

MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION**GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC**

SECOND SERIES

By BERT PAUL OSBON

X. MACDOWELL.



MACDOWELL
*Famous American
Composer*

Edward was just like any boy. He showed that he liked music when he was a little boy, but not more so than children often do. When he was eight years old he began to take piano lessons.

Edward disliked the drudgery of practicing scales and exercises, and much preferred to amuse himself by improvising. He was fond, too, of drawing with a pencil, covering his music books with little sketches that really did show the skill of a born artist. He continued his piano lessons until he was fifteen years old. In this year, 1876, it was decided that the boy should go to Europe to study music in the great music school known as the Paris Conservatory.

Accompanied by his mother, he went to France. The young American could speak only English. In order to study at the Paris Conservatory it was necessary to know French. Soon, therefore, after his arrival in Paris, a teacher was engaged

to teach Edward the new language. During one of these lessons, Edward amused himself by drawing a picture of his teacher who had a very large nose. The teacher discovered the drawing, and was about to scold Edward severely for wasting his time, when he saw the sketch was really very cleverly drawn. So he asked his pupil if he might keep it, and later he showed it to a famous painter.

The painter was so impressed with the evidence of talent shown in the sketch that he begged Mrs. MacDowell to let him give her son a three years' course of free instruction. Mrs. MacDowell wisely let Edward decide for himself whether he would become a painter of pictures or a musician. He decided to go on with his music study at the Conservatory. He studied music for some years at the Paris Conservatory, and then went to Germany to study music some more.

You surely would like to know how Edward MacDowell looked when he was a young man. He had keen and very blue eyes, a fine pink and white complexion, and a reddish mustache which contrasted with his jet black hair. Everybody thought him a very handsome young man.

For several years MacDowell continued his residence in Europe, studying and teaching. In 1882 he visited at Weimar the most famous pianist and composer of piano music in Europe, the great Franz Liszt. (See the article about Liszt in THE YOUNG CITIZEN for February,

1941.) The young American composer showed the master a piano *concerto* he had written, and he felt much encouraged when Liszt praised it highly.

Two years later MacDowell returned to America, living first in Boston and then in New York. He became widely known as a composer and a pianist. The music department of Columbia University in New York City, in which he became a professor of music, owed much to the teaching of this handsome, exuberant genius, whose courses in the history of music and music appreciation gave undergraduates a live interest in what had hitherto been a dead subject.

Edward MacDowell was the first eminent musician the United States produced. He was a poet and nature-lover. The delicacy and feeling which characterize his music show how keen was his reaction to beauty in every form. No composer ever loved the great, glorious out-of-doors more than MacDowell. In his piano pieces called *Woodland Sketches* and *New England Idylls* he translated into music the charm of the fields and woods he so dearly loved. Be sure to hear some one play on the piano or the phonograph *To a Wild Rose*, *To a Water-Lily*, and *From an Indian Lodge*.

He loved the sea, too, and in his *Sea Pieces* he pictured most wonderfully the surge and depth and majesty of the ocean.

MacDowell's lasting significance as a composer lies in his sensitiveness and originality. He was highly gifted in his ability to depict mood in his music. In melody, rhythm, and harmony, he displayed unusual freshness, and his sense of musical form was unflinching. He composed music for orchestra, for piano, and for voice. His *Woodland Sketches* and his *Sea Pieces* have made him deservedly

popular among persons of widely differing musical tastes.

"An overwhelmingly creative person, this Edward MacDowell," says a music critic, "for MacDowell planned gardens, designed buildings, decorated rooms, made photographs, and painted pictures, besides playing the piano like an angel and composing music that placed him high in the ranks of American composers."

In 1904 his mind gave way, and Mrs. MacDowell led him, gentle and docile, to the home in Peterboro, New Hampshire, where they had spent many happy summers. He became as a child, and so died peacefully on January 23, 1908. But young creative artists rise up and call him blessed, for his house in Peterboro, due to the efforts of Mrs. MacDowell, is thrown open to them in the summer, just as its owner's radiant personality was thrown open to them during the summer of his life.

REVIEW

1. Give the dates of Edward MacDowell's life.
2. What was MacDowell fond of doing when he was a little boy? What did this show?
3. How old was he when he first took piano lessons?
4. Where did he go to study music when he was fifteen years old? At what famous school of music did he study?
5. To what country did he go afterwards to study more music?
6. Who was Liszt? Can you name some of his well-known works?
7. Tell something about MacDowell's musical compositions.
8. For what is MacDowell noted as a musician?