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MUSIC
FOR ALL
OF US

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

MUSIC
FOR ALL
OF US

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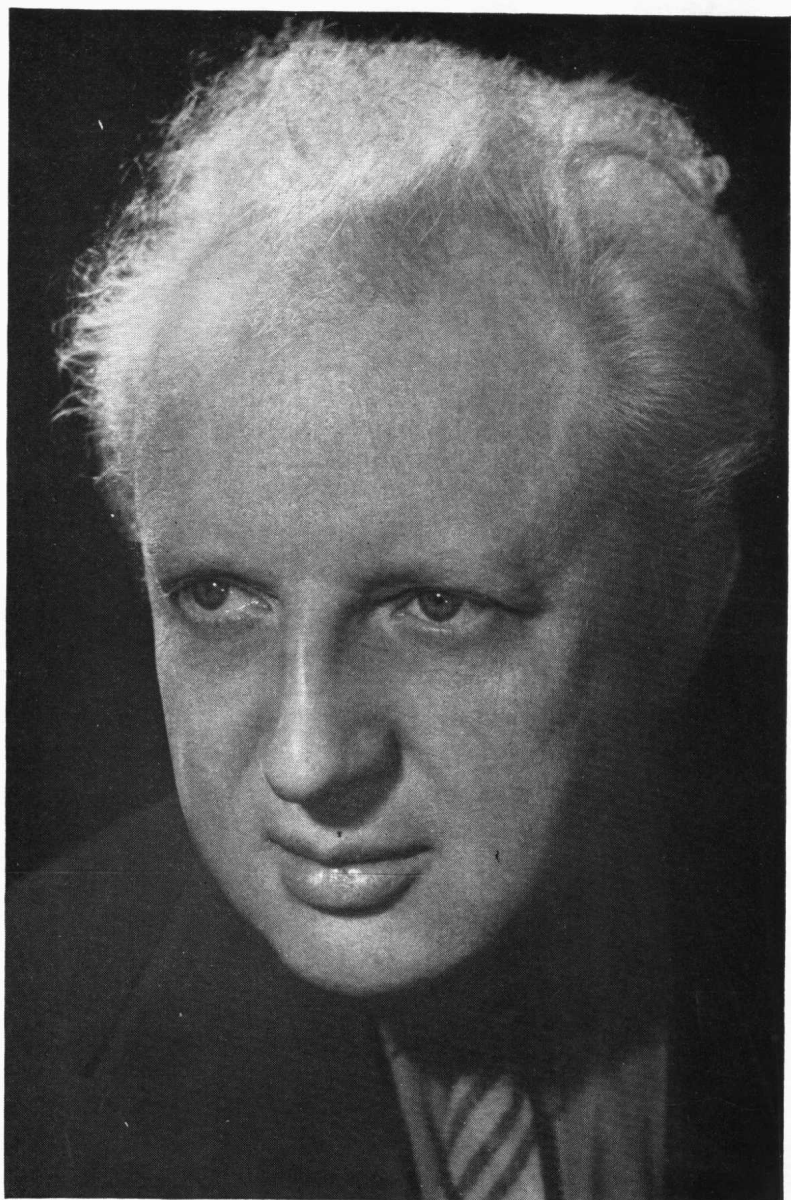
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LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

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MUSIC THE UNIVERSAL

1

MUSIC is a universal language—it speaks to everyone—is the birthright of all of us. Formerly music was chiefly confined to privileged classes in cultural centers, but today, through radio and records, music has come directly into our homes no matter how far we may live from cultural centers. This is as it should be, because music speaks to every man, woman, and child—high or low, rich or poor, happy or despairing—who is sensitive to its deep and powerful message.

Music is Poetry—expressed through tone instead of words. If we listen to poems in French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish—and if we do not know those languages—we may not understand the meaning of the poems. But if we listen to French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish music, the music will have meaning because music is a universal language. In this sense music is pure poetry—understandable by everyone.

This is only one side of the greatness of music. Not only is it universal as a language, but it is universal in its expression. It may be a children's song, a soldiers' march, a

country dance, a simple folk melody—or it may be the highest and greatest in art music—its range of expression is without limit.

Today there are millions interested in music where there were formerly a few thousands. Almost all schools, colleges, universities have orchestras in which the students play with enthusiasm and often with a high degree of skill. Radio has enriched the cultural life of almost everyone by making the music of many lands and many periods available all over the civilized world. It is for all of these music lovers that this book is written. In it I shall try to describe the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical sides of music. The technical aspects of music, radio, and recording will also be included. These are important to the degree in which they *serve* music—they must always be secondary to the higher aspects of the art. Music has innumerable phases—it can be all things to all men. We each respond to those phases and expressions of music that appeal most to us. Because there are so many aspects of music they will, of necessity, be discussed briefly.

Sometimes there are conflicting opinions about various aspects of music. I shall try to describe these, without wishing to force my own opinion upon the reader, because it is my deepest belief that in music we must all have unlimited scope to feel and think for ourselves. That is freedom—the inborn majesty of the human soul.

We shall discuss what is deep and subtle and mysterious in music, but it is of great importance to keep always in mind that the supreme heights of music can only be *sug-*

gested by words—they can be experienced only through *music itself*.

In these times of world-wide cultural and social evolution, there will probably be equally great changes and growth in music. So we shall discuss the past—its music, composers, technical methods, musical evolution . . . the future—the limitless potentialities of its music, further developments of musical technique, future developments of our present instruments, new types of instruments, future uses of electrical techniques applied to music, the great part music will play in our cultural life. Undoubtedly music will continue in concerts and operas—radio and records. In addition, the kind of music thousands have felt to be great over a long period of time will play an increasingly important part in motion pictures and television, and in this way many who otherwise might not hear such music will come in contact with it, and through this experience it may become an inspiration in their lives.

For convenience we shall discuss different phases of music separately, so as to concentrate our attention for a time on important details. But if we wish to understand music in all its fullness, we must relate every detail to the whole of music and always keep in mind that music is *one*—each part is related to the whole. Music is organic—it is not only unified in itself but it is united to life—it is the expression through rhythm and tone of the unlimited range of our feeling, and is intimately interwoven with the rhythms and cycles and pulsations of our life. Life

here and now, with all the accumulation of experience of emotion and thought and culture of past ages—life reaching into and forming the future. Everything and everyone is touching life all the time—and music and rhythm and vibration are all part of the Universal Life.

There are many ways of regarding music. One way is to think of music from a historical and national standpoint. Sometimes this particular point of view narrows down to a region within the nation, and even to a certain period in the music of that region. For example, some musicians are interested in the music of Vienna in the last part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, when there was a wonderful flowering of music and art in that city. They confine their attention and admiration mainly to Vienna in that time and are much less interested in other parts of the German-speaking countries, and even in other periods of Viennese music. Again, some musicians are interested in the great choral music of the sixteenth century in Italy, particularly that of Rome, Florence, and Venice, and are less interested in Italian music of other epochs, or of other cultural centers.

A totally different conception is to enjoy the music of various periods and places, and yet to consider these from a universal standpoint. In all kinds of music there are certain *basic principles* of rhythm—melodic form—key centers—frequency relations that create successions of tones which form the basis of melodies—of harmonic relations—various speeds of tempo that create moods of excitement or languor, tranquillity or agitation—of counter-melodies

and counter-rhythms. All these basic elements are to be found in various forms and degrees in almost every kind of music. A music lover who understands this universal approach to music is not confused when he hears for the first time the music of lands unfamiliar to him. He soon penetrates to the inner nature of that music, no matter how strange it may sound to him at first, because he is able to reduce music to its simplest elements, and so find the relation of all kinds of music to each other through those basic fundamentals which make him at home with all kinds of music—of all periods—all countries. As a musician, he is a citizen of the world, because his universal approach to music has given him the key to the understanding of all types of music. He realizes that art and artists are means to an end—channels through which flow many kinds of power—the expression of beauty and ecstasy—all that is deep and vital in the universe and in our souls.

There are many kinds of musicians, and each, if he is a good artist of his kind, has his place in the service of music. Some intellectual musicians regard the rhapsodical, emotional musician as an untrustworthy artist on a lower level. Some musicians who rely on instinct and inspiration in their music regard the intellectual musician as cold and uninspired. The ideal is to combine each one of these qualities, because music needs *all* our faculties to reach its fullest expression and its most complete understanding.

A musician must be a poet, and a poet a musician. As

poetry floats upward into the essence of beauty it becomes music—as in Shakespeare—Shelley—Li-Po. All the different branches of art receive their inspiration from the same root. What is that root? I believe it is a passionately strong feeling for the *poetry* of life—for the beautiful, the mysterious, the romantic, the ecstatic—the loveliness of nature, the lovability of people, everything that excites us, everything that starts our imagination working, laughter, gaiety, “pretending” in the way that children do, strength, heroism, love, tenderness, every time we see—however dimly—the god-like that is in everyone—and want to kneel in reverence.

Artists express themselves through many media—the painter through color—the sculptor through wood and stone—the architect through various materials and the functional designing of space—the dancer through motion—the artists of drama through speech, motion, light, color, and many other elements—the poet through words—the musician through tone—but perhaps the greatest art is the art of living, and the poetry that reaches its most universal expression is the poetry that surrounds us all the time.

Sometimes the culture of a nation comes to a flowering period and produces a soul that towers like a mountain above other men—and that soul is a symbol of all the deepest aspirations of his country. Such was Bach for Germany—Shakespeare for England—Leonardo da Vinci for Italy—Pythagoras for Greece—Lao-tse for China. We know comparatively little of Shakespeare and Bach as

men, but their poetry and music clearly reveal their personalities—the deepest recesses of their thought and feeling. Shakespeare's range of feeling and thought, perception and intuition, is without end. He is universal—from the blackest melancholy and despair to the most dazzling sun-rays of joy—from the coarse wit of the prostitute to the highest levels of spirituality—from iron and steel to gossamer-like moonbeams and romantic beauty. Shakespeare was not only poet but also musician—his words and their rhythm sound like music—subtle, beautiful, heavy-laden with meaning and character.

Music has always existed in Nature. Gifted artists are the channels which bring music from Nature to us. Although it is well to study various aspects of music with those who are highly developed in those aspects, our greatest teacher can be Nature. In Nature the Supreme Artist has created with never-ending variety marvels of form, color, motion, sound, drama, poetry—never repeating—always creating new developments of basic motives. The unending variety of the design of flowers, the beauty of their form and color, are some of the highest creations of the Supreme Artist. Mountains and arroyos, like the Grand Canyon, are Nature's sculpture on a vast scale. The violent swaying of trees in the wind, the rapid vibration of their leaves, the rolling surface of the ocean in calm weather, and the titanic battle of the waves in storms are only some of the moods of the Dance of Nature. The mysterious light of the moon and the stars is pure poetry.

The burning heat of the sun is life-giving inspiration. The great geological changes of the earth are like an immense drama, spreading over centuries of time. All of these and a thousand other aspects of Nature are creations of the Supreme Artist. We can learn from them the infinite possibilities of art.

Music is one expression of the Supreme Artist and of all the creative forces of the universe which inspire us. It is the most intimate and direct of all languages. As the moon reflects the burning light of the sun, so Bach and Beethoven and other inspired musicians reflect the sacred fire of creation from some divine source we dimly feel, but do not yet clearly know. Some of us are born to be sensitive to music—others find it difficult to understand at first, but after a time they become responsive to its message, and their whole life is enriched by music—a new source of joy and understanding gives to them an enlarged meaning to life.

True artists are born, not made—they learn from Nature and from each other. It is possible that all ideas—all combinations of color and sound—have always existed. Some men with vision are sensitive to forces that are invisible and yet more powerful than the electric currents in space. Such men become conscious of these universal ideas and relations of color and sound—they are our poets, painters, musicians, and other artists.

In Nature and all around us is the poetry of life—sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrifying. It is for us to look

beneath the surface and find that poetry. Music and the poetry of life are two of Nature's highest manifestations. In a flash we can be in that inner world of beauty, inspiration, mystery, ecstasy—through the magic of the universal language of music.

THE NATURE OF MUSIC

2

Just as we all have a body, mind, and spiritual side to our being, so music has its physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual nature. These different sides of music are all wonderful in themselves when we enjoy them separately—when they are combined, our experience can be overwhelming.

Just as a house may have its foundations imbedded in the earth, so music has its foundations clearly and definitely disclosed to us by Nature and by mathematical relations. The house may have a higher part above the foundations and a still higher part above the treetops. Similarly music has a higher part, in which rhythms and counter-rhythms, melodies and counter-melodies, harmonies and timbres are some of the elements of expression. These can give us unending delight in themselves. But above them may be a still higher sphere of feeling, imagination, intuition, emotion—heavenly tranquillity, violent and overwhelming agitation—humor and whimsicality, or intoxicated ecstasy—a sphere of divine utterance in which the heavens seem to open and we see a burning vision.