

*Baltimore Evening Sun*  
June 27, 1910

*Chiefly Musical*

*The Influence Of An Appellation*

What's in a name? A good deal more, it is probable, than Shakespeare ever suspected. A man's whole career is subtly colored and conditioned by his appellation. It has been by no mere accident, we may be sure, that the world has never known a philosopher named Percy. Percy is a euphonious and honorable name, but for some reason or other it seems grotesquely unsuitable for a metaphysician. We have had philosophers named Frederick, William, John, George, David and Thomas, and even Arthur and Herbert, but never a Percy. That label belongs to poets and warriors, polo players and dancing men, and the man who chances to bear it is drawn, as if by irresistible magnetism, toward one or another of those professions. A new theory of epistemology, proposed by a scholar named Percy, would get no more attention than a drama in blank verse by a poet named Hiram or Jehoshaphat or Gussie. If Shakespeare's name had been Uriah Snodgrass or Leander Boggs, his plays would have been forgotten before the death of Charles I.

In every name, indeed, there is a mysterious psychological pull—perhaps even a dozen or more pulls. Its bearer is always led, consciously or unconsciously, to justify his possession of it. No matter how much his training and environment may suggest treason to it, he is always giving odd proofs of his fidelity. Sometimes he is actually dragged along against his will, even against his loud and public protest. In evidence whereof let me cite the case of Richard Strauss.

Strauss, as everyone knows, is a musician of the future. His taste is for unearthly harmonies, maddening melodies, enormously complex scores. But the name of Strauss is associated, in the minds of all musicians, with waltzes. Johann Strauss, the elder, made the Vienna waltz respectable; Johann, the younger, made it a work of art; Joseph and Eduard helped to adorn it and glorify it; Oscar, in our own day, is the author of that delightful comic opera, "A Waltz Dream." And so poor Richard Strauss has been dragged, willy-nilly, into waltz writing.

The work, we may be sure, is unspeakably distasteful to him. We may fancy him raging against the luscious tunes, the smooth harmonies, the rigid forms and the simple cadences that the waltz demands—raging in helpless agony, like Prometheus against the vultures. Swear as he may, he can't escape. He is bound to the triple beat. He must write for the ballroom, however much his soul yearns for the greater orchestra of the bull ring and boiler works. For his name is Strauss, and a man named Strauss is inevitably a maker of waltzes.

*Comic Opera By Richard Strauss*

The waltzes that this tortured and rebellious Strauss is now writing will be played at the end of the second act of his new opera, "Der Rosenkavalier," upon the score of which he is

working in his summer musik-fabrik at Garmisch in the Bavarian mountains. The first two acts are already completely scored, and the third is well under way. Before the end of the summer Strauss will come to the final curtain music—an exquisite passage, it is promised, for muted maxims and tenorkettle drums—and before Christmas the opera will be sung at Dresden under the baton of the accomplished Generalmusikdirektor Dr. Schuch, of the K. K. Hoftheatre.

The libretto of the new work is by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, author of “Elektra,” but it shows nothing of that exciting opera’s savagery. Its general tone, indeed, is that of high comedy, and Strauss says that he has gone back to Mozart, the chief god in his musical Valhalla, for his inspiration. The scene of the piece is Vienna and the time is that of Maria Theresa. The story has some faint resemblance to that of “Cyrano de Bergerac.”

As the curtain rises the boudoir of the Countess Werdenberg, wife of the Field Marshal Count Werdenberg, is disclosed, and we behold the fair Countess at her morning coffee, with a young courtier named Octavian bearing her company. Into this peaceful scene breaks the Baron Ochs von Lerchenau, the Countess’ cousin and a brutal boaster, with a demand that she give him aid in an affair of love. Octavien, in order to avoid compromising the Countess, jumps into a chambermaid’s gown and during the ensuing scene is busily engaged in dusting the room.

What the Baron wants is a Rosenkavalier—that is to say a dashing and eloquent young cavalier to do his wooing for him and to carry to the fair object of his passion the rose of betrothal, a symbol of love affected by all gentlemanly Romeos of that day. The Countess nominates Octavien for the post, and in the next act we see him at work. He has discarded his chambermaid’s disguise and is now arrayed in the gorgeous satins of a courtier. The young woman in the case is much impressed. As a matter of fact, she falls head over heels in love with Octavien, and he with her, and the good Countess is delighted. But how to get rid of the Baron? How to still his rage and shut off his yearning for revenge?

The Countess devises a plan, and it works charmingly. Octavien resumes his chambermaid’s gown and falls in the way of the Baron the next time the latter comes to call. The Baron attempts the role of Lothario, a meeting is arranged, and when it takes place Octavien jumps out of his skirt, the Countess and the other young woman bound into the room—and the discomfited Baron takes to his heels. Then the gallant rosenkavalier clasps his bride-elect to his breast, the Countess blesses them and the curtain falls.

### *A Master of the Mood of Joy*

A Haydn revival is threatened in England, and no doubt there will be echoes of it on this side of the water. As a matter of fact, a number of American orchestras have already begun to resurrect the scores of genial Papa Josef. The Boston Orchestra, at its last Baltimore concert, gave a delightful performance of his Oxford Symphony, and in the West the local Nikisches and Mucks seem to be very fond of some of his more familiar works, such as the Military Symphony and that with the startling drum beat. “The Creation,” of course, needs no revival. It will be heard so long as church choirs combine in cheerful caterwauling and oratorio societies bring down the plaster.

In this day of enormously complex and portentous music, Haydn is apt to be dismissed as a trivial and childish old fellow, but in that judgment there is very little sense. His true place in music is much like that of Herrick in English poetry. That is to say, he was seldom moved by the deeper and more poignant emotions, but no man ever exceeded him in expressing the moods of gayety, of pleasant reverie, of light sentiment. The comparison, of course, is clumsy enough, as

all such comparisons are apt to be. Haydn, as everyone knows, was more than a mere orchestral philanderer. He could be serious enough on occasion (so could Herrick, for that matter), and he left deep marks upon the art of writing for the orchestra. But so many more solemn pundits have arisen since his time that we think of him today chiefly as a master of musical foolery, as the prince of musical comedians.

His symphonic works, even the more ambitious of them, now seem absurdly elemental. It is commonly assumed that first-year conservatory students would write like that if only they could bring themselves to forget their learning. Let them try it! Let them write variations as stately and rondos as frisky as those that Hayden wrote. Let them write minuets as delightful as those he turned out by the gross and great gross. The world will readily forgive them their fall from grace. It still has need of simple, honest music. The supply is never equal to the demand.

#### *The Music of the Fourth*

Meanwhile, the unspeakable cacophony of the Fourth begins to torture the ear. Some time ago the chiefs of the constabulary made the usual solemn announcement that no fireworks would be permitted in Baltimore this year. Ever since then the vicinity of Gilmore and Baltimore streets has been racked and rocked by explosions. They begin every evening at about sundown and continue until 9 o'clock. Just how the racket is produced is not quite clear, probably by fastening cartridges to the trolley tracks. So far I have heard of no arrests. No doubt the police are busy elsewhere.

*(Source: Iowa State University, Parks Media Center; Microfilm Collection)*