

Studio Observations of the Pupil Yehudi Menuhin

By Louis Persinger

Yehudi MENUHIN is really a genuine phenomenon.

At various times during the two years he has been under my "wing," I have had him play for different visiting artists and they have been astonished at the boy's playing and unusual mentality. Zimbalist said that the nearest approach to it that he had run across anywhere was Heifetz, at the age of nine and Elman said that he knew of none anywhere who showed such gifts at that age. The boy is only eight years old and sometimes I can hardly keep from smiling at his seriousness and intensity and passion and utter unconsciousness of what he is doing when he is playing some big work.

People have been kind enough to "blame" me for creating some of the mature understanding and musical richness of Yehudi's playing, but it is all within the boy himself and I am happy to be the guide who takes him along the good path.

"Do you remember that play Otis Skinner toured around in a few seasons ago, "Mister Antonio ?" Well, Mister Antonio used to talk and think about that beautiful orange grove of his, over in sunny Italy, when things went too badly with (I may have this slightly mixed, but anyway it has served the purpose!) and sometimes when Yehudi doesn't quite seem to want to put the warmth necessary into what he is playing, all I have to do is to say: "Look out, Yehudi, I see that lovely grove over there, with all the bees and the hot lazy sun and the cool shade," then he starts in and plays like someone who is meeting his sweetheart for the first time. It is a standing joke between us .

His memory is something to make your hair stand on end. One time when Zimbalist was to hear him play, I told him to prepare and memorize the first movement of the 7th Rode concerto. I had given it to him with my fingerings on a Wednesday and on the following Saturday he came to his lesson with the entire concerto memorized . And at that time he was practicing not more than an hour and a half a day. Now he gets in about three hours a day, in addition to doing school studies (both in Hebrew and English). His arithmetic, for instance, is figured out with the help of the family grocery bills. One of the nicest things about him is his wonderful sense of humor. I When I first heard him play (after much grumbling and postponing on my part, for I thought it would be the usual boy "alleged" to be a marvel)

He was playing the 9th concerto of De Beriot. He had some bad musical habits but it seemed to me that there was something to that boy. So I accepted him as a pupil and have been giving him two lessons a week except for some summer vacation periods and when I had to leave to play somewhere.

Last March he gave a recital in Scottish Rite Hall, San Francisco, playing Vieuxtemps' Fantasia Appassionata, the Mendelssohn concerto, Rimsky Korsakoff's "Hymn to the Sun," Zimbalist's "Hebrew Air and Dance" and Paganini's "Moto Pertetuo." His parents are very sensible and have refused any number of paid engagements for the boy, including a vaudeville tour and simply want him to develop quietly and to gradually find his place in the world.