

# PAUL ALLEN'S CAREER

## THE WORK OF A YOUNG BOSTON COMPOSER

The Symphony Which Will Be Heard Tomorrow Night at Jordan Hall—The Opera Which Has Recently Been Heard in Genoa—Its Plot and Its Musical Virtues—The Composer's European Career

**T**OMORROW night the orchestra of the New England Conservatory of Music, under Mr. Chadwick's direction, will play two movements of a symphony in D minor, by Paul Allen, a young Boston composer, now living in Italy, whose music has been little heard here. The symphony was awarded the Paderewski prize in 1910—the prize which was established by the pianist in the nineties for the encouragement of American symphonic music, and some years ago was awarded to Henry K. Hadley's "North, East, South, and West" symphony.

Mr. Allen was graduated from Harvard in 1903, but soon went abroad for study, and has returned to America only once since that time. He has gained a solid reputation for himself in Europe, first as a pianist and more recently as a composer. In Italy he has become established by his opera, "The Philtre," recently performed at Genoa. This work, together with its composer's career, was described at length by Charles W. Lemmi in the October number of the Harvard Musical Review. Apropos of the forthcoming performance of the symphony in D minor, this article is here reprinted in full:

An Italian audience, accustomed to masterpieces which are at once the expression and the proud achievement of a national gift, is a very critical audience; for a young American to appear before it with an opera professedly Italian both in style and subject, may not improbably have seemed a novelty to many; for him to have moved such a tribunal to enthusiastic applause he must be a man of very exceptional endowments; and this is what Paul Allen has done, at Genoa, with his new opera, "The Philtre."

The libretto of "The Philtre," which is by the noted Italian novelist, Luigi Capuana, tells, in a single act, a story of betrayed love, revenge and suicide in a Sicilian fishing village—time, the seventeenth century. The curtain rises on a festive scene: the launching of a new fishing boat, which is named the Enza, after the beautiful daughter of its owner, the wealthiest man in the village. All the fisher folk are rejoicing; all cry good wishes to the bright new vessel; the women cast handfuls of salt on it, as is the custom, and sprinkle with salt its fair young godmother; young Sderio, accompanying himself on the mandolin and accompanied on the guitar by the old show maker, Lello, sings it a song of good omen.

All are rejoicing save one: poor Flora watches from a distance, torn with grief and jealousy; for Sderio, her sweetheart, has abandoned her to woo the lovely Enza. Old Lello knows this, and after the pretty ceremony of the launching is over, tries to comfort her, but in vain. Proudly striving to conceal her misery, she declares that it really matters very little to her, now, what Sderio does or does not.

" 'Twas but a whim," she sings, "and I have put it by." The old man turns sadly away; from Sderio he has received only a shrug and a laugh for answer. Slowly bitterness and hatred darken all her mind. And then comes her lover himself, conscience-driven, with a coward's complaint against what he terms her sullenness. Fully aroused, she turns on him, with stinging mockery, spurns him fiercely from her, and finally bursts into a savage song of malediction against him, Enza and the boat.

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The unhappy girl has but one thought now; she only awaits a means of putting it into action, and this soon offers itself. The local magician has attended the village festival, and the people have been crowding around him, eager (despite a running fire of gibes from Lello) to hear him tell the Enza's fortune; but presently the fortune is told, the crowd scatters, and

Flora hastens to the magician, her plan already made. In exchange for her earrings she receives from him a love-philtre, with which, before her sorrow turned to hatred, she had commissioned him. "But remember what I told you," the sorcerer warns her, "administered by you, this is a sure love-philtre; administered by another it is a deadly poison. Remember." Flora remembers: Enza, who, loyally silencing her own heart, has steadily repulsed Sderio until now, hesitates to accept Flora's gift, but completely disarmed at length, and moved, also, by the argument which the deserted girl makes of her own misfortune, she finally accepts, and the supposed love-philtre does its deadly work. Then Flora plunges down into the sea.

Mr. Allen's musical interpretation received very warm praise from the Italian critics. Says one of these: "The music is clear, heartfelt, beautiful. The songs are in the purest Italian style; correct in manner, ample in development, faultless in accent. The orchestra is genially handled, the instrumental effects being excellent, both in distribution and in massing. The chorus is employed rationally and is effectively illustrative. In a word, 'The Philtre' is a work excellent in form, content, and inspiration; it reveals in Mr. Allen a subtle and aristocratic musician of easy and elegant vein; a vigorous harmonist; a daring and erudite master of counterpoint. His orchestral palette is rich in brightest colors, delicate shades, and delicious episodes, and the result is admirable in its geniality. Mr. Allen's handling of his orchestra is that of a symphonist, and it is precisely as such that he enjoys an enviable reputation abroad. It gives me especial pleasure to remark (I beg to be excused for doing so a second time) that this composer,—a foreigner among us—is a melodist of the purest Italian stamp,—utterly alien from the

baroquism and artifice which seem to have infected almost all our contemporary melodrama.

'The opera begins with a prelude, a genial and robust symphonic passage. There follows a powerful chorus, moulded on a barcarole motive which, outlined by a part of the chorus in the interior, presently blends into admirable union with the gay, lively motive of the rest. The tenor's aria is a facile, limpid song which sways easily to a vague, pleasing suggestion of waltz-time; the baritone's guitar-song is vigorous, ringing, characteristic; the orchestra comments ably on both. Fresh and new is the phrasing of the tenor-soprano duet; especially those two phrases which at first pursue each other, then rush to their union with an ever-growing sound of urgency which bursts into a thrilling climax as they meet. Original and dramatically strong is the scene which takes place between Flora and the magician; and note that the dramatic intensity of this scene is produced entirely by skilful use of the orchestra, for the voices do not once infringe the rule of sober moderation to which the composer seems to have bound himself throughout. Original, too, is the song of Enza, supported by an agitated movement of the orchestra; and equally good is the duet between the two women, which is almost an introduction to the great finale which brings the opera to a close. Downright masterly is this same finale, perhaps somewhat closely modelled on our great masters of the last century, but surely not to be censured for that. Indeed, such deference to our great musical traditions (provided, of course, that the occasion warrants it) is a rare virtue in a contemporary composer; and when that composer is a foreigner, the virtue has the added merit of being pleasantly

flattering to our pride whence I, for one, am not ungrateful to Mr. Allen.

"To sum up: 'The Philtre,' is much more than a bright promise for the future; it is an impressive assertion of the actual merit of a young man singularly endowed with the gifts of the operatic composer, the excellent musician, the true and original artist."

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Paul Allen is a graduate of Harvard Law School; there's a queer beginning for you! But no, that wasn't the real beginning at all; rather it was the end of another beginning which he made (and brilliantly, too, for he was a lawyer at nineteen—exempted, for special merit, from his last year of study) to please his parents, who, perhaps, had said to their son what we should possibly say to ours—that an artistic career is like the Sphinx of old. No, that was not the real beginning. The real beginning was when a very few years after his birth (which occurred in 1884, at Boston), little Paul Allen, untaught save by himself, began to scribble music and to play the piano; he felt the need, he said, of expressing himself in that way. The need grew and grew with each succeeding year; grew into a strong desire for instruction, into a great wish and hope for the future; waxed so strong and stubborn on adversity that the music lessons (they slipped in when dad wasn't looking) were found time for, despite the college work; spoke at last in

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a voice so imperious that but a few months after his graduation the young lawyer was in Italy studying music under the best masters there.

A sudden call to substitute his illustrious master Eucnamici at a concert of chamber music, a brilliant début, and Paul Allen's career as a musician was begun. How promisingly, those in this country know who applauded him during the one brief winter that he spent here in 1907-08; for, alas! thou siren Italy! in the spring of 1908 he returned there for just one more look—and he is looking still. In 1910 he made a tour in Germany, where he reaped a rich harvest of applause in fourteen concerts, directed by the celebrated Ernst Eulemberg; where, too, a powerful grand orchestra symphony of his won him the Paderewski prize. On his return to Italy, he gave himself up completely to composition and in less than two years produced a number of chamber music romances, several pianoforte pieces, two quartets for stringed instruments, a trio for piano, violin and 'cello; various choral pieces, two grand orchestra symphonies, a one-act fable, entitled "Rospus" and finally, "much more than a promise," indeed, and yet a pleasant assurance of more to follow—"The Philtre."