

B.M.G.

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The Spanish Guitar

By WILFRID M. APPLEBY

HERE is news that will accelerate the heartbeats of every British enthusiast of the Spanish guitar.

SEGOVIA IS COMING!

Yes, this is official. Andres Segovia will be in Holland during the early part of this month and will arrive in London in time to broadcast on November 25th.

Other engagements which have been made up to the time of writing are:—

- Dec. 3. Harpenden Music Club.
- 7. Cambridge Theatre.
- 9. Bradford Music Club.
- 12. Welwyn Music Club.

No doubt other recitals will be arranged also.

It is just ten years since Segovia last visited this country and in that decade many people have become interested in the Spanish guitar and it can be asserted that a large proportion of these owe their enthusiasm to having heard a recording of Segovia's wonderful playing. Now we are to hear a direct broadcast by him and the fortunate few may even see and hear him at one of his recitals.

When Ferdinand Sor brought his guitar to England just over a century ago, only a few thousand people at most could have heard him play. Yet he made a profound impression on British music-lovers and paved the way for other guitarists. Segovia's radio audience in Britain will be numbered in millions so we may expect his visit to stimulate interest in the Spanish guitar considerably.

No doubt as a result of hearing him, some people will try to learn to play the guitar. Unfortunately, they will

not find it an easy task. There are few teachers capable of giving instruction in the modern way of playing. There is no adequate Method in the English language (now that the Roch Method is not being imported) giving instruction on the technique used by Segovia. However, I understand that Segovia is preparing a Method. It is urgently needed and guitar enthusiasts look forward to its publication with great eagerness.

OBTAINING A GUITAR

Then there is the difficulty of obtaining a guitar. Beginners will not find a Hauser or Simplicio for sale in Britain but there are good instruments available if they are content to learn on a well-made guitar of the Lacote or Panormo type, instead of insisting on a "concert-size" instrument.

I would not exchange a small but good Lacote I have for a dozen of the

big Spanish-made "factory" guitars. A friend recently returned from Spain tells me that these mass-produced instruments are looked upon as "rubbish" by discerning players in that country.

He also tells me that the most famous guitar-maker in Madrid warmly praised Panormo guitars.

It is true that the volume of these guitars is not usually suitable for a room larger than a small hall but what they lack in volume they make up in beauty of tone.

It is easy to design a guitar which will give loud tone but the *quality* of the tone is all-important in a Spanish guitar.

SEGOVIA'S REMINISCENCES

Under the title "The Guitar and Myself," Segovia has written an autobiographical sketch which is appearing in the American publication "Guitar Review."

Although he was born in the Andalusian mining-town of Linares, Segovia's early years were passed in the beautiful province of Granada where he absorbed the music of nature. He gives an interesting account of his efforts to master the guitar, compiling his own exercises to the vigour, elasticity and rapidity of his fingers. He tells how he had to fight the opposition of his family and studied music when everyone was asleep.

Later he found encouragement from neighbours who allowed him to practise in secret on a guitar he had bought by saving all his pocket-money.

He absorbed a harmony method at one reading; taught himself to be a good sight-reader and, especially after moving to Cordoba, became acquainted with the music of the classic

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Masters.

His first recital was given at the Centro Artistico in Granada in 1910 when he was sixteen and from that beginning he has taken the guitar to almost every part of the world.

He has become a missionary of the guitar and, as a famous writer said: "There is but one guitar and Segovia is its prophet. He does not need to talk or write about it; he just plays and people of all languages hear and understand." The reason is that Segovia had faith in the guitar. His intuition made him realise its possibilities for the rendering of sublime music. His genius and sincerity have enabled him to convince and convert so that those who come to scoff have said: "If that is the guitar, I like it."

AN INSPIRATION

Segovia has brought the art of the guitarist to a new high level. He has inspired composers to write better music for the instrument and he has revealed surprising new beauty in classical music in his interpretations of it on the sensitive Spanish guitar.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a passage from his autobiography: "The piano, which is more fortunate than any other instrument in the extent of its repertory, is nevertheless the most neutral and colourless of them all. It does no more to music than a receptacle of transparent crystal does to water. The violin or the 'cello add to the music written for them the human warmth of their timbre and the music played by an orchestra is like a rain of colours. The guitar condenses and refines the music played on it as the hundred fragrances of the forest are condensed and refined in a tiny flask."

(To be continued)