

Yehudi Menuhin and Louis Persinger

Yehudi MENUHIN was first brought to Louis Persinger for lessons when he was barely six years old, (in San Francisco), and the musical relationship began which has resulted in Yehudi's present extraordinary musical understanding and phenomenal virtuosity.

After a year's study, Zimbalist, Elman, Hertz and others were invited in to hear the lad play. All were astounded and the boy was favorably compared to the talent of Heifetz at the age of nine. Lessons with Persinger continued, and on March 30, 1925, Yehudi gave his first complete recital in San Francisco, playing the Mendelssohn Concerto, Vieuxtemps' Fantasia appassionata, and other taxing works, with Persinger playing the accompaniments. Yehudi was greeted by critics and public as a genius.

In the fall of 1925, when Persinger went east on a tour with the San Francisco Chamber Music Society (the string quartet of which has now become known as the Persinger Quartet) Yehudi was taken to New York by his parents, to continue his lessons, Persinger taking him every day while in New York. In January, 1926, Yehudi, with Louis Persinger at the piano, gave a recital at the Manhattan Opera House, playing a Handel sonata, the Lalo Symphonie Espagnole, the Paganini Concerto, and a group of pieces ending with Sarasate's Zigeunerweisen. The concert was an extraordinary success. All the encores were exhausted, a mob of enthusiasts stormed the stage, and Yehudi had to be smuggled out through a tunnel!

11 offers of concerts were refused by his sensible parents, and they returned immediately to San Francisco, where he resumed his work with Persinger.

In March, 1926, the boy made his first orchestral appearance, with the San Francisco Symphony, Louis Persinger conducting; and the same month another San Francisco recital, with Persinger at the piano.

In November, 1926, Yehudi again appeared with the San Francisco Symphony, Alfred Hertz conducting, before an audience of eleven thousand. Again all the encores were exhausted and the boy had to be smuggled out of the hall. On this occasion he played the Tschaikowski Concerto. After that final appearance he took up the study of the Beethoven concerto with Persinger, something he had longed and begged for for more than a year!

Early this year his parents took him abroad for further broadening experience and concertizing. His two appearances with the famous old l'amourcaux orchestra in Paris were sensational successes, and for the first time in forty years the no-encore rule had to be broken ! After another year in France, England and Germany, Yehudi will return to America, to continue his studying with Louis Persinger and to play a few concert engagements. The parents will refrain from exploiting the boy, and he will be allowed to play only a few concerts a season.

The following, from a recent letter to the editor of "The Violinist," may be of interest to our readers:

"Yes, Yehudi does seem to be quite a sturdy little fellow. His parents keep him swathed in heavy underwear all the time, to lessen the chance of his catching colds (he had pneumonia a couple of times, as a very small boylet) It was always painful for me to watch the little fellow going through the perspiration-coated gymnastics of the Tschaikowski Concerto, for instance, when I knew how warm he must have been under the wings ! He does get a bit of exercise, though, and writes me that they walk the streets of Paris for three hours a day, discovering odd historical corners and

sights which awe him and his two little sisters exceedingly .

His mother and father are with him, too, and his school studies are all mapped out for him, just as they were in San Francisco. He is using a seven-eighths violin now, supposedly a Grancino. It's a small seven-eighths, though; and his bow, a three-quarter size, is really too long for him, so that it sometimes disappears around the corner a bit on one of those intense, long-drawn-out tones Yehudi is as pink and sweet and dimplish as a baby, and is not at all what one expects a violin prodigy to look like. May he remain that way !

"Yehudi's parents are extremely clever; sensitive, high-strung and intensely musical, although neither of them play any instrument to speak of. I believe the mother did play the piano a bit, at one time, and Mr. Menuhin's grandfather was a Chassidic rabbi! That may account for the stream of imagination and ecstatic something or other which runs through the whole family. No, they are not of "American" blood, for the mother (Marutha) was born in the Crimea, Russia, and the father (Moshe) in Palestine itself ! The names of the two little sisters are Yaltah and Hephzibah, —hardly very Yankeec-sounding! Both of them show a remarkable gift for the piano, too. You would take them for Scandinavians, for they are all very blonde and fresh-looking But Hebrew to the core ! "Just received a batch of Paris criticisms from Yehudi today's of the first Lamoureaux orchestra appearance, on February 6th. They certainly are flattering in the extreme ! But luckily his parents will keep the flattering things from his eyes"