

GOTTSCHALK

Frederic Louis Ritter
"Music in America", 1890

Among native American musicians, the pianist-composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk occupied a prominent position in the American musical world for some time.

He was born in New Orleans, May 8, 1829, and went, quite young, to Paris, to study the pianoforte under Stamaty. He made a successful debut at Paris in 1845, and afterwards went on a professional tour through France, Switzerland, and Spain. In 1853 he returned to America, to follow up his virtuoso career. He soon became the favorite pianist among his countrymen, and performed in all the principal cities in the United States, playing his own compositions almost exclusively. Though some of his pieces were charming, this plan was one-sided, and failed to promote the best interests of musical cultivation in a broad artistic sense. Gottschalk's too exclusive occupation with his own ideas and forms eventually produced mannerism and repetition, from the injurious effects of which his compositions deteriorated towards the last. But he possessed a fine technique, a beautiful touch, and an exquisite poetical conception, though inclined towards too great sentimentality. His was a thoroughly refined musical nature; but, in consequence of his one-sided art-practice, he missed the higher artistic importance and excellence which his great talent seemed at first to promise. He spent his best force while endeavoring to entertain musically inexperienced and uninspiring audiences.

The transcriptions and fantasies based on slave or Creole melodies, such as his "Bamboula," "Banjo," "Le Bananier," and those resting on Spanish melodies, claim the foremost rank among his numerous pianoforte publications. He died in Rio Janeiro, Dec. 18, 1869.