

Recollections of an old musician, 1899 (Extract)

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In 1862, Teresa Carreno, a remarkable child pianist, nine years of age, accompanied by her father and mother, came to the United States from Caracas, Venezuela.

The father of this " wonder child " was a man of distinguished political position in his country, and was also a devoted musical amateur.

He was the child's only instructor up to her seventh year of age ; then Julius Hoheni, a German professor, took charge of her. On the arrival of the family in New York, the distinguished pianist, Gottschalk, took the greatest interest in the little girl, gave her lessons, and taught her many of his brilliant pieces.

Teresa was gifted with a wonderful memory.

She could acquire the mastery of a lengthy, difficult fantasia in two or three days. This gift is always the surest sign of a musical temperament that will bring distinction to its possessor.

Teresa made her first appearance in Boston, January 4, 1863. She remained here about one month, and was a great attraction at the grand orchestral concerts which were given at that period under the direction of Carl Zerrahn or P. S. Gilmore. She created a furore of enthusiasm every time she played. I doubt if any child pianist of the same age has ever exceeded her in ability. Imagine a child of nine years playing Thalberg's Moses, Gottschalk's Jerusalem, and similar pieces, full of technical difficulties.

Teresa was a lovable character, rather sedate and thoughtful, with very attractive features, beautiful, pleading eyes, and a strong and healthful physique. My family were greatly attracted to her. She and her mother, a large handsome woman, paid us several visits.

Teresa never failed to bring her doll with her.

At the end of the Boston visit, Teresa gave what was termed a Juvenile Reception to at least three thousand school children in Music Hall. She wished distinctly to do this thing ; she said that being herself a child, she wanted the children of Boston to hear her. At this concert his Honor Mayor Cobb (I think it was) led Teresa on to the stage and made a little speech ; then she played, to the children's great delight ; after which came the reception, first in the anteroom, and then on the stage. It was with difficulty she could tear herself away from her young hearers.

Carreno's artistic life is well known in America, for though she paid many visits to her own country and Europe, a large part of her early life was spent among us. She can certainly be called American at least by adoption. As a pianist she has for years stood in the front rank of brilliant players. A few seasons ago she played the great No. 4 Concerto, by Rubinstein, in one of the Boston Symphony Concerts. I was one of the delighted listeners.

While she was thrilling me with her magnificent playing of the great composition, my mind was travelling back to her first appearance in that same Music Hall, when as a little child he had to climb upon the music stool to play her piece. After the concert I did myself the honor of visiting her. In conversation, we went over much that had happened in her art life. She, as a good American, wished to know all about the progress of music in the United States since she had made her home in Germany.

I regard her as a wonderful player in all respects. She is now in the prime of life, strong and vigorous, full of verve and intelligence, of fine mental grasp, and is as thoroughly devoted to her art as she was at twenty years of age. Her great popularity therefore is easily accounted for.