of us, have in us a finger-board, but some have broken the cords of their souls in such a way that the fingerboards no longer produce sounds. Others sound false, although feeling everything deeply. These are generally those artists who, having a lively conception of the beautiful, and a thirst to express it, are not endowed with the faculty of formulating what they feel. Sometimes, by dint of slow and patient researches, assisted by their insatiable desire to express what they experience, they attain to creating something which approaches to genius, but the effort and the labor are apparent, two shackles that genius does not know."

"Music is a thing eminently sensuous. Certain combinations move us, not because they are ingenious, but because they move our nervous system in a certain way. I have a horror of musical Puritans. They are arid natures deprived of sensibility."

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"Music being a *physical agent* — that is to say, acting on the individual without the assistance of his intellect— a *moral agent* — that is to say, reviving his memory, exciting his imagination, developing his sentiment — and a *complex agent* — that is to say, having a psychological action upon the instinct, the organism, and the forces of man — I thence conclude that it is one of the most powerful means of ameliorating and ennobling the human mind, of elevating the morals, and above all, of refining the manners of the people."

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"Music, when employed in the service of religion, has always been its most powerful auxiliary. The organ did more for Catholicism in the Middle Ages than all its preaching, and Palestrina and Marcello have reclaimed and still reclaim more infidels than all the doctors of the church."

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" SCOTCH melodies are, according to my mind, those which have the most character, it is in truth the music of the mountains and of fantastic legends. I discover in it the reflection of the Scottish character, mystical, exalted, very superstitious, poetic, dreamy, and wild. Its intervals of a fourth and the frequent employment of the plagal chord, the rhythm weakened by the absence of accentuated cadences, powerfully contribute to give them their character of strange melancholy and twilight poesy."

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"SINCE Liszt has given the word of command to the Germans, Chopin has all at once become classical. His forms, which before they treated without understanding them as whimsical, his harmonies, so worked up, have become so many perfect models. I do not complain, for my part, having been one of the old Chopinists, but what I deplore is the frightful abuse which is made of Chopin's formulas. There is not a small pianist composer who does not think himself called upon to make Chopin mazurkas, Chopin nocturnes,

Chopin polonaises. They have become masters of Chopin's processes and employ them without discernment in the most trivial melodies."

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"THERE is one thing that money cannot rule: it is the inspiration of the artist."

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"THERE is a class of persons who wish to learn what was the artist's intention. The artist is an instrument through which God inspires good things to men. He is passive. You might as well ask of the sun his intention in producing the marvelous effects of light and shade in a landscape. The inspired artist is like a keyboard which sounds correctly under the tremor which agitates it."

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"BEETHOVEN, taken as a symphonist, is the most inspired among composers, and the one who composes best for the orchestra. The instrumental effects which he combines on paper are always realized in the orchestra as he has conceived them. As a composer for the piano he falls below mediocrity—the least pianist of any intelligence in our days writes infinitely better than Beethoven ever did. 'Hue and cry on the robber!' are you all about to exclaim? You brawlers will never attain that height of admiration which I have for Beethoven when he is great, and it is through this admiration that I am forced to see his feebleness. I will explain: — "The piano is an instrument which Beethoven imperfectly knew, and which besides at the period he wrote was but the embryo of the piano which is made by modern manufacturers. The instrumentation of the piano is a special matter. The point in question is not only to have ideas, but to know how to adapt them to the piano, and that is what Beethoven only imperfectly knew. The ideas, so beautifully and so marvelously clothed in all the splendor, or all the tenderness, which the orchestra affords him in his profoundest researches, are clumsy, and often tame when he adapts them for the piano. The number of formulas which he prepared for the piano were extraordinarily limited, and in many passages we feel what he has wished by perceiving that he has not attained what he desired. Many of the effects which he combined from his knowledge of the orchestra have failed on the piano from not knowing how to translate them into the peculiar language of this instrument."