

ORIGIN AT EARLY DATE

HARP PLAYING A DELIGHTFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Its Great Sweetness Recognized by Best Composers, adapted to Home Use.

By H. H. Kenest.

The origin of the harp is lost in the mists of antiquity. Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Welsh, Irish and many another have had a share in its evolution and history, and though in the course of this development it has varied in form and construction, its essentials have always been the same while its use has been universal.

It was somewhat defective in its ancient form, for you will notice that the Egyptian harp of the sketch is without the upright pillar, so we do not know how it was tuned. It was furnished with 4, 7, 10 or 20 strings, in some cases even more. Though we may look to Egypt for the origin of the harp, it probably existed in some primitive form before the Egyptians possessed it; however, this may be, their frescoes 4,000 years old or more, show the harp and manner of playing, which differs little from our own.

The Hebrew Harp was a small triangular shaped instrument—a kind of Lyre, played with a plectrum; while the Irish harp, famed in song and story, was fashioned after the Egyptian pattern, having a compass of 30 notes. Among our Anglo-Sax-

on forefathers the harp was a favorite instrument. The very earliest harps were, for the most part, no doubt, played horizontally and borne upon the shoulder of the player; only later was the triangular shape assumed, and the height increased. Some of these old time upright harps were 6 feet in height and supplied with 10 to 13 strings, but as there was no pillar to take the strain in front, the strings were of gut, the pitch and tension low.

The harp is considered to be the finest among instruments of the pizzicato class; all well-equipped orchestras being provided with it. It is equally esteemed for home service, but though having many votaries, will never dethrone the piano.

Many composers of the first rank have recognized the harp's great sweetness and versatility which they have turned to good account. Beethoven, for instance, has united the horn and harp in such a way in "Childe Harold," as to perfectly imitate the tones of a bell. In the "Dance Macabre" of St. Saens, the harp strikes the hour of twelve and the skeletons appear, while an incomparable melody has been woven by Wagner out of six harps massed together in his "Das Rheingold."

While bearing in itself the elements of many varieties, in common with most musical instruments, the modern harp is the invention of Sebastian Evard, who in 1810, devised his double acting arrangement which gives to each note its chromatic intervals, above and below, sharp and

flat; making it an almost perfect musical instrument.

It has a compass of 6½ octaves, is tuned to the diatonic scale of C flat, while its music is written as for the piano—a double staff with treble and bass clefs.

The term "double action" may be thus briefly explained: By a single pressure on each of the harp's seven pedals, all the degrees of the scale are raised a semi-tone, the harp then stands in the key of C. A second pressure then raises it to C sharp; there being a pedal to each degree of the scale should an "accident" be required the pedal of such note is touched, raising or lowering every note of the same tone, as the case may be. Most lovely effects in chords and arpeggios from forte to piano can thus be produced at will.

The wood used in the harp is chiefly sycamore, but the sound-box is of deal. The dimensions of this box and body increase downward. Along the centre of the sound-box is glued a strip of beech or other hardwood in which is inserted the pegs holding the lower end of the strings; the upper ends of which are round tuning pins piercing the wrist plank which forms the upper part of the neck. The sound-board is ribbed underneath by two narrow bars crossing the grain of the deal, their duty consists in driving the sound-board into modes and figures of vibration.

The slanting sound-box rises from the base to the curved neck which connects it to the pillar at the top. The strings which pass from the

neck of the sound-box are arranged in diatonic scale—tuned in flats, those in C flat are colored red, those in F flat in blue, so as to be more easily recognized by the player.

The performer holds the slanting sound-box next to him, and as the strings are close together his hands can stretch a 10th upon the harp as easily as in the octave on the piano. It is well to remember that the strings must never be plucked sharply but with a sweeping motion, thus producing a stately effect.

Using Our Leisure.

With the tendency of the day to shorten working hours, the problem of how to make the best use of the leisure time becomes more involved. So often one hears it said, eight hours to work, eight hours to sleep and eight hours to play. How to utilize the time for work and sleep is pretty well decided for us. But the play time is our own. If it is to be used rightly, then we must be taught from childhood its proper use.

There are few questions in the social life of to-day that need more thought than this one of how the people should spend their recreation hours. Whatever else finds place in a reasonable programme for the leisure periods, surely music merits a very large place. There is no other human agency that will benefit people physically, mentally, morally and spiritually to as great an extent as music. It rests the body, muscles, nerves and all. It rests the brain. It creates thoughts of the higher

things of life. It enriches the spirit. If we had far more music in our schools, far more music among the children in our homes, if people generally gave themselves over more to music in the home and in concerts, the problem of seeing to it that the people spend their leisure in the best possible way would be much less of a problem.

Humor in Church Music.

In the days when the church music was in the hands of preceptors, at least in the Presbyterian congregations, it was the custom to give out one line of the piece at a time. One Scotch preceptor announced the line from the seventy-first Psalm "To many I a wonder am." This caused a titter to go over the whole congregation. It partly unnerved the surprised gentleman; but he made another attempt and announced the line a second time. Again there was general laughter. The minister, taking in the situation at a glance, leaned over the pulpit and said to the preceptor: "You are a wonder, Thomas, you've got your wig on wrong."

Another story is told of two judges, in the early days of this country, who were on their way from one circuit to another. En route they had to stop at a small town over Sunday. They arrived at church for the morning service unexpectedly to the people. The minister hurriedly looked up something appropriate to sing. Scanning the index of the hymn book he noticed "Speak, O ye Judges of the Earth." He announced this hymn, thinking to do honor to the distinguished guests, but the words were as follows:

Speak, O ye judges of the earth,
If just your sentence be;
Or must not innocence appeal
To Heaven from your decree?

Your wicked hearts and judgments
are
Alike by malice swayed;
Your gripping hands, by weighty
bribes,

To violence betrayed.
The thoughts that flashed through
the judges' minds are not recorded.

Make It Interesting

The study of music from the very beginning, should be made interesting and thorough. Even the child can be made to play with expression in his own atmosphere and by degrees the study will become a source of real pleasure and inspiration to him. The really good teacher must have a positive technical plan to teach. It will not do any good to feed the pupils on old worn out doctrines. What we need is teachers all over the country who know the foundation principles of technic according to approved methods and can teach them. Then there will be no need of "beginning over again" because the foundation was badly laid, should such a student enter the classes of an artist teacher.

Popularizing Good Music in Russia.

It seems that even poor disorganized Russia had lined up with other great nations in an endeavor to give the masses every opportunity to progress musically. Maria Moravsky gives a glimpse into this movement in an article in Pearson's Magazine in the course of which this writer says:

"A few years ago some of our enthusiastic young musicians started a campaign in Russia to introduce serious music to the ordinary, everyday people. They organized small street bands with solists, who sang and played the music created by our best composers. They would have their improvised concerts in the courtyards (almost every Russian house has a big courtyard) and the audience consisted mostly of servants, children, janitors, salesmen and so on. Instead of the ragtime and the popular sentimental love songs they play Tchaikowsky, Rachmaninoff, even Moussorgsky and Scriabin. They played the foreign composers too: Chopin, Grieg, and—don't be frightened—Wagner. Programmes were varied and the results—splendid. The audiences, the poorly educated, plain audiences, liked them better than the music from movies, which is as light in Russia as everywhere.

Only Two Divisions.

To the average person there are just two kinds of music, the kind he likes and the kind he does not like. There are individuals and organizations working to stimulate interest in British music. Others are advocating the use of more French or Russian or Italian or Spanish or American music. These efforts have their place. The champions of the music of the various nations have a useful mission to perform.

But in the long run the quality of the individual composition or the public's fancy for it will determine its use. No music deserves recognition simply because it is the work of a citizen of a certain nation. All the admiration, all the publicity, all the coaxing in the world is not going to popularize music that has not within itself the power to win popularity.

If a family wants a record of "The Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah for their phonograph they care not whether that oratorio is French or Italian or Serbian or Czech-Slovak. It is the Hallelujah Chorus they want.

If a person goes to a concert to hear "Il Trovatore," "Mamma Butterfly," "Pagliacci," or "The Mikado," he does not stop to think of the opera's nationality. It is of little concern to him whether Verdi or Puccini or Leoncavallo or Sullivan is classified as a hottentot or a white man.

The average person usually does not like oratorios and huge symphonies. He does not crave marches and abhor opera. He does not praise the old masters and damn the modern or ultra-modern. The composer's nationality does influence some people's likes and dislikes, but generally speaking to the public music is the universal language—the only esparto. The public divides music into two classes—and just two—what it likes and what it does not like.

The average voice range of ordinary singers is one octave—and popular songs are usually confined to the octave.



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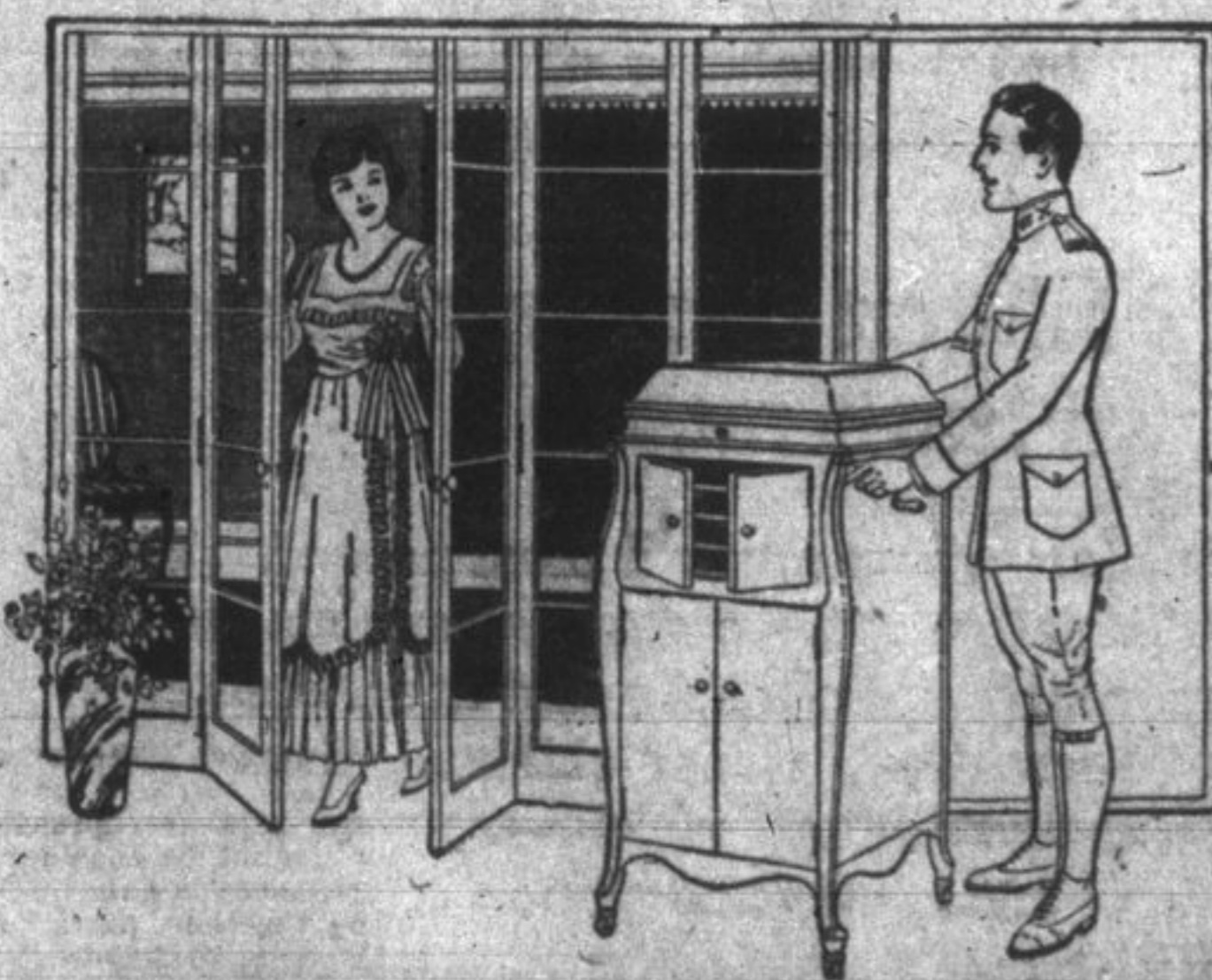


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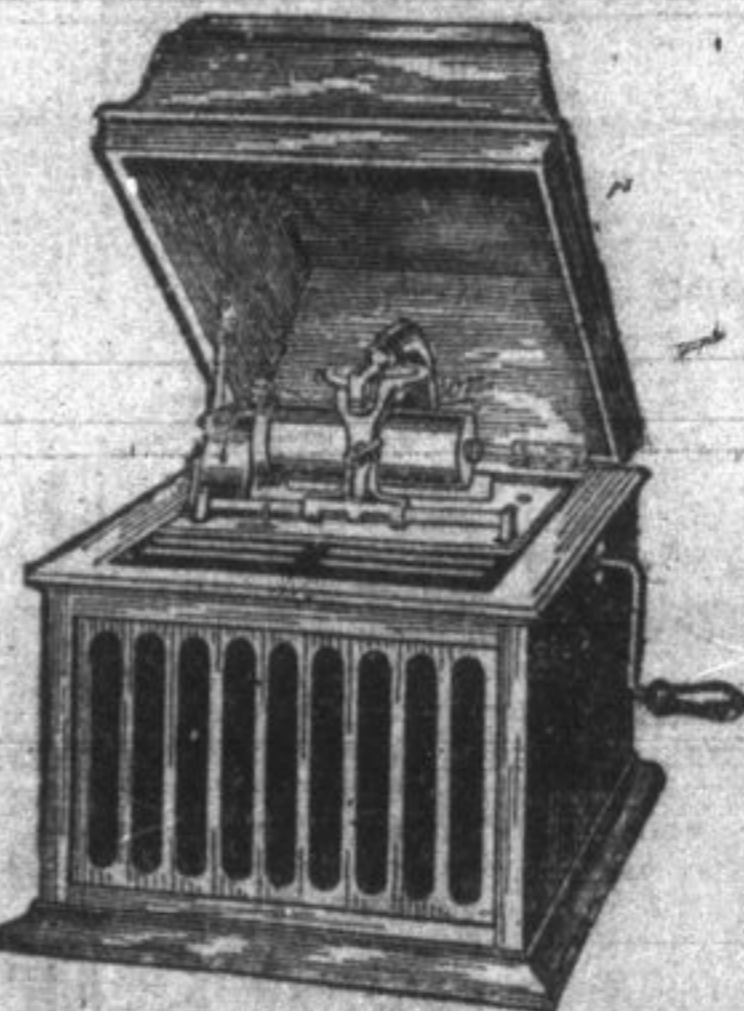
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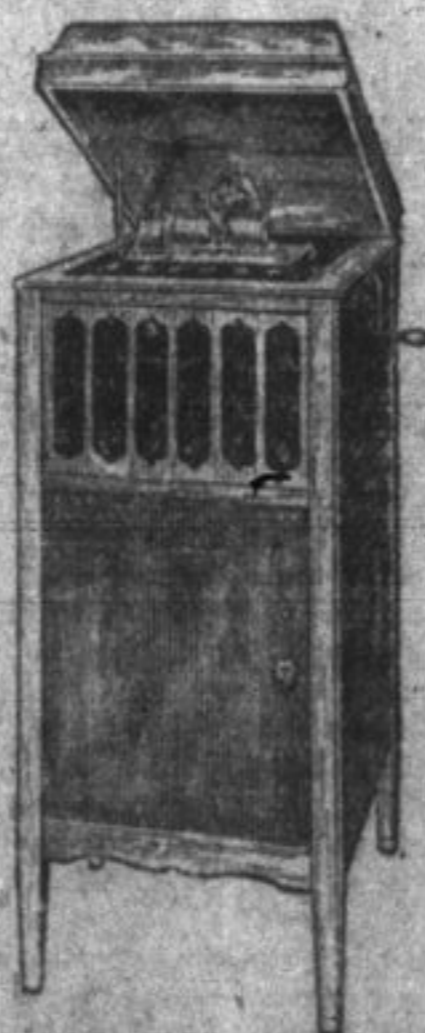
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Music in the Adriatic. In the mountains of Tyrol, it is the custom of the women and children to come out, when it is bedtime, and sing their national songs until they hear their husbands, fathers, and brothers answer them from the hills on their return home. On the shores of the Adriatic, such a custom prevails. There the wives of the fishermen come down about sunset and sing a melody. After singing the first stanza, they listen awhile for the answering strain from the water, and continue to sing and listen until the well-known voices come borne on the tide, telling that the loved ones are almost home. Piano players and singers generally do not like sharp, so the popular song writers stick to flats.