

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—When the late William H. Sherwood was confined to his bed with his last illness, our readers will be gratified to know that he had them in mind, and prepared the following article especially for them. Every word is significant and gives an indication of Mr. Sherwood's keen mental powers even to the very end. A few days after this article was written Mr. Sherwood passed away.]

THE MUSIC OF THE DRUM.

There are many young ladies who play the piano with artistic taste and Esthetic feeling, and choose selections which are high-grade in every respect, who would really find a startling and valuable surprise in store for themselves if they would add to the study of the piano that of the snare drum. With the snare drum one can distinguish between every possible degree of speed and force and rhythmical variety. In fact, it is music with everything but the tune. In cases where the drummer uses drums with different pitch even the element of tune is added to the above. Ridiculous as the comparison of the drum and the piano may seem, and unlikely as it undoubtedly is that any of the readers of this article will hie themselves to a music shop and buy a drum, it is nevertheless true that they might really be benefited by doing so. Haydn, it is said, was very fond of playing on the drum. In order that he might get an insight to the secrets of orchestral writing. Vincent d'Indy, the famous French composer, secured a position as second drummer in the Colonne Orchestra in Paris, and remained in this position for three years. This, mind you, was after he had won the famous *Prix de Rome* at the Paris Conservatoire. If d'Indy could afford to study rhythm in this somewhat peculiar manner, you can easily see that there is more reason than rhyme in my efforts to call the attention of the readers of THE ETUDE to the great significance. Incidentally, the practice of the drum might do something, to loosen up some of those horribly stiff wrists which some ladies exhibit the moment they commence to play octaves. It is also a fact that at the piano the player seems to be blind to rhythm because he finds the melody and the harmony so fascinating. He makes every effort to have his chords right, every note accurately sounded and with the appropriate touch, but the infinite variety of effects which come from the careful observance of the rhythm seem to escape his attention.

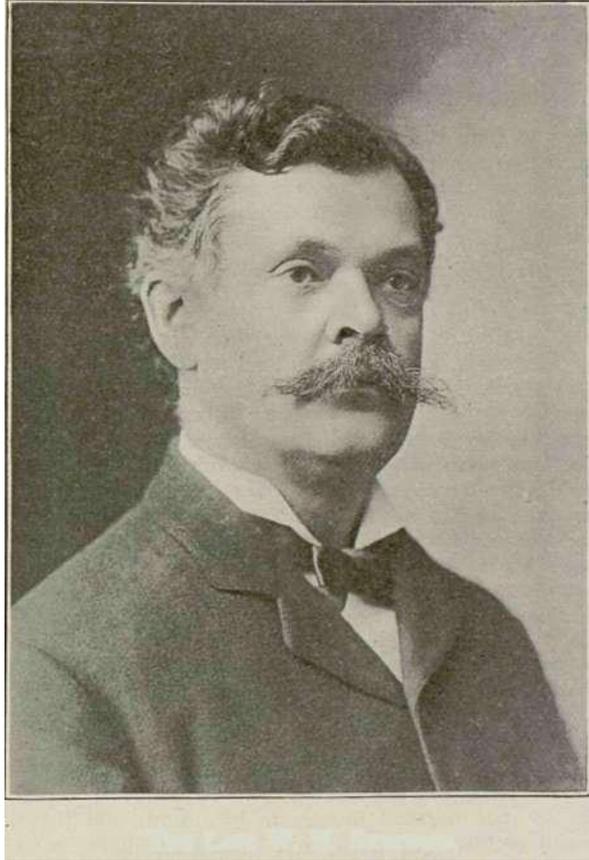
COMMON RHYTHMICAL FAULTS.

The young ladies with refined sensibilities seem to be particularly far off the track when they make their amusing attempts to play in correct rhythm. During my observation of the playing of pupils for the past year, I have tried to make some classification of the most important things necessary. I have found that, like the amateur in painting, the temptation to use bright colors and brilliant effects diverts the pupil's mind and artistic feeling, in the one case from the foundation facts of correct drawing, and in the other from the foundation control of correct rhythm. Sometimes it is a technical one-sidedness that causes this deflection while the pupil may have naturally good rhythm. A person with faulty habits of managing the wrists and hands generally plays certain notes too loud or too soft, too soon or too late.

Some of the examples of failure to observe the rhythm have become evident in special places. For instance, I have discovered that notes previous to skips are very frequently played prematurely and with insufficient force. Again, when playing a bass note in an accompaniment, with a skip between the note and the following note, the first note is very liable to be played with too little force. This seems to throw the rhythm out in a most annoying manner, and when the pupil has lost the rhythmic poise it is very difficult to regain it before several measures have been played.

THE LIFE OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION.

Another common tendency is to drag out a diminuendo as though diminuendo meant rallentando, and the converse habit of playing a crescendo passage with accelerated time. This is very likely to break up the rhythmic design. Many players who pride themselves upon their sense of time can well afford to look into their own habits in this respect.



THE LATE W. H. SHERWOOD.

A *careless* student does not *analyse his music* enough to keep time right. He does not think, judge or govern his mind in such respects. A sense of rhythm and of good dynamics (a relative appreciation of loud and soft shadings and accent in music) all go together. Correct sense of rhythm *is* really temperament in music. It is the impulse, life and musical expression itself.

Probably no composer ever took more freedom with strict time, with more artistic beauty and originality of style (*tempo rubato* playing) than Chopin, and there probably was never a greater, if equally splendid, interpreter of Chopin music than Liszt, of whom Chopin said, "I thought it was Chopin playing," as he listened to Liszt with his works. During my own studies with Liszt I heard him allude on two occasions to "*tempo rubato* playing," insisting that it should be perfectly controlled and regulated according to a strict sense of regular time keeping, with accents from which the artist should make logical deviations; that is to say, that he must be able to govern strict time in order to play with beautiful interpretation of free time. Liszt likened the case to a tall tree, solid at the ground and trunk, while the topmost branches were swaying with the breeze. In looking at the foundation of the tree there was a sense of fixed stability. Following the line of the trunk upwards the deviation was very slight at first, but more and more apparent the higher one looked, until the motion showed a swaying sense of freedom and graceful relaxation at the tree top.

LISZT ON RHYTHM.

On many occasions during my study with Liszt, not only with works played to him by myself and played in turn by him, but in works studied with him by others, while I listened, a strict government of time and accent, the one inseparable from the other, was emphasized. It was not difficult to see that the discipline of such things was a power of expression and poetry itself in Liszt's music. Records go to show that features of strength and originality in the compositions of some of the greatest composers as explained by themselves depend upon similar characteristics.

No one will ever become a good sight reader or develop right judgment in the interpretation of music except by sufficient training in correct habits of time keeping and accenting. In my own case, while I have quite a natural sense of rhythm aided by insistent practice, I admit that nearly all of my difficulties of managing the right kind of interpretative expression are rendered too vague and unsatisfactory if not given form through the right rhythmical setting. This very feature is the greatest one I have to contend with in reading a new piece. A few out of the many writers on compositions and methods for the piano student have given this subject sufficient thought and care in their works on "technic."

No one could possibly have been more insistent upon the careful and intelligent observation of rhythm than my teacher, Dr. William Mason. His famous work, *Touch and Technic*, is rich with suggestions for rhythmic accentuation, and in many ways these are presented in such an original and forceful manner that they possess the power and character of real inventions—something very rare in the music of any day. Dr. Mason's rhythmic scales as outlined in Book II of *Touch and Technic* are a veritable school of rhythm in themselves.

A VALUABLE TEST PIECE.

When advanced pupils show carelessness and too much self-confidence plus ignorance, I frequently select a *Fantasia* in C Minor, Mozart, edited by Von Bulow (this is not the "Fantasia with Sonata" in the same key). Here is an advanced illustration of the most natural and ideal musical expression, requiring a great deal of discrimination in correct rhythmical reading. The piece is in 4-4 time (adagio). There are $\frac{1}{2}$ note sections; $\frac{1}{4}$ note sections; 8th note sections; 16th note sections; 16th note (triplets); 32d note sections (both kinds, as of 16ths) ; 64th note sections (also both kinds) ; 128th note sections; also 128th triplets in regular groups and subdivisions. There are also syncopated notes or suspensions in plenty, and their resolutions form a considerable class of feature for expression by themselves, and there are a good many groups of irregular numbers of notes besides, such as a group of $\frac{7}{32}$ d notes belonging to the interval of an 8th, etc.

A draftsman measuring a drawing in which such a diversity of fractions to the foot might occur would have to have a means of scaling his work down to very small subdivisions of an inch. How many amateur piano students ever do this kind of thinking about their music? It is only through getting mental and mechanical mastery of such details that the ideal beauty and poetry of many a selection can be brought out completely.

RUBINSTEIN'S OPINION.

There is no doubt of Rubinstein's genius with rubato playing, as I frequently heard it during the time of my acquaintance with this master, but in the case of Rubinstein, as with Liszt, I never failed to mark the authoritative control of exact time and the accented expression thereof alongside of his freedom of style. It is said of Rubinstein that a man congratulated him after a recital in one of our cities where he played a Beethoven program in the authoritative (and at the same time with the subjective beauty so well known in his playing), saying to him, "Why do you play these interminable exercises? Why do you not play something for the soul?" Rubinstein said, "Whose soul—your soul?"

The great Russian virtuoso was not insistent upon the observance of rhythm, but was a veritable crank regarding time. He is quoted as saying: "I really cannot understand what kind of a teacher it was who could not teach a pupil to count while playing. I know where I would send such a teacher. A musician must get a clear idea of the rhythm and tempo before setting himself to study a work. He must play all notes clearly with the utmost regard for their rhythmic significance. We must wash the body finely before dressing it up finely. Play in the beginning slowly, firmly, until the new piece has entered into your fingers, After that only may you dare to use the pedal, and give expression to the melody."

One of our great critics working on the playing of some of the concert pianists a few years ago observed that in the performance of the Chopin concerto (in F minor) that every note Chopin wrote in the work was *logical* and every liberty taken with his free style of performance, and must needs be logical in order to be ideal and poetic. There are some kinds of freedom which our talented amateurs allow themselves which are not real freedom. But to go from serious to comical. I wonder if you readers have heard the following story :

AN AMUSING GOTTSCHALK STORY.

It is said that when Gottschalk, the great genius who perhaps was our pioneer concert pianist, in making a tour in America visited a certain mining camp on the frontier, and that his piano failed to arrive the day of the concert. Knowing the ready manner in which the rough cowboys and miners in the country at that time used their guns, the pianist and manager were more or less anxious. The hall had been sold out and the men were sure to put in an appearance after paying two dollars for a ticket, bringing their revolvers along with them. The manager spent an anxious day trying to find a substitute piano. Towards night-time he at last found an old German settler, living several miles out in the country, who had in his possession an old-fashioned square piano belonging to a daughter who had died several years previous. The piano was locked up and the key was lost. After much persuasion, a liberal price finally secured the use of the instrument, which was brought to the hall just in time for the concert. They broke it open on the stage and Gottschalk proceeded to examine the piano. It was found that *one wire* had *not* rusted out and that the hammers and the other broken wires were all ready for action. An ominous click of revolvers resounded in the hall which spurred the great artist to a desperate effort. He soon discovered that he could make this one tone sound loud or soft at will and that he could play it at any degree of velocity or variety of movement. He commenced by trying to imitate a bugle call, striking the one key with such rhythm and accent as might be expected. He found upon playing the broken wires in the piano that he could imitate sounds such as one might expect from soldiers or cavalry and imitated an army advancing or in retreat: and that he could also make a good imitation of thunder. The artist improved various battle scenes with realistic effect. The guns were put away and he was greeted with uproarious applause. His piano arrived the next day, when he gave a second concert in that mining camp and the house was sold out. *So much for rhythm.*