

GREAT JEWISH COMPOSERS

REMARKABLE ARRAY OF MUSICAL TALENT AMONG JEWISH PEOPLE

Jews have been proclaimed the world's finest musicians by no less an authority than Rachmannoff, the famous pianist writes Eugene V. Segal in the *London Bulletin*. Rachmannoff says that while he was traveling through Russia, inspecting educational institutions as a representative of societies for the propagation of music he found a great number of little, poorly clad boys of ten or twelve years of age who were very gifted musically, and of these the most talented were invariably Jews. Most of them were violinists, he states.

According to some statistics eight out of every twelve prominent pianists, violinists, vocalists and conductors are of Jewish blood. Whether or not these figures are absolutely correct, enough Jews who are engaged in all branches of musical pursuits can readily be cited to substantiate the Jewish claim for a prominent position in the realm of harmony. There are long lists of them, of all degrees of merit and fame but it is possible to name only a few in this brief review.

Among the Jewish composers, the best known are Anton Rubinstein, Felix Mendelssohn Meyerbeer, Offenbach, Rubin Goldmark, Jacques Halevy, Edward Solomon and Max Bruch.

Rubinstein

Though Rubinstein's family was converted to Greek Orthodox, his genius must unquestionably be regarded as a heritage of his race. His music, especially that of "The Maccabees," often shows a trace of synagogical melodies. Rubinstein was born in Bessarabia, 1829. His first public performance was at a piano concert in Moscow, when he was but ten years of age. Following this he made a tour of Germany, Holland, Scandinavia and France. He began to study composition when fifteen years old, but did not produce anything of note until he was thrown on his own resources by the financial reverses of his family. Some of his notable works are "Ivan the Terrible," "Don Quixote," "Anthony and Cleopatra," and "Paradise Lost." Rubinstein died in 1894.

Mendelssohn

Mendelssohn, like Rubinstein, was also a converted Jew. There were peculiarities in his works, too, which remind some critics of Jewish litur-

gical songs. Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1809 and ten years later published his first musical composition. A *Midsummer Night's Dream* was his first work performed in public when he was seventeen years old. His true genius, however, was first recognized by the English in 1829, when he made his debut as a pianist in London. He was later appointed musical director at Düsseldorf, and as a conductor in Leipzig made that city the musical centre of Germany. He died in 1847. His best productions are the oratorios "Paulus" and "Elias."

Meyerbeer

Jakob Lieberman Beer best known as Meyerbeer was born in 1791. He was the best dramatic composer of his age and maintained a dominant place in opera for seventy years. He was the composer of the music for the first reform service held in Berlin. He exerted a great influence upon composers all over Europe. Numbered among his German followers were Lachner, Franke, Lortzing, Flotow, Rubinstein and Goldmark. Halevy, Gounod and Bizet were some of his French followers, and his Italian disciples were Mercadanti, Donizetti and Verdi. Meyerbeer made his debut as a pianist when nine years of age. He was appointed composer to the Court by the Grand Duke of Hesse. His first oratorio was performed in 1811. He later became closely identified with the French school of opera and wrote "Robert le Diable" and "Les Huguenots." He was finally called to Berlin by Frederick William IV. to serve as general musical director. Some of his works which deserve mention are the monodrama, "Thevelinden's Liebe," "Rosa and Constanza," "Freundschaft," and "Fumenides."

Offenbach

Offenbach was born in Cologne, 1819, and died in Paris, 1880. He is famous as a creator of French comic opera. He began his career as a cellist in the orchestra of the Opera Comique. His first operatic success was, "Chanson Fortunio." In 1855 he opened his own theatre where many of his popular works were produced. In all he wrote 102 compositions. Among them were "Orpheus aux Enfers," "La Belle Helene," and "La Vie Parisienne."

Goldmark

Goldmark is an American. He was born in New York City in 1872, and

was educated at the City College of New York. He studied at the Conservatory of Vienna, lectured at the University of Vienna, gave instruction in piano playing at the National Conservatory and gave 300 lecture recitals in the United States and Canada. Among his compositions are "Samson," the overture to "Hiawatha" many songs and pieces for piano and violin.

Halevy

Halevy, a Frenchman, was born in Paris in 1799 and died 1842. He entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of ten. He later became a pupil of Cherubini. Before he left for Italy as the recipient of the Grand Prix de Rome, his "De Profundis" with Hebrew text was performed at a Parisian synagogue. His masterpiece is the opera "La Juive" (The Jewess) which was produced in 1835 and won him fame.

Solomon

Solomon was born in London, 1850, and died 1895. He was largely self-taught. He is best known for his light operas.

Bruch

Bruch was a pianist, conductor, educator, and composer. He was the director of the Philharmonic Society, Liverpool the Orchestra Society, Breslau, and director of composition at the Royal Hochschule Berlin. His compositions, which include Hebrew melodies and selections for piano, violin, orchestra and voice, are legion.

(This is the first of a series of articles on "The Jew in Music" by Eugene V. Segal. An article on "Great Jewish Violinists and Pianists" will appear Sunday—The Editor.)