

STRAUSS HAS REHEARSAL.

GERMAN COMPOSER CONDUCTS THE CHICAGO ORCHESTRA.

Says It's the Best He Has Found Since Reaching the United States—Wields the Baton in Spirited Fashion, Using Left Hand Almost Constantly and Sometimes Bringing His Feet Into Action—Series of Songs Sung by His Wife.

Dr. Richard Strauss arrived in Chicago yesterday forenoon and from 10:15 till 12:45 o'clock rehearsed the Chicago orchestra on the program of his own works which he is to direct at the Auditorium tomorrow afternoon and Saturday evening.

As soon as the players had assembled 10 o'clock for regular rehearsal Mr. Thomas appeared before his men and announced the train conveying Dr. Strauss from the east was late and he could not say just when the visiting conductor would arrive.

The words were scarcely uttered when Librarian MacNichols entered in more than usually busy fashion and escorted a stranger to the desk where Mr. Thomas was standing. The two men shook hands, and Mr. Thomas then turning to the orchestra said in German:

"Gentlemen, Dr. Richard Strauss."

There was no delay. Work was commenced at once. The first of the tone poems on the program is the "Thus Spake Zarathustra." Stepping to the director's platform, the composer opened the score, rapped for order, and with a "Bitte, meine Herrn" the rehearsal began. Standing (thus) slouched against the lighted stage the most prominent of living composers could be studied at leisure by an observer concealed by the dense darkness of the rear of the balcony. A man above average height—close to six feet, if not more than that—shoulders broad and suggestive of muscular strength, but the figure as a whole slender rather than heavy. Straight and long of limb and upright of carriage, Dr. Strauss impresses as being the embodiment of energetic physical well being, and good natured but positive individuality.

Dressed in a dark sack suit, Dr. Strauss impressed by the directness and earnestness with which he attacked the work in hand. His beat is distinct, clear, and firm, calm and easy when the music is moving quietly and regularly, but becoming impassioned and decided when a climax or a sudden change in rhythm is at hand. He uses his left hand almost constantly. It is a hand slender and white, the length of the fingers and the strong assertiveness of the thumb being its most noticeable features.

As the music grows more strenuous Dr. Strauss' leading gains in excitability. He beats time with his right foot, and when a sudden climax of particular force is desired he entire right leg is lifted and the foot comes down with a stamp. He gives every sign of entrance to the different instrument pointing now here, now there, stepping forward, rising on tiptoe, and then, when a quick diminution of the volume of tones is wished, crouching down into a half sitting posture and then rising quickly. He moves nimbly and not without a certain nervous intensity that precludes all hint of pose and tells only of keen interest in the work in hand.

He stopped the orchestra frequently, not to find fault with anything done but to explain to the players his exact wishes. A particular motif was to be raised into prominence by a certain instrument, some of the strings were to bow a given phrase with a little more of lightness or of power, a trumpet was to make a single note stand above the mass of tone—countless changes of this kind were indicated and the conductor seemed never to grow weary nor to find an appeal too small to receive attention. In this way "Thus Spake Zarathustra," "Till Eulenspiegel," and "Death and Transfiguration" were taken through, every measured phrase carefully considered, and the composer's ideas made clear. Frequently Dr. Strauss would give utterance to some good natured comment that created laughter among the players, and in the "Till Eulenspiegel" he illustrated by dramatic pose the movement "Till" went through when the wiper put its clutches on him, and which he has described in the orchestra. After a series of his corrections he laughingly remarked to Mr. Thomas:

"Your men play so exactly according to the marks in the score that I have to pay particular attention to what I'm doing in order not to show my ignorance."

After the "Zarathustra" was finished, Dr. Strauss said:

"Gentlemen, it is my pleasure and my pride to be able to direct today so faultless an orchestra and to hear my music played in a manner so completely in accordance with every wish. Your organization is a model in all ways, and I feel proud to be associated with an orchestra which has been brought to such perfection by a man whom I have honored and wished to know for full forty years—Mr. Thomas."

As the last tone poem was being rehearsed Mrs. Strauss made her appearance. There was nothing of the prima donna manner about her.

Dressed in a black skirt of walking length and a simple shirt waist of gray, and carrying a small handbag, she came quietly and took a seat on the platform. When the orchestral numbers were ended Mr. Thomas introduced her to the players, who greeted her with applause, and then seating herself again, she sang in half voice the different songs she is to give at the concert. After the first group had been rehearsed Dr. Strauss turned to her and laughingly said:

"You might get up and work a little, too, if you get a bit." She rose, and, leaning on the back of the chair, took the next song through a little more of tonal volume, but she then seated herself and the rehearsal of the rest of the songs went on quietly and good naturedly.

Dr. and Mme. Strauss left in the afternoon for Milwaukee, but will return here Friday morning.

W. L. HUBBARD.