

# The Musical Standard, May 24, 1902

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## Comments and Opinions The Joachim Quartet.

In another column will be found an article which we have quoted from the Times. It is an interesting specimen of special pleading, and we like it none the less for that. In the main we quite agree with the “correspondent” of the Times, but he rather begs the critical question in applying his ideas to the Joachim Quartet itself. The point made concerning the positive qualities of restraint is good, but we cannot quite grasp the notion of a mind that sees everything and that allows all the elements in a work of art to react naturally on each other. We think that an artificial and too analytical a frame of mind for the ideal interpreter. In any case it has not much to do with the playing of the Joachim Quartet, and the writer has allowed himself to fall into the mistake common to all enthusiasts. A certain thing is good, therefore the person we admire possesses it. No one wants ranting in music, especially not in chamber music, but the fault of the Joachim “reserve” and “restraint” is that they do not always suggest the emotion which should be there; rather are they an expression of an aloof objectivity which is not always in keeping with the character of the music. Then again, no good is done by an enthusiasm which attempts to turn defects into virtues. It is impossible for anyone, not obsessed by Joachim worship, to avoid noticing that the great violinist’s tone is poor and that his finger technique is not always equal to the demands made on it. The other members of the quartet are men in the prime of life, but naturally their playing has to be conditioned by Joachim’s. When Joachim led the old Popular Concert Quartet (practically a permanent body), the restraint and reserve so much admired now were not noticeable then in anything like the same degree. We do not see that any good is done by pretending that Joachim has not grown older. In fact, he has passed the age when an artist should play in public, and it is absurd to base æsthetic discussions on a style of performance which is largely conditioned by the physical state of the leader of the Joachim Quartet.

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