



Musicians of Today (Romain Rolland Collection)

Romain Rolland

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It is perhaps fitting that the series of volumes comprising *The Musician's Bookshelf* should be inaugurated by the present collection of essays. To the majority of English readers the name of that strange and forceful personality, Romain Rolland, is known only through his magnificent, intimate record of an artist's life and aspirations, embracing ten volumes, *Jean-Christophe*. This is not the place in which to discuss that masterpiece. A few biographical facts concerning the author may not, however, be out of place here.

Romain Rolland came very early under the influence of Tolstoy and Wagner and displayed a remarkable critical faculty. In 1895 (at the age of twenty-nine) we find him awarded the coveted Grand Prix of the Académie Française for his work *Histoire de l'Opéra en Europe avant Lulli et Scarlatti*, and in the same year he sustained, before the faculty of the Sorbonne—where he now occupies the chair of musical criticism—a remarkable dissertation on *The Origin of the Modern Lyrical Drama*—his thesis for the Doctorate. This, in reality, is a vehement protest against the indifference for the Art of Music which, up to that time, had always been displayed by the University. In 1903 he published a remarkable *Life of Beethoven*, followed by a *Life of Hugo Wolf* in 1905. The present volume, together with its companion, *Musiciens d'Autrefois*, appeared in 1908. Both form remarkable essays and reveal a consummate and most intimate knowledge of the life and works of our great contemporaries. A just estimate of a composer's work is not to be arrived at without a study of his works and of the conditions under which these were produced. To take, for instance, the case of but one of the composers treated in this volume, Hector Berlioz. No composer has been so misunderstood, so vilified as he, simply because those who have written about him, either wilfully or through ignorance, have grossly misrepresented him.

CLAUDE LANDI.

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