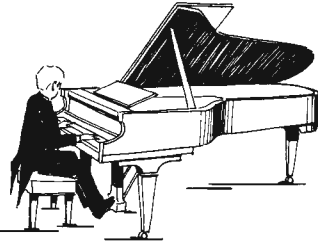
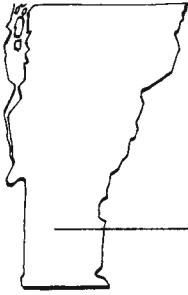


Spring 1971

VOL. XXXIX No. 2



The PROCEEDINGS of the  
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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This eminent pianist enjoyed his visit to Burlington. Probably he did not read what a reviewer for the *Burlington Free Press* wrote about his recital . . .

## Louis Moreau Gottschalk's Visit to Vermont in 1862

By JANE AMBROSE

**L**OUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK, who was born in New Orleans in 1829, was the first American composer to include vernacular elements of American music in his works. He successfully captured the Negro and Creole rhythms and melodies he had heard as a child, and later, when he visited Latin America, he was able to incorporate the spirit of Latin musical culture into his individualistic style.

Gottschalk studied piano and theory in Paris and earned the praise and friendship of Berlioz, Chopin, and Liszt. He became the idol of the French salons where rich patrons vied for his attention. His most famous compositions were either fantasies on American themes, such as "The Union," which he wrote to express his sympathy for the North during the Civil War, or sentimental ballads such as "The Last Hope," which was perhaps the best-known popular composition of the nineteenth century, unless its popularity was surpassed by another of his works entitled "The Dying Poet." This flamboyant exponent of Louisiana and the American musical spirit died in Rio de Janeiro in 1869. His memoir, *Notes of a Pianist*,<sup>1</sup> is an engrossing portrayal of the impressions and experiences of a recognized itinerant artist.

1. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Notes Of A Pianist* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881).

One of his tours included a recital in Burlington, Vermont. The *Burlington Daily Free Press* from June 26 to July 1, 1862, contains the announcement of a "Soiree Musicale and Concert d'Instruction" to be given by Gottschalk on Thursday evening, July 3, at Town Hall.<sup>2</sup> Admission was to be fifty cents. On July 2 the *Free Press* carried the same advertisement and a biographical sketch based upon a review of Gottschalk's first public performance. In addition to the advertisement on July 3, a reporter added the following encomium:

Gottschalk's concert takes place this evening and it needs no urging on our part to induce attendance. Those who like piano music, - and who does not? - can this evening hear the best pianist in the country, indeed a master of the instrument equalled only by two or three in the whole world.

A "very few" seats, it was reported, were still available on the morning of the concert.

Gottschalk and his entourage arrived in Burlington on that day. His impressions of Burlington are recorded in *Notes of a Pianist*:

A small town built on Lake Champlain. I have never seen in Switzerland anything more beautiful than the mountains which surround it. My concert had attracted many. Two steamers freighted with people from St. Albans and a train from Jericho have arrived expressly for the concert. Bishop Hopkins,<sup>3</sup> of the Episcopal Church, was present. I played for him the prelude of Chopin's. After the concert he invited me home to take tea with him. The Bishop is a charming man, and also an excellent painter. I remarked at his house a copy of "La Vierge a la Chaise." His wife and his sons and grandsons are good musicians, and I found a good piano. Near his house on a hill which overlooks the lake, he has built a large boarding school, and a chapel in Gothic style.<sup>4</sup>

This favorable impression of Burlington was written either in ignorance or disdain of a review of the concert that appeared in the *Free Press* on Monday, July 7, for Gottschalk was in Quebec City on the 7th, probably meeting another concert engagement. The anonymous critic was blunt and uncompromising in his assessment of the pianist's attitude and ability. His statement that "the artist was not in good humor" set the tone for the entire review. He goes on to say that Gotts-

2. Town Hall was in the old City Hall, which was built in the 1850's on the site of the present City Hall. On the second floor was a meeting and public room which was used for lectures, meetings, concerts, and recitals. I am grateful to David Blow of the University Archives at UVM for this information.

3. The versatile Bishop Hopkins played the violin, viola, organ, and piano. He was also a composer whose *Twelve Canzonets, words and music* were published in London and New York in 1839.

4. Gottschalk, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

chalk showed no enthusiasm, omitted pieces from his announced program, did not play requests from the audience as he had promised to do, and acted unmannerly in front of a cultured audience. The reviewer did remark that there was some noise from firecrackers outside the concert hall — the concert took place on the eve of Independence Day — but the people in the audience had paid for the concert and the pianist should have realized, therefore, that he was their “servant.” This reviewer concludes: “When Mr. Gottschalk can come prepared to fulfill his promises, and treat his audience with due respect, we shall be happy to have him again in Burlington.”

A fair review? Was the audience as disappointed as the reviewer? We can't judge because there are no additional reports about Gottschalk's concert. But at least there is solace in knowing that he left Burlington with a favorable impression of the town he had visited.

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## A Sharp Retort To Rudyard Kipling:

There is a Vermont bookseller who never tires of repeating the retort that he once made to Rudyard Kipling.

This bookseller lives in Montpelier, and Mr. Kipling, during his residence in Vermont, visited his store one day. He is a thin sharp man, and the poet, taking an interest in him, questioned him about his business.

“How many books do you sell a day here?”

“What is the profit of bookselling in Montpelier?”

“Do they read me hereabouts?”

These and other questions Mr. Kipling asked. Finally he took up “*Celibates*,” a work of George Moore.

“Is this good?” he said.

“I don't know, sir.”

“You don't know? Why haven't you read it?”

“No, sir.”

Kipling frowned at the little man. “A bookseller,” he said, “and you don't read your own books?”

The other much enraged, retorted hotly: “If I were a druggist, would you expect me to take my own drugs?”

— West Townshend *Merchant*, November, 1904.