

V A N I T Y F A I R

February, 1919

An Oriental Composer of Occidental Music

*The Work of the Leader of the
Tokio Philharmonic Orchestra*

AN orchestral concert of the works of Kos-caku Yamada was recently given in New York. It was conducted by the composer himself, who is the conductor of the Tokio Philharmonic Orchestra. The concert proved to be extremely interesting and particularly instructive, and the orchestral numbers, as well as some of the composer's works for the piano, go to prove that no one can deal with the music of a country quite so well as a native of that country. The composer arranged a series of Japanese melodies paraphrased in Western musical idiom; they are models of arrangement and development. The harmony is rich and appropriate, and the whole effect is to bring out a charming and particularly unique vein of beauty—all that haunting miniature mood that we find in Japanese poetry.

Strikingly, the larger works of the Japanese composer are in the truest European vein, displaying a superb command of the resources of harmony and of the orchestra. He developed under the influence of the classics, and most of his work reveals only the slightest Oriental touch. But he comes to his native island songs with the homely familiarity that education in



Koscaku Yamada, who, besides being a musician and a composer of distinction, is the conductor of the Tokio Philharmonic Orchestra

the European conservatories has not obliterated.

Yamada organized the first symphonic orchestra of native players to perform the music of Occidental composers under a Japanese conductor. It is the present Philharmonic Orchestra of Tokio. His works include a symphony, "Triumph and Peace," in F major, four movements; a number of symphonic poems, and a choreographic symphony, the inspiration for which was received from Maeterlinck's drama, "Mary Magdalene." This symphony was played for the first time at his American concert. He also wrote an elaborate "Coronation March" in 1915, and the new Emperor accepted the dedication, which is indeed a special and unusual honor for a composer.

YAMADA says that Western music is rapidly making its way into Japanese favor. Japanese school children are taught to sing such songs as "Way Down Upon the Suwanee River,"—with Japanese lyrics, of course.

Thus, it would seem, while we are importing the music of the Orient, and assimilating it in considerable part, the East, by way of returning the compliment, is being won to our music.