A PELICAN BOOK

Music 1950

Edited by

RALPH HILL

A comment on outstanding events and a general picture of what has taken place in the musical world during the last year. All branches of the art of music – aesthetics, history, technique and criticism – are discussed by leading critics. An annual publication which succeeds *Penguin Music Magazine*.

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Music 1950 is *Penguin Music Magazine* in its new annual guise. Like its predecessor, it sets out to appeal primarily to the intelligent, non-professional music-lover, who wants not only to add to his knowledge but also to keep up to date with what is happening generally in the world of music. It is obvious that there will not be the space to review everything in detail – concerts in London and the chief provincial music centres, opera, new gramophone records, new books, new music, etc. – therefore all we can hope to do is to comment on outstanding events and give a general picture of what has taken place. The present volume is concerned mainly with the events of the second half of the 1948-9 season (January to July), but *Music 1951* will cover the whole 12 months of the 1949-50 season.

The first part of *Music 1950* contains a number of articles of general interest by leading critics and writers. In these it is intended to cover as wide a field as possible, since the Editor believes that music-lovers should be encouraged to take an interest in all branches of the art of music – aesthetics, history, technique, and criticism; opera as well as symphony, song as well as chamber music.

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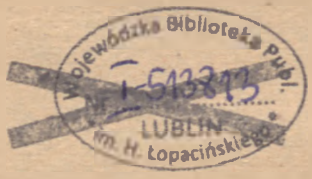

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THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

Ralph Hill

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC IN LONDON

ALTHOUGH the standards of London's orchestras are still lower than those maintained during the decade immediately preceding the Second World War, there has been a marked improvement to the lamentable state of affairs that prevailed a couple of years ago. The situation can be defined as follows. Young blood has been transfused into our three permanent orchestras (the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra) with excellent results. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which centres round the Royal Philharmonic Society's concerts, the Philharmonia Orchestra, which is primarily a gramophone recording orchestra, and the New London Orchestra, which although centring round the New London Opera Company gives concerts from time to time, each possesses a generous nucleus of some of the finest and most experienced orchestral players in the country, but they are only semi-permanent orchestras in that their players are not on whole-time contracts. Finally, one or two mushroom-growth orchestras have mercifully fallen by the way.

Before the war there were three first-class permanent orchestras (the B.B.C., the L.P.O., and the L.S.O.), one of which – the L.P.O. – took the Covent Garden International Season of Opera in its stride. Now we have three permanent symphony orchestras, three semi-permanent, the

permanent Covent Garden Opera Orchestra, to say nothing of the Sadler's Wells Opera Orchestra and the highly specialized Boyd Neel and Jacques orchestras. So far as symphony orchestras are concerned there are obviously too many, despite the large increase in audiences for orchestral music during the last ten years or so. The smallness of the audience at the *average* concert, however good it may be, provides evidence of this fact. Every orchestra in the country, with the exception of the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, is struggling to keep its head near – let alone above – the surface of the dark waters of finance.

The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, which exists primarily for broadcasting, is independent of the box-office, and therefore the losses on its public concerts are losses merely on paper. In the early days when the B.B.C. was attacked on all sides for giving public concerts, and therefore, it was alleged, entering into competition with private enterprise I always defended the B.B.C.'s policy. I support that policy to-day, but now that London is superabundantly supplied with concerts devoted to the familiar and popular repertoire I venture to suggest that the B.B.C. should confine its public activities (excepting, of course, the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts) largely to the performance of works which lie outside the economic reach of those concert organisations that are obliged to consider the dictates of the box-office. I refer to such works as Berg's *Wozzeck* and Honegger's *Joan of Arc* (both of which have been given by the B.B.C.), the symphonies of Bruckner, Mahler, Rubbra, Bax, Roussel, the neglected symphonies of Haydn and Mozart and Liszt, the orchestral works of Schönberg, Bartók, and Bloch, concert versions of the operas of Berlioz, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The desperate struggle for existence among our orchestras is due to three main causes: (1) the maintenance of a first-

class permanent orchestra is and never can be anything but a financial loss, and therefore adequate subsidy either by the State or by private individuals is essential; (2) the supply of concerts is in excess of the demand, therefore for the time being saturation point has been reached; (3) the price of concert tickets is far too high for the majority of music-lovers, particularly for the young people who largely form the new audiences for orchestral music. I know at least a dozen people in my own circle of local acquaintances who simply cannot afford to go regularly to concerts, and therefore they have got out of the habit of attending concerts and rely solely on their radio for musical sustenance.

The remedies are obvious. (1) Since the millionaire class of benevolent music-lovers (the pre-war Courtaulds, Nettlefolds and Cunards) has disappeared in England, the State must provide the necessary subsidies if a healthy musical culture is to be maintained. (2) There must be fewer orchestras and fewer but more vital concerts. (3) The price of concert tickets must be brought down at least to the level of the 'Proms.'

Some months ago I wrote an article in the *Evening Standard* pointing out that the large and intelligent public for the best music, which wholeheartedly supported ENSA during the war at a 'bob a nob', consists mainly of young people who cannot afford to pay the high price demanded for tickets. And the older people, too, are equally short of pocket-money. A couple of shillings for a good seat is the limit of all of them, if they are to be regular concert-goers. Then why not fill our concert-halls with 2/– seats instead of keeping them empty with seats that cost on the average from 3/– to 12/6? If the State is going to spend money on orchestral music then it should spend it wisely and bring the best music within the economic range of the musical public.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra accepted this challenge and a few weeks later announced a concert for which the prices of admission were drastically cut. It was stated that 'in common with other organisations, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been worried by the consistently small size of audiences at the Royal Albert Hall in recent months, and by this experiment hope to find out whether it is merely shortage of money which is keeping people away, or whether there is no longer a public for the Albert Hall and for a well-designed – as opposed to a catch-penny – programme.' The experiment was highly successful and according to the L.P.O. 'although there was no soloist, and the programme itself made no concession to box-office appeal, three times as many people as had normally attended on Thursday evenings took advantage of the lower prices. It was interesting, too, to see the high proportion of young people enjoying the unaccustomed comfort of the best seats. Unfortunately, at these prices it is impossible to cover even the costs of a concert if it is to have proper rehearsal. Our expenses have gone up as drastically as your own. A compromise must therefore be struck. We would far rather build (and the Orchestra would far rather play to) a good-sized audience of people who come to our concerts regularly and pay a moderate price, than rely on a possibly meagre and casual attendance at the normal rates of admission.'

The new average prices of seats are 2/- to 5/- compared with the old average prices of 3/- to 12/6. It remains to be seen what effect these new prices will have on the size of audiences throughout the season. However, there is no question about the fact that if these lower prices become generally accepted among our permanent and more idealistic orchestral organisations the losses will have to be borne

by the State, or else these organisations will go bankrupt and cease to exist.

The other day I received an interesting letter from an 'inveterate' concert-goer, as she calls herself, who finds that she simply cannot afford to go now to many concerts. 'But during the last nine months or so,' she says, 'I have been, as a small compensation, increasing my not very profound knowledge of opera. At Covent Garden one can get a quite comfortable seat, from which one can see and *hear* perfectly, for 5/– or 7/6. One can see and hear as well, though less comfortably, from a seat in the gallery (which is nevertheless quite as comfortable as the seats in that dreadful balcony at the Albert Hall) for 2/6. For the Wagner seasons the prices rose slightly. But one could still hear Flagstad in *Tristan* for 3/6 in the gallery. Now someone has corrupted Covent Garden as well. For the coming Wagner season, beginning May 12th, the 2/6 seats have leapt to 6/– instead of 3/6, the 5/– seats to 8/6, the 7/6 seats to 12/–. I went along to Covent Garden at lunch-time yesterday, the first day for booking seats individually for this season. On the blackboard outside the theatre it was indicated that the 6/–, 8/6, 12/– and 15/– seats had already been sold – obviously to the people who had managed to get there soon after 10 a.m. There were seats available from 23/– to two guineas, and there was no clamour to buy them.'

DO CONCERTS START TOO LATE?

My correspondent raises another important question, the question whether the pre-war time for beginning a concert at 8 o'clock or 8.30 is suitable for present-day conditions. Ever since the war ended the B.B.C. has been anxious to take the lead and make their public concerts later, without, in my opinion, due regard for the fact that

general conditions are very different from those of pre- war

My correspondent says that she has talked to many concert-goers like herself and, after mentioning the price of tickets as a serious obstacle to attendance, they all condemn the practice of starting concerts late in the evening. 'During the war, when the vast new audiences for music grew up, concerts began at 6 p.m., 6.30 or 7. Presumably the only people who did not get there by seven were those who needed a long and elaborate meal first. Now concerts begin at 7.30 or 8 p.m. When all the virtues of the Albert Hall have been counted, the only thing that can be said for its *position* is that it is handy for people living in central London and in the eastern suburbs. For the rest of mankind it is a journey. It takes me, for example, ninety minutes to get home. One of the undoubted reasons for the continuing popularity of the Proms is that, even if they do not start until 7.30, one can leave at nine, having heard the larger part of the evening's music. Fewer and fewer people, I find, want to let themselves into the outer suburbs at 11.30 in these days.

'Again, suppose you leave your office, say, at 5.30 in central London. It will take you half-an-hour at the outside to get to the Albert Hall. In pre-war days one could easily spin out a cheap meal with a book or conversation. But now, this is what I hear: "If I have to pay 5/– or 10/– for a decent seat, I cannot afford a 5/– plus dinner beforehand, and the tea shops are shut. What am I to do for nearly two hours?" Of course these objections are from very humble fry, I know. But all the same I think they are the people who would pack the Albert Hall if the seats were cheaper, the times of commencement earlier, and the programmes a more judicious mixture of well-worn and less well-known music. And if you get into the habit of going regularly, you will always pay a little bit extra now and then for something special, as we all know.'

MONEY-GRABBING ARTISTS

The concerts manager of a well-known Music Club on the south-east coast also writes to me and says that he entirely agrees with me that concert tickets are far too expensive, but he fails to see how the costs can be reduced 'when the rents of theatres and halls, both in London and the Provinces, are becoming prohibitive, and the fees asked for by artists and conductors are also becoming prohibitive, making the presentation of concerts by organisations such as ours very difficult indeed. One does not mind paying a hundred guineas or so for a recital by one artist but when the same, or even more, is demanded for the playing of a concerto the difficulties in arranging concerts increase so that they become almost impossible unless one can put forward a programme which will sell almost as soon as the box office is open.'

As I have suggested above, the only way that the cost of seats can be reduced is by State subsidy. But I must confess that I see no reason why the State should subsidise the exorbitant and fabulous fees demanded by 'pin-up' artists, whose scanty and well-worn repertoires are clear evidence of their money-grabbing propensities and musical stagnation. The disgusting thing about it all is that as their fees go higher and higher each year so they are forced (thank goodness!) to disgorge more and more super tax. Meanwhile the musical public and the concert organisations are made to suffer. The solo artist who is giving a one-man show is entitled to get the highest fee he can or a fair share of the profits, but when he is merely a supporting artist – playing a concerto in the course of an orchestral concert – it is ludicrous for him to expect to be paid as much if not more than the conductor, and perhaps half as much as the entire orchestra collectively. It is time that concert organisa-

tions throughout the country got together and refused to be robbed by these morons of music. If they will not accept reasonable, economic fees then blackball them and engage young and unknown artists who will. It is also time the public began to realise that these 'pin-up' artists, or rather so-called artists, who play the same three or four concertos or couple of dozen pieces week after week and year after year are not giving value for money, for they are merely doing a routine, mechanical job without thought or feeling, and therefore they take their money under false pretences.

MUSIC IN THE SUBURBS

I am afraid that nothing can be done about the exorbitant rents of theatres and halls, except the building of more and more municipal halls in the far distant future. When a concert society has a good local municipal hall at its disposal and a benevolent Council to support its activities it is in a very fortunate position, and the musical public usually benefit by reduced cost of seats.

The secretary of the Wimbledon Concert Club writes to tell me that its second season has been very successful. This is due largely to the fact that the Club has tried to provide the best music, covering a wide field, at prices that are well within the means of the least well off. Despite the fact that the Club has no financial backing from either the Arts Council or the local Borough Council, its series of concerts have paid for themselves, and in addition, the Wimbledon Philharmonic Orchestra has been created and maintained through the efforts of the Club. 'As you are no doubt aware', says the secretary, 'we have a very fine concert hall in Wimbledon, which the Council allows the Community Association to use for two nights a week throughout the year, at a nominal fee of £5. 5. 0 per night for the promotion of music, drama and educational activities. The Hall

holds 1,400 people, so that it is practicable to put on concerts at a cheap admission charge. The average attendance at our series concerts is between 1,200 and 1,400 and we feel that this fact shows that the public appreciates the cheapness and the high standard. We have just over 800 members who pay no subscription, but who undertake to purchase series tickets for one or more series, at 5/– and/or 10/– per series.' This works out at the very low price of 1/– and 2/– per concert.

COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE VERSUS THE STATE

There can be no question about the fact that if Britain is to maintain a healthy musical culture it will have to be nurtured by the munificence of the State through the medium of the Arts Council. The future of music-making of the best quality does not lie in the hands of commercial or free enterprise. Even in the palmy days before the war, when rich backers were forthcoming, the life of our orchestras, excepting the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, which has always been a properly subsidised orchestra, was precarious. Despite millionaire backing, gramophone contracts, the International Season of Opera, and other things, Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra which he created found it very difficult to make both ends of the financial situation meet.

It is all the more surprising, then, to find that there is a body of reactionary musical opinion, led by Sir Thomas Beecham and Ernest Newman, which cannot bear the idea of music being subsidised by the State. Sir Thomas calls it 'sponging on the tax-payer', and prides himself on the alleged fact that his new orchestra – the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra – is independent of subsidies from the Arts Council. Yet I seem to remember a society called The Thomas Beecham Concerts Society which *in association with*

the Arts Council of Great Britain presented at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, a couple of years ago a 'Beecham-Mozart Festival'! And what about the concerts of the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Glyndebourne Society's Mozart concerts, both of which feature Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and receive necessary subsidies from the Arts Council?

Sir Thomas Beecham is nothing if he is not inconsistent; Mr Newman is nothing if he is not consistent. Many years ago when the Government proposed to subsidise opera to the modest extent of £17,500 per year Mr Newman wrote: 'The opera lovers are only a small proportion of the total population of these islands, and I cannot see the equity of making the 80 per cent who do not want opera pay for the pleasures of the 20 per cent of us who do.' I replied that if we carry Mr Newman's idea of moral justice to its logical conclusion we must condemn, *ipso facto,* public libraries, museums and art galleries, and free education, the upkeep of which all intelligent people are unanimous in considering to be an essential prerogative of the State. Had social reformers in the past been unable to see the equity of making the 80 per cent pay, we should still have children of seven working in the mines and factories. As the Editors of the *Hallé* magazine (November, 1949) neatly put it: 'When Sir Thomas Beecham told a roomful of Scottish reporters recently that he was "strongly opposed to the taxpayers providing money for musical enterprises" what he was saying, in effect, was this: I have no objection to the taxpayer spending money on drains, gasometers and electric trams since these services are "necessities" of modern life. But let him spend a penny on securing for himself contact with the emancipating spirit of Beethoven or the civilising grace of Mozart and I shall attack him as a squandermaniac and the recipient as a sponger.'

In a recent article in the *Sunday Times* Mr Newman applauded Sir Thomas for his condemnation of State aid for orchestral music, and himself described the practice as a 'feckless use of the tax-payer's money.' He went on to say that 'this sponging has now become something like a public scandal, calling for critical investigation. Orchestras, concert organisations of various kinds, festivals, Covent Garden, and heaven knows what besides, are all in receipt of a charity the lavishness of which is equalled only by the futility of much of it, so far as artistic results, as distinguished from the policy of bread and circuses, are concerned. Our public music-making is as bad as it is, not in spite of all this subsidising, but largely because of it.' Mr Newman is condemning a principle merely because of its bad practice. We all know that the Arts Council has been misled by some of its advisers and that some of the public music-making given under its auspices calls for critical investigation, but generally speaking the influence of the Arts Council has been for the good.

In all due respect to Mr Newman's knowledge and perception I venture to say that he is wrong in naming subsidisation as the cause of the badness of so much of our public music-making. The real cause is precisely the opposite. Indeed, Mr Newman would have scored a bull had he said that our public music-making is as bad as it is, not in spite of all this *commercial enterprise*, but largely because of it. As I said in my *Evening Standard* article, catch-penny concert promoters (Sir Thomas Beecham has said himself that 'we have every day new impresarios, each one more fantastic than the last') pander to the ignorance and lack of taste of a certain section of the public, which is prepared to spend its money in return for the thrill of hearing an artist with a 'pin-up' name or a piece of music which has been popularised in some trivial 'musical' film. These musical

touts care nothing for the cultural values of great music artistically presented. They are out to kill the goose and collar the golden eggs. To them music is purely a business, an unscrupulous business not far removed, morally speaking, from bootlegging and dealing on the black market. What Sir Thomas and Mr Newman seem to fail to realise is that our world of music is no longer supported by benevolent millionaires, and a small, priveleged section of society. The new audiences of to-day consist largely of what Mr Newman used to call the 'plain man.' Commercial enterprise of to-day is largely in the hands of catch-penny promoters, who are doing serious harm to the course of musical culture. In his excellent pamphlet *The Taxpayer and British Orchestras* (L.P.O. Booklet No. 6, price 6d.) Thomas Russell reminds us that these promoters did little for musical culture 'during the war years, when there was no profit in music, and they will cease to be interested as soon as a season of concerts show a loss. In the meantime they cannot fail to lower the standard of our music, and to hamper the more serious plans of the permanent societies. Many of these promoters are already on the way out, for the public is finding it increasingly difficult to pay the high prices demanded by them. And the limited number of hackneyed musical works which could formerly be relied upon to attract large audiences is wearing thin. It is in the light of this public inability to pay that all appeals to go back to private enterprise in music have to be regarded.' The recent costly and badly organised adventure of bringing the Philadelphia Orchestra over to England is a good example of the public's inability to pay fantastically high prices for seats, even for an exceptional occasion.

The idea of State aid or patronage of the Arts is elaborated by Mary Davie on page 113.

FIRST PERFORMANCES

The performances of new works during the first six months of 1949 produced few things of real distinction. At the Cheltenham Festival I was very impressed with Gordon Jacob's Symphonic Suite and Philip Sainton's *Nadir*. The outstanding novelties at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts were Alan Bush's Violin Concerto (his *Nottingham Symphony*, which was commissioned to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the granting of the Royal Charter to the City of Nottingham in 1449, was also a success), Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for string orchestra, Gordon Jacob's *Fantasia on the Alleluia Hymn*, and Ernest Bloch's Concerto Symphonique for piano and orchestra, which received its first performance a few days previously at the Edinburgh Festival.

The Bloch Concerto, which follows the great romantic tradition, was the most impressive and exciting work I have heard for many years. Except for the notices of Ernest Newman, A. K. Holland, Dr Mosco Carner and myself (there may have been one or two others) it received a sour press. The critic of *The Times* suggested that Bloch should rewrite it, if such a task was worth the trouble. This seemed to me to imply that either Bloch or his critic did not know his job.

Benjamin Britten's *Spring Symphony* received the honour of a first performance at the Amsterdam Festival by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Van Beinum. (It is scheduled for its first London performance in the Spring). Scott Goddard was present and he writes as follows: 'A rehearsal left me without a clue. Then two performances. By the end of the second there was sufficient daylight to see whither one was being taken. By then it was possible to decide; the work had come alive, become clearly articulated,

its proportions could be measured, it was in perspective. And it had become immensely attractive. Apart from the great ability Britten shows here in vocal and instrumental techniques and the blending of them there is such evidence of alertness of mind, quick vision and the poet's inspired handicraft as to keep the listener continually attentive. The *Spring Symphony* is vocal throughout; really a cantata in four movements that roughly correspond to those of a symphony. From that, I imagine, the title springs; though it is misleading in that it suggests a type of development within each movement that it does not and evidently was never meant to possess. It was rumoured that there were to be certain purely instrumental sections, but this was not the case at Amsterdam.

'Thirteen poems are set. They range from "Sumer is i-cumen in" up to the present day with Auden's "Out on the lawn" and take in Peele, Clare, Herrick, Vaughan and others on the way. The choice is strange. It displays the activity of a highly intelligent, resourceful and curious mind, in the sense of the researcher's and explorer's curiosity. Among these poems are some exquisite, unexpected numbers; Vaughan's "Waters above! eternal springs" is one of these, introducing a play, a new gloss, on the word spring which sets one thinking that there maybe a clue lies. For there are times when one needs a clue to the composer's intention in joining one poem to another within a movement. The general scheme of the movements, each taken as a whole, is not difficult to guess. The introduction celebrates the departure of winter and the arrival of the cuckoo. The second movement is moderately slow; spring is welcomed by Herrick's "maids of honour." Then the third movement, rapid and scherzo-like, with May now within sight. And so to the finale "London to thee I do present the merry month of May" which ends with the

Reading Rota, its thread of melody woven into the texture of chorus, soloists and orchestra. The forces employed are a large orchestra and chorus, a boys' choir and three solo voices.

'These two performances, the one in Amsterdam, the other in Scheveningen, were remarkably successful. All the choral singers were Dutch; and when it is considered that the poems they had to learn are by no means of the easiest description, while Britten's music has some deuced difficult passages to compass, their standard of performance was immensely creditable. The soloists were Jo Vincent, Kathleen Ferrier and Peter Pears; all admirable. It is the duet "Fair and fair" in the third movement, deliciously manipulated by Vincent and Pears, that was among the memorable moments of this performance. It is a charming song, swift and pert, very exacting for the singers. These two did the trick beautifully. The Concertgebouw Orchestra was conducted by van Beinum who had prepared everything with his usual care.'

STRAUSS AND NEVEU

As the old world tottered towards extinction during the first 14 years of the present century the universe of music never shone more brightly and enchantingly than in its constellation of orchestral composers, with Wagner, Mahler, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Puccini, Sibelius, Elgar, and Puccini in the ascendency. To command absolute attention and arouse enthusiasm and admiration among such brilliant company was an achievement of genius. This is precisely what Richard Strauss did when he came on the scene in 1889 with his tone poem *Don Juan* and continued to dazzle the universe of music with a succession of major works which reached the zenith with *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1911. I think most people

will agree that Strauss never again equalled his achievement during that period.

How does Strauss's reputation as a great composer stand to-day? It would seem that out of his complete and extensive list of compositions three or four operas, perhaps fewer than half-a-dozen tone poems, and a couple of dozen songs possess universal and lasting appeal. Since *Der Rosenkavalier* Strauss's star was surely in the descendant until its light was almost extinguished in his last group of compositions. Apart from *Metamorphosen,* which has something of the warmth and brightness of the dying flame about it, these works seem to me merely machine-made.

Posterity, of course, will be the final arbiter on Strauss's place among the great composers. But I am afraid she is an exacting and ruthless critic and allows few of the great names to remain great. Think of Clementi, Cherubini, and Meyerbeer (and innumerable others) who once enjoyed places among the most exalted!

The death of Ginette Neveu at the age of 30 is an irreparable loss. We all know that the art of the executant has only transitory values, and in its highest manifestations it can be no more than a perfect reflection of the far greater and far more important mind of the composer. Nevertheless to achieve this perfect reflection is of vital importance, for it constitutes the realisation of the composer's thought in terms of actual sound, which is the *raison d'être,* indeed the very stuff, of the art of music.

Neveu was one of the supreme artists of the violin. She carried on in the royal line of Ysaye and Kreisler and alone was fit, or almost fit, to meet them on equal terms. She possessed every requisite of the really great violinist: tone, technique, musicianship, sensitiveness, taste, style, and personality. Among string players, only Casals, Ysaye, and Kreisler have ever combined such intensity of expression,

ease of execution, and unique quality of tone that distinguished Ginette Neveu from all her contemporaries.

It is ironical that a few months before Strauss and Neveu died the new H.M.V. Special List included a recording of Strauss's charming early Sonata for violin and piano played by Ginette Neveu and Gustav Beck! She also recorded the Brahms and Sibelius concertos as well as some other records not yet issued. Thus with the aid of the gramophone we may have 'the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!' – the voice of the greatest violinist since Kreisler.

PHILISTINISM IN MANCHESTER

It is distressing news that the Manchester City Council has decided to cut down its grant to the Hallé Orchestra. The original annual grant of £9,000 for an orchestra of international repute guided by one of the world's finest conductors was paltry enough for one of the largest and richest cities in Europe.

Music-lovers throughout Britain will deplore the advance of Philistinism in Manchester and there will be 'On all sides, from innumerable tongues, a dismal universal hiss, the sound of public scorn.'

On the other hand, it is gratifying to hear that the Hallé Concerts Society has decided to publish its excellent *Hallé* magazine monthly instead of bi-monthly in future. *Hallé* is a really lively and attractively produced musical journal, and I wish every success to its editors, T. E. Bean and George F. Knight.

RUSSIA AND MUSIC

Charles Stuart

I

THOSE of us whose formative years fell between the wars, especially in the questing, innovating twenties, were conditioned musically by the Russians, much as our fathers and grandfathers had been shaped by the great Romantics of Germany. The world of Schumann and Brahms suddenly became insufferable, a slippered cosiness. Schubert shrank to a tinkling. Weber we dismissed, without troubling to know him, as wax fruit under a glass dome. Wagner had ravaged our hearts: we stared at the pocks and scars resentfully. Our revolt assailed the musical godhead itself: in Beethoven we detected a tarnished rhetoric, aggravated by slow movements which tended to bring tears to the eyes – a fatal flaw!

From Russia a cleansing gale was blowing. With it came romantic echoes of revolutionary tumult. In our secret hearts we construed the street-fighting of 1917 in terms of Paris, 1830, 1848, and 1871. We nurtured Hugoesque visions of barricades with bloody and bandaged heroes. Great films came filtering through to sharpen our fever. In *The Mother* and *Potemkin* the sun fell in benediction upon alleys and pavements which had witnessed the overthrow of tyrants and the enthronement of Liberty – which this time wore no Phrygian bonnet, but the peaked cap of an industrial suburb and a ragged jacket hooped about by a stolen bandolier. Also there came the New Music: not all of it new in the chronological sense, but all of it shiningly unfamiliar, like a thing born of the morrow. Albert Coates was conducting Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*

with Messianic fervour. This music fluttered, twittered, and swooned; but in the midst of its feminisings trombones pealed apocalyptically. Nowhere had one heard anything remotely resembling Scriabin; his music was a world with windows and doors sealed against all percolations; it was music written inside a diving-bell.

After Scriabin, Stravinsky. Was Scriabin altogether as isolated as one had supposed? Listening to the Dance of the Firebird from the Stravinsky ballet suite, we said to one another, 'Surely, this is a crib from the *Poem of Ecstasy*.' The resemblance was not so much in the structure or general purport of the music as in the handling of the orchestra. Stravinsky had borrowed from Scriabin the technique of flutter and effervescence; the same little frenzies overtook the strings; the same aerial iridescence hung over much of his music. And was there not also in Stravinsky an affinity with Rimsky-Korsakov? Rimsky had taught young Igor composition. It was only natural that the *Firebird* should here and there echo the gilded splendours of *Scheherazade* and the subtle instrumental chemistry (as it was fashionable to call it) of *The Golden Cockerel*. But *The Firebird* contained stranger matters than echo and affinity. The brassy, breakneck syncopations of Prince Kastchei and his evil spirits are now as dated as white waistcoat slips and cummerbunds, but twenty-five years ago they cowed and conquered us. One later lumped and linked this Kastchei music with other elatingly rhythmic movements from Stravinsky's early ballets, including the coachmen's and nursemaids' dances in *Petrushka* and the great 'stamping' dance in *The Rite of Spring*. These and kindred movements were, to our way of thinking, intensely *Russian*.

What, precisely, did we mean by this epithet?

We should have been hard put to it to offer a pat definition. I suppose we thought of Russian music first of all as

music with certain outstanding rhythmic characteristics. Instead of sticking to the jogtrot three, four, six, eight in a bar of the German classics, the Russians – or, anyway, Stravinsky – inserted bars of five, seven, even eleven, alternating duple and triple measures in a way that imparted rhythmic fluidity. Other factors we looked for were scraps of sturdy or melancholy tune in Russian folk modes; frequent clashes and mixtures of key; and orchestration as brightly coloured as a Ukrainian peasant skirt. When Serge Prokofiev came along he conformed snugly to this specification. His *Love of the Three Oranges,* with its note of gawky sophistication superadded, was as Slavonic as Gogol. We listened to him ecstatically, one ear clapped to the gramophone mouthpiece, and dutifully drank tea out of tumblers, nibbling bits of sugar concurrently, in the fashion of Russian fiction as translated by Constance Garnett.

II

Russian music in those explorative and intoxicating days was a bright, external thing, rather brittle, objective in its impact – a complicated but adorable toy. For a few years this assessment seemed to cover the field nicely. Then came a revelation which knocked it to bits and multiplied the significance of Russian music tenfold.

The only way one can convey to a non-musician the wonder of discovering *Boris Godunov* is to compare it with one's first sight and first exploring, at an impressionable age, of some foreign city. To hear *Boris* performed and then, while still on the fringe of it, to go through the score page by page at one's piano – this is an experience no less pervasive of after-years than one's early, enchanted wanderings on the banks of Tiber, Seine, and Guadalquivir. For *Boris* is an immensity. Consider the clangour of the Coronation music. Such sonorities of bell and brass had never been so much as

hinted at before, even by Hector Berlioz; the very domes of the Kremlin seem turned into music. Consider, too, the scene in the royal nursery where the usurper's hallucination is mockingly accompanied by the whirr and chiming of the children's clock, with its mechanical figures. Never had the orchestra yielded such a grotesque and terrifying tick-tock music. In this scene a psychic gulf is opened: we look into the deeps of a suffocating soul, and what we see there parallels the spectacle of 'Macbeth'.

But, in my submission, a finer distillation of Moussorgsky's art is to be found not in the Kremlin episodes, but in such broadly 'popular' scenes as (*a*) the inn near the Lithuanian border and (*b*) the forest-clearing which, in the original version of the opera, frames the finale. What is one to say of the music of these two scenes? In the case of the inn scene one may venture the view that opera offers no example of a vocal line more taut and sensitive, so highly characterised and yet so vivid and moving in strictly musical terms. In setting the cross-talk between the hostess, Pretender Grigori, the two police officers and the renegade monks, Moussorgsky is concerned to provide a ductile medium for the words; but the singing never becomes a gabble, as so often happens when dramatic values threaten to get the upper hand in opera. Every bar of Moussorgsky's vocal writing here is 'expressive' in the sense that it seems tinctured by the text and the dramatic situation; yet there is never any playing down of purely musical quality.

But what, exactly, is the musical quality of Moussorgsky? How put one's finger on it? How find a name for it? In the presence of such questions the critic sits mumchance. The inner essence of music has never been caught in any verbal net. In one's greener days one asserted boldly that Moussorgsky had isolated and set down on music paper the collective Russian soul, with all its black sorrows and convulsive joys.

You couldn't prove this was right. On the other hand, nobody could prove it was wrong. And the more one heard of the Forest Clearing (or 'Revolutionary') scene the more reasonable one's thesis seemed. A fierce swirl of five-note quaver groups on the strings leads into a choral torrent with liturgical interludes and insets of nursery tune sung by children. Musically the scene is built of themes modelled on Russian folk-patterns. And here we find something odd. When English composers use English folk-tunes, or write in folk-vein, the results are usually as dismal as a Morris dance by games mistresses in an urban playground on a wet Saturday afternoon. Even Bartók was rather below his best when thurifying native Hungarian melodies.

How different it is with Moussorgsky! When he handles a folk-tune you find bits of black soil and birch bark clinging to it still; you do not find it sicklied o'er with academic syrups or Glazunov glaze. Thus, the finale of *Boris*, for all its weight and elaboration, is clean and uncloying. The curtain comes down on the Simpleton, who is also a Seer (a recurring type in the folklore of many countries), squatting alone in the snow. The mob has moved off. From the direction in which they have gone comes the sinister glow of arson through the forest trees. Swaying from side to side, he sings a quavering lament for Russia, which reaches timorously to A natural, then falls in a long cadence that is burdened with the woes and pains of a whole people.

III

In twenty years or more my position has changed. My view of Russian music to-day is based in part on factors which were outside my experience in the twenties. One of the factors is *A Life for the Tsar*.

I had, of course, been familiar enough with Glinka's opera as a text-book item from the cradle up. Who has not? Every-

body must be aware – it is something imbibed with our first algebra equations – that Glinka was the Father of the Russian nationalist school, and that *A Life for the Tsar*, originally produced at St Petersburg in December 1836, is the first piece of out-and-out Russian music extant. We were told by some authorities that *A Life for the Tsar*, although praiseworthy enough as a pioneering effort, was of unequal quality musically. A recent thumbnail biography of Glinka speaks airily of 'its banalities and amateurish harmony.' Other writers, while crediting the score with brawny Russian folk-tunes and an occasional flavour of vodka, cite Italian tendencies and French influences, as though Glinka were in the dock and they were detective sergeants reading out previous convictions. On the other hand, *A Life for the Tsar* has had fervent defenders. In his diary for June, 1888, Tchaikovsky wrote of it as

> an opera which for inspiration, originality and irreproachable technique is worthy to stand beside all that is loftiest and most profound in musical art! ... How came this average amateur to catch up in a single stride with such men as Mozart and Beethoven– Yes, for he has *overtaken* them.

In my youth I would almost certainly have dismissed Tchaikovsky's testimony, if I had come upon it, as that of a bad witness. What did Tchaikovsky's music amount to? A string of barrel-organ tunes. Of what use his judgment? Of no use whatever save, perhaps, as a pointer to Tchaikovsky's own superficiality. Somewhere I had read a sentence which pleased me greatly: 'Tchaikovsky is a moujik who wears a silk hat in the boudoir.' As a champion of Glinka, Tchaikovsky was a handicap rather than a help.

For decades *A Life for the Tsar* remained one of those pieces we were doomed to read about and never to hear. The compilers of reference books went on repeating each other down the decades, and would probably have been

content to go on doing so till the last syllable of recorded time, had not the B.B.C. decided to bring us face to face with reality. Early in the summer of 1947 they put on two unforgettable full-dress performances of *A Life for the Tsar*, as far as I can gather the first to be given in this country for sixty years or so, under the conductorship of Nikolai Malko in the studio at Maida Vale.

I heard both B.B.C. performances from the studio balcony. Already I had a sort of skeleton of the work in my head, derived from piano score. The skeleton is now clothed in flesh; and I must say that *A Life for the Tsar* in the flesh is an entity entirely different from the inscribed foundation stone which the musical compendiums dinned and drilled into us. But in the B.B.C. performances there was a difference of a more organic sort. Dramatically considered, the Malko production was far removed from the conception of Glinka and his librettist, Baron von Rosen. For reasons into which I need not enter here, the text sung was a translation, partly in French, partly in English, of a revised libretto which, conforming rigidly and humourlessly to the Party line, was confected for the Leningrad revival in 1938 under a new title – namely, '*Ivan Susanin*'.

In the original text Mikhail Romanov is the Little Father of pre-Soviet fiction and fact. Susanin and his fellow-peasants cheer, pray, and fight for him manfully. It never occurs to them that, by all the rules of dialectical materialism, they are behaving like Blimpish reactionaries. In the new version Tsar Mikhail Romanov is suppressed. Susanin gives his life instead for a partisan leader, one Minin, and the people of Moscow. There are other twists and interpolations. The invading Poles are abetted by a force of German knights, of whom nothing is heard in the original version. It is noticeable, also, that the wives of the Polish nobles are a good deal more vicious than the conventional operatic

creatures drawn by von Rosen. They egg their husbands on to battle and booty. They sing anticipatorily of steeds, diamonds, furs, silks, and less immediately consumable prizes such as rivers, fields, and forests. As you will have already guessed, there is a Fifth Column of traitor boyars.

The ideological prudery which thrusts such perversions down unwitting throats has its amusing side. The attitude is, 'Not only do we disapprove of Tsardom. We refuse to admit that it ever existed.'

IV

It has not yet occurred to any Soviet purist to rewrite Glinka's music, but I can imagine a musical revision being commissioned some day on the ground that this celebrated foundation stone of Russian opera is not half Russian enough. Anybody coming hotfoot to *A Life for the Tsar* from *Boris Godunov* might well be excused for complaining that Glinka's music is no more Slavonic in its predominant flavour than a *cassata Siciliana* or any other ice-pudding.

It is true that when first vaguely thinking about writing an opera Glinka said that the subject and the music must be nationalistic; both elements must be recognisable to his fellow-countrymen as impregnated with 'the spirit of the Russian homeland.' But on going painstakingly through the bulky score, one finds that the identifiable Russianisms, though tending to tincture the rest, are few. Let us pass some of them in review. The opening chorus of peasants, first for the men's, then for women's voices, sounds as if Glinka wrote it while chewing sunflower seeds on the banks of the Volga. It is the kind of music which, if one of those criminals known as 'arrangers' got his teeth into it, would be scored in less than no time for massed balalaikas. At the end of this movement, however, men and women get to-

gether in a roistering fourteen-page fugue which has no more connection with Russia specifically than have the multiplication tables. In the third act Susanin sings a recurrent sixteen-bar melody, doubled by unison strings, which is peculiarly Russian both as to its intervals and its rhythmic build. A few pages later Susanin finds himself singing in four-four time for a stave or two against the three-four time of a parcel of tenors who are supposed to be Polish soldiery. At this point the score looks as though a fragment of *Les Noces* (Stravinsky, 1923) has slipped in by mistake. Again, in the third act there is a limpid chorus of peasant girls off-stage in five-four time, a metre especially dear to Russian nationalists. As for the triumphal music at the end, with the chorus singing their heads off, tubular bells jangling for all they were worth, full organ trying to outblast full orchestra, and the Tsar in person riding on a milk-white charger into the Kremlin, as to this joyous peak and culmination, one can only say that it has been copied in some form or degree by every Russian composer who ever set pen to paper, and promises to be a recurring model so long as there is a Russian composer on earth.

But, as I say, when you add these and other inescapably Russian pages together, the total is slight in relation to the rest. And the rest turns out to be a superb restatement of Europe, 1836, in operatic terms. The score is built up in set numbers which are indexed scene by scene on the flyleaf. Arias, duets, trios, quartets, choruses, ballet, act finales, grand finale, symphonic interlude – Glinka erects the entire machine just as it had been blueprinted by a whole synod of predecessors and contemporaries in the West – Méhul, Rossini, Cherubini and Bellini among them. That his style and technique were coloured and determined by the French 'grand' and Italian general utility schools is quite true. To make this point is, however, no indictment of Glinka, as

some simple-minded folk seem to think. Our grandfathers, who accepted Bayreuth as a new Sinai radiating eternal truth, were so utterly committed to the Wagnerian dogma of 'endless melody' that they shunned the superseded system of separate operatic numbers and set pieces as something archaic and almost immoral. There is no reason on earth why we should perpetuate this ancestral nonsense. We are capable of producing nonsense enough of our own.

The truth is that the traditional patterns of opera, if handled by a composer of genius, satisfy the ear's inevitable craving for form, for detailed and over-riding musical design. But does not the set-number method, with its artificial divisions of recitative and aria, impede the dramatic content of opera? That depends on the composer's genius, as I have already indicated. Given the genius of a Mozart, the set number is dramatically an aid, not a hindrance. The musical architecture of *Don Giovanni,* far from getting in the way of the story, skilfully points and underlines it. In observing the operatic conventions of his day, Glinka was acting reasonably and imaginatively. He did not, apparently, feel any urge to innovate. He was not concerned to write for posterity, an over-rated person whose postal address, in any case, nobody ever knows. The means and material to hand were sufficient to his purpose; and his purpose was to entertain a contemporary audience in contemporary terms.

Antonida's opening aria, with its *ritornelli*, its clarinet arabesques, and its vocal imitations thereof, is as elegant and artificial as a Nash terrace; and, like a Nash terrace, it could have belonged anywhere in 1836. It is the sort of music people were writing around 1836 in Naples, Milan, Prague, London, Madrid – and even (I have no doubt) in New York. That this particular aria happened to see the light first in St Petersburg is a purely accidental circum-

stance. The same may be said of quite nine-tenths of the score. The pointer, as it seems to me, is not towards nationalism, but towards quite a different set of values. If *A Life* proves anything at all, it proves that, essentially, music is without passports, flags, or frontier posts. The key of E flat minor is no more and no less Russian than twelve times twelve. The recurring and inevitable musical forms, from fugue and full-dress aria to rondo and sonata first movement, are as truly international as Lake Success, and probably a good deal more stable. Even folk-tunes are dubious in their national allegiance. You may pin down your folk-tune and dissect it as learnedly as you please; to isolate its specifically native element is a hard if not hopeless job. The scales from which Russian folk-tunes derive are a common heritage from pre-mediæval Europe. The Kremlin has no corner in them.

But, you object, what of the distinctive *rhythms* of Russian music? These, surely, are as characteristic of Russia as samovars and sunflower seeds. It is true that Moussorgsky and certain other Russian composers of the nineteenth century freed themselves in a tentative way from the rhythmic strait-jacket which European music first imposed upon itself in the eighteenth century; but in this matter Moussorgsky was not so much a nationalistic innovator as a revivalist. For fluid rhythm Europe has heard nothing to eclipse, and little to compare with, its own ecclesiastical plain-chant. The Gregorian modes of the Church are the vehicle of rhythmic subtlety and diversity which anticipate much, if not all, of Igor Stravinsky. Indeed, the choral and solo voice parts of *Les Noces* look for all the world like a series of Gregorian lines in staff notation which have been superimposed on each other, bar lines, fluctuating time signatures and all. But of *Les Noces* more later.

To return to *A Life for the Tsar*. Indisputably, this music

is much more than a merely formal essay, typical of its period. The accent, the flavour, is unique, but for this we are beholden, surely, to Glinka rather than to his homeland. A nation may not be indicted for the crimes of individuals. By the same ruling, a nation is not rightly to be praised for individual genius. *A Life for the Tsar* was written by a man, not by a collectivity. I begin to suspect, indeed, that there is no such thing as Russian music, French music, German music, Italian music – or even (extreme case!) Spanish music; but only music by Russian, French, German, Italian, and Spanish composers.

I am constrained, of course, to concede the intensely national, not to say racial, colour, and quality of much traditional dance-music, as well as folk-song; but good things of this kind are made as much for export as for home consumption – they are as cosmopolitan as Camembert. A hundred years ago national dance-tunes and rhythms were freely interchangeable. Chopin would never have dreamed of asserting exclusive rights in the polonaise simply because he was a Pole. Glinka makes brilliant and highly dramatic use of the polonaise and other Polish dance-measures in *A Life*. I shall be told, no doubt, that Glinka, though not a Pole, was certainly a Slav, and therefore predisposed by blood towards Polish tunes and traditions. In that case, what of Weber? There was nothing Slavonic about the author of *Der Freischütz*, yet his *Polacca Brillant*, Op. 72, is as convincing and swashbuckling an example as anything written by native hand on Polish plains. Glinka turned his hand with equal aptitude to the national airs and rhythms of Russia, Poland – and Spain. His *Jota Aragonesca* and his *Night in Madrid* speak for themselves. It used to be said, before Albeniz and Falla, that all the best Spanish music was written by Russians and Frenchmen.

On the whole, then, *A Life* is an international, not a

national document: the precise contrary to what the textbooks have always chorused. While writing it, Glinka heard Beethoven's Seventh Symphony for the first time and was overwhelmed by it. I often fancy that some of the rhythmic pull and undertow of the Seventh found its way, transmuted, into the superb blizzard music of the fourth act. Beethoven was one feeder, Bellini another. Glinka ransacked the Europe of his day for the provenance of his opera; but every alien influence was assimilated and precisely adapted to his aesthetic purpose. His opera is no patchwork quilt, but a unity moulded by a technique which seems in large part to have been intuitively acquired.

But a more remarkable thing is that *A Life for the Tsar*, historically viewed, contains in kernel form the musical credo and development of two later Russian composers, Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky, who are indubitable cosmopolitans in the Glinka line.

V

After a quarter of a century's musical pilgrimage I find myself no longer disdainful of the deviser of 'barrel-organ tunes.' One used to be obsessed, to the exclusion of all other constituents, by Tchaikovsky's 'emotional content.' What emerges to-day is the structural sweep and security of his music; the delicacy and adroitness with which it is fashioned. There is much that is obvious in his work; but this is an asset, no handicap. Obvious music is not necessarily shallow music. For proof of this consult much of Handel, Mozart, Verdi, Beethoven. And Tchaikovsky's fecund technique, dating from the thorough-bass and harmony lessons of his nonage, derives and develops unmistakably from Europe's main traditional stream.

There is no disputing the intense Russianism of Tchaikovsky the citizen. The infant whom governess Fanny Dur-

bach found smothering the map of Russia with kisses (and spitting on adjacent countries) became the man who, in his thirty-ninth year, wrote:

> I have never yet come across anyone so much in love with Mother Russia as myself. I am passionately devoted to the Russian people, the Russian language, the Russian spirit ... I am Russian in the fullest sense of the word.

But when it came to writing music, ethnomania flew out of the window. Tchaikovsky made abundant use of Russian folk-melodies, just as a wood-carver may use elm that grew in his own garden. The significant thing is that with Tchaikovsky folk-tunes are so embedded in their context and blended with it that often one never suspects their origin until it is pointed out. How many of the uncounted millions who know the B flat minor Piano Concerto by heart suspect that one of the more flippant first-movement subjects is derived from a folk-tune which, on Tchaikovsky's own testimony, used to be sung by blind beggars throughout Little Russia? When Rimsky Korsakov used folk-tunes he was apt to attach stick-on labels, so that everybody should be mindful of their origin. The same applies in lesser degree to the early Stravinsky. With Tchaikovsky the origin of a tune is of relatively small importance. The things that matter are its purely musical character and context, and what happens to it.

It is common experience at a Tchaikovsky concert nowadays to find the programme notes bristling with abuse. In some quarters Tchaikovsky is regarded as fair game for any sort of vilification. Garbled bits are taken from the Letters and the Diary and tendentiously construed by writers whose only conceivable defence is that they have had neither time, taste, nor patience to master all the biographical sources and get them into true focus. It is true that Tchaikovsky considered Brahms a dull fellow. 'What could I say to Brahms (if I met him)?' he wrote to his confidante Nadejda

von Meck. 'If I were an honourable and sincere man I should have to say something of this kind: – "Herr Brahms, I regard you as an uninspired and pretentious composer, without any creative genius whatever. I ... look down on you with disdain". 'Is Tchaikovsky to be dismissed as one of the fops and featherbrains because he held views about Brahms which G. B. Shaw expressed with incalculably greater ferocity in his critical heyday? It is true also that Tchaikovsky found Wagner's *Ring* a bore, apart from its quasi-symphonic set-pieces. Is there anything peculiarly sinful in this? Or unusual?

Of course, there are graver charges. As an infant Tchaikovsky used to hear Bellini and Donizetti on an orchestrion which Tchaikovsky *père* brought back with him to Kamsko-Votinsk after a visit to St Petersburg. Maturity only aggravated his taste for Italian opera. The French music of his day he adored. For *Carmen* he had an 'almost unwholesome passion.' (The phrase is that of his brother Modeste.) To sit in the balcony at a Colonne concert in Paris and hear Berlioz's *Faust* was heaven. Delibes' *Sylvia* he revered. Such predilections must have been anathema to that wing of Tchaikovsky's contemporaries who were building the great German musical hegemony over European music. To the belated upholders of that hegemony in our own day his tastes are equally deplorable. Hence the disfavour and patronage which he suffers in the academic creeks and backwaters of Britain.

You may tirelessly plead extenuating circumstances. Tchaikovsky, you point out, *did* draw the line at the riper Massenet. You cite lines from the diary:

> Played *Manon* to-day. Massenet seems to cloy with sweetness ...
>
> Played Massenet at home. How stale he has grown! The worst of it is that in this staleness I trace a certain affinity to myself.
>
> ... the sickly *Manon!*

Your pleadings are of no avail. *Manon* apart, Tchaikovsky had French-Italian loyalties, and was therefore a frivolous, hollow person.

I do not suggest in defence that Tchaikovsky's tastes were as wide and sensitive as they might have been. His strictures on Moussorgsky, although they contain a grain of truth, disclose a singular blindness. The man who could write, even as early as 1874, that *Boris Godunov* was the 'commonest, lowest parody of music' and might, as far as he was concerned, go to the devil, deserves something more than mild reprimand from posterity. Undoubtedly Tchaikovsky the critic had his shortcomings; but all are generously outweighed by his almost mystical devotion to Mozart, who seems to have been one of the secret inspirational springs of his own music. He first knew Mozart through the Kamsko-Votinsk orchestrion, whose twangling of Zerlina's air was a key which first unlocked musical appetite and aptitude in him. Forty years later comes the famous passage in his diary:

> Mozart was as pure as an angel, and his music is full of divine beauty ... To my mind Mozart is the culminating point of all beauty in the sphere of music. He alone can make me weep and tremble with delight at the consciousness of the approach of that which we call the ideal ... I love everything in Mozart, for we love everything in the man to whom we are truly devoted. Above all, *Don Juan*, for through that work I have learned to know what music is ...

As an artist Tchaikovsky was of his time and place. He wrote with a highly individual accent and an occasional smell of vodka. But his inner gaze was bent upon the West – and not the West of his own day. He seems to have recognised that in the immense framework of Tradition all tongues and talents may find places in which to thrive. Nationalism was not his fount.

VI

The regard for tradition, implicit in Tchaikovsky's music and pronouncements, is explicitly stated as well as practised by Stravinsky, notwithstanding the fact that the composer of the 1940 and 1945 Symphonies is still looked upon by some of our academic backwoodsmen as exclusively an innovator and 'revolutionary.'

At the outset, thirty years ago, it seemed that Stravinsky was going to become, and stay, the banner-man and cheer-leader of Russification. Not only is *The Rite of Spring* (1913) Russian as to balletic theme; it is also primeval and pagan. We are up to the ears in native soil. Listening to the prelude to *The Rite,* that astonishing snakehouse for wood-wind, and to the dislocated yet crushingly logical rhythms of the sacrificial scene at the end, one concluded that Stravinsky had cut the painter and had neither connection with nor the smallest interest in the general body of European music, historically considered. The music of *The Rite* had a disturbingly new quality and colour. One did not quite know whether to label this as characteristically Stravinsky or characteristically Russian. On the whole, one plumped for the Russian label. Then came *Pribaoutki* (1914), a group of Russian folk-rhymes set for voices, four strings, and four woodwind instruments. These songs are exquisite in their craftsmanship and humour. At the time they were written, and for some years after, the general ruck of musical people were much too disturbed by the tartness of the harmony and by a seeming scrappiness of design to savour their true merit. The *Pribaoutki* songs are as exciting as the onset of spring. Black earth is still moist from thaw. The birches are budding. No other music is comparable with this. To find an affinity one must go outside

music: to some of the Tchekov short stories, perhaps, or, better still, to the paintings of Paul Klee.

From 1917 to 1932 Stravinsky worked in spells and spurts on *Les Noces*, a ballet on Russian peasant wedding customs. The solo singers are instructed to bawl occasionally instead of singing. Four pianos (in the theatre wings) are supplemented by a gallimaufry of things to beat and belabour, from xylophone to tuned cymbals. In London twenty years ago *Les Noces* was received with a howl. The musical texture of the work is so radical in its novelty that even to this day timorous people are scared into brutal misjudgment of a score notable above all things for its disarming gaiety and tenderness. On one thing, however, most people are agreed – that *Les Noces* is intensely moujik. At the height of the din which followed the first London production, H. G. Wells leapt to Stravinsky's defence. In a letter to the Press he described *Les Noces* as a rendering in sound and vision of the peasant soul in its gravity, in its deliberate and simple-minded intricacy, in its subtly-varied rhythms.' It is amusing to compare this chivalrous but dogmatic diagnosis with Stravinsky's own reference to *Les Noces* in his *Chroniques de Ma Vie*. He there tells us that in devising his extraordinary scheme of sonorities he was in no way concerned to imitate the sounds of village wedding fêtes, which, in any case, he had neither seen nor heard. 'It never entered my head', he adds, 'to recreate a peasant wedding ceremony. Ethnographical considerations rarely occurred to me.' For Stravinsky *Les Noces* was predominantly a musical problem and exercise; and it is certainly the case that a purely musical approach is the only one which guarantees understanding and enjoyment of the score. The music of *Les Noces* is immensely dramatic. The pitting of a glittering percussive battery against a complex vocal flow obeys all the laws of theatrical conflict. But the

drama is conceived exclusively in musical terms. The peasant soul has nothing to do with the case.

From 1920 or thereabouts Stravinsky refused to let the peasant soul get a word in edgeways. For the better part of thirty years he has, in musical terms, been a good European. Judging by the Symphony in C of 1940, the Symphony in three movements (1945), and the Sonata for two pianos (1944) – three major products of his American exile and citizenship – transplantation has in no way deflected or adulterated his art. Upon certain Europeans of genius or high talent, not necessarily musicians, America has had a denaturing and commercialising effect. The three works cited above are aristocratically immune from all such taint.

What of the *Scherzo à la Russe*, written in 1944? There is certainly an immediacy of appeal here. It is perhaps the only thing written by Stravinsky in thirty years or more which has the popular touch. There are brisk, elating rhythms to set the gallery stamping – but no hint of banality. The scoring is flower-bright and frosty, the harmony piquant and rarely abstruse. Ninety concert-goers out of a hundred will unhesitatingly call this thoroughly Russian music. By this they mean it sounds vaguely like *Petrushka*. We are switched back enchantingly to the opening and closing scenes of the early ballet. Again we move among the garish booths and carnival crowds of the Admiralty Square, St Petersburg, *circa* 1830. But the charming thing about the Scherzo is that its main subject – the brisk opening tune stated in trumpet triads – derives not from the native folk-tune material of *Petrushka*, but rather from the French popular song *Elle avait un' jambe en bois* by one Emile Spencer, which in 1910 was being played so obsessingly by phonographs and street musicians that Stravinsky, hoping to get the thing out of his blood, incorporated it in the opening tableau of his ballet, where it is scored as if for barrel organ.

VII

Stravinsky's repudiation of the sunflower-seed-and-samovar school was one of the most disturbing happenings of the post-1918 world. In 1919 he immersed himself in sonatas, songs, and unpublished fragments by the early eighteenth-century G. B. Pergolesi, in whom he detected a twin spirit, and, at Diaghilev's suggestion, expanded and transmuted them into a ballet score which, though recognisably of the eighteenth century as to its melodic material and the structure of its movements, is saturated throughout in a peculiarly Stravinskian idiom. When *Pulcinella*, as the new ballet was named, came out in Paris in the spring of 1920, this bracketing of dissonance with old-fashioned musical formulae perplexed some, gave others pause and turned the fogeys purple with resentment – especially the young fogeys who, then as now, are addicted to 100 per cent innovation at all times, in all things, for innovation's sake. If only the dissonances had been overdone, the young fogeys, with their ears irrelevantly full of *The Rite of Spring*, would have been appeased. Instead, dissonance is applied with restraint. Here and there a reiterated note in one of the inner parts becomes a pedal point in false relation to the bland and courtly figurations above and below it. In episode after episode Stravinsky offers a 'period' context which is intact and old-masterish except for alien harmonic details at strategical points.

One is reminded instantly of Picasso. So much of the music is aurally the equivalent of Picasso's perversions of natural form. Listening to certain of Stravinsky's 'misplaced' pedal points is like looking at a nose growing in profile from the ear of a Picasso full-face portrait. I am not at present (or ever) concerned to defend Picasso's peculiar

line in plastic surgery. Certainly, however, I find its musical counterpart in *Pulcinella* exquisite. This interlocking of ancient musical moulds and Stravinskian harmonic device – or rather the inter-penetration and fusion of these two elements – endowed music with an entirely new set of values. Most people missed the point. That always happens when new values crop up in any art. I well remember how insipid *Pulcinella* originally sounded in my own ears. It took me some years to 'get' its *bouquet*. To go through a piano-voice score of the ballet suite is now a perennial refreshment. What moves me especially, I find, is the Air with two variations. The limpid serenity and simplicity of this music faintly suggest a pigtailed schoolgirl at an upright piano in a schoolroom, but minute departures here and there from academic part-writing give the movement a marvellous fragrance: there is here a transparency and innocence which have been evident in Stravinsky's music under various styles and in widely different guises, from the 'Firebird' finale to the closing pages of the *Apollo* ballet (1928) and the opening movement of the wartime Two-Piano Sonata. *Pulcinella,* although far from being Stravinsky's *multum in minimo*, does offer hints and clues to the bulk of his subsequent music, whose stylistic range ransacks European time and space. The opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927), sung by masked personages to a Latin text, reintroduces the formal aria, with flavours of Handel and Verdi. For this we had been prepared five years earlier by the comic opera *Mavra*, a work so rich in rousing, four-square tunes that one is perplexed to find it shelved and unremembered. Stravinsky has not applied himself with equal rigour in all his works to the restatement and re-application of eighteenth-century formulae. On the contrary, one detects a rough dividing line. On one side of the line are such works as the Octet for wind instruments (1923), the Concerto for Piano

and Orchestra (1924), the Piano Sonata (1924), the Violin Concerto (1931), and the immense Concerto for two solo pianos (1935). These are works of antique temper; their general austerity relieved by flashes of sober beauty and a constant felicity of craftsmanship. On the other side of the line are works freer in form and, in varying degrees, romantic either as to content or surface appeal. In this group I would include *The Fairy's Kiss* ballet (1928), based on material from Tchaikovsky, the Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra (1929), the *Persephone* cantata (1934), the *Card Game* ballet (1936) and the Symphony of Psalms (1930). Inclusion of the last mentioned will be hotly challenged by some Stravinsky students. The Symphony, I admit, includes a double fugue which is even more crushingly severe than the fugal finale to the Two-Piano Concerto, but the rest of the score has a starkness, a wildness and a sweetness which more than redress the balance.

As with Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky's musical loyalties are catholic. His admiration not only for Weber (a faded nonentity in the eyes of many) and Verdi (always suspect in the ears of Germanophils), but also for such 'riff-raff' as Bellini, Bizet, Gounod, Chabrier, and even Massager, caused what is technically known as a painful sensation when avowed in his memoirs, *Chroniques de Ma Vie,* but probably hastened a backswing towards Latinity in music which in any case was written in the stars. Bach and Beethoven are, or have at various times been, his heroes-in-chief. What could be more fruitfully Bachian than the polyphony of the 1932 Octet, or that of the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* of 1938? The last mentioned is modelled deliberately on Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. Whether by coincidence or design, the first bar includes a ten-note tunelet from the Brandenburg No 3. A French musicologist of greater zeal than humour denounced this as 'insolent

borrowing'. It is, of course, nothing of the sort. As was pointed out in refutation at the time, the offending tunelet, which takes the form of a chain of incidental phrases, has become part of the common musical vocabulary of Europe since Bach's day. It is to be found not only in Stravinsky but also in Mendelssohn, Rossini, and Benedetto Marcello. I quote this incident not as a sample of the feverish little quarrels which go on in the musical world, but to drive home the truth that Stravinsky's genius is truly cosmopolitan in its habits, like that of Glinka and Tchaikovsky.

The influence of Beethoven has been even deeper and subtler than that of Bach. An excellent example is the Adagietto of the Piano Sonata. The melodic line here is frilled and fringed with pianist ornament in the baroque manner of the early and mid-period Beethoven sonatas. The middle section of this movement carries some intimation of Beethoven's more sober and sombre manner. Another example is the canopied and starlit Notturno of the Two-Piano Concerto. It is hard, perhaps impossible, to put one's finger on the precise points of affinity, but I never hear this music without having a vision of the Demiurge himself, with his mane and his blunt nose and his cleft chin.

In his theoretical writings Stravinsky reverts tirelessly to tradition as a vivifying stream; as a necessary factor and force in all authentic creation. In his lectures from the Harvard chair of poetry in 1930–40 he said, 'There is truth in the paradox which amusingly tells us that outside tradition there's nothing but plagiarism.' For Stravinsky tradition in music means, above all things, discipline, structure, order, form. He abjures the notion that the artist must await overmastering urge, some compelling impulse, and let it lead him by the nose. In this context he refers with approval to the letter which Tchaikovsky wrote to the Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovitch: 'Mozart, Beet-

hoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann composed their immortal works just as a cobbler makes a pair of boots – by daily work; and more often than not because they were ordered.'

Stravinsky's not unreasonable contention that the values of music are *sui generis*, and that music is incapable of depicting landscape, expressing sentiments or narrating incidents, has provoked black fury among English musicians, most of whom still believe that the eleventh 'Enigma' variation of Elgar really does portray G. R. Sinclair's bulldog Dan in the act of tumbling into the Wye and scrambling out again with barks and tailwaggings. On this theme Stravinsky has been the victim of much misrepresentation. An absurd asceticism is attributed to him. Not only is music incapable of expressing emotion; it must refrain from arousing any in the hearer! Stravinsky has, of course, never uttered anything remotely resembling the second proposition, which is the muddle-headed or peevish invention of people who do not like his music, and have untidy minds into the bargain.

So much for Stravinksy. His music, in the main, is not Russian music. It is music by a Russian composer who, before becoming an American citizen, was for eleven years a French subject. And that is rather a different matter.

VIII

To sum up. Every nation, Russia like the rest, has its peculiar genius, some racial or communal characteristic which tinctures the outlook and work of individuals. One is bound to speak hypothetically of these things. To give a laboratory demonstration of their existence is out of the question. It is certainly the case that between the glitter of *Petrushka* and the glooms of *Boris Godounov* I sense a cultural common denominator which it is quite impossible to detach and push under the critical microscope. To minimise the importance of affinities of this kind, even though they are

suspected rather than perceived, would be obscurantist.

Yet one inevitably returns to the thesis that music is of its nature borderless. It does not depict the 'national soul.' It depicts nothing outside itself.

If music were the expression of extraneous things it would be as pointless and boring as those paintings which, in accordance with Hamlet's fatuous recipe, hold the mirror up to Nature. Music, like love and logic, is of its nature a supra-national thing. That Glinka, Tchaikovsky, and, in our own time, Stravinsky, perceived this truth and spurned the *Blut und Boden* nonsense of extreme musical nationalism, is their special and perhaps crowning glory.

All three brought the world's gaze upon Russia.
Their own eyes were focused beyond frontiers.

ANALYSIS OF 1948–9 ORCHESTRAL PROGRAMMES

J. E. Potts

ALTHOUGH most of our leading orchestras now receive some form of official subsidy from one source or another, they still have to keep a very watchful eye on box-office receipts, and public taste must remain a vital consideration when programmes are being planned. He who pays the piper calls the tune; the rule still holds good and, broadly speaking, the public gets what it wants. Should our music industry ever become nationalised no doubt the public would get something else – the music that somebody else thought it ought to have!

In the meantime we live in the present with the natural laws of supply and demand operating comparatively freely and suffering only mild disturbances at the hands of those programme-planners who, to their credit, continue in their attempts to widen the public's tastes. The programmes of the concerts given by our promoters of regular orchestral concerts should, in the aggregate, show what are the public's real tastes in orchestral music and a thorough examination of a representative batch might be expected to yield reasonably reliable information on the subject. With these thoughts in mind I decided to carry out what I intended to be a fairly exhaustive – and found to be a very exhausting – analysis of the 1948–49 programmes announced by eleven of our orchestral concert-giving bodies. This involved the sifting and sorting of 1,705 performances of 621 individual works at 393 concerts. It should here be mentioned that the

survey omits the purely choral concerts included in these series, although choral items forming part of mainly orchestral programmes are included; any departures from the programmes as initially announced have been ignored. The following are the eleven concert series concerned:

Royal Philharmonic Society: Seven orchestral concerts, five by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and two by the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra.

B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra: Seven Wednesday concerts at the Royal Albert Hall; twelve Winter Promenade Concerts, January 10 to January 22, 1949.

London Philharmonic Orchestra: Eighteen Thursday concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, October 14, 1948 to March 31, 1949.

City of Birmingham Orchestra: Seventeen Sunday afternoon concerts, thirty-five Thursday evening concerts and sixteen Tuesday evening concerts, all at the Town Hall.

Liverpool Philharmonic Society: Sixteen Tuesday evening concerts, sixteen Sunday afternoon concerts and fifteen Saturday evening concerts at Philharmonic Hall, all by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra except for one Sunday concert given by the Hallé Orchestra.

Hallé Concerts Society: Two series of fifteen fortnightly mid-week concerts at the Albert Hall, the Wednesday programmes being repeated on Thursdays and each work thus receiving two performances, both of which are counted in the analysis; eighteen Sunday evening concerts at King's Hall, Belle Vue. All are by the Hallé Orchestra, except for one pair of mid-week concerts by the Boyd Neel Orchestra and one pair by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra: Seventy-three concerts, including twenty-three in Leeds and the remainder shared by Dewsbury, Doncaster, Halifax, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Hull, Keighley, Rotherham, Wakefield and York. Many

works were repeated at these different centres; some thus appeared in the programmes as many as seven or eight times and one – Beethoven's Leonora No 3 – was given nine times during the season.

Scottish Orchestra: Details of twenty-two Saturday evening concerts at St Andrew's Hall and twenty-one Sunday afternoon concerts at Green's Playhouse are available for inclusion in the survey.

Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra: Thirty-one Thursday evening concerts in the Winter Gardens Pavilion.

Bradford Subscription Concerts: Nine concerts by the Hallé Orchestra and one each by the B.B.C. Northern, the Boyd Neel and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

Sheffield Philharmonic Society: Twenty-two concerts by the Hallé Orchestra, two by the Liverpool Philharmonic and one each by the B.B.C. Northern, the City of Birmingham and the New London Orchestras.

*

The main statistics of the survey are set out in Table 1. One has become so accustomed to thinking how exceedingly narrow is the range of music offered to us that it comes as a mild but pleasant surprise to find that the total number of works is as great as 621. This becomes less gratifying, however, when it is found that no fewer than 301 – nearly half of the total – received one performance only. The remaining 320 works shared 1,404 performances between them, an average of over four performances each. The established favourites make their regular appearances, but far too many compositions are played once and are then put back on the shelves.

The following are the thirty most popular composers as judged by the total number of performances given of their works; the number of works by each is given in brackets:

Beethoven	166 (29)	Weber	32 (6)
Mozart	108 (33)	Schubert	31 (8)
Tchaikovsky	105 (25)	Rimsky-Korsakov	31 (7)
Brahms	65 (13)	Grieg	30 (9)
Elgar	60 (18)	Rachmaninoff	26 (5)
Wagner	55 (15)	Strauss, R.	25 (12)
Mendelssohn	53 (9)	Ravel	25 (10)
Delius	47 (18)	Haydn	23 (15)
Sibelius	47 (13)	Borodin	22 (4)
Dvořák	45 (15)	Liszt	20 (7)
Bach	41 (22)	Franck	19 (3)
Vaughan Williams	40 (14)	Strauss, J.	18 (10)
Berlioz	36 (9)	Handel	17 (10)
Rossini	33 (10)	Walton	17 (8)
Debussy	32 (9)	Schumann	15 (4)

The first dozen on the list – 7 per cent only of the 173 composers whose works are represented – provide no less than 49 per cent of the total number of performances and 36 per cent of the total number of works given. It is, by the way, extremely pleasing to note that this top twelve includes three British composers. The results of a similar survey recently carried out by the American journal *Musical America* are available for comparison, and it is a remarkable fact that the four most popular composers over there are the same four that appear at the top of our list and in almost the same order. The American survey was based on the 1948–49 programmes of twenty-seven leading American orchestras and included 3,566 performances of 771 different works by 248 composers. After the first four, in which, to America's credit, Brahms takes third place only slightly behind Mozart, with Tchaikovsky fourth, their list differs somewhat from ours although seventeen in the first twenty-four are common to both lists; America's next twenty in order of number of performances are: Wagner, Richard Strauss, Bach, Ravel, Haydn, Schumann, Debussy, Prokofieff, Mendelssohn, Bartók, Berlioz, Stravin-

sky, Handel, Sibelius, Weber, Liszt, Dvořák, Hindemith, Rachmaninoff, Schubert. This high placing of Bartók and Hindemith over there is, to us, somewhat surprising.

While the German and Austrian classical and romantic composers, together with the one inescapable Russian, still provide the larger share of the music given, Table II shows that our native composers are now receiving a much better hearing than one might imagine, although here again the position is not quite so healthy as the figures might imply, for nearly half of the 297 performances of British music are devoted to the works of three composers – Delius, Elgar and Vaughan Williams; the scope is reasonably wide, but too many composers receive too little attention. Moeran, for instance, is represented only by one performance of his symphony and Rubbra by single performances of three works. In the matter of performances of native works we fare slightly better than our American friends, for while British compositions provide over 17 per cent of the total number of performances the American survey shows that performances of American music formed only 11 per cent of the total – 403 performances of 155 works.

With the object of assessing the degree of enterprise shown by each concert series, separate figures are given in Table I of the British and modern works which they presented. As far as musical content is concerned there is, of course, no yardstick for the measurement of modernity and for our present purposes a purely arbitrary classification by date is unavoidable; in this survey the term 'modern' is applied to all works which have appeared since the end of the 1914-1918 war, that is to say, in the last thirty years. By no means all of the compositions thus included under this heading are modern in manner or style and, conversely, there are, without doubt, not a few dating from before 1919 which are eminently worthy of the epithet.

The L.P.O. would appear from these figures to be the least enterprising organisation of the lot, but it must be remembered that only eighteen of the 108 public concerts given by it between October 14th, 1948 and March 31st, 1949 are included, a very small sample which may or may not be representative of the whole. It has, in the immediate past, been among the more enterprising of our orchestras, but the most interesting programmes which it has presented at Covent Garden in recent seasons have not received the public support that they deserved and they have, most regrettably, been abandoned for the time being. The L.P.O., like all the concert-giving bodies under consideration with the exception of the municipally-financed orchestras – the Y.S.O. and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra – must have good houses if it is to keep its head above water. The municipal grants and Arts Council aid which the L.P.O., the City of Birmingham Orchestra, the Liverpool Philharmonic and the Hallé enjoy are only a partial support, and the box-office must still govern to a large extent the programme policy adopted. Although, in theory, the two orchestras entirely maintained by municipal finances are much more independent of commercial considerations they are, in practice, far from being in a position to ignore any falling off in public support and it is, therefore, extremely gratifying to find both the Bournemouth and the Yorkshire orchestras showing up so well in regard to both British and modern music. The Bournemouth is, indeed, the most enterprising of them all; 30 per cent of its performances are of British works and a like proportion are modern. Rudolf Schwarz is to be commended for thus maintaining the traditions of Sir Dan Godfrey who did so much to encourage new music. The Y.S.O. under Maurice Miles is not far behind them, particularly as far as British music is concerned, and it is to be hoped

TABLE I

Concert series	Number of concerts	Total number of works	Total number of performances	British Music				Modern Music				First performances	First British performances
				Works		Performances		Works		Performances			
				No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Royal Philharmonic	7	27	27	7	29	7	29	5	21	5	21	1	1
B.B.C.	19	86	90	16	16	17	16	18	20	18	20	3	1
L.P.O.	18	68	70	2	3	2	3	6	11	6	11	—	—
Birmingham	68	268	304	59	15	60	15	59	19	59	19	7	2
Liverpool	47	167	193	31	19	32	17	31	19	35	18	—	—
Hallé	48	143	201	19	13	29	14	25	17	39	19	1	2
Y.S.O.	73	136	327	38	28	65	20	29	21	42	13	—	—
Scottish	43	184	187	20	11	20	11	28	15	28	15	—	—
Bournemouth	31	125	125	38	30	38	30	38	30	38	30	4	1
Bradford	12	52	52	9	17	9	17	10	19	10	19	—	—
Sheffield	27	129	129	18	14	18	14	22	17	22	17	—	—
	393	621	1,705	156	25	297	17	172	28	302	18	16	7

TABLE II

Composers	Number	Number of performances	Number of works
German	15	468	118
British	66	297	156
Russian	16	233	69
Austrian	9	223	87
French	24	163	65
Italian	14	62	30
Czech	6	62	22
Hungarian	4	44	19
Miscellaneous	19	153	55
Totals	173	1,705	621

that the courageous efforts of this new organisation to present a really wide range of music, even during the trying initial period of establishing itself, will be adequately responded to by its Yorkshire public.

Table 1 also gives the number of works receiving first performances at the hands of each organisation. The following list of the sixteen first performances and seven first English performances does not, in the aggregate, form a very impressive output of new music:

First performances: Rubbra's 5th Symphony (Royal Philharmonic Society); Gordon Jacob's *Festal March,* Herbert Howell's *Infant Joy* and Michael Tippett's Serenade (Birthday Suite) (B.B.C.); John Veale's 2nd Symphony, Ruth Gipps's Piano Concerto and Prelude *The Cat,* ballet suite from Bliss's *Adam Zero,* Skerjanc's Piano Concerto, Kenneth Pakeman's Oboe Concerto and *Two Pastorals* by Mary Chandler (City of Birmingham); suite from John Wooldridge's music for the film *Fame is the Spur* (Hallé), Dohnanyi's *Suite en Valse,* Hans Gal's Piano Concerto, *Images Russes* by Kon-

stantinoff and *Scottish Reel* by Lionel Salter (Bournemouth).

First performances in England: Canadian Suite by Alexander Brott (Royal Philharmonic Society); Stravinsky's *Orpheus* ballet suite (B.B.C.); *Inci's Book* by Adnan Saygun; Piano Concerto by Erkin (City of Birmingham); Symphony No. 5½ by Don Gillis and Richard Strauss's Duet Concertino for clarinet, bassoon and orchestra (Hallé); Richard Arnell's Canzone and Capriccio, op. 37 for violin and string orchestra (Bournemouth).

The American survey already referred to mentions the inclusion of sixty first performances among the total of 771 works. More than two-thirds of these are 'world premières', and the Americans thus have rather more in the way of efforts to launch new music to boast about than we have. Note that of the twenty-three works listed above only thirteen are by native composers; in the 1948–9 season the twenty-seven leading American orchestras gave first performances of thirty-seven new American works.

Splitting the total of 621 different works into classified groups gives the figures contained in Table III, which calls for little comment. It is, however, of passing interest to note which are the most popular works in the various classes to-day. The other day I was reading of the plebiscites which used to be held over sixty years ago towards the end of the brief winter seasons of orchestral concerts then organised by the Glasgow Choral and Orchestral Union and conducted at that time by Manns; the object of the plebiscites was to decide the works to be played at the final concert. The symphony then most in favour was Beethoven's Pastoral, closely followed by his 5th, and it is interesting to find that in 1885 Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* was among the top three or four; of overtures the most

TABLE III

Type of work	Number of works	Number of performances	British		Modern	
			Number of works	Number of performances	Number of works	Number of performances
Symphonies	96	361	13	39	20	51
Piano Concertos	62	205	11	17	19	29
Violin Concertos	20	63	4	6	5	8
Other Concertos	21	50	6	11	8	15
Overtures	90	301	18	42	14	26
Miscellaneous	332	725	104	182	106	173
Totals	621	1,705	156	297	172	302

popular then were Beethoven's *Leonora No. 3,* Mozart's *Magic Flute,* Rossini's *William Tell,* Wagner's *Tannhauser* and *Flying Dutchman* and Weber's *Der Freischütz.* Opinion in regard to symphonies has made little change; the composer of the most popular symphony remains the same, but the choice falls upon another symphony. The twelve leading symphonies on our 1948–49 list are: Beethoven's Eroica (fifteen performances); César Franck's D minor (thirteen); Schubert's 8th (twelve); Beethoven's 7th (eleven); Beethoven's 5th and 6th (ten each); Mendelssohn's 4th, Dvořák's 5th, Brahms's 4th, Mozart's No. 41, Tchaikovsky's 4th, and Vaughan Williams's 6th (nine each). All of Beethoven's were given, Brahms's four, Dvořák's five and all of Tchaikovsky's except the forgotten and never-played No. 1, but only five of Sibelius's seven – the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 7th.

Beethoven, Weber and Wagner remain the composers of to-day's most popular overtures, with Rossini and Mozart not far behind; *Leonora No. 3* (with fifteen performances), *Oberon* (thirteen) and *Die Meistersinger* (eleven) lead the field, while *The Flying Dutchman, Fingal's Cave* and Elgar's *Cockaigne* (eight each) come next, followed by Berlioz's *Roman Carnival, The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro, Egmont,* Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict,* and Dvořák's *Carnaval* (seven each); not much change in public taste there.

In the field of piano concertos the order is Beethoven's 5th and Grieg's A minor (14 each); Beethoven's 4th (twelve); Rachmaninoff's C minor and Tchaikovsky's B minor (eleven each); Schumann's A minor and Dohnanyi's Variations on a Nursery Tune (nine each). Apart from the fact that what has come to be known as 'the' piano concerto is bracketed third on the list and not first, there is nothing here but what one would expect to find. Of violin concertos

only four appear more than four times and they are the obvious four – Mendelssohn's (thirteen performances), Beethoven's (eleven), Tchaikovsky's (six) and Brahms's (five).

These familiar symphonies, concertos and overtures, together with similar stock works, do, in fact, form the bulk of the public's orchestral pabulum; the concert promoter who includes a selection from them in his programme may be assured of a reasonably full house. The public thinks that it knows what it likes; in actual fact it likes merely what it knows and appears as content as ever to let matters stop at that. There is, of course, nothing new in this deep-rooted preference for the familiar and aversion to the unknown. When Richter began to introduce too much unfamiliar music at his London concerts in the 1880's it was made very clear by reduced attendances that the public expected him to adhere to the type of programmes for which he had become famous, programmes of well-known music built round a solid core of Beethoven and Wagner. Nor is the phenomenon peculiar to ourselves; Charles Rigby, in his recent sketch of John Barbirolli's career, tells of the distinguished conductor's surprise when he was informed by the assistant manager of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra – of which Barbirolli was then chief conductor – that whenever he included a new American work in a programme many subscribers would ask for their tickets to be changed for a later concert. However, there is always a vigorous if relatively small element in our audiences which will not be content to hear the same old war-horses again and again, and it is probably true to say that the concert promoters who never lift their programmes out of the rut are courting trouble in the long run, just as surely as are those who ignore the popular appeal of the established favourites; but the latter will probably find themselves in queer street long before the former.

THE PROBLEM OF MODERN OPERA

John L. Cowan

SINCE opera ceased to be a prerogative of the European courts and became an entertainment open to the general public, in most European countries it has had not only a wide public but one which is still increasing. In the last few years even England, which until recent times had never had a permanent opera, has managed to subsidise two permanent opera houses and is the scene of other private operatic ventures. Further, the tours of the Covent Garden Company and others through the cities of England show that appreciation of operatic art is more wide-spread than ever before.

It is surprising, then, to note that in spite of opera being a living and a growing art, the last work to go into the regular international repertoire and to maintain its place there was *Turandot,* produced 25th April, 1926, at the Scala, Milan. There have, of course, been successful operas since then: – Alban Berg's *Wozzeck,* produced 14th December, 1925, at the Berlin Staatsoper, which I intend to discuss later; a light opera like Weinberger's *Schwanda,* produced 27th April, 1927, in Prague, which still makes its appearance in various countries from time to time; and Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes,* produced 17th June, 1945, at Sadler's Wells, which is regularly in the English repertoire and still having new productions throughout the world, the latest being in Helsinki 17th March, 1949. But in the case of *Peter Grimes* it is too early yet to say whether it has won a lasting place in the regular international repertoire.

An Italian friend of mine in Milan recently said to me,

while discussing a new opera which had won a *succès d'estime* at the Scala, but to which the public remained apathetic, 'You see, the Milanese public is not musical; it merely has a taste for 19th century musical melodrama.' This statement, while probably an exaggeration, has the seeds of truth in it and applies in some degree to all operatic publics in the world. And in this connection it is worth noting that the most popular operas in Germany in the 1937-8 season were: *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Madame Butterfly*, the only three works to achieve more than 300 performances in the German opera houses.

Is it, then, that the operas of Verdi, Puccini, Mascagni, Strauss and Wagner had qualities which present-day composers seem to have lost? Or is it not rather that the general public is unable to keep up with changes of style, owing to the fact that we are at the end of one period of musical history and that the present period is one of transition, when numerous experiments of various kinds must be made? However that may be, it is our purpose here to look and see what qualities the most popular works of these composers had, which the failures lack. And in passing we should note that a comparatively unpopular opera often contains some of the composer's greatest music.

Firstly, let us look at the matter of opera, i.e., the libretto, and secondly at the way in which it is treated, *i.e.*, the music. One has often heard 'such and such a work was a failure owing to the inanity of its libretto.' Antithetically one has heard 'No good opera was ever ruined by the badness of the libretto.' There is truth in both these statements. The crux of the matter is to be found in what we mean by badness and goodness, applied to the word libretto. For instance, of the second statement the libretto of *Trovatore* seems an outstanding example. It is the butt of most writers on opera. The prize remark, in

my opinion, is Gustav Kobbée's sentence that 'Azucena ... seized and hurled into the flames her own child, instead of the young Count (thus, preserving, with an almost supernatural instinct for opera, the baby that was destined to grow up into a tenor with a voice high enough to sing "Di quella pira")' And anyway, who was Leonora and what was she doing there?

But, absurd though this libretto may be in detail, it contains one terrific piece of character drawing in Azucena and broad, gripping, dramatic situations on which Verdi was able to lavish his most melodious and dramatic writing. So, absurd though it may be, one is forced to admit that as a libretto it serves its purpose.

In direct contrast, one may cite the libretti of Wagner's *The Ring*. Here there are no loose ends. The origin, antecedents, and the reasons for the actions of every character are explained, even though the public may be expected to remember back two or three nights. But it is not this that makes *The Ring* a good libretto; it is the human element and the dramatic situations. The average opera public in any country sees in the Act I of *Die Walküre* a hunted man meeting and falling in love with the wife of his enemy and their fleeing together. All that matters is that here a dramatic situation has drawn wonderfully lyrical and dramatic music out of an operatic genius. And one should remember that, although *The Ring* still enjoys world-wide popularity, no one in recent years, at any rate outside Germany, takes the philosophy, the politics, or even the story itself very seriously. In fact many of the greatest admirers and devotees of Wagner treat his libretti with the greatest flippancy.

It would seem then, that the success of a libretto depends on the broad human interests and dramatic situations, which can draw the best from a composer and appeal to

the public, rather than on the probability of its story. But while we are discussing this subject we must not forget social implications and changes.

Whereas it is not normally possible for a work of art to be either a great work or even a popular one, if it does not conform to and interpret the social conditions of its time, yet looking at music from a historical point of view we find that this conformity on the composer's part has often been unconscious. It does not of course have to be so, but a modern tendency, particularly in evidence in Germany in this century, to keep social conditions in the forefront of consciousness, has had the bad effect of producing what one may call self-conscious, *i.e.*, unspontaneous music, and also music which has not lasted, because it mirrored social conditions obtaining for only a very short time. So one can see that it would be unthinkable to offer a marriage between a libretto like *Traviata* or *Butterfly* and a Berg, Britten or Hindemith and to expect anything except an abortion, even if one achieved a consummation. Nevertheless the modern composer, like the older ones, must have broad dramatic situations for his libretti, and a theme which can excite both him and the public, in order to write a successful opera. Whether it will also be a good one will depend on the genius of the composer. And since, even in the most perfect fusions of music and drama, the music is always more important, not than the drama, but than the actual words, the libretto should contain one idea of paramount importance and not too many subsidiary ideas and complications.

Now before considering shortly a few of the operas which have made their appearance this century, we must mention a few factors which should be borne in mind: that the cost of mounting a new opera production is so great, that even subsidized opera houses may not always be willing to take

the risk, with the result that some masterpieces may have to wait many years before they are seen; that operas, like other works of art, may be ahead of their time; that owing to differences of language, style and feeling a success in Italy may fail in Germany, and vice versa. Further, in the case of recent successes, it is difficult, if not impossible, to say whether they fall into the category of masterpieces, valid for all time, of lesser works valid for their own period and possibly deserving an occasional revival, or of works which are purely the outcome of fashion and which soon become dated and forgotten.

Kurt Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper,* on its production on 31st August, 1928, at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, Berlin, achieved a fantastic success. Apart from its success all over Germany, it was played in theatres from Paris to Moscow between then and 1930. But between 1930 and 1940 the only new stage production has been in New York in 1933. It seems then that this work caught the fancy of a wide international public, but only for a very short time; a revival to-day would probably look like a historical curiosity. No other works of Weill have achieved anything like the same popularity, though some are considered to be infinitely better works.

Much the same can be said of Krenek's *Johnny spielt auf;* it, also, had an immense success on its production in Leipzig on the 10th February, 1927, and went the round of German and foreign opera houses till 1930, when, after an isolated production in Warsaw in 1933, it disappeared. A glance at the score now confirms that it is as old-fashioned and dated as are the dance tunes of that period. Hindemith has never achieved such an outstanding operatic success as Weill or Krenek, though *Cardillac,* produced at Dresden on the 9th November, 1926, and later in Vienna, Prague and Berlin, and *Mathis der Maler,* produced at Zürich on the 28th May,

1938, probably stand a much better chance of survival. *Neues vom Tage,* produced at the Berlin Kroll-Oper on the 8th June, 1929, suffers from some of the same defects as the Weill and Krenek successes.

In the case of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* there is quite a different story to tell. After its production in Berlin it was given on sixteen other German stages between 1929 and 1932 and in Prague, Leningrad, Vienna, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, Zürich, New York, Brussels, and Brno in that period. (It is worth noting that it was not given in any Latin country of Europe or America, with the exception of Brussels.) It was the first opera written in a so-called atonal style to be produced, though some of the music has a very distinct tonality. And it may, therefore, be instructive to investigate shortly how such a work, which from the technical point of view no general public could be expected either to understand or to analyse, yet managed to enthrall the people of many countries. And I must add that even a concert performance, given in London on 16th March of last year has shown that its power to impress is undiminished. First it is a drama of the underdog, which evokes real pity, even if the audience does not either like or wish to identify itself with any of the protagonists; secondly, it has the quality of inevitability and as such is real tragedy in the Greek sense. Musically, its new idiom clothes both the characters and their story in an other-worldliness, but the tension is always maintained and the drama always integrated with the music. Lastly the vocal line, though often extremely awkward, is most expressive.

Turning to Italy, short reference must be made to Respighi's *La Fiamma,* produced on 23rd January, 1934, at Rome. This had a success in Italy and has in addition been produced in North and South America, in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, etc. The works of Wolf-Ferrari, though not in

themselves great operas, have kept alive the taste for opera buffa. In particular *I Quattro Rusteghi*, produced 19th March, 1906, in Munich, has had many European revivals in the 20's and 30's and has recently been given in London at Sadler's Wells. His most recent opera is *La Dama Boba*, produced 1st February, 1939, at the Scala, Milan.

There are, however, two other operatic composers, who from point of view of method stand somewhat outside the ordinary German and Italian styles: Janacek and Pizzetti. They have some points in common in the search for a new style of operatic composition. Janacek is best known for his *Jeji Pastorkyna*, later known as *Jenufa*. Produced at Brno on the 21st January, 1904, it must have made little impression, since it was not until 1916 that it received another production, this time in Prague. Since then it has attracted attention and been given in Vienna, Cologne, Berlin, New York, Basle, Antwerp, etc. Its story is a simple country tale; the music, though patently Czech, is also very personal. Each scene is characterised by a different rhythmic figure over which is placed a highly individual vocal line; the harmony is deliberately restrained, variations of colour being obtained by original orchestration. The success of this work led to five more operas, four of which have been heard in Germany as well as in Czechoslovakia.

Pizzetti, too, uses very marked rhythmic figures to characterise his scenes. In *Fedra*, produced 20th March, 1915, at the Scala, Milan, and later in South America, Lisbon and Paris, his harmony is deliberately restricted and the colour obtained with luscious orchestration. He had already by that time developed a form of declamation which is highly personal, but in *Fedra* it was somewhat monotonous. However, in *Debora e Jaele*, produced 16th December, 1922, at the Scala, Milan, and later in South America, Hamburg and Brussels, this declamation is much

more maturely used and is relieved at times by a much more lyrical vocal line, with brilliant forceful and barbaric use of the chorus, as well as a wider harmonic range. Since *Debora* there have been three more full-scale works.

Since the war the chief new operatic figure has been Benjamin Britten, whose *Peter Grimes* has the elements of world success. Whereas the figures in the drama are mostly little more attractive than those of *Wozzeck*, they are treated with much more humanity and from a more personal point of view. Again it is the tragedy of the underdog and again mental breakdown is of the essence of the tragedy. Britten's writing here for the stage is sure and original and the smell of the sea seems to pervade this score. His other works are chamber opera, of which the most important is *The Rape of Lucretia*, produced 12th July, 1946, at Glyndebourne. The libretto has been criticised, yet, though it is certainly pretentious in wording, the structure is good and has brought out the best in Britten. Less can be said for the libretto of *Albert Herring*, produced 20th June, 1947, at Glyndebourne, which has reduced the piquancy of a Maupassant story to the level of a dull satire of local English customs and which has resulted in a score, brilliant at times, but more uneven than his two previous works. His reworking of *The Beggar's Opera*, though containing things of miraculous beauty, has the demerit of making an essentially popular work into a highbrow opera for the few. Here perhaps was a case of a too-conscious realisation of the social conditions of to-day and a too-conscious revolt against the prettiness of Frederick Austin's version, which had an unprecedented popular success after the first world war.

I make no apology for omitting, in an article of this small scope, the later works of Strauss, Giordano, Mascagni, Zandonai, etc., as they belong to a past period; nor such composers as Busoni, Milhaud, Pfitzner, Stravinsky, and

many others. It has been my intention to consider briefly some recent works and bearing in mind too the great works of the past to draw some conclusions. I have already suggested the qualities needed for a good libretto; and in this connection one should remember that the wider the opera public becomes, the less willing it is to accept all the conventions of the past. And one of the things that it finds more and more difficult to accept is the unduly large size and bad acting of opera singers. This goes hand in hand with the heightened importance of opera production, and the improvement in the general dramatic side of opera performances since the early years of the century.

Another interesting trend to be noted concerns the subject matter which modern composers have chosen as their themes. Just as Strauss in *Salome* and *Elektra*, while fulfilling the Wagnerian music-drama, abolished the political and philosophical side and substituted hysteria for it, so the general negative trend, particularly in Germany, seems to have been to eschew the subject of love as a central theme. What has been substituted has been so various that it is impossible to say that there is a general positive trend to be discovered.

On the musical side, we have seen that all present-day composers of note have rejected the Wagner-Strauss method on the one hand and the Italian 'veristi' method on the other as having been not only fully developed in the past, but unsuitable to the needs of the present. Since, then, this appears to be a period of musical transition, we find some composers, with their feet planted firmly in the past, trying to develop a modern, though traditional art, while others have been trying to break with the past as completely as possible. Of the first group, Janacek and Pizzetti are perhaps the outstanding examples, and Berg is the chief example of the second group, though unfortunately until now he has

been the only atonal composer to bridge the gap between theory and popular success. Britten has consciously modelled his vocal line on that of Purcell and Verdi, but he has in addition a very strong individual style of his own.

Germany and to a certain extent Italy were, between the two world wars, countries where many operatic experiments took place. Unfortunately the war and present operatic conditions the world over preclude for the moment the possibility of further experiments or of the revival of those which were considered successful; so the results of these experimental years are largely lost to us.

In any case we are too near in time to all these experiments to be able to deduce what the future operatic style is likely to be, and Arthur Bliss's *The Olympians* produced this season at Covent Garden gives us no help, since in style and contrast it might well have been written in the last century. However, we shall be getting in England plenty of further evidence in the near future, since Arthur Benjamin, Benjamin Britten, Michael Tippett and William Walton amongst others are all at work on new operas.

WAGNER – AND A NEW GENERATION

John Culshaw

THIS must be to some extent a personal testament. I imagine that more has been written about Wagner than about any other composer in musical history, and one hesitates to add to the pile. His life has been chronicled by Ernest Newman with a thoroughness and insight that have much in common with Wagner's own industry, while others have analysed *Tristan* to the last diminished seventh; the emotional significance of Wagner's characters has also been discussed at length, so that according to which book you choose you may learn to recognise yourself in Wotan, Kurvenal, Loge, Siegfried or, if you are feeling a little cynical, Fafner. Whether one admires Wagner or not, his influence on almost every field of musical activity has to be admitted. 'The rattlesnake', said Nietzsche, 'the old rattlesnake'; and we know exactly what he meant.

Yet to-day there is a generation (to which, as a writer, I belong) that has been forced, through the intervention of war, to experience a crucial, formative period without the companionship of Wagner; it has had to wait until 1949 to cut its teeth, as it were, on *The Ring*. Clearly, this must indicate an important difference between this generation and those that reached maturity in the inter-war years.

Approximately, one can say that the first formative years of musical experience – that is, when one begins not only to accept all kinds of music but to align one's experiences and to compare one work sensibly with the next – lie between seventeen and twenty-two. And it is this period that has long been recognised as the most vulnerable to

the Wagnerian infection. A highly impressionable state of musical innocence, the first freedoms of late adolescence and the rise of sex combine to lower one's resistance to the spell of Wagner's highly seductive, highly sensual music. Or so we are told.

I fear that this cannot be applied to the present generation. They had no Wagner in which to wallow, but I suspect that those who would in any case have done so have found ample compensation in the lesser Puccini or Tchaikovsky, in whose mires they are still, to my knowledge, inextricably stuck. There is to-day a distinctly cooler attitude towards Wagner, an attitude that is more temperate and reasoned than one might expect, and which rejects emphatically the mysticism and false symbolism that have long been parts of the Wagner ritual. Even so, I have a feeling that this down-to-earth, matter-of-fact attitude is of very limited application; it is desperately inadequate equipment with which to face *The Ring*.

It fosters at once a severely analytical approach; like it or not, we are in a critical era where detail is deity and generalisation the plague. One is able to write a chapter about a symphony or opera in such an impersonal, analytical manner that the result reads like a mathematical problem somewhat laboriously solved; the supreme crime is to convey any enthusiasm, or any idea of what the work is like except in terms of its functional detail. This is clearly a reaction from the absurdities of an earlier critical style which attempted, through description, to parallel the state of musical experience. Neither of these will do for Wagner, and I am not sure which is the more deadly. I am convinced, though, that the man who enjoys the music in Act 2 of *Tristan* without having the faintest idea of what exactly is being portrayed is nearer to the Wagnerian ideal than the man who is listening to harmonic progressions

and making odd notes about modulations on bits of paper. As a Wagnerian critic, I would reject the former because of his inadequately narrow approach; equally, I believe we should reject the latter unless he makes it quite clear that he is criticising only Wagner the musical empiricist, and is making no claim to assess him as a creative artist. I am convinced that one has to evolve a separate critical approach when Wagner is being considered; rule of thumb methods, whether technical or not, simply will not do for a creative artist of such complex talents nor for works of art that pose so many paradoxes and contradictions.

It is the fear of these contradictions that drives one type of writer, or listener, to excessive musical analysis, another to purely dramatic considerations, and another to political, sociological or psychological allegories. None of these evasions will take us a step nearer the real Wagner, nor will they solve the contradictions that are their source. One may still wonder whether the music serves the drama, or the drama the music; whether it is possible to accept, as great art, music which soars so frequently from banality to subtlety, and back again; whether ...

One has to compromise with Wagner; usually, one has to be prepared to meet his world of imagination half-way. And this is impossible without taking Wagner as a whole: the musician, the librettist, the dramatist. Most of us have a desire to evade the task, since the type and extent of judgment demanded is totally different from that required for other operas. One can say, and it may be a legitimate observation, that in this or that opera the excellence of the music compensates for weaknesses in dramatic construction or characterisation; it has been said often of Weber, Rossini, Verdi, and even Britten; but I do not think it can ever be a valid criticism in the case of the mature Wagner. It is an initial mistake of the analytical approach that it tries to

separate the inseparable, and Wagner's own writings do not make things easier; in his book *Opera and Drama* he contended, at almost interminable length, that the trouble with opera was that 'a means of expression (music) had been converted into the object; and that the real object of expression (drama) had been converted into a means.' But this does not mean that Wagner was basically a dramatist; it means that when we consider his works we must be aware of a special, unique relationship between music and drama, each of which are dependent on the other. His characters are compound portrayals that rely on music, words and actions for their real existence, and the fact that some Wagner is transportable to the concert hall is no reason for assuming that nothing is lost in the process. The musical analyst can function there just as well as in the opera house; our sin against Wagner is not in regarding the concert hall as an opera house, but in regarding the opera house as a concert hall.

But even if we take Wagner as a whole, there is no doubt that our attitude towards certain aspects of his art has changed considerably; this applies both to his characters and to the substance of his drama. I doubt whether there are many to-day who take the cumbersome allegory of *The Ring* very seriously; its content could be expressed with greater force and much more clarity by an economist in a 1,000-word article. We value the work not for its overall implications, but for the immense humanity of most of its characters, whether mortal or immortal; the love music in Act 1 of *Die Walküre* is superb love music, and we understand Siegmunde and Sieglinde without worrying whether they are supposed to represent this or that. The relation between *The Ring* and its allegory is the same as the relation between Beckmesser and Hanslick; Hanslick is forgotten, but we all know a Beckmesser. Similarly, in the light of

this approach, we have perhaps ceased to worry so much about the 'Teutonic' aspects of Wagner's drama; in the case of *The Ring* the issue has never been particularly clear. Siegfried may have been the first of the heroes (he did at least kill the dragon), but he has never seemed to me to be a particularly inspiring or even reliable political omen, and those who use him should not forget that he came to a sudden and somewhat inglorious end.

Even less valid are the so-called 'Teutonic' aspects of *Tristan,* most of which originated outside Germany. There was a time when anti-Tristan writings pounced with fervour on the love potion, which they regarded as typically Teutonic, unhealthy and dramatically weak. They did not recognise, as I think we do now, that the love potion *as Wagner used it* is an excellent dramatic device; Wagner knew that a state of love takes time to mature, and that, unless his opera were to be inordinately long, the process would have to be quickened. But he makes it quite clear that the love potion merely brings to a climax a state that had its beginnings long before Brangäne opened the casket; 'Mir erkoren' ('Once beloved') says Isolde when she first sees Tristan at the opening of the second scene, and when Tristan enters her cabin his masculine independence fades in the cadence of the string chords. From the point of human behaviour and the relationship between love and hate, Wagner's observation was never more acute than in this first act.

We have at last discarded the idea that there is something improper, something akin to musical pornography, in this work. *Tristan* is in fact every bit as 'natural' as *Meistersinger,* and its statement is no less direct. It is almost unbelievable that anyone of normal sexual experience could fail to recognise its aural transliteration in the love duet and Liebestod. Wagner's imagination, as such, never sur-

passed this feat; it requires little or no imagination on the part of the listener; it is simply stated. And it is because it is so direct, and because it does not ask the listener to twist his imagination in line with the music, that it is not pornographic. I am not sure, for instance, that the accusation could not be held successfully against the orchestral prologue to *Rosenkavalier;* if you know what is supposed to be happening on the stage before the curtain rises you have a shrewd idea of what the music is about, but the prior knowledge is essential. The music, directly, cannot inform. In *Tristan*, Wagner's account of the lovers' ecstasy is much more than a piece of beautiful, impassioned music. From all the operas that have ever been written, including all Wagner except *Tristan*, you may isolate the love duets and find they have features in common; there is only one exception and, if you think about it, it is inconceivable that there should ever be another.

It is perhaps the intimate nature of *Tristan* and, to a lesser extent, *Meistersinger* that draws us away from *The Ring*. Just as Wagner's quieter moments, his smaller ideas, seem in the long run to be more memorable than his grandiose conceptions, so his clearest characters are often to be found in minor roles. (There are exceptions, of which Hans Sachs is the most important.) Kurvenal, King Mark and Mime are better drawn than Tristan, Walther or Wotan; this, to-day, seems to be clearly recognised. In the past it is quite evident from critical writings that if Wotan was regarded, on occasions, as a tolerable bore, King Mark was both a bore and an anti-climax. To-day, with perhaps a nicer sense of relevancy, many will admit that Wotan's autobiographical ramblings are tedious because, after the first time, they add nothing to the character and generally hold up the action; Wotan is in fact more convincing when he ceases to be a God and resorts to emotions that are

yours and mine and Wagner's; I refer to the end of *Die Walküre*, or to his last moments on the stage in Scene 1, Act 3 of *Siegfried*. King Mark, however, is a totally different case; he makes his one and only stand in a lengthy monologue that follows the impassioned love duet in Act 2 of *Tristan*. It is an unenviable position, and if he were singing about the weather or the state of the garden one could admit him as a bore and a dramatic ineptitude. But Mark is one of Wagner's finest and deepest portrayals; 'Mir dies? Dies, Tristan, mir? Wohin nun Treue, da Tristan mich betrog?' ('This blow? Tristan, to me? Where now has truth fled if Tristan can betray?') asks Mark, in phrases that are as unexpected, in the circumstances, as they are dramatically penetrating. Mark's grief is intensely human; it is not the grief of one whose moral principles have been shocked, or whose jealousy has been roused. Mark is Wagner; he is the only man on the stage who profoundly understands the situation, and this profundity, expressed in his monologue, is one of the greatest moments in *Tristan*. Yet Kobbé, in his well-known book on Wagner's music dramas, is pleased to dismiss Mark because 'from the standpoint of manhood he is a garrulous professor of moral philosophy when he should be a swift avenger of his honour.' But Wagner knew better; it is Melot who slays Tristan, and it is Mark who suffers, long after Tristan is dead and Isolde has sung her Liebestod.

Melot is a rare instance in Wagner's dramas; he is a merely dramatic character, and self-sufficient as such. Just as music, words and action are inseparably bound, so most of Wagner's characters are inter-related in such a way that the complete portrayal of each requires the music of all; you cannot understand Eva unless you understand Hans Sachs and Walther and David. You certainly cannot understand any of them from concert hall excerpts, and if you

do not understand them you cannot understand the music. Much has been written about the 'symphonic' nature of Wagner's music, but this again is not simply a matter of technicality, although it has to be examined and analysed as such. In its way, it too is a servant of drama, in so far as it is a means of evolving a character.

If, therefore, there is any danger in the modern attitude towards Wagner it will be found either in an excessive concentration on detail and the consequent division of Wagner's talent into three or four factors, or else in new allegorical attempts on a psychological rather than political basis. The first is fatal; the second is interesting so long as it remains a means to an end. But, whatever the attitude of the future may be, I think it will be more moderate and perhaps more balanced than that of the past. It is clearly evident from critical writings that, with honoured exceptions, Wagnerian criticism has been a matter of extremes – and an excess of praise is no less useless than an excess of hatred. We understand what has happened, psychologically, when we read of those who, nurtured excessively on Wagner, later turned against him and proclaimed his art as 'music for adolescents.'

It is perhaps a very good thing that one generation should have arrived rather late. It is a generation that knows that Wagner is no longer potent as a purely musical influence; his secrets are known, and have been worn threadbare by others; only the originals survive. The spell of all Wagner's mature works – except perhaps *Parsifal* – is still intense, but it is no longer unique, no longer an operatic ritual; *Salome*, *Elektra* and *Wozzeck* have seen to that. Now, nearly a century after the composition of *Tristan*, it may be possible that a new conception of Wagner is slowly being formed; it may at last be possible to see the rattlesnake in focus.

MUSICAL FORMS:

NO I. THE CONCERTO

J. Raymond Tobin

IN recent days a vast army of music-lovers has discovered the Concerto. The discovery is robbed of none of its thrill by the fact that the first concerto happened to have been composed centuries ago, or that, for example, it is nearly one hundred and fifty years since Beethoven put the final touches to his Op. 73, the so-called *Emperor Concerto*. Each generation has to make its own discoveries; and discovery is ever-new though the art-form or the music may be old. This awakening to the power and possibilities of a design is an inevitable feature in the development of the appreciation of music. Every art in spreading its influence must, in the main, follow two courses: knowledge, understanding, appreciation, discrimination, intellectual or emotional response – call it what you will – may be deepened in the individual, or it may spread itself to reach a new and wider public. Fortunately a desire to deepen knowledge almost inescapably follows in the tracks of the widening process. Those whose imagination has been captured by the concerto seek to know more about a form of music which has appeal; and they realise that, in spite of the vast differences in sound and style, there is a kinship, an area of common ground in concertos written by Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Rachmaninoff and other composers. That we can and do speak of 'the concerto' means that there is a basic design for concertos or, at least, fixed principles which are applied with frequency and flexibility by all composers. So the

question 'What is a Concerto?' is poised. Put it to the music-lover and the answer may be that a concerto spells dazzle, display, delight, dexterity, that it is a spot-lighting of a performer and his instrument, an impressive example of mental concentration and physical endurance, an exciting contest between a solitary artist and a full orchestra, with victory on the side of the soloist, even though the performer be but a slip of a girl. All this is true; and, despite the apparent emphasis on externals, it is possibly as good a general description as may be achieved, except that the effort of the soloist and orchestra is not a combat but a carefully-planned co-operation which has, as its objective, the provision of contrast in tone-amount and tone-colour. In sober terms, a concerto is a musical composition which is intended to display the capacities of a musical instrument, through the skill and artistry of a performer. That is the objective. The transcendental technique, the tone-contrasts, the variety of theme, texture and treatment are the means to that end; they reveal the range, the sonority, the brilliance, the delicacy of nuance, the power and poetry of which an instrument is capable in the hands of a well-equipped artist; they proclaim the advance in the constructional design of a musical instrument and the ability of the creative mind to employ the constructional gains in the extension of the expressive power of music.

The question 'What is a Concerto?' may seem to be a simple and a sane one. Actually, it is no more reasonable than if one were to ask 'What is a house?' The story of the house stretches from the meanness of the mud hut to the magnificence of the mansion, while the most recent chapter, the pre-fab of to-day, is a reminder that, while progress is not always on the onward and upward line, even austerity does not rule out some advance and advantage. The answer to 'What is a house?' depends upon factors

such as period, purpose, peoples and place. Often most depends upon the quality and stature of the architect or architect-builder. And so it is with the concerto: it means different things in different ages and at different stages of development. The view of a concerto as a kind of symphony composed for an Eileen Joyce, a Heifitz or a Menuhin aided and abetted by an orchestra is, of course, a limited one. The early concertos were mostly written for a group of soloists. Bach's *Italian Concerto* was written for a single instrument – a double-decker harpsichord. Schumann did not always regard the orchestra as indispensable: his Sonata for Pianoforte, Op. 14 was originally titled *Concerto sans Orchestre*. Chausson composed a Concerto for Pianoforte, Violin and String Quartet; Arthur Bliss wrote one for Pianoforte, Tenor voice, Xylophone and Strings, but, later, revised it for two pianos and orchestra. Alan Rawsthorne has written a concerto for String Quartet; and so great is the advance in orchestral technique that in 1944 Béla Bartók produced a *Concerto for Orchestra*.

Conveniently, however, concertos may be classified as (a) The Concerto Grosso (late 17th and early 18th century); (b) the Classical Concerto, which reached its peak with Mozart; (c) the Modern Concerto; and, while the shape, content and style of these varieties of concertos vary enormously, it is possible to recognise and relish certain characteristics which persist from one end of the story to the other. The recognition will be all the more ready if we remember that while the use and application of music's basic or raw material is illimitable, the material itself is curiously limited. A composer has at his command only two things – sound and silence; his score is made up of notes and rests, though a wide range of symbols may be employed to modify the sound or silence, particularly the sound. Sound and silence provide the element of contrast. Again, during the long

stretch of time between the overthrow of the ancient Greek modes and the assault on diatonicism in the 20th century, a composer had a choice of composing his music only in a major key or in a minor key. Yet here again the contrast is vivid. And when one contemplates the number of fine tunes composed since the dawn of history, it is surprising to recall that in the making of a melody a sound can be succeeded only by a sound that is either higher or lower; but, here too, we have the diametric contrast of up and down movement. In the texture of music too, the composer has, at base, only harmony (or chords) as an alternative to the single notes of melody. Yet the contrast between the one and the other can be magical. By now, the importance of the element of contrast will be obvious; and it is also clear that the sole alternative to contrast is repetition. In music, speech or other means of communicating ideas we may say the same thing again or we may say something new. The content and the design of music depend, ultimately, on the use of *contrast* and *repetition*, each serving its turn and each used in fair proportion. Repetition can stress, underline or drive home an idea, but, if used to excess, becomes boredom. Contrast (or variety) can grip and hold the interest of ear and mind of young and old; but only the untutored mind demands or can endure continual change. Contrast, indeed, depends for its force upon alternation with repetition. Here we have the very core of every design in music. Together with display, contrast provides the twin pillars which support the concerto form.

In the concerto grosso, which reached full flower in the wonderful *Brandenburg Concertos* by Bach, the element of contrast is provided by the use of a group of solo players in conjunction with a full orchestra; the variety in tone-amount and tone-colour aided the composer in holding the

interest of the listener.* The solo orchestra was called *concertino;* the full orchestra *ripieno.* To-day we use the terms *solo* (one) and *tutti* (all). The *ripieno* section consisted, in the main, of the stringed instruments supported possibly by a keyboard instrument; and the *concertino* often included the more colourful wood-wind. The two sections were used, sometimes independently and sometimes in combination, to secure the utmost contrast. The shape of the concerto grosso was decided largely by the then popular overture and the suite. There was a diminishing emphasis on the dance, though in the *Brandenburgs* we have examples of the minuet, polacca and courante. Slow movements alternated with allegros and the richness and invention of the contrapuntal and fugal devices employed further tended to obscure the dance rhythms. The number of movements in the concerto grosso varies – two, three, four or more – but there is early evidence of an inclination to stabilize on the three-movement plan which is almost invariably employed by the modern composer and which provides the contrast of a slow movement separating a First movement and a quick finale. It may be said that the element of display is lacking in the *concerto grosso* and that nowhere is it less obvious than in the finest examples of the form by Bach. It is important, however, to remember that the concertino section often included instruments now obsolete and that, in consequence, the music has had to be adapted to suit the instruments of to-day. Bach in the first Brandenburg wrote for a *Violino piccolo concertato.* This was an instrument smaller than the violin of to-day but somewhat larger than the pocket-sized fiddle which, at that date, was part of the kit of the dancing master. This little violin or quart-geige would seem to have

*The same device was employed in the Minuet and Trio: the minuet was played by the full orchestra and a second minuet was played by three instruments only: hence the name *trio.*

been a transposing instrument. Its small size and the closeness of its strings made possible not only double-stopping but also chords of three and four notes which, on the ordinary instrument, would have defeated even a Paganini. The concerto grosso belonged to an age which prevailed before the solo artist and public concert-giving had secured a hold. It was conditioned by the artistic and social background of its period. Broadly it was concerted music of a co-equal, polyphonic kind and cast in a shape approximating to the classical suite: a step along the road to the symphony.

When the instrumental suite gave place to the sonata or symphony plan, the concerto grosso was supplanted by the classical concerto. The sonata design was hammered out and perfected by that mighty trio – Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; but, while the minuet and trio (later transformed to the scherzo) was carried over from suite to symphony, it found no favour in the concerto. It may be, indeed, that the dance suggested a communal rather than an individual effort, or that adherence to its rhythmic outline prevented the elaboration necessary for display.* Whatever the cause, the concerto quickly settled into the three-movement plan, while symphonists remained constant to the four movements. The regular plan of the classical concerto was:

I First Movement
II Slow Movement
III Finale

This is often called the Quick-Slow-Quick plan, but I is

*Brahms introduced a scherzo into his *Concerto for Pianoforte in B flat* and so did Litolff in *Concerto Symphonique in E flat;* and curiously enough this Litolff movement leapt to popularity recently – possibly the sole survivor of this composer's huge output. *Concerto for Orchestra* (Bartók), referred to earlier, creates a record with its five movements, the second of which (*Guico delle coppie*) is, in effect, a scherzo.

characterised by strength rather than speed, II is lyrical rather than slow, and III, light and gay-hearted. The music of the first movement is traditionally but not by any means invariably built in the sonata (or 'first movement') form. This is a movement which falls into three sections. In the first section there are two main themes – the first theme is in the key of the Concerto, the second in some other key. In the early classical concerto this second key is closely related to the first key, a next-door-neighbour key which has one sharp more or one flat less in its make-up. This change of tonality or pitch-level provides an element of variety. To-day composers are said to be more adventurous, but the truth is that Bach, Beethoven and Schubert paved the way for this freedom of the keys and that all later composers reaped the benefit of their courage and initiative. The two themes which constitute the first section are contrasted in matter, mood and meaning as well as in key; and they provide the material for the middle section.

The middle section is descriptively called the Development or Working-out, and because in this part of the movement the composer toys with, develops, and works out one or both of the main themes as one might elaborate a text or subject matter. (The themes are technically known as *subjects*.) The third portion of a first-movement plan consists of a repetition of the opening section, with such modifications, extensions, and curtailments as artistry or the listening ear may require. In this section, for instance, it is requisite that the second theme shall be presented in the main key of the concerto.

In the early classical concertos the orchestra played the main themes before the entry of the solo part; but it soon became apparent that this procedure robbed the form of force, because it not only made the soloist echo the senti-

ments of others but, by keeping him cooling his heels during a lengthy *tutti*, robbed his entry of spectacle and drama. Mozart, whose architectural sense in music was supreme, was quick to see that the *tutti* must be curtailed; and, while it was necessary for him to respect tradition, his *Concerto for Pianoforte in E flat* (*K 271*) brings in the soloist at the second bar and enables him to share in the initial statement of the main theme. Mozart here threw out a hint which others were quick to seize upon, so that to-day the opening orchestral *tutti* is a thing of the past. The repeated use of *tutti* and *solo* before and between and after the soloist's presentation to the thematic material was a carry-over from the concerto grosso.

Only slowly did the soloist secure the complete dominance he enjoys in the modern concerto. Formerly, the *cadenza*, which is still the high-light for the performer, was a main and closely-concentrated period of display. It was customary towards the end of the opening movement for a composer to introduce a pause chord known as a 'six-four of the dominant.' This simple chord, which once ranked as a near-discord, created an air of suspense or non-completion. At this point, the soloist was at liberty to improvise a *cadenza*, an elaborate solo passage in which he could display his technical prowess. This ended, he would play a prolonged *shake* (or alternation of adjacent sounds) during which the orchestra would enter with a short and final *tutti*. The orchestra having remained silent during the cadenza, the soloist returned the compliment by remaining silent during the final bars of the movement. In some of his later concertos, Mozart made the soloist join in the final rally; and Beethoven followed his example. Thus the element of display was increasingly recognised. The practice of permitting the soloist to improvise his own cadenzas quickly revealed weaknesses. It has been said that if the

frenzy of inspiration could be trusted to come at the right moment, impromptu cadenzas would be the most effective; but the creative and interpretative fields in music demand different qualities. A spacious and all-sufficient instrumental technique, even when accompanied by sound musicianship, is no fit match for creative genius; and, in spite of all the finger fireworks, the improvised cadenza became an excrescence instead of an ornament. And when performers were guilty of the crime of introducing one stock cadenza in different concertos by different composers, the clamorous clatter of the keys became the death rattle of the improvised cadenza. Mozart's fertile mind and disciplined, eloquent fingers must have put together hundreds of cadenzas. Of these, thirty-six remain. As these were for his own use as a soloist, the practice by composers of supplying the cadenza in full may be said to have begun with Beethoven's E Flat Concerto. Beethoven also composed cadenzas for Mozart concertos; and great executants such as Moscheles, Bülow, Joachim, Vieuxtemps, Dohnanyi and Busoni composed and published cadenzas for concertos in the standard repertoire.

The Slow movement of a concerto was usually written in song form, but, while the pace of the music was slow, the soloist's part often contained rapid, elaborate ornamentation and even short cadenzas.

The Finale was formerly a simple rondo; a dance-like movement with a gay, lilting theme. Compared with the first movement its construction and character were almost naive. Gradually, however, the rondo took on something of the structural strength of the Sonata plan, but the light-hearted gaiety of the early dance persisted. To increase the climactic effect, Beethoven restricted, on occasions, the use of the cadenza to the finale. This over-all design of the classical concerto still retains its authority and usefulness.

Its three movements, with at least one of them based on the sonata plan, remains the master pattern. In the term 'concerto form' we embrace the shape and structural characteristics of all the successful concertos that have ever been written or played; it is a pattern in time as well as in Space. It is a living, growing thing; and, as with the leaves or other parts of a plant, its shape, texture, size, colour, proportions and details undergo a gradual but ceaseless change during growth.

The Modern concerto is rooted in the Classical concerto. It differs from those composed during the classical and romantic periods in its spirit and musical content; it follows the trend of all creative music in that it seeks not only to reflect moods and emotions but to express thoughts and philosophy. Of fundamental changes there are few. Modifications generally tend to exalt and glorify the soloist so that display trespasses upon the domain of contrast. Artistry seeks to make technique a means rather than an end; and vulgar showmanship is eliminated or reduced. The music of the solo part has a difficulty which places the performer under greater pressure for longer periods; and, as a consequence, the determination to put instrument and player to full stretch has been known to result in cadenzas remarkable more for their difficulty than for their musical effect. To-day, the soloist jumps into the front of the picture at the outset. He is there at the final climax, with many peak points on the way and with only enough rest (or *tacit*) bars to afford essential relief to the ear of the listener and the fingers of the player. The work of the solo instrument and the orchestra is more closely knit and artistically purposed. The orchestra is a partner rather than a servile accompanist. Composers strive to increase the cohesion of the concerto as a whole and seek to prevent the sense of anti-climax in the finale after the vigour and force of the

opening movement. A like problem exists with the symphony, in which Beethoven linked successive movements and used in his Finale some of the thematic matter of the opening movement. César Franck, the greatest near-genius, pursued this line of thought. Liszt evolved a plan which made the three movements into three sections of one expanded movement. Delius wrote a piano concerto in a single movement with *tempi* contrasts which conform to the three movement plan although the music is continuous. The single movement would seem to offer the most satisfactory solution but, in practice, it falls down. It may be that it does not place the soloist under an endurance test long enough to thrill the listener; or it may be that the effort to secure homogeneity reduces too far the element of contrast and variety. It may even be that the hand of tradition, of the old suite, lies too heavily on us all. That the design of the classical concerto as a container for modern thought in music is not outworn is evident from the magnificent work of Elgar, while some contemporary composers, e.g., Vaughan Williams in his *Concerto Academico* and Walton's use of the title *Sinfonia Concertante* suggest a harking back to early ideals. It is interesting to note that the first known use of the word *concerti* was when it served to describe collections of motets for voices and organ or strings which were published as early as the 16th century. The latest use of the term is its application to works such as Manuel de Falla's *Nights in the Garden of Spain* or even Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. So we may be led to qualify our definition of a concerto: it is not only a vehicle of display for instrument and performer but it must be cast in a mould approximating to that fixed by the originator of the virtuoso concerto, the man who composed more than fifty concertos for various instruments and who foreshadowed almost every improvement in its design since his time – Mozart.

CONCERTS GRAVE AND GAY

Ernest Chapman

In the foreword to his recent *Chanticleer,* a work of excellent humour based on one of the *Canterbury Tales,* Thomas Wood writes: '*Chanticleer* is meant to be a tale for singing, which will (I hope) make those who sing it happy. The conventions and formality of the concert platform are out of place. I would rather have instead the air of music-making at a family party – even though the family be a large one.' The composer then instructs his singers that 'as well as singing there should be gesture, laughter where it is called for ... and if the music ... can be sung from memory, so much the better.' Dr Wood realizes that when a work which is meant to entertain rather than edify is performed in the average concert hall the near-ecclesiastical atmosphere prevailing in such places has a strong deterrent effect on the audience. The association of the concert hall with the performance of classical masterpieces sets up an inhibitory state, so that concert-goers are frightened to relax and enjoy themselves even when offered music intended precisely for enjoyment. An example of this was the performance not long ago in London of a sextet for piano and wind instruments by Poulenc, which, with its reminiscences and parodies of the tunes of the café and music-hall, provided a dexterous and extremely amusing exhibition of tight-rope walking above the abyss of banality. Seated in the hushed pews of Wigmore Hall, few among the audience seemed to realize that they were being offered entertainment pure and simple, while those who did, no doubt overcome by a sense of guilt, made stern efforts to repress their merriment.

The music fought a losing battle against unsympathetic surroundings.

It was not always so, and the time is perhaps ripe for the introduction of a new type of concert – or, more properly, the revival of an old type – at which it will not be considered incongruous for good music of the less ponderous type to be associated with cheerful surroundings, good company, eating and drinking, and the harmless pleasures of tobacco. The concert as we know it in this country has its origin in three sources: the tavern, the 'musicke meetings' and clubs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the eighteenth century concerts held in private houses for which an admission fee was charged. In each case the atmosphere was cheerful, refreshments and smoking were usual, and people expected to have a pleasant time.

Tavern music goes back to the earliest times: Bacchus and Apollo seem ever to have gone hand in hand. In England during the Commonwealth organs taken from churches were frequently re-erected in taverns and the performances were sometimes accompanied by small bands. Taverns which specialized in music became known as 'Musick Houses' and in 1698 Ned Ward mentioned one at Wapping where there was 'a most stately apartment', at one end of which sat 'fiddlers and hautboys with a hum-drum organ', while the customers sat in 'seats like pews.' Daily programmes were arranged and the fixed admission price sometimes included the cost of refreshment. At the end of the nineteenth century weekly musical meetings, or 'Harmonic Clubs', as they were called, were still a common feature of the English tavern. At Evans's Supper and Music Rooms in Covent Garden – a well-known place – booklets were distributed containing the words of madrigals and glees together with information about their composers.

Music clubs, mainly for choral singing, flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The earliest ones, known as 'Musicke Meetings', were often run by needy professional musicians as a means of increasing their income. The members consisted of well-to-do merchants and gentry who met in private houses or in taverns. Smoking and drinking were usual. One such club founded in 1761, the Madrigal Society, flourishes to this day, meeting once a month in Lincolns Inn and upholding the ancient tradition of combining good music with good food and drink. Dr Scholes, who in the *Oxford Companion* provides us with much out-of-the-way information on this subject, remarks that the Huddersfield Choral Society, when founded in 1836, was more of a club than a concert organization. It met for practice rather than public performance; and at each monthly meeting the members, male and female, were allowed 'three gills of ale and bread and cheese.'

The closest ancient counterparts of the concert of to-day were those given in London by John Banister between 1672 and 1678, and by Thomas Britton between 1678 and 1714. Banister, a professional violinist, may be said virtually to have originated the concert, since he was the first to organize musical programmes in a room procured specially for that purpose which the public attended on payment of a fee. Roger North, in his *Memoires of Music* (1728), says that at Banister's concerts in Whitefriars 'the room was rounded with seats and small tables, alehouse fashion. One shilling was the price, and call for what you pleased; there was very good musick.' Thomas Britton, who by day hawked charcoal in the streets, held concerts in an upper room of his house at Clerkenwell to which leading members of the aristocracy and many of the finest musicians of the day were attracted. Handel and Pepusch were among Britton's closest friends, and coffee was provided at his concerts at a

penny a cup. At some of the later concert series the association with the tavern was maintained. The Academy of Ancient Music (1710–92) for long met at the 'Crown and Anchor' in the Strand, while the Castle Society took its name from the Castle Tavern in Paternoster Row. But the increasing expansion and commercializing of concert activities, the attractions of the instrumental 'recital', and the growing importance of symphonic music during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought to an end the pleasant association of music with cheerful company and refreshment. Attendance at concerts has now become a solemn rite, and the only music one is likely to encounter in a public house is the radio, the broken-down piano, and the itinerant banjo-player.

Is it not time we took ourselves a little less seriously? Is there any good reason why concerts should not be given in the informal atmosphere of, if not a public house, at any rate a licensed restaurant? Food and drink would be available, smoking would be encouraged, and tables and chairs would replace the concert hall's narrow rows. The unhurried programme would seek to entertain rather than edify. Masterpieces of the more profound variety would be left to the concert-hall proper, as would the works of those contemporaries who, in exploring every harmonic avenue, leave no tone unturned.

Certain musical media suggest themselves as being specially suitable for informal concerts. The small choir would be greatly in demand, since group singing is essentially the music of good company. The choice of items need not be hackneyed; indeed, there would be opportunity for the introduction of many things which all too rarely are heard in the concert hall. English madrigals (among which Gibbons's unique and fascinating *Cries of London* would be certain of success), catches, and glees might be heard in

company with the wholly enjoyable secular music of Josquin, Lassus, Gombert, Palestrina, and Monteverdi. From later times there are the canons and trios of Mozart, the vocal quartets of Schumann, and Brahms's lovely *Liebeslieder* and *Zigeunerlieder*. Solo songs would also be welcome – English settings for preference, in the sturdy tradition of Purcell, Arne, Dibdin, and Stanford.

The more rigorous types of chamber music would be eschewed, but how wide remains the choice! For viols, recorders, harp, and lute there is a wealth of early music, among which the string fantasias of Byrd, Gibbons, and Purcell are not less pleasing than the charming titled pieces for broken consort by Dufay, Isaac, Willaert, and other Continental masters. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provide a wide choice of sonatas, concertos, and suites by Purcell, Blow, J. C. Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Rameau, and Couperin. Haydn and Mozart both wrote very enjoyable works for wind instruments; Beethoven's septet and the Op. 87 trio for two oboes and cor anglais also fit well into the scheme. So would, of course, the octets of Schubert and Mendelssohn, masterpieces of light music which deserve to be kept for specially festive occasions.

Duet playing is another friendly form of music making which seems to establish a close *rapport* between the players and the audience, as well as between the players themselves. For four hands at one piano – which is much to be preferred to the ponderous two-piano medium – there are the neglected great original works by Schubert, the scintillating Mozart sonatas, and the several charming sets by Schumann. Among classical string duets, those for violin and viola by Mozart are particularly fine. For two voices, there is superb music by Purcell and Handel.

So far our programmes have not progressed beyond the late nineteenth century. There is nevertheless a respectable

corpus of music in the lighter vein by composers of our own time. England alone has a good deal to offer if the byways are explored. There are attractive choral works, *a capella* or with piano, by Vaughan Williams, Moeran, Rowley, and Dunhill; the engaging Nursery Songs and variations for two violins by Alan Rawsthorne; the trio and serenade for strings by Lennox Berkeley; and the amusing piano duets by Lord Berners. The witty and too little known wind duets and trios by Gordon Jacob include an introduction and fugue for piccolo, flute, and bass flute, which this writer has long anticipated with relish. Arthur Benjamin, Lennox Berkeley, and Benjamin Britten have all written pleasing music for two pianos, while Herbert Murrill has produced some particularly elegant solo pieces for piano.

Of foreign composers, Poulenc, Milhaud, and Jean Françaix uphold the tradition of Chabrier and Bizet with many works that avowedly set out to entertain and succeed admirably in their purpose. Prokofiev, in his overture on Hebrew themes for clarinet, string quartet, and piano, and Stravinsky, in his pieces for piano duet and the unusually mild sonata for two pianos, have temporarily turned aside from sterner activities. Most of Shostakovich's waggish humour seems to have gone into his orchestral works and ballets, but if a string orchestra were available on occasion the inspired tomfoolery of his concerto for piano and strings could hardly fail to amuse the audience. Of lesser known composers who have produced well-contrived music for entertainment, Vittorio Rieti (Italy), Marcel Poot (Belgium) Knudage Rusager (Denmark), and Lars-Erik Larsson (Sweden) should not be forgotten.

There is no lack of suitable music for the informal concert; and it seems likely that a large enough audience for such gatherings exists, particularly among those who are not yet ready for the rites of Wigmore Hall. Will not one of our

more adventurous impresarios turn aside from mammoth ventures at Harringay and Earls Court, and expend instead a modest sum on one or two informal concerts along the lines I have suggested?

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FROWSY TUNES

Harold Rawlinson

'Like a frowsy tune, tickling men's ears'
Robert Browning

WHAT is your idea of a frowsy tune? I put this question to a musician and received the quick reply, 'a lousy tune!' I asked another the same question and got the answer, 'a tune born with whiskers on it.' It is an unfortunate fact that some tickling tunes get into your head and seem to take a devilish delight in sticking there. Chaliapin often surprised his friends by roaring out, *Yes, we have no bananas.*

'For goodness sake turn that wireless off', my wife shouted downstairs one morning, 'I shall have that silly tune in my head all day.' It was the *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka!*

One day I want to make a list of frowsy tunes written by respectable composers, but I shall keep the list to myself! I suppose there is room in the world for all kinds of tunes good and bad, but some are downright bad (there is really no room for these). Others are common or vulgar and some – just frowsy. It is really curious that a succession of musical sounds can be either beautiful or ugly, noble or cheap; the difference just a simple matter of the order in which the notes follow one another!

Musical craftsmanship can be present in bad tunes as well as in the good ones. Richard Strauss had a first-class brain, yet that trumpet tune in the battle scene of *A Hero's Life* seems to me to be as vulgar as any tune could be. Does it appear to others differently? I have often wondered how I could explain to a music class just what makes a melody great. What mental processes are involved in selecting the

right succession of notes in their rise and fall and the speed with which they follow one another? When the pattern is completed, the notes either take on a cloak of beauty or don a drab garb of the commonplace. A tune like *Land of Hope and Glory* offends all the theorists, but is applauded by the multitude. It is, of course, with all its faults a rattling good melody and somewhat confounds us when we try to apply academic analysis. The *Londonderry Air* is quoted as being an example of a perfectly constructed melody, but the man in the street does not appreciate it more for that reason. It would be fascinating if we could trace the metamorphosis the so-called Londonderry Air has undergone since its first conception somewhere in the North of Ireland. Was it conceived in perfect form? Or have the bare bones of its infancy been fleshed into perfect shape by the alchemy of time? Why, for instance, is a song like *Sailing down the river on a Sunday afternoon* just downright bad, while another popular song may be worthy of inclusion in a twentieth century *Beggar's Opera?*

The simplest definition of a melody would be 'one note followed by another', as in the traditional *A-men.* But this would be only half the story because there are two primary ingredients to every tune – pitch and time. In its own full blossoming, a melody will suggest its harmony and modulations. Rhythm will also enter into its make-up.

Good and bad melodies have existed from the beginning and it is safe to assert that the best melodies are not composed with a text book in the hand. The beauty which is expressed and felt in a spontaneous melody presents the theorist with a *fait accompli* from which he has prepared his book of rules. It is ironical that even with this book of rules in our hand we cannot go and do likewise and compose good melodies as easily as we can do cross-word puzzles.

Some theorists have tabulated a few simple rules which

should be observed in composing a 'good' melody. Here is a sample:

1. Either proceed by step or by skip of a consonant interval, avoiding, as a general rule, the leap of a major seventh and all leaps beyond an octave.

2. Never proceed by an augmented interval unless (*a*) both notes belong to the same harmony; (*b*) they occur in the repetitions of a sequence; (*c*) they occur in the scale progression of the harmonic minor mode. In all three exceptions the melody should not return to a note within the interval, but proceed in the same direction.

3. If a melody proceed by a diminished interval, it should return to a note within that interval.

4. A skip to an interval beyond a fifth is best approached by contrary motion to the skip.

Well, well, if it is objectionable to leap to a seventh it must also be bad form to fall by the same interval – and that knocks the bottom out of some of our most beloved tunes. Elgar would fall down badly on this ruling and we should have to start by blue-pencilling bars of the *Enigma!*

I do not think it is possible to formulate a universal definition of what constitutes a good melody. A good tune to a Chinese would probably seem frowsy to us. Once I attended a festival of Indian music given by Mexican Indians, and, although many of the melodies were of obvious Spanish origin, quite a few which had survived from the period of Aztec civilization were without any definable tune to me.

I think there are as many frowsy tunes written to-day by the accepted high-priest composers as there are by the unabashed composer of popular music. Both camps present their compositions in brilliant orchestral settings. Clever orchestrations cover up the poverty of melodic invention in a manner undreamed of by composers of yesteryear. The simple accompaniment and treatment of an Aria by Messrs Bellini, Donizetti and Company laid bare at once any tune which creaked at the joints. As with every musician, some

tunes make me squirm, others irritate me intensely. When I hear *Love's Old Sweet Song* I want to stuff my ears with cotton wool, while I admit that my neighbour is probably lapping it up as his cat laps up milk. Have we not all a private collection of frowsy tunes? I believe that in the colourful vernacular of some members of the musical profession these are called 'Gor-blimey' tunes. Slightly profane but very expressive!

It is easier to sort out good from bad prose. The ungrammatical writing of an illiterate can be corrected by a schoolboy. It is much more difficult to correct bad music writing. Too often have the rules been broken by the best composers.

A friend of mine, not a musician, is a great Bach enthusiast and I asked her why she liked Bach's music. 'Because his melodies are never commonplace,' she replied. '*I can absorb them whole. I do not lose sight of their beginning while the melodies are nearing their close.* They are full of surprises in the way the melody rises or falls and in the way they modulate, yet it all seems to be so natural, so basically correct. They are so satisfying and seem to belong to eternity.'

Well, I suppose it is now up to me to commit myself as to my idea of a frowsy tune. Here it is: 'A tune that tells you where it is going almost before it starts its elementary, obvious and unnecessary journey.'

But Browning must have the last word; after all – he was responsible for this article!

> '... like a frowsy tune,
> Tickling men's ears – the sect for a quarter of an hour
> I' the teeth of the world which, clown-like, loves to chew
> Be it but a straw twixt work and whistling-while,
> Taste some vituperation, bite away,
> Whether at majoram-sprig or garlic-clove,
> Aught it may sport with, spoil, and then spit forth.
>
> *The Ring and the Book*

A VIEW ON MODERN AESTHETICS

Becket Williams

MANY people speak their minds about modern art in the privacy of their parlours and clubs, and some, even, are allowed to give their views in the papers. But it falls to few to have their remarks as well advertised as did the robust Sir Alfred Munnings at the Royal Academy Dinner this year. In his case he was dealing with the modern tendencies in painting, but the principle involved applies to all the arts, music, poetry, prose, architecture, and the cinema. Comments such as his give as much pain to the so-called advanced among us, as they give pleasure to the normal intelligent man. The reader will remember that Sir Alfred's speech was severely critical of modern aesthetics, and I feel it would do no harm if we took a broom, and swept around this room a little, removing a few cobwebs here, much waste-paper there, and even a few fungi which seem to have taken root in various places. Let's tidy up a bit.

First of all, it is plain that the members of this self-styled intelligentsia make much more noise than their opposites – in fact, so much noise that simple people are generally afraid to express any views at all, for fear of being ridiculed as old-fashioned, out-of-date, and generally contemptible. To say that our noisy friends, too, often dress the part, and show by their striking costumes that they consider themselves as beings apart, and half-way to immortality already – this is irrelevant. But it acts as an additional irritant to the ordinary, much as a red rag is supposed to offend a bull.

But are they really as fine and superior as they pretend, these lordly ones, and are their opinions invariably right?

Of course they're not. Over and over again they have been proved wrong, and their swans have turned out to be geese. Let me take three examples. First the Surrealists. I forget how many years ago the craze started. It was probably suggested by the work of Osman Spare, an excellent artist indeed, although he never got the discredit for it. Spare, in some early and allegedly 'occult' works, experimented with certain curious juxtapositions, which is all surrealism really is (divorced from the blah connected with it) and which have since been carried to extremes in the works of Dali and the others. Clever newspaper work and other forms of propaganda deluded many poor boobs, and persuaded them to believe that such nonsense was worthy of respect. The names of Bosch and 'Devil' Breughel meant nothing to them, artists who had worked along the same lines hundreds of years before, and whose paintings had long ago been relegated to the categories of the merely odd and unimportant. So to-day the modern manifestations of the Surrealists have lost interest to any except psychiatrists.

Then came the purely 'functional' architect, designer, and engineer. Square buildings made of concrete and glass, tea-cups with solid handles, and the terrible grinning abortions which masquerade as motor-cars are examples. In so far as this was a reaction from the fussiness that had gone before, it was welcome. But I see very few square boxes being built now, the tea-cups have disappeared, and firms like Rolls-Royce, Bentley, and the two new marvels, the Allard, and the Healey, still keep sanity in their design.

The third example is that of the musical 'atonalists.' At this moment the craze is at its height. Schönberg, whom I met years ago, struck me as primarily an engineer, with an engineer's mind in music. He 'experimented' in atonality, and thus constricted his artistic outlook, just as Scriabin did with his harmonic system, and dozens of primitives with

their pentatonic and even smaller scales. His music is clever and ingenious, and so in its slighter way is that of Humphrey Searle. I cannot say the same of the other exponents in this austere country of ours. Their work seems to fit the character of the immortal young lady in the *Pilgrim's Progress* whose name was Dull. But among the whole repertoire of atonal music I can find none to which we can loosely apply the word immortal. 'Interesting' perhaps – but how I loathe that word as applied to the arts!

I well remember, how after the first war, when I was writing musical criticisms, I was jeered at by my colleagues for venturing to doubt the reality of the all-powerful geniuses who were arising in their dozens. Who has survived as even a talent? Possibly John Ireland, and his output is pitiably small. (I have lately seen his work referred to in the highbrow *New Statesman* as Chantrey Bequest music, and I presume this was meant as a sneer). I hope it will be noted that I do not include the names of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holbrooke, because they were born outside the age we are considering.

At the moment there is a well-fostered craze for the work of Benjamin Britten, a young man of very considerable technical gifts. He is known best by two operas, *Peter Grimes,* a sordid work full of the inspissated gloom of youth, and *Albert Herring,* a light opera which cannot prevent tragedy breaking in. In comparison with the sort of music which is produced now, both of these are important works, but, to be frank, they cannot be spoken of in the same terms as the art of the great masters, because they lack consistently striking thematic material, and humanity. These remarks are, I fear, calculated to infuriate Bloomsbury, but for that I couldn't care less. And I hope I shall not be accused of smug conceit and complacency when I express the hope that when Mr Britten's experience of life has widened, he will

write a masterpiece. In my view, there are four stages in the life of a creator, be he painter, poet, composer or what you will. They are student, prig, virtuoso, and artist. Mr Britten is still in the third, the virtuoso stage. Most of his admirers are in the second.

Another significant fact is that our luminaries are seldom appreciated abroad. It is no good pointing to International Festivals, for these are no criterion. There politeness reigns supreme, and the good old principle of you scratch me, and I'll scratch you, flourishes luxuriantly. But I suggest the reader peruses, as I do, the foreign press itself, and does not leave himself in the hands of interested parties, who point to the applause of a specialised audience which seems to think that if enough music is performed, some day a winner will be discovered.

There are still many who aver that no genius is appreciated in his lifetime, and take refuge in that theory when their *protégés* are given the bird. They particularly instance the case of Wagner, and how he was despised and rejected at first. This is, as a mere matter of history, untrue. Better instances would be the later works of Beethoven, or the music of César Franck; Bizet's *Carmen* is a classical case. But it must be remembered that in those days few heard new works, whereas now the masterpieces of 'advanced' composers are repeated *ad nauseam*, and there is no excuse for those who say that the thing is new and strange, and therefore cannot be judged. To-day if a composer's work is not heard, it is due either to the fact that he is, like Holbrooke, *persona ingrata* with the B.B.C. or, as in the case of the most ultra-modern of all, Sorabji, he has such a poor opinion of his interpreters that he has forbidden performances of his works!

Amid this welter of snobbery, inconsistency, and ineffectiveness it is pleasant to find something to laugh at.

This is provided by the spectacle of our paladins of the future. It is no secret that the most vocal and the most performed of the 'new school', composers who really know all the answers, are either members of the Communist Party or fellow-travellers. Personally, I don't care a toss what political party a composer belongs to*, but I do shudder to think what would happen to my exuberant colleagues if Communism really came to power over here, and their music was judged by its popular appeal ...

And now I come to the attitude (or attitudes, for they continually change) taken up by the poor old B.B.C. The music executives there seem to have such a feeling of inferiority that criticism is resented. I have dealt with this attitude in so many articles, and in so many papers and lectures, that I do not propose to enlarge on it here. That these executives do their best is, presumably, true, but one is tempted to remark that their best seems rather feeble, where modern music is concerned. The insistence by a Government Department (don't waste time by denying that for all practical purposes it *is* a Government Department) the insistence, then, on giving the public what it thinks is good for it, is a negation of the democratic principle. I should like to be fair about this, and explain that when I say 'public' in this connection I mean the *intelligent* musical public. What is given to Light Programme listeners does not concern us here. Most people have no opinion of any value about music. They like simple rhythms, obvious shapes, pinkish colours, treacly timbres, and indefinite intonations. Frequently the great masters use the two first, but not the rest. The tones of the piano-accordion are the people's delight, and it is curious to reflect that the mediaeval regal is revived in this loathsome instrument. The cinema organ

* The possession of the artistic faculty is no guarantee of unusual political acumen.

is also beloved. It may be noted here that a good one is a really lovely instrument. Not long ago the eminent Mr Charles Saxby 'took me over' the one at Swiss Cottage. Some of the effects obtained were most delightful. Beautiful and tender echo-carillons, smooth foundations, and terrific brass. Some great master should write music specially for it. But at the moment it is worth the job of any cinema-organist who played consistently good music. Occasionally something worth while is manoeuvered in, but very seldom. Which proves that the public does not want worthwhile music. If it did it would demand it, and the film magnates, being business men, would provide it.

But, probably by way of natural reaction, the Third Programme pulls the elastic too far the other way. The contemporary music heard is almost all calculated to please only the modernist. If not puerile, it is ugly, crabbed, spiky and unpleasant. Some of it is clever, but by no means all is even this. Euphony is at a discount. The idea seems to be that the age we live in is deplorable, and so the music written in it should be deplorable too. How often do we hear it said that an artist should picture the spirit of his time? I totally disagree with this. Art is a means of escape, as Scarlatti intimated long ago. The great master rises superior to his age. He tries to picture the eternal verities, truth, beauty, honesty and goodness. He *should* rise superior to his age. He should not waste his time picturing and describing unhappy conditions, but should point to the possibility of higher states. And if you say I write like a prig, well I write like a prig, but I happen to be right, and *you know* I'm right ... To paraphrase a superb sentence in Mann's *Dr Faustus,* it is a sinful and morbid corruption of natural gifts to write thus, the issue of a horrible bargain.

And the sad part is, the euphonious and delightful music that even now is being written is not allowed to be heard by

those who are starved of beauty. Instead a build-up worthy of a new Beethoven symphony is given to some sterile composition, and so the opinion of those who say all modern music is worthless is reinforced.

But it is of course not true to say that all modern art is bad. Over here the music of Rawsthorne, Rubbra and some of Walton, the compositions of Poulenc in France, Villa-Lobos in Brazil, all comparatively young men, are outstanding. The paintings of Piper and Melhuish, the poetry of the Sitwells, Eliot, and Day Lewis, the books of Elizabeth Bowen – one could give dozens of examples of fascinating work, if few examples of genius. Because genius is a rare thing at any time, and to hail as a work of genius what is merely odd, is to debase the term.

And this silly cult of the New! How many times should it be dinned into us that art is not new or old, but good or bad. Nor is it necessarily involved. A beautiful and simple lyric poem is of more value than a dull elaborate epic, and Mozart got much more out of his little orchestra than ever Scriabin obtained with his immense forces. Not that artless simplicity has any value *per se*. Wordsworth was generally at his worst when he was most simple, and I am sure Sir Alfred Munnings would prefer even Moore's 'Madonna' to a coloured plaster saint from the shops around Westminster.

So why be snobs? If we like the pictures of the Pre-Raphaelites there is no need for shame. We are as likely to be artistically right as those who prefer Sutherland or Braque. There is no need to lay down the law, and shout the odds on what is really an individual affair. Attempts to do this should be treated with suspicion, and resisted, from whatever quarter they may come.

HORRORS

Robin Gregory

In a recent review, Professor Gerald Abraham made a remark to the effect that one of the minor pleasures of history was that of having one's flesh made to creep, and went on to mention incomplete and incompetent orchestras, divided control of such orchestras, varying pitch, additional accompaniments, and the monstrous octobasse as gruesome examples of flesh-creeping nightmares. It so happens that for some time now I have been collecting, with morbid and ghoulish fascination, specimens of what can only be called musical (or perhaps more justly, unmusical) horrors, and in this respect, at least, it seems that I am in good company. In presenting some of these specimens I am conscious that in a short article the surface of the subject can be no more than scratched. This is perhaps just as well, for, though having one's flesh made to creep may be pleasurable in small doses, horror piled on horror soon becomes unbearable, and eventually the senses become completely numbed. Even so, squeamish persons are warned that they read any further at their own risk.

Horrors in music, as in literature, range from the crude and obvious blood-curdler of the penny-dreadful type to the subtle and imaginative study in psychology whose full significance dawns only gradually but whose eventual impact is much more devastating. Examples of the former class are so numerous that choice is difficult, but a start might be made across the Atlantic, where there was recently announced a new version of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata, entitled 'Rainbow's End', of which Freddy Martin has now

'Waxed a strictly pop version – plenty of melody – words which are as beautiful as the music – with romance and sentiment to soften the hearts of all.' There was hardly any need to say where this brutal murder took place, but, to show that we can do that sort of thing equally well, we had some years ago 'a new musical make-believe' by Eric Maschwitz called *Waltz without End,* with the music of Chopin adapted and arranged by Bernard Grun, and there have been many other equally gruesome dismemberments.

I have not had the good fortune to see the technicolor film of Rimsky-Korsakov's life, but the advance publicity had prepared me for a real horror. The title was originally to be 'Shahrazad', said to be the Arabic spelling, and the heroine was to have been an Arabian Queen with whom the young Russian midshipman fell in love. He was to be pictured as 'a boy of twenty-one making his first venture into the world from the cold steppes of Russia, sailing on the warm Mediterranean Sea to Africa, where the beauteous queen was to entertain him with her stories from the Arabian Nights.' Apparently this was thought to be almost too horrific (it would undoubtedly have been awarded an 'H' Certificate by the Censor), and eventually the plot was toned down to suit the susceptibilities of the less-toughened film-goer, while still retaining much, however, of its Grand Guignol character.

Hardly less crude, though perhaps more far-reaching in its implications, have been the press announcements heralding the recent visit to this country of

'PIERINO GAMBA
PIERINO GAMBA
PIERINO GAMBA
PIERINO GAMBA

the amazing 11-year-old Italian Boy Conductor who's (*sic*) first appearance in London last season created the greatest

musical sensation of all time.' Unfortunately the promoters could not keep things screwed up to this pitch; the next week PIERINO GAMBA etc. became merely 'the 11-year-old wonder boy conductor whose first appearance astounded the music critics of the British press,' and he was billed to conduct England's 'foremost orchestra (entirely without music score)', while later still he had declined to be no more than 'Phenomenonal for his age; would be outstanding even at 35 to 40.' Although this suspicion of anticlimax mars the total effect, it is still considerable. It only remains to add that, in the event, the victim wore a frilly lace collar, short white socks, and, yes, black velvet pants, for the horrible picture to be complete.

But the past is not entirely free from blame, even though in the absence of the film and of modern publicity methods its scope was rather more limited. Here are a few of their more gruesome achievements. In the book reviewed by Mr Abraham, Adam Carse quotes a publication under the title, 'The Overture and Music (complete) to the Comic Opera called *The Barber of Seville,* as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, partly selected from Paesiello and Rossini's highly celebrated operas, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia,* partly composed, and the whole arranged, altered and adapted to the English Stage, by Henry R. Bishop.' Paris produced Mozart's *Zauberflöte* under the title *Les Mystères d'Isis,* incorporating music from *Don Juan, Figaro, La Clemenza di Tito,* and parts of Haydn's symphonies, together with additional recitatives by Lachnith, who also reorchestrated parts of it; and the contralto Madame Vestris introduced into *Figaro* 'that silly trash of a ballad "I've been roaming."' English arrangements also included one of the "Hallelujah" Chorus for two flutes, and another for concertina.

Obsolete instruments provide some grisly relics whose

significance perhaps only the imaginative can fully realise. To them the very name 'Sausage-bassoon' must cause the hair to stand on end. Its appearance, like a squat and menacing infernal machine, heightens the tension, and even the fact that it by no means lived up to its alternative name 'Racket', having a tone described as 'very quiet, almost as if one were blowing on a comb', serves merely to accentuate the horror. A monstrous instrument with a monstrous name should surely produce a monstrous noise; its feeble tone makes it so much the more of a monstrosity. The most unwieldy woodwind instrument ever devised certainly did not fail in this respect, and must have been terrifying to see and hear in action. This was the *Gross Doppel-Quint-Pommer*, which was over ten feet long, and hardly to be played at all without the aid of an assistant whose job it was to hold up the end furthest from the player. Its tone can only be imagined, but from the etymology of *Pommer*, deriving from the Latin bombus, it must have resembled the buzzing of a swarm of Brobdingnagian bees.

Torture, of course, is inflicted daily on composers in the shape of inadequate and imperfect representations of the creatures of their brains, sometimes so altered that the mangled remains are almost completely unrecognisable, but tortures of a different kind are the lot of some. The unfortunate winners of the *Prix de Rome* do not always seem to have enjoyed life among their fellow-artists at the Villa Medici. Berlioz called it the 'Academy Barracks' and left before his time had expired, while Debussy found the life 'a combination of the existence at a cosmopolitan hotel, a private college and a compulsory civilian barracks'; he felt a loathing for the life in common at the 'abominable villa' and an antipathy for his companions. Conditions hardly conducive, it would seem, for the production of masterpieces. Imagine the plight, then, of the officially patronised

young musician in Soviet Russia, who has to live in a Governmental building entitled 'House of Composers', with no fewer than a hundred and forty-four other members of his craft. As Constant Lambert remarked, 'Personally, I would give up composition altogether and take to plain sewing or gangsterism.' In addition, the Association of Proletarian Musicians required 'the extension of the hegemony of the proletariat to the field of music, the creation of Marxist musicology and Marxist musical criticism, and the creation of conditions favourable to the growth of proletarian music.' The uncharitable might here interpolate some remarks on the quality of much recent Russian music. Music and politics are indeed uncongenial companions. To clear the air, which has now become somewhat foul and murky, and send a momentary but healthier shudder down the spine, I throw in the contralto who asked for more songs like *The Lost Chord* because 'there is something of the grandeur of Beethoven in it.'

The reader must by now almost have reached saturation point; if his senses are not already benumbed, perhaps the thought of having to sit through a Philharmonic Society Concert of the 1830's will finish him off. This might have included two overtures, two symphonies, two 'grand instrumental' and four vocal pieces, the latter consisting of variations, fantasias and other trivialities designed to show off a soloist's particular type of virtuosity. Or if the *longueurs* of this far from heavenly length are too crude a *coup de grâce*, imagine the nightmare of a piano recital which actually took place, in which every item was in the key of C sharp minor. (No prizes are offered for reconstructing the programme). Or perhaps I may not be alone in finding the last item of the last night at the Proms, especially in its modern manifestation, an embarrassment so acute as to constitute a truly harrowing experience.

STATE AID AND THE ARTS

Mary Davie

ART or the arts is the name given to the activities of those who express themselves not in the limited medium of words, but in the more imaginative forms of music, the visual arts, the drama and certain types of film. Whichever of the four forms is finally chosen for self-expression, there will be two distinct approaches to the art, namely the function of the creator and the function of the interpreter; and in discussing State assistance for the arts, it is essential to think of these two functions separately.

Patronage, the euphonious name for financial assistance to the arts, has always existed where the arts have been practised. It is not even a new idea that the State should be patron. Until the eighteenth century, the State in the person of the Sovereign always was a patron of the arts. In Germany the history of opera is the history of patronage, first by the petty sovereigns of the numerous states and after the debacle of 1918 by the patronage of municipalities and State. During the difficult inter-war period eighty-one opera houses in Germany were subsidised, Berlin at the top of the list receiving over £200,000 a year.

To-day, for the first time, there is proof that the arts in Great Britain will receive financial assistance from a democratic State. The wartime organisation of the Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, set up as a permanent body under the title of the Arts Council, will provide the machinery for distribution of State aid. It should be emphasised that no professional artist, be he musician, painter or actor, questions the desirability of state subsidy. It has been left to

the amateurs, the connoisseurs and the theorists to doubt the possibility of a healthy growth of national cultural activity which must look to the State for its patronage. And even these doubters do not question the need for patronage, but rather doubt the ability of the State to create an adaptable enough machinery.

The patron has always been deemed an integral part of the provision of the arts and especially for the support of work of that small section of the artistic world that must be ahead of the main development of its own time in order to become the main growth of the future.

The fundamental cause for uneasiness of opinion lies in the anxiety regarding the human factor in the administration of State subsidy. On the one hand is the knowledge that State patronage involves the spending of public monies, and that the expenditure must be accounted for. On the other hand is the little appreciated but essential condition that the arts cannot give a short-term account of themselves. The ideal conditions of State aid will assume the principle that State subsidy for the arts is acceptable to the public; that the distribution must be left unreservedly in the hands of administrators chosen for their powers of judgement and discernment; that there must be no call for short-term results and that there must be an allowance for a considerable margin of error.

So far the problem of State aid has been discussed in general terms from the point of view of the public. In practice it will be found that each art will require particular consideration, although finally, similar principles are applicable to all.

The economic problem facing the creative artist arises first out of the need for a prolonged and specialised training, and eventually out of the time lag, which may last to the end of his life, between the first step towards creation and the

sale of the work. The entrepreneur or agent who acts after a lapse of time can indeed make a considerable fortune by the circulation of the great creative works. Musicians do obtain a very small performing right fee for a period, but this, together with the cost of publishing and printing, defeats its own purpose by making the cost of performing the works of living composers greater.

The solution of the first problem can and will be overcome as part of the long-term education policy of the country. The second problem, that of covering the time lag, would involve the granting of financial aid direct to the individual, a solution which, if accompanied by conditions and qualifications, could bring in its train more evils than at present exist. It is a truism that no generation can be the judge of contemporary creation. But as there is no absolute standard in creative art, there is no test by which a potential artist can claim to qualify for subsidy. It appears, therefore, that, until such time as the whole population is on a minimum subsistence rate, personal subsidy must be made for creative artists and the chance of error must be risked.

The element generally disregarded by the alarmist who would warn us against such a procedure is that the quantitive sum of such claims for subsidy, when taken in proportion to the total population, would be minute, involving only thousands of pounds. At the same time it is a salutary comparison to note that in 1946–7, for instance, the cost to local governments of supporting lunatics and mental deficients was £23,119,000 in England and Wales alone.

For the interpretive function of the arts, the duty of State is far more obvious and far easier of execution, because results can be shown in a very much shorter time. Again the first problem is the even more prolonged and specialised training required to produce the executant and

the future administrator. Again the solution is to be found in an appreciation of the problems peculiar to this type of training, and its inclusion in the country's general education policy is imperative.

The gradual reduction of the higher incomes must in any case cut down the number of potential private patrons, but, even in the heyday of private patronage, no single person or organisation could have met such a demand as is at present waiting to be met. Only the vast resources of the State can provide the special facilities requisite for cultural activities by the provision of theatres, concert halls and arts centres. Perhaps the difference between cultural activities in the past and in the future lies in the new conception of decentralisation, the decentralisation from the metropolis to the provinces, from the upper classes to the whole public, from certain intermittent occurrences to daily activity.

Far from stifling art, State aid has become essential to the very existence of the arts. As to whether State aid will improve the standard of the arts in this country, a general assumption is that it depends to what extent patronage can be left free to grow with the temporary and ever changing need in the artistic world, free of conditions and qualifications; and to what extent the country can produce an administration capable of building a living tradition of patronage.

The signs and portents of the present time are on the whole encouraging.

FUNNY PECULIAR OR FUNNY HA-HA?

David Cox

In the bad old days of psycho-analysis, before the founding of the S.P.M.T.,* musical therapy was not nearly as popular as it has to-day become – in fact, it was used comparatively rarely, and more or less tentatively. To-day, of course, this form of treatment seems one of the most obvious for practically all kinds of illnesses, especially mental ones. But this was not so until quite recently. I often cast my mind back to the case of my friend George – to the days (not very long ago) when we were university students together. It was only by the merest chance that we managed to discover a musical cure for him then.

The trouble with George was that he had no sense of humour. Not that he was dull-minded by any means; on the contrary, at school he had done quite brilliantly, and had won a scholarship to Oxford (where I made his acquaintance). He just had no sense of humour, that was all.

He himself was fully aware of this shortcoming. Sometimes he would say to me (who knew him very well): 'How I wish I could see the funny side of things!' And again and again I would try to make him see things which I thought were funny. But the hoped-for reaction never came. Jokes (clean or bawdy), witty sayings, humorous drawings – he never saw the point of any of them. In short, while there were many things in life that he found odd – often decidedly odd – there was nothing he found funny.

* The Society for the Promotion of Musical Therapy – *not* the Society for the Prevention of Malignant Tumours.

This did not mean that he was perpetually serious – that he never had any fun. He would smile and look pleased when he was doing pleasant things – yes, and at times he would laugh, too; but this smiling, this laughter, no more signified a sense of humour than the smile of the Cheshire Cat or the laugh of a hyena.

I did what I could for him. I tried (by much reading on the subject) to find out what a sense of humour really is. Is it a perception of the absurd and incongruous – especially in others? Is it cruel – rejoicing at the misfortunes of an enemy? Is it mocking, selfish? Can it ever be quite innocuous? I found the anatomy of laughter very difficult to get at, and my attempts to make George laugh *at* something were all fruitless.

Then, quite by accident, came the musical discovery.

One day George and I were listening to the gramophone. I was playing the records of the *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saëns. When it came to the movement entitled *Hens and Cocks* I happened to catch sight of George's face. He was smiling – and all at once his smile broke into a laugh.

I looked at him. Many a time in the past my hopes had been raised by a laugh which meant nothing. Could it be that this time ...?

'Are you laughing at the music, George? Or are you just laughing?'

'Well ... it *is* rather odd,' he replied. 'I believe ... ' Suddenly he realised what had happened, and jumped to his feet excitedly. 'By Jove! It's true! I did find that funny. Play it again.'

I put on the same part again, and again George laughed. And he laughed at the movement called *Mules,* and at the one called *Personages with Long Ears.*

What a wonderful discovery this was! How delighted we

both were! We shook hands wildly. We danced round in circles. We threw gramophone records in the air, and they smashed to smithereens with a noise like cracked laughter.

What had happened exactly? We had been listening to music by Saint-Saëns ... The sounds of birds and animals, and all the other noises we find in nature, have on occasions provided material for many composers, from Beethoven to Eric Coates. Sounds which we take for granted when heard in their normal surroundings take on quite a different significance – sometimes humorous – when transplanted elsewhere. This is what happens in the *Carnival of the Animals;* Saint-Saens transfers sounds from the farmyard to the concert platform. Not a very subtle form of humour – so simple, so direct, so elementary, in fact, that it had worked spontaneously on George and awakened something in him which until then had lain dormant.

Encouraged by this first success, I selected, from my vast collection of records, other works which I thought were funny. We had a session with the gramophone every day, and gradually George advanced from the elementary, crude forms of musical humour to more subtle manifestations of composers' wit. It was a slow, laborious business, and required great patience both on George's part and on mine.

First we stuck to elementary humour of the *Carnival of the Animals* type. Humour through incongruity. Haydn's *Toy Symphony,* for example, which is classical symphony plus nursery noises. Not a very large step from there to musical caricature. *Bach goes to Town* by Alec Templeton. A joke in bad taste? – blasphemous even? Perhaps some musicians, whose attitude of mind towards the great John Sebastian is one of unquestioning, abject reverence, might consider it so. From what we know of Bach's character, however, we may safely assume that he would not have

minded – that he would certainly have seen the joke – that he would have laughed at *Bach goes to Town*, as George did.

We decided that the bassoon was the funniest instrument of the orchestra, especially when we listened to Archie Camden playing the Allegro Spiritoso by Senaille. And we liked the two bassoons – intended to portray two monks conversing, as they amble along on their mules – in Strauss's *Don Quixote*. In the same work, too, the *pianissimo* string trills, representing clouds of dust, and the horn notes suggesting the bleating of sheep, seemed to us good examples of musical humour.

Sometimes we really went to town and had a whole-hogging, orgiastic outburst: Spike Jones and the City Slickers. *Hotcha Cornia* – what a wonderfully slick, riotously funny, fantastic hotchpotch this is! Here is counterpoint in convulsions and harmony in hysterics. Every conceivable device for the production of all possible and impossible noises seems to have been employed. George once said: 'Let's hope that Spike Jones never learns the secret of the atom bomb.'

Then there was musical satire. Prokofiev's *Symphonie Classique*, the wit of Lord Berners, the *Façade* of William Walton, and the accomplished, sophisticated clowning of Milhaud and Poulenc.

We had travelled a long way since those first zoological noises of Saint-Saëns. George could now appreciate a great many far less obvious examples of musical humour.

We found a good example of Beethoven's humour in the *scherzo* movement of the *Spring Sonata* for violin and piano. There are several places where the players, so to speak, come unstuck – where they seem to be playing one after the other, by mistake. The obvious comment would be: 'Well played – but what a pity they didn't keep together!' To appreciate fully the effect, one has to imagine

oneself in a fashionable drawing-room of Beethoven's day, listening to a recital of chamber music. No doubt people looked at one another furtively, not knowing whether they ought to laugh or not ...

By this time, the change in George was obvious to all who knew him. It was as though an anti-social barrier had been swept away. Now he would always laugh when he was expected to, and would very often say things himself which were intended to be funny – and which were usually quite definitely funny.

Music, in this case, had done the trick. And surely nobody can deny that the possibilities of that art are limitless. We frequently quoted the lines from Shakespeare about Orpheus with his lute, and about wild colts brought to a sudden standstill.

'"Orpheus with his lute made trees ..." '

'And you with your gramophone made me laugh,' George would respond. And once, I remember, he went on to say: 'Perhaps the trees and mountains, when they heard Orpheus play, were really doubling up with laughter. Who knows?'

All this was, as I say, before the work of the S.P.M.T. had begun. Nobody in those days could have foreseen how tremendously popular musical therapy was to become. Who, while we were muddling through with psycho-analysis, would have foretold that in a few years' time Harley Street specialists would be attending the Royal College of Music as part of their training?

REPRINTED ESSAYS–I

TCHAIKOVSKY AND HIS PATHETIC SYMPHONY

John F. Runciman

INTRODUCTION

JOHN F. RUNCIMAN (1866-1916) was a leading English music critic. He was critic of the *Saturday Review* in its great days under the editorship of Frank Harris; his colleague on the dramatic side was George Bernard Shaw. Runciman was a knowledgeable musician and a forceful writer, who was continually coming up against the law of libel. He was a bitter enemy of academicism and he continued his tirades against the professors even after the time Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, brought a libel action against him that cost the *Saturday Review* £400. Shaw was the chief witness for the defence. Apparently for his sins of commission Runciman was made to suffer the indignity of omission from Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The following article on Tchaikovsky was published in a collection of reprinted essays entitled ... *Old Scores and New Readings* in 1898. Tchaikovsky was then a 'modern' composer, and therefore it should be interesting to read an article on him by a perceptive critic of his own time. – R. H.

* * *

A VERY little while since, Tschaikovsky was little more than a name in England. He had visited us some two or three times, and it was generally believed that he composed; but he had not written any piece without which no orchestral programme could be considered complete, and the mere suggestion that his place might possibly be far above

Gounod would certainly have been received with open derision. However, when his fame became great and spread wide on the Continent, he became so important a man in the eyes of English musicians that Cambridge University thought fit to honour itself by offering him an honorary musical degree. Tschaikovsky, simple soul, good-humouredly accepted it, apparently in entire ignorance of the estimation in which such cheap decorations are held in this country; and it is to be hoped that before his death he obtained a hearing in Russia for the Cambridge professor's music.* The incident, comical as it appeared to those of us who knew the value of musical degrees, the means by which they are obtained, and the reasons for which they are conferred, yet served a useful purpose by calling public attention to the fact that there was living a man who had written music that was fresh, a trifle strange perhaps, but full of vitality, and containing a new throb, a new thrill. Since 1893 his reputation has steadily grown, but in a curious way. One can scarcely say with truth that Tschaikovsky is popular; only his *Pathetic Symphony* and one or two smaller things are popular. Had he not written the *Pathetic*, one may doubt whether he would be much better known to-day than he was in 1893. It caught the public fancy as no other work of his caught it, and on the strength of its popularity many of the critics do not hesitate to call it a great symphony, and on the strength of the symphony Tschaikovsky a great composer. (For in England criticism largely means saying what the public thinks.) Passionately though that symphony is admired, hardly any other of his music can be truly said to get a hearing; for, on the rare occasions when it is played, the public thoughtfully stays away. It is true that the *Casse Noisette Suite* is always applauded, but it is a trifling work compared with his best.

*The Cambridge professor was Sir Charles Stanford.

Tschaikovsky shares with Gray and one or two others in ancient and modern times the distinction of being famous by a single achievement. The public is jealous for the supremacy of that achievement, and will not hear of there being another equal to it.

Whether the public is right or wrong, and whether we all are or are not just a little inclined to-day to exaggerate Tschaikovsky's gifts and the value of his music, there can be no doubt whatever that he was a singularly fine craftsman, who brought into music a number of fresh and living elements. He seems to me to have been an extraordinary combination of the barbarian and the civilised man, of the Slav and the Latin or Teuton, the Slav barbarian preponderating. He saw things as neither Slav nor Latin nor Teuton had seen them before; the touch of things aroused in him moods dissimilar from those that had been aroused in anyone before. Hence, while we English regard him as a representative Russian, or at anyrate Slav, composer, many Russians repudiate him, calling him virtually a western. He has the Slav fire, rash impetuosity, passion and intense melancholy, and much also of that Slav naivete which in the case of Dvořák degenerates into sheer brainlessness; he has an Oriental love of a wealth of extravagant embroidery, of pomp and show and masses of gorgeous colour, but the other, which I might call the Western, civilised element in his character, showed itself in his lifelong striving to get into touch with contemporary thought, to acquire a full measure of modern culture, and to curb his riotous, lawless impulse towards mere sound and fury. It is this unique fusion of apparently mutally destructive elements and instincts that gives to Tschaikovsky's music much of its novelty and piquancy. But, apart from this uncommon fusion, it must be remembered that his was an original mind – original not only in colour but in its very

structure. Had he been pure Slav, or pure Latin, his music might have been very different, but it would certainly have been original. He had true creative imagination, a fund of original, underived emotion, and a copiousness of invention almost as great as Wagner's or Mozart's. His power of evolving new decorative patterns of a fantastic beauty seemed quite inexhaustible; and the same may be said of his schemes and combinations and shades of colour, and the architectural plans and forms of his larger works. It is true that his forms frequently enough approach formlessness; that his colours – and especially in his earlier music – are violent and inharmonious; and that in his ceaseless invention of new patterns his Slav naivete and lack of humour led him more than a hundred times to write unintentionally comic passages. He is discursive – I might say voluble. Again, he had little or no real strength – none of the massive, healthy strength of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner; his force is sheer hysteria. He is wanting in the deepest and tenderest human feeling. He is plausible to a degree that leads one to suspect his sincerity, and certainly leaves it an open question how long a great deal of his music will stand after this generation, to which it appeals so strongly, has passed away. But when all that may fairly be said against him has been said and given due weight, the truth remains that he is one of the few great composers of this century. I myself, in all humility, allowing fully that I may be altogether wrong, while convinced that I am absolutely right, deliberately set him far above Brahms, above Gounod, above Schumann – above all save Beethoven, Weber, Schubert, and Wagner. His accomplishment as a sheer musician was greater than either Gounod's or Schumann's, though far from being equal to Brahms's – for Brahms as a master of the management of notes stands with the highest, with Bach, Mozart, and Wagner; while

as a voice and a new force in music neither Brahms nor Schumann nor Gounod can be compared with him other than unfavourably. All that are sensitive to music can feel, as I have said, the new throb, the new thrill; and that decides the matter.

It is now a long time since Mr. Henry Wood, one winter's afternoon, the only Englishman who may be ranked with the great continental conductors, gave a Tschaikovsky concert, with a programme that included some of the earlier as well as one or two of the later works. It served to show how hard and how long Tschaikovsky laboured to attain to lucidity of expression, and why the *Pathetic Symphony* is popular while the other compositions are not. In all of them we find infinite invention and blazes of Eastern magnificence and splendour; but in the earlier things there is little of the order and clarity of the later ones. Another and a more notable point is that in not one thing played at this concert might the human note be heard. The Suite (Op. 55) and the Symphony (Op. 36) are full of novel and dazzling effects – for example, the scherzo of the symphony played mainly by the strings pizzicato, and the scherzo of the suite, with the short, sharp notes of the brass and the rattle of the side-drum; the melodies also are new, and in their way beautiful; in form both symphony and suite are nearly as clear as anything Tschaikovsky wrote; in fact, each work is a masterwork. But each is lacking in the human element, and without the human element no piece of music can be popular for long. The fame of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, is still growing and will continue to grow, because every time we hear their music it touches us; while Weber, mighty though he is, will probably never be better loved than he is to-day, because his marvellously graphic picturesque music does not touch us – cannot, was not intended to, touch us; and the fame of Mendelssohn and the host of

lesser men who did not speak with a human accent of human woe and weal wanes from day to day. The composer who writes purely decorative music, or purely picturesque music, may be remembered as long as he who expresses human feeling; but he cannot hope to be loved by so many. It is because Tschaikovsky has so successfully put his own native emotions, his own aspirations and hopes and fears and sorrows, into the *Pathetic,* that I believe it has come to stay with us, while many of his other works will fade from the common remembrance. Surely it is one of the most mournful things in music, yet surely sadness was never uttered with a finer grace, with a more winning carelessness, as one who tries to smile gaily at his own griefs. Were it touched with the finest tenderness, as Mozart might have touched it, we might – if we could once get thoroughly accustomed to a few of the unintentionally humorous passages I have referred to – have it set by the side of the G minor and *Jupiter* Symphonies. As it is, it unmistakably falls short of Mozart by lacking that tenderness, just as it falls short of Beethoven by lacking profundity of emotion and thought; but it does not always fall so far short. There are passages in it that neither Beethoven nor Mozart need have been ashamed to own as theirs; and especially there is much in it that is in the very spirit of Mozart – Mozart as we find him in the Requiem, rather than the Mozart of *Don Giovanni* or *Figaro.* The opening bars are, of course, ultra-modern; they would never have been written had not Wagner written something like them first; but the combination of poignancy and lightness and poise with which the same phrase is delivered and expanded as the theme for the allegro is quite Mozartean, and the same may be said of the semiquaver passage following it. The outbursts of Slavonic fire are, of course, Tschaikovsky pure and simple; but everyone who hears the symphony may note how the

curious union of barbarism with modern culture is manifest in the ease with which Tschaikovsky recovers himself after one of these outbursts – turns it aside, so to speak, instead of giving it free play after the favourite plan both of Borodin the great and purely Russian composer, and Dvořák the little Hungarian (*sic*) composer. The second theme does not appear to me equal to the rest of the symphony. It has that curious volubility and 'mouthing' quality that sometimes gets into Tschaikovsky's music; it is plausible and pretty; it suggests a writer who either cannot or dare not use the true tremendous word at the proper moment, and goes on delivering himself of journalistic stock-phrases which he knows will move those who would be left unmoved were the right word spoken. There is nothing of this in the melody of the second movement. Its ease is matched by its poignancy: the very happy-go-lucky swing of it adds to it poignancy; and the continuation – another instance of the untamed Slav under the influence of the most finished culture – has a wild beauty, and at the same time communicates the emotion more clearly than speech could. The mere fact that it is written in five-four time counts for little – nothing is easier than to write in five-four time when once you have got the trick; the remarkable thing is the skill and tact with which Tschaikovsky has used precisely the best rhythm he could have chosen – a free, often ambiguous, rhythm – to express that particular shade of feeling. The next movement is one of the most astounding ever conceived. Beginning like an airy scherzo, presently a march rhythm is introduced, and before one has realised the state of affairs we are in the midst of a positive tornado of passion. The first tunes then resume; but again they are dismissed, and it becomes apparent that the march theme is the real theme of the whole movement – that all the others are intended simply to lead up to it, or to form a frame in

which it is set. It comes in again and again with ever greater and greater clamour, until it seems to overwhelm one altogether. There is no real strength in it – the effect is entirely the result of nervous energy, of sheer hysteria; but as an expression of an uncontrollable hysterical mood it stands alone in music. It should be observed that even here Tschaikovsky's instinctive tendency to cover the intensity of his mood with a pretence of carelessness had led him to put this enormous outburst into a rhythm, that, otherwise used, would be irresistibly jolly. The last movement, too, verges on the hysterical throughout. It is full of the blackest melancholy and despondency, with occasional relapses into a tranquillity even more tragic; and the trombone passage near the end, introduced by a startling stroke on the gong, inevitably reminds one of the spirit of Mozart's *Requiem*.

The whole of this paper might have been devoted to a discussion of the technical side of Tschaikovsky's music, for the score of this symphony is one of the most interesting I know. It is full of astonishing points, of ingenious dodges used not for their own sake, but to produce, as here they nearly always do, particular effects; and throughout, the part-writing, the texture of the music, is most masterly and far beyond anything Tschaikovsky achieved before. For instance, the opening of the last movement has puzzled some good critics, for it is written in a way which seems like a mere perverse and wasted display of skill. But let anyone imagine for a moment the solid, leaden, lifeless result of letting all the parts descend together, instead of setting them, as Tschaikovsky does, twisting round each other, and it will at once be perceived that Tschaikovsky never knew better what he was doing, or was more luckily inspired, than when he devised the arrangement that now stands. Much as I should like to have debated dozens of such points, it is perhaps better, after all, just now to have talked

principally of the content of Tschaikovsky's music; for, when all is said, in Tschaikovsky's music it is the content that counts. I might describe that content as modern, were it not that the phrase means little. Tschaikovsky is modern because he is new; and in this age, when the earth has grown narrow, and tales of far-off coasts and unexplored countries seem wonderful no longer, we throw ourselves with eagerness upon the new thing, in five minutes make it our own, and hail the inventor of it as the man who has said for us what we had all felt for years. Nevertheless, it may be that Tschaikovsky's attitude towards life, and especially towards its sorrows – the don't-care-a-hang attitude – is modern; and anyhow, in the sense that it is so new that we seize it first amongst a hundred other things, this symphony is the most modern piece of music we have. It is imbued with a romanticism beside which the romanticism of Weber and Wagner seems a little thin-blooded and pallid; it expresses for us the emotions of the over-excited and over-sensitive man as they have not been expressed since Mozart; and at the present time we are quite ready for a new and less Teutonic romanticism than Weber's, and to enter at once into the feelings of the brain-tired man. That the *Pathetic* will for long continue to grow in popularity I also fully expect; and that after this generation has hurried away it will continue to have a large measure of popularity I also fully expect, for in it, together with much that appeals only to us unhealthy folk of to-day, there is much that will appeal to the race, no matter how healthy it may become, so long as it remains human in its desires and instincts.

MUSIC IN TORONTO

Joyce Atkins

ANY true music-lover will smell out music in the most unlikely places. He is guided by the same unfailing instinct as the book-lover, who, set down in a strange city, will find his way without hesitation to the best second-hand book-shop, and pick out from among the dusty shelves the book he has been seeking for years.

People will tell you that there is no music in Canada – a vast country, mostly covered in snow, and quite uncultured. Your music-lover on arrival there, however, will cock his ears and wait, and presently his instinct will lead him, as it led me, to Toronto.

Toronto has the reputation of being the most musical city in Canada – or so the Torontonians will tell you. The inhabitants of Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver would very likely disagree, for in each large city that you visit in Canada you are told that here, and here only you will find the largest hotel in the British Empire, the finest street-cars, the biggest departmental stores, etc. So, no doubt, in Montreal you would be told that *their* Symphony Orchestra was bigger and better in every way than the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and that there was far more music going on in Montreal in one week than you would find in Toronto in a whole season.

Canadians and Americans seem to find it difficult to understand that the average Englishman is more interested in the quality of a thing than in its size, though it was a Canadian who said to me, apropos of music in Toronto: 'What we lack here is not quantity, but *quality*.' I think

perhaps he was right. Certainly it would be difficult to believe that there is any other city, except New York, where one can hear as *much* music as in Toronto.

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan, and occasional guest conductors), gives about seventy-five concerts in a season – twenty-four Subscription Concerts (given fortnightly on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings), twenty-six 'Pop' Concerts (conducted by Assistant Conductor Paul Scherman, and presenting as the name implies, a more 'popular' type of music), ten concerts for young people, and other concerts including five in other Ontario cities, five full length evening concerts for pupils of Toronto and district high schools, and five matinees for public school children, sponsored by the Board of Education. In addition to forty one-hour broadcasts for schools, the orchestra also does broadcasts sponsored by the Ontario Department of Education direct to schools. Other broadcasting activities include fourteen Subscription Concert broadcasts over the C.B.S. Dominion Network, and twenty-six 'Pop' Concert broadcasts sponsored by the Robert Simpson Co. Ltd.

The artists engaged to appear as soloists with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra are usually the best available. In the 1948/49 Season, the list included William Primrose, Malcuzynski, Marcel Grandjany, Clifford Curzon, Rubinstein, and Heifetz. The 1949/50 list includes Dame Myra Hess, Moiseiwitsch, Claudio Arrau, Yehudi Menuhin, Pierre Fournier, etc. The orchestras, under Sir Ernest MacMillan, is competent and effective, though seldom inspiring. It has not yet attained the standard of the best English and European orchestras, though I think it has the capacity to do so eventually.

International Artists present two Concert Series during the Season – the Master Piano Series, and the Musical

Highlights. In the 1948/49 Season, these included such artists as Brailowsky, Michelangeli, Moiseiwitsch, Claudio Arrau, and Horowitz, Lauritz Melchior, Marian Anderson and the Vienna Choir Boys. Messrs. International Artists append to each of their programmes a Musical Knowledge Quiz in which the audience is invited to compete, with an alluring first prize of two complimentary tickets for the following Season. The questions asked are, roughly, on the following lines:

1. *True or False?* (a) Leonardo da Vinci was a composer. (b) Victor Herbert was once first 'cellist at the Metropolitan.

2. *Who composed the following compositions?* (a) When Johnny Comes Marching Home. (b) Lincoln Portrait. (c) Death and the Maiden. (d) Fêtes.

3. *What famous contemporary pianist travels with a diplomatic passport?*

4. *What famous soprano sang 'Vissi d'arte' stretched face downwards on the floor?*

There are ten questions of this type. The audience is requested 'not to write during the performance', but this does not prevent frantic rustling of paper, and heated discussions carried on in sibilant whispers as to whether Beethoven was deaf, blind or insane. So great indeed is the absorption of some people in the Musical Quiz that one cannot help feeling doubtful about their ability to answer the question – who was the soloist at to-night's concert?

In the Eaton Auditorium are presented three Series of a more 'popular' nature under the headings – 'Thursday Concert Series', 'Thursday Artists Series', and 'Musical Arts Series'. The Eaton Auditorium, on the top floor of one of Toronto's largest departmental stores, is the most attractive concert hall in the city. It is modern, clean, artistic in

design, and the seats are very comfortable – in striking contrast to Massey Hall (home of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra), which is ugly, antiquated and extremely uncomfortable except on the ground floor, where a new type of seating accommodation has recently been installed.

The Subscription Concerts, the International Artists Series and the Eaton Auditorium Series are all advertised in advance and one may subscribe to them if one wishes. This, however, is only about a tenth of the music which is offered in Toronto during the Season. There are usually several performances of Opera in the Eaton Auditorium by the Royal Conservatory Opera, with the Opera Orchestra of the Royal Conservatory brilliantly conducted by Nicholas Goldschmidt, and the Stage Direction in the capable and energetic hands of Herman Geiger-Torel. There are the annual performances of *Messiah* (usually three or four), and special concerts by the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Jewish Folk Choir, as well as many extra concerts and recitals by well-known and by lesser-known artists. For those who prefer chamber music, there are the Wednesday Five O'Clocks (concerts which take place in the Hall of the Royal Conservatory), and the concerts organised by the 'Friends of Great Music'. On Sunday afternoons there are free recitals in the Art Gallery. I do not think it would be exaggerating to say that there is a concert of some kind somewhere in Toronto every night in the week during the Season.

The difficulty which faces the discriminating concert-goer is how to pick the best concerts and avoid the almost inevitable 'clashes'. A glance down the 'entertainments' page of the daily newspaper on any day of the week is quite bewildering. One would like to subscribe to the Toronto Symphony Concerts because by so doing one saves quite a few dollars, but one hesitates because, although

the artists are announced, no programmes are published in advance. Fortunately the Massey Hall is so vast that except in the case of extremely popular artists like Horowitz, Rubinstein or Heifetz, one can usually obtain a seat in the gallery at a dollar (the cheapest seat), on the night of the concert.

For the average Canadian, of course, there is no problem. Music in both Canada and America is highly commercialised, and the 'star' system seems to be almost as much in force as it is in the film world. Thus, for the concert-goer in Toronto, it is enough to know that Horowitz will appear on such and such a date, and the money is put down without question. Horowitz is 'tops'. The advertisements say so, and it would not matter whether he played Chopin Nocturnes, Beethoven Sonatas, Bach Fugues, Liszt Rhapsodies, or Rubinstein's *Melody in F*. The Canadian goes to 'see' Horowitz rather than to 'hear' music.

The programmes played by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra are similar to what one might expect to find in a provincial town in England – Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart predominating, with a few compositions (not without interest) by modern Canadian composers, and occasionally modern British composers, who seem to be well known, and, on the whole, well liked. One rarely finds anything which might be called 'adventurous', though the first performance of the Sixth Symphony of Vaughan Williams in January, 1949, was probably quite an adventure for Toronto audiences. Sir Ernest MacMillan introduced the work with a short speech, and the performance was enthusiastically applauded. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that in a poll held by the American magazine *Musical America,* to determine which was the best new work broadcast in 1948, this particular symphony came out top of the list.

One of the best performances I heard by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra was when, with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, they presented William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. Sir Ernest MacMillan is at his best in choral work, and on this occasion he rose to great heights. The hall was crowded and the work obviously had a powerful effect on the audience. I heard such remarks afterwards as: 'Shattering!' 'Wonderful!' 'Something to remember ...' 'Thrilled to the depths of my soul!', etc. Under the heading 'Mendelssohn Choir Hits New Peak in Artistry', the musical critic of the *Globe and Mail,* after praising the performance in glowing terms said: 'More than one listener expressed the pride and joy of feeling that a work representing England's contemporary prowess in music was upheld with distinction by the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, which has grown in the tradition of British choral music.' Walton's music is well known and much appreciated in both Canada and America. I was discussing his Quartet with Shepphard Lehnhoff, violist of the Fine Arts Quartet of Chicago, after a performance given in the Spring Fesitval of the 'Friends of Great Music'. He said, of Walton: 'Yes *Sir!* He's a *deucedly* good composer!'

The 'Friends of Great Music', described in its programmes as 'a non-profit organization inaugurated in 1945 to present outstanding music performed by outstanding artists', is run by a young enthusiast named Victor Mann as a spare-time hobby. It is the only organization in Toronto which presents really first-rate chamber music, and it is also the only organization which publishes its programmes in advance. The taste, discrimination, skill and knowledge displayed in the choice and arrangement of these programmes should be a lesson to all concert promoters in the city. Mr. Mann has high ideals. There is no pandering to 'popular taste'. There are no encores (the

vice of Toronto concert-goers). After the music has started, nobody is allowed to enter. This rule is so strongly enforced that on one occasion two innocent young men who had offered to act as ushers and were determined to do their duty to the utmost, fiercely refused admittance to Sir Ernest MacMillan, who was made to wait, with other late-comers, in the foyer.

Since its inaugural concert with Schnabel as soloist 'Friends of Great Music' has presented such artists as Szigeti, Horszowski, Primrose, Petri, Kahn, the Fine Arts Quartet, the Budapest Quartet, and the Alberneri Trio, playing music of the highest quality. Unfortunately there is not a very large audience for this type of music in Toronto. Canadians, on the whole, prefer something a little more spectacular. Nevertheless, the 'Friends of Great Music' has its band of faithful followers who can always be relied upon to form the nucleus of an audience. The main difficulty that Mr Mann faces is a financial one. There is no Arts Council in Canada to back enterprising young concert promoters. Expenses are always high, and even a full house is not a complete guarantee against financial loss. Yet Mr Mann struggles bravely on, engaging his own artists, doing his own publicity, standing his own losses. He has his reward in his own quiet way, and one cannot but admire his courage in this pioneer work.

It is easy to sneer at the Canadians, to deplore their ignorance and lack of taste, but one must remember that Canada is a young country and has been too much occupied until now with pioneering work of another kind to have had the time to explore the world of music and the arts. A large proportion of the population of Toronto seems to believe that nothing can possibly be worth while which does not bring in dollars, and considers listening to music a complete waste of time. Nevertheless, the tremendous

musical activity which goes on there is a sign that more and more people are becoming aware of the cultural side of life and its value in the spiritual development of a country; but it will obviously take time for them to develop their taste and to escape from the tyranny of the 'advertised product'. Meanwhile, so long as there are people who care so much about music that they will go out and engage their own artists and stand their own losses, as Mr Mann is doing, I think it hardly fair to say that there is 'no music in Canada'.

MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA

Franz Holford
Editor of *The Canon* – Australian Journal of Music

SOME years ago a number of aborigines attended a performance of *The Mikado* in Sydney. There was a flash from a reporter's camera as they entered the theatre, and the following morning their photograph appeared in the papers. As a matter of interest I sent a copy to a well-known European conductor, and was astonished to receive the following advice in reply: 'I have always thought Australia barely civilised. It is obviously too early for you to expect anything cultural in such a place. Your musical enthusiasm will be worn down and suffocated.'

My whimsical communication had evidently been misconstrued; in fact it only lent support to my friend's already grave misgivings about the cultural backwardness of Australia generally. Until quite recently, however, a similar view has found acceptance among most people living beyond the waters of the Pacific. And this is understandable when one considers that, as far as the older world is concerned, not more than a handful of years separates Australia from complete oblivion, and that the year which saw the birth of Beethoven also saw the discovery of this continent by Cook. Australia has occupied, in fact, only a very brief space in time's saga – she is only just settling into the world's mighty story and identifying herself as a character of some consequence.

The size of Australia, in terms of square mileage, is 2,974,581. Compare this area with the 50,874 square miles allotted to England and the difference is seen to be con-

siderable. Then there is the small island of Tasmania which, although 195 miles distant from the mainland, is still an active participant in Australian musical life. These figures are of particular interest when we realise that to cover such vast distances with symphony orchestras, recitalists and theatre companies presents a major transport problem.

While agreeing, however, that Australia is very young and, indeed, very large, the reader should not imagine her as nothing but an awkward child. Taking into account the short time that Australia has been conscious of music, it must be allowed that she has progressed rapidly in her discrimination and use of it.

Consider, for instance, the achievements in the orchestral field. The orchestra, as Australia knows it to-day, has not been functioning for more than fifteen years; and, even then, it has not until recently become an established unit throughout the Commonwealth. In 1934, when Sir Hamilton Harty visited Australia, he was virtually the first overseas conductor to tour the country giving orchestral concerts in the capital cities. Despite the parlous state of orchestral performance at that time, Harty had great hopes for the future, and his prophetic dreams have in many ways been realised. The impetus which he gave to regular, serious orchestral playing in 1934 was reinforced the following year when Dr Edgar L. Bainton, then Director of the New South Wales State Conservatorium, revived the New South Wales State Orchestra, kept it groomed, and gave a number of stimulating concerts. In these he had the subsidy of the State Government, which materially supported the orchestra until the Australian Broadcasting Commission stepped forward a year or so later. During the last two years our orchestral life has further benefited from the activity of Eugene Goossens, who has done much towards enlivening

the musical interest and developing a higher degree of efficiency among the players – particularly in Sydney, where Goossens is resident conductor as well as Director of the Conservatorium.

A rapid survey of the present orchestral position shows that there are six principal orchestras: the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Eugene Goossens with Joseph Post as associate conductor), the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (conducted by J. Farnsworth Hall), the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (no conductor appointed), the Perth Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Henry Krips), and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (conducted by Kenneth Murison-Bourne). Each of these units is virtually under the direction of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and it is to the Commission's credit that these orchestras have been employed not only in studio and city concerts, but in frequent tours of the large country towns and outlying suburbs adjoining the metropolis.

In addition to the conductors resident with the state orchestras, there are a number of others – Sir Bernard Heinze, Percy Code, Clive Douglas, Dr Edgar Bainton and Harry Hutchins – who direct studio and concert performances and play an active part in encouraging the ever-growing public response to orchestral music. Of these, Sir Bernard Heinze has worked the most consistently for music over the last twenty-five years, and it is gratifying that his service should be recognised, in his anniversary year, by the honour of a knighthood. It was Sir Bernard who, with the help of the A.B.C., inaugurated a series of orchestral concerts, presented free to the school-children of Australia. Year by year, these concerts still attract fresh generations of enthusiastic youngsters, who listen attentively as Sir Bernard conducts them on a walk through the orchestra

and comments, charmingly and lucidly, on the works to be performed. It is not much to say, indeed, that for many thousands of young people Sir Bernard Heinze is the father of music.

Sir Bernard Heinze was invited by the A.B.C. to accept the permanent conductorship of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, but he declined the invitation. He is, however, acting conductor of the Orchestra pending the appointment of a permanent conductor. He is also Ormond Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne. Incidentally, a new chair of music has been created in the University of Sydney and it is occupied by Professor Donald Peart.

A further significant development, made possible by Sir Bernard and the A.B.C., are the Youth Concerts. These have played a vital part in promoting an intelligent and discriminating approach among youthful concert-goers – all of them below the age limit of 25. In New South Wales the concerts begin about 6.30 p.m., and continue until nine. In Melbourne they gravitate to the more normal concert hour of eight o'clock; and the times vary, I fancy, in the other states. The concerts are all fully subscribed – the cost of a single season ticket being 9/6 – and in the eastern states alone the number of subscribers far exceeds seven thousand.

This, then, is the foundation on which the future of Australia as a musical nation is being based. At the Children's Concerts, the impressionable mind of the child first stirs to the questing call of music; from the child it is passed on, in turn, to the youth and the adult concert-goer. In this way the links are gradually forged in the chain of the nation's life with music.

Our most immediate need, however, is not so much for larger audiences as for a suitable hall in which to accommodate them. The Sydney Town Hall, for instance, is acoustically poor and capable of seating only two thousand

people. The list of patrons for the Subscription Concerts, on the other hand, more than trebles that number. Consequently, in order to satisfy the adult subscribers alone, each concert has to be given three times over. This, in an already exacting concert schedule, places undue strain on the orchestra and makes it difficult to sustain a consistently high standard of performance. Goossens, who summed up the position immediately on his arrival, lost little time in submitting a plan for a new auditorium with a seating capacity of four thousand. The building is to have adjustable interior walls, so that it may prove equally suitable as either opera house or theatre. To date, however, the proposal has not received official consideration in terms of bricks and mortar; but the need for such an auditorium is no less imperative – and not only in Sydney but in the other capitals as well.

Enough has been said of the response to orchestral music in this country. Unfortunately, the public reaction to vocal and chamber recitals is by no means equally enthusiastic. Despite the advocacy of a number of isolated groups (few of which, however, attain the balanced and unified ensemble so essential to chamber music) the Australian musical consciousness remains primarily orchestral. Of these pioneer groups of chamber music players, the Musica Viva Society is perhaps the most distinguished, touring interstate and presenting some fine recitals. Sydney may also boast of a small company of top-ranking artists – for the most part prominent members of the orchestra – who have formed two groups, the elder known as the Sinfonia da Camera and the younger comprising a string quartet, led by the concert master of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ernest Llewellyn. In Melbourne there is the Sinfonietta, a young string orchestra of fine quality, conducted by Verdon Williams; and there are various other

groups. All, however, are dependent on a more widespread public recognition before they will be able to face their future with perfect equanimity.

From the choral standpoint the position is equally serious, and there are few indications of the love for concerted vocal performance so noticeable in England. The four principal choirs are the Melbourne Philharmonic, the Hurlstone Park Choral Society (N.S.W.), the Adelaide Philharmonic and the Brisbane State Municipal Choir. Each of these gives some five or six performances annually. In Brisbane, Dr. Robert Dalley-Scarlett is working towards a renaissance of interest in choral music, and Melbourne owes a debt of gratitude to both Dr. Percy Jones and Herbert Davis. An interesting development in Sydney has been the foundation, by Oliver King, of an altruistic body known as Singers of Australia. It aims at establishing a nation-wide organisation to encourage Australian singers and promote the vocal art generally in all its branches. Since its inauguration in 1946 Singers of Australia has certainly imparted a more vigorous pulse to our insouciant choral tradition, and has brought many works before the public which would otherwise have been unknown in this country. Mention must be made of Miss Gertrude Johnson, founder and honorary director of the National Theatre Movement of Australia. Thanks to her heroic efforts, Melbourne has seen two successful seasons of opera by an Australian company. At the same time it cannot be said that there is any great opening for operatic activity at present. Neither is there any first-class theatre, although the visit of the Old Vic Company (under the auspices of the British Council) has given an astonishing impetus to this rather arid province of Australian art.

Turning to the field of composition we find that there are many composers at work, but few who write to throw away.

In other words, expert self-criticism, so conducive to concentrated effort, is not sufficiently in evidence; and Australian music, generally, is young music, still serving its apprenticeship in the school of experience and age-old competition. Since the coming of Eugene Goossens there has been increased activity, for Goossens has displayed a lively interest in Australian music, and has placed himself and his orchestra at the disposal of any composer capable of producing a score worthy of his consideration. But the goal will not be reached until greater attention is paid to the fundamentals of musical expression; not, in short, before the music written by Australian composers is sincerely felt and believed in.

A survey of the field of Australian composition presents, frankly, a sorry spectacle. Composers, in the main, are eclectic and even openly derivative. But this is to be expected from a society of creative musicians who have little or no home background in the fullest sense of the term. The only musical tradition Australia knows is that of the outer and older world. She has nothing to fall back on of her own, and cannot do otherwise than accept, for the basis of her musical speech, a diction not specifically national. Her isolation, while peaceful until the last decade or so, has tended to impede her utterance; for she has not been called upon to produce great music in the way that England and Germany have, and she is only just realising to-day the necessity for music in her national life and character.

Among the many composers now writing in Australia there are some names which may possibly be familiar to English readers. The list includes John Antill (*Corroboree*), Margaret Sutherland, Alfred Hill (compositions in all forms), Frank Hutchens, Edith Harrhy, Mirrie Hill, Raymond Hanson, Dorian le Gallienne, Robert Hughes,

Arundel Orchard, Lindley Evans, Dulcie Holland, Esther Rofe, Miriam Hyde, Horace Perkins, Brewster Jones and Clive Douglas.

To sum up: Australia, musically, is one of the most enthusiastic countries in the world. But her enthusiasm is coupled with a youthful impetuosity that inclines towards an attitude of pseudo-superiority. When her enthusiasm becomes tempered with a keener discrimination and her regrettable hostility to criticism with a willingness to accept advice, the future of Australia as a great musical nation will be assured.

NEW BOOKS ABOUT MUSIC

Ralph Hill

In his introduction to *A Music Lover's Anthology* (Winchester Publications, 12/6 net), compiled by Arthur Jacobs, Sir Malcolm Sargent says that he is always delighted and comforted when he meets someone who enthusiastically exclaims: 'I love music – but I confess I know nothing about it.' Many people say this sort of thing out of a modesty with which the musician sympathises. But if it is said with pride, one can only regret Sir Malcolm applauding so shallow a remark. As a bedside book, you will find quite a lot of amusement and interest in the bits from books, letters and poems on and about music and musicians, from which this anthology is largely compiled, and this, I imagine, is the author's intention.

One of the most important books that has been published in recent years is Adam Carse's *The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz* (Hueffer, 30/– net). Mr Carse has ransacked every available source to secure first-hand information about the constitution, strength, and personnel of the leading orchestras that flourished during the first half of the 19th century, in France, Germany, England, Italy, Central Europe, and elsewhere. He rightly stresses the importance of the nameless players who form the main body of an orchestra. The conductor and leader are usually given too much of the limelight, and the members of the orchestra are treated as if they were the human equivalent of a flock of sheep. 'Each player', he says, 'for better or for worse, contributes something to the whole, each player has a name and individuality, and it is only the combination of

so many individuals that makes possible the existence of the corporate body.'

Mr Carse also traces the history of the art of conducting, gives a lot of valuable information about the mechanism and idiosyncrasies of the instruments of the orchestra, and discusses such matters as the writing, copying, and engraving of the score and parts of orchestral music. The book is generously illustrated with reproductions of engravings and pictures and, above all, Mr Carse presents his scholarship and learning through the medium of a clear and gracious literary style.

Adam Carse has written another book on the orchestra for those who want the facts of its history, development, and technique clearly and succinctly outlined. *The Orchestra* in the *World of Music* series (Max Parrish, 7/6 net) is an excellent little book for the newcomer to music. However, I do not altogether agree with Mr Carse when he claims that the *artistic* need of the time was entirely responsible for the various stages in the development of the orchestra. While I would certainly not go so far as the other extreme expressed in the Marxian doctrine, there is no question of the fact that the social and domestic needs were every bit as responsible as the artistic needs. The early history of chamber music provides ample evidence of this.

The development of chamber music during the 17th century represents one of the most important and vital periods of musical history in Western Europe. It is, however, a study to which thorough attention in English and American musicology has been strangely remiss. Some valuable information is given in Bukofzer's recent book *The History of Rococo Music,* and now comes from America a highly specialised study, *Early Chamber Music* by Ruth Halle Rowen (Columbia University Press, London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 20/- net).

Miss Rowen has at last made accessible to the ordinary student an interesting period of musical history that has been the preserve only of the scholar. Her discussion of the fashions in composition, the characteristics and disposition of instruments, the theory and technique of continuo and figured bass, and much else beside, is a valuable contribution towards our proper understanding of the values and methods of seventeenth-century chamber music leading up to what we call the great classical period that began with Haydn and ended with Brahms.

In her opening chapter on the relationship between instrumental and vocal styles it is interesting to read that 'by the eighteenth century the instrumental medium *per se* was well clarified in the Italian and German mind, but the French persisted in leaning on vocal music to justify music with instruments. Sebastian de Brassand, for example, argued that instruments were invented either to imitate the voice artificially, to supplement its shortcomings, or to accompany and support it. For several decades, pure instrumental music was regarded with suspicion, curiously enough, because of its purity; because it could be manipulated, if the composer so desired, as an abstract idiom, complete and consistent within itself. The composer need no longer lean upon the "reproduction" or "imitation of nature", and this was a stage prop which the French were rather reluctant to discard. When verbal images were lacking, they favoured music which incorporated imitative and picturesque effects, or music dependent on attitudes of the dance. Only towards 1750 was it generally granted that sentiment could be expressed in music without words. Instrumental music was centuries old before French aesthetes and philosophers recognised it as a separate language.' That music should ever have been expected 'to tell a story' or provide a background for one, outside the

opera house or theatre, has been generally a bad influence on the art. That chamber music, with a few conspicuous exceptions, has remained 'pure' and unadulterated has been a good influence and at the same time provides the reason for its comparative unpopularity.

Another important and interesting book that also helps to fill this gap in English musical literature and supplements Miss Rowen's work is Homer Ulrich's *Chamber Music: The Growth and Practice of an Intimate Art* (Columbia University Press, London. Geoffrey Cumberlege, 32/6 net). The most valuable part of this well written and documented book is the description and analysis of the soil in which chamber music grew – the chanson, the canzone, the dance suite, the sonata da chiesa and sonata da camera, the trio sonata, and the emergence of the classical style which was brought to its heights by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. All students of musical style and form, particularly sonata-form, will find this book indispensable. The chapters on the chamber music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, on Schubert and the Romantic period, Brahms and the decline of romanticism, and on the contemporary world are excellent too. Mr Ulrich's definition of the Baroque, Roccoco, and Galant styles is also very important.

Far too many people are apt to assume that much of the music written between 1600 to 1750 in the new forms of that period is to be considered only as mere experiment. In closing his chapters relating to this period Mr Ulrich rightly observes that 'anyone who gathers from the music discussed that this period was a period of forerunners merely, of vapid experiments which produced no real music, has missed its real significance. Each of the composers in the line from Gabrieli through Frescobaldi, Vitali, Corelli, Purcell, Buxterhude, Dall'Abaco, Handel, and Bach has written music in the style of his times, has clothed

musical truth and beauty in the aesthetic apparel of his generation. That we have substituted another style for the style of these composers is in itself no guarantee that ours is superior to theirs. Styles change, inevitably, as the economic material and psychological factors of human life change. Anyone who will take the trouble to assume the aesthetic outlook and adopt the psychology of the Baroque man will find in Baroque music a source of great satisfaction ... the music cannot fail to serve the same purpose as music of every other age: to move human emotions and to inspire towards a richer life.'

A new study of Brahms by an English writer, giving a revaluation and a close analysis of the stylistic characteristics of his music, has long been overdue. I am sorry to say that, in my opinion, Peter Latham's new book *Brahms* in the *Master Musicians* series (J. M. Dent, 7/6 net) does not give all that we want. It is sound as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. Mr Latham tells the story of the composer's life and sums up his character frankly and clearly. But in the chapters discussing Brahms's music he attempts too much by reviewing almost every major work without having the necessary space at his disposal to do it thoroughly. Thus the Haydn Variations are dismissed in about ninety words, the Symphony No. 1 in C minor in about five hundred and thirty words, and the Tragic Overture gets only four lines, because the author lacks enthusiasm for it.

The old question crops up, whether Brahms deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Beethoven and Bach. Mr Latham refuses Brahms a place among such illustrious company, because he considers him to be inferior to them as a composer. But Brahms's inferiority to Beethoven, claims Mr Latham, is *not* a matter of technique: 'In his powers of organisation, his faculty for expanding an idea is at least comparable to his predecessor, and in the art of contra-

puntal manipulation he is undoubtedly Beethoven's superior.'

Why then, we may well ask, deny Brahms a place among the gods? According to Mr Latham, it is Brahms's temperament, or rather character, that is at fault and lets him down. In his beliefs and in his music, Beethoven 'was one of the most positive people who ever walked the earth. He was not an orthodox churchman, but most certainly he believed in God. His music is all assertion, his energy is volcanic, his endurance knows no limits, he always has power in reserve; he can exist for long stretches at altitudes which the rarity of the atmosphere forbids to lesser mortals. In sheer endurance Brahms is something like his equal. Few Beethoven movements exceed the first movement of Brahms's First Symphony, or the last movement of his Fourth Symphony, as regards this quality. Yet Brahms never reaches the highest summits of all because in the last resort he believes neither in God nor himself. Lacking faith he lacks confidence.'

Mr Latham offers no factual evidence to support these conclusions which are obviously the result of certain spiritual, or rather emotional, reactions. Supposing I choose to assert that in the finale of Beethoven's C minor Symphony the composer exults in his agnosticism, while in the finale of Brahms's C minor Symphony the composer reveals an experience of the Divine Presence? Can Mr Latham prove my assertion to be untrue? Of course, he cannot any more than I can disprove his equally questionable assertion concerning the spiritual reason for Beethoven's superiority over Brahms as a composer.

I venture to suggest to Mr Latham that all this is not the language of music criticism, but of mysticism or theology. It may tell us a lot about the author, but nothing we want to know about Brahms and Beethoven as musicians.

When we are assessing musical values let us, as far as it is possible, keep to facts and leave our personal fancies and beliefs out of it. I am quite aware that complete objectivity in criticism is an unattainable ideal, and that therefore every critic's evaluation is liable to be coloured to some extent by his own personal tastes. But musical taste ought not be to affected by non-musical influences of a theological, philosophical, or political nature.

Even a scholar like Professor C. M. Girdlestone in his monumental book on *Mozart's Piano Concertos* (Cassell. 25/- net) sails dangerously near the wind when he divides Mozart's slow movements into five groups with differing emotional characteristics: the galant, the romance, the dream, the meditation, and the tragic or dramatic. But these emotional interpretations are the result of Professor Girdlestone's reactions to the music and do not necessarily coincide with yours or mine.

The Professor's book is concerned largely with the full analysis of each of the twenty-three concertos, in relation both to its formal aspects and its inspirational background. In the preliminary chapters devoted to general considerations it is a pity the author does not tell us more about the origins of the concerto, particularly its connections with opera.

A word about the translation from the original French. An important book like this ought to have been rendered into decent English; as it is, punctuation and diction are slipshod, and awkwardly constructed sentences abound. Furthermore, it is annoying to read the old English term *hautboy* whenever the oboe is mentioned, and the colloquial *fiddle* for violin.

The Music Masters (Maurice Fridberg. 30/- net) is the collective title of four useful volumes devoted to the biographies of over a hundred and seventy great and near-

great composers from the sixteenth century to the present day. They include the re-issue of that well-known series of biographies, *Lives of the Great Composers*, which was originally published in one volume by Gollancz in 1935 and recently issued by Penguins in three Pelican books. The first volume of *The Music Masters*, which has just been published, takes us up to the time of Beethoven. The editor is A. L. Bacharach, while the various writers of the biographies are well-known critics and musicians.

Mention of Pelican books reminds me that A. K. Holland's admirable life of *Purcell*, with a new appendix on Purcell's parentage, and Constant Lambert's brilliant *Music Ho!* have been issued in that series. First published in 1934, when Mr Lambert was only twenty-nine years of age, *Music Ho!* displays the wisdom, knowledge, and judgment of a critic of forty-nine. It is, as Mr Lambert himself describes it, 'essentially a history of the troubled *twenties*,' but at the same time it remains to-day possibly the most searching criticism of the period that has yet been offered. Mr Lambert's literary style is as masterly and as vivid as his musical judgments are penetrating and singularly objective. He has a remarkable gift for simile and metaphor, and they pour from his pen in an unending stream illuminating complex problems and neatly clinching arguments.

Take, for example and at random, his discussion of 'synthetic' melody, where he is talking about the frequent changes of style that were so fashionable among certain composers of the twenties. He says: 'With the minor Parisian figures, the camp followers of Diaghilev, it is fairly safe to assume that the lack of individuality and desire for chic were at the back of their changes, but with Stravinsky we may charitably assume that the reasons were more technical, for to do him justice there has always been an almost hieratic earnestness about his apparently facetious technical

juggling. *Les Six* performed their little tricks with all the quips and cranks of the cheerily anecdotal nothing-up-my-sleeve type of conjurer, but Stravinsky approached his public with the pontifical solemnity of the oriental illusionist.'

To my mind, that apt and colourful simile drives home a point of criticism far more effectively than would a couple of pages of musical analysis and quotation. What Mr Lambert has to say about other eminent names of yesterday and to-day is equally revealing. His analysis of Stravinsky's style and achievements as a composer comes as a welcome and refreshing antidote to the fulsome praise that this very gifted but over-rated and wayward experimentalist in the music of our time is enjoying just now.

Besides Adam Carse's little book on the orchestra the *World of Music* series adds yet four more distinctive volumes to its list. Thomas Russell gives a clear and interesting account of *The Proms* and Martin Cooper offers a valuable study of *Opéra Comique*, which is a much neglected subject. Dr Mosco Carner writes enthusiastically, colourfully, and learnedly about the history of *The Waltz*. He traces this romantic dance from its humble origins through to the Golden Age of the Strauss family and Waldteufel and up to the more symphonic and concert conceptions of Ravel, Richard Strauss, and others. Apart from its value as entertaining reading charmingly illustrated, this book is an important contribution to the history of one of the smaller tributaries to the main-stream of music.

Elisabeth Schumann's book on *German Song* is somewhat disappointing, for it tells us little or nothing that is not easily accessible in any good dictionary or history of music. It is certainly written with the sincerity and enthusiasm of a fine artist for her art, but her criticism is often rather naïve and ill-balanced. For instance, the songs of Franz, Corne-

lius, Mahler, and Reger receive scant attention, while those of Richard Strauss receive a whole chapter of uncritical praise. The best chapter in the book, though all too short, is the one on interpretation.

Much more valuable is Lotte Lehmann's *More Than Singing* (Boosey and Hawkes, 15/6 net), in which this equally fine artist analyses from a point of view of interpretation a selection of German, French, and Russian songs. England, by the way, is represented by Dr Arne's *The Plague of Love* and the traditional *Phyllida and Corydon* and *Come let's be merry!*

Grieg, Rachmaninov, and Franck are three composers who have been strangely neglected by English writers; four new books on these composers therefore are to be welcomed. Gerald Abraham's symposium on *Grieg* in the *Music of the Masters* series (Lindsay Drummond, 10/6 net) is as well-balanced as it is comprehensive and authoritative so far as the critical essays on Grieg's music are concerned, of which I give pride of place to John Horton's 'Musical Personality and Style.' The essay on 'Grieg the Man' by Gerik Schjelderup, son of one of Grieg's first biographers, is disappointingly sketchy and surely unnecessarily short. John Culshaw's *Sergei Rachmaninov* in the *Contemporary Composers* series edited by Scott Goddard (Dobson, 8/6 net) surveys this controversial composer's life and works with enthusiasm tempered by critical judgment. John Horton's *César Franck* in *The Musical Pilgrim* series (Oxford University Press, 3/- net) is a refreshing little book containing some excellent criticism of Franck's musical style and idiom, and sympathetic analyses of the composer's more important keyboard, orchestral, and chamber compositions. I do not welcome Norman Demuth's *César Franck* (Dobson, 12/6 net): its style is slipshod and amateurish and its criticism superficial. The last paragraph in the book is typical of

Mr Demuth's loose and untidy thought: 'What Berlioz did for the orchestra and Wagner for the theatre, so did Franck for symphonic music. All three composers may be called the founders of modern music.'

Rollo Myers gives us a very valuable study of *Erik Satie* in the *Contemporary Composers* series (Dobson, 8/6 net). Satie was one of the most important figures in the development of modern French music, but his achievements as an artist are little known in England. Mr Myers writes knowledgeably and vigorously about this somewhat eccentric composer and his music. Mr Myers has also written a splendid little book on *Debussy* in the *Great Lives* series (Duckworth 4/6, net). Not only does he give a clearly and sympathetically drawn pen picture of the great French composer, but he has many interesting and perceptive things to say about Debussy's music. Unlike most of Debussy's critics, Mr Myers does not consider that in his last works the composer had written himself out. On the contrary, he suggests that Debussy was deliberately seeking to purify his style and bring it more into line with the great French tradition going back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Admirers of Benjamin Britten will find much of interest in Eric Walter White's *Benjamin Britten: A Sketch of his Life and Works* (Boosey and Hawkes, 5/- net). Mr White's problem has been to get a quart into a pint pot, and thus he has had inadequate space to do justice to the discussion of the composer's more important instrumental works, such as the *Sinfonia da Requiem* and the String Quartet No. 2.

The Making of Music is the high-sounding title of a book by Cedric Cliffe (Cassell, 12/6 net), which sets out to tell you 'how to recognise and understand orchestral music.' This book has been written 'while the author was serving as a navigator in the Royal Air Force; it has been written at odd moments in tents, messes, and dispersals with the bour-

don of Beaufighters and Mosquitos providing an obligato. By the same token, it has been written "out of the head", without any opportunity of consulting the standard books of reference. There has been some subsequent verification of titles, opus numbers and the like. But on the whole the author has deprecated any ambition to write a complete or impeccable work of reference, or to claim any measure of infallibility.' Since Mr Cliffe deals with facts as well as his own little fancies it was surely his intellectual duty to see that the former were impeccable in accuracy, particularly as it was to be assumed that his readers would be slightly more ignorant musically than himself. In technical matters Mr Cliffe's book bristles with half-truths (i.e. Bridge passage: 'a comparatively unimportant passage in a symphonic work, serving as a connecting link between two major themes') and inaccuracies (i.e. consecutive fifths: 'Two successive chords, each of which contains the interval of a fifth between the same two parts'). When Mr Cliffe indulges in criticism and sums up the stylistic characteristics of composers from Purcell to Wolf and Walton the results are unbelievedly fatuous and disgracefully misleading. Finally, Mr Cliffe's ill-digested musical knowledge is expressed in the most condescending manner and in an idiom that reeks with R.A.F.-ese. Mr Cliffe's highly specialised training as an R.A.F. navigator should have taught him that navigation, even in the art of music, is the province of the trained specialist not of the half-baked amateur.

How a trained expert sets to work to explain highly technical matters in a simple and imaginative manner to the uninitiated may be seen in Gerald Abraham's booklet *Design in Music* (Oxford University Press, 3/6 net). Professor Abraham discusses the problem of musical design and explains the nature of and the principles underlying fugue, variations, sonata, and concerto. This booklet can be read with

profit by both musician and amateur. Every amateur could not be better advised than to read Professor Abraham's booklet first and then study J. Raymond Tobin's *How to Understand Musical Form* (Boosey and Hawkes, 5/- net), which I reviewed in *Penguin Music Magazine No. 9*. These are the two best elementary books on the subject I know.

The reprints of two important books deserve mention: Gerald Abraham's *A Hundred Years of Music* (Duckworth, 21/- net), which is an invaluable history of musical style that the author suggests might well have been sub-titled, 'The Triumph, Decline, and Fall of Musical Romanticism', and Professor Donald N. Ferguson's *A History of Musical Thought* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 25/- net), which covers the whole field of music readably and learnedly. For those who are interested in modern developments I recommend Adolfo Salazar's *Music in Our Time* (The Bodley Head, 15/- net), which, although traversing a considerable part of the same ground as Professor Abraham's book, is written from another standpoint.

Music criticism first began to rear its beautiful and distinguished head in the middle of the eighteenth century. Max Graf's *Composer and Critic* (Chapman and Hall, 16/- net) reviews two hundred years of music criticism and thus presents an interesting side-light on the musical history of that period. Mr Graf, who was himself once an eminent critic in Vienna, writes with knowledge and authority of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism, particularly German and Austrian, but his treatment of the twentieth century, in both France and England, is rather cursory and less well-informed. For example, so far as England is concerned, he does not even mention the name of Edwin Evans, who had an international reputation; he merely mentions the *Musical Times* in passing; and in summing up Ernest Newman's distinguished work as a critic he says nothing of

his crowning achievement – the four-volume biography of Wagner.

Norman Demuth's *An Anthology of Musical Criticism from the fifteenth to the twentieth Century* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 12/6) runs true to the author's usual form. It is ill-balanced in selection, hasty in execution, and contains little or nothing of original research. Although epitaphs and quotations from novelists, diarists, poets, and essayists are not examples of genuine music criticism, they are all mixed up with the pronouncements of musicians and music critics. The writings of Chorley (*Athenaeum*) and Davison (*The Times*) are by no means fairly represented, and J. F. Runciman (*Saturday Review*) is entirely overlooked. The writings of several of the best critics of our own time, such as J. A. Westrup, Scott Goddard, and A. K. Holland, are omitted, while those who are included are not always represented by examples of their best work. It was unfortunate but understandable that George Bernard Shaw 'will not consent to the use of any of his writings still available in print in his own editions', and that Ernest Newman 'does not wish to appear.' That Mr Demuth should include a piece of his own on Ravel is typical of his self-importance.

Bernard Shore's *Sixteen Symphonies* (Longmans, 17/6 net) is a very handsomely-produced volume devoted to the analysis of 15 great symphonies from Haydn's No. 88 in G to Walton's Symphony, and Holst's *The Planets,* which is not a symphony at all, but a suite. The only great classical symphonist not represented is Mendelssohn, whose *Italian Symphony* would have been surely a better choice than *The Planets,* in view of the title of the volume and its contents. The analysis of each symphony is preceded by a general essay on the composer, which sets an admirable background. Mr Shore calls his book 'an orchestral musician's book.' Certainly no writer but an intelligent and

really knowledgeable orchestral musician could have given us such insight and understanding from the 'inside' – that is to say on points of interpretation. Mr Shore's wide experience as one-time principal viola of the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra makes him a unique guide in a land of musical masterpieces.

As Sir Adrian Boult points out in his Foreword, this book embodies Mr Shore's 'recollections in tranquillity'; indeed, Mr Shore expresses these recollections in the manner of a charming writer born to the art.

Unfortunately, space will permit only bare mention of Cecil's Gray's entertaining and vigorously written autobiography *Musical Chairs* (Home and Van Thal Limited, 16/- net), Daniel Gregory Mason's learned analyses of *The Quartets of Beethoven* (Oxford University Press, 21/- net) and Frank Howes's *Man, Mind, and Music* (Secker and Warburg, 12/6 net), which consists of studies in the philosophy of music and in the relations of the art to anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Mr Howes's book is as important as it is highly controversial, and therefore I propose to write an article on it in *Music 1951* for the problems involved and discussed are of permament and not merely passing interest.

As we were about to go to press I received 16 volumes of a new series of books on musical subjects entitled the *Symphonia Books* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 7/6 each). Slightly larger in size and longer in text, they are similar in format to the *World of Music* series mentioned above, but not so gorgeously illustrated – the illustrations are confined to black and white reproductions. The authors are all eminent Dutch professors and musicologists and their contributions to the series have been excellently translated by W. A. G. Doyle-Davidson, Professor of English in the University of Nijmegen. I have only had time to read four volumes: *A*

Bird's-Eye History of Music by Dr Eduard Reeser; *Gregorian Chant* by Jos. Smits Van Waesberghe; *The History of the Waltz* by Dr Eduard Reeser; and *César Franck* by Hendrik Andriessen. I highly recommend them as books of first-rate quality addressed to the intelligent music-lover rather than to the specialist. I shall have more to say about this series in *Music 1951*. R.H.

That Penguin Books should have issued a book on *The Symphony* – and a double volume at half-a-crown at that – must be taken as a measure of the present widespread demand for musical enlightenment. It is perhaps surprising that the publishers should not have thought of it before. For, after all, the symphony is the be-all and end-all of orchestral music, and, however great our delight at and interest in other forms, most of us return to the symphony as our greatest and deepest musical experience. Rightly or wrongly, an orchestral programme without a symphony in it is felt to be lacking in substance, and it surely is significant that even when there is no symphony on the bill we still like to speak of a 'symphony' concert. Penguin Books have previously proved that they have an ear for the *vox populi* – not only in matters musical – and the result in this particular case is a publication that will be most useful to a large section of concertgoers.

The Symphony, edited by Ralph Hill, is no history of the evolution of the symphony, though this is to a certain extent implicit in the chronological sequence in which the individual works are discussed. Nor would it be correct to describe it as a mere collection of glorified programme annotations. For, in addition to the Editor's general chapter on the symphony and its development, each section boasts of a special, in some cases extensive, introduction in which the composer's significance and style as a symphonist is dealt with.

The Editor has been fortunate in gathering round him a number of eminent writers who are qualified to speak with authority and conviction on their respective subjects. In fact, with one very glaring exception, the level of writing and critical comment is consistently high, though one could pick a number of holes in the actual analyses. There is variety of style and approach which adds not a little to the attractiveness of this large volume of nearly half-a-thousand pages. There is the philosophical Cecil Gray reminding us of Haydn's great pioneering in the evolution of the symphonic form; there is William McNaught putting his finger on the essential features of the Schubert symphonies and doing it with nimble wit and much verbal felicity; there is the conversational Stephen Williams breaking a lance for Schumann's neglected symphonies; there is the factual Humphrey Searle on Liszt, and on Bruckner the poetic Capell, whose essay is one of the best and fairest comments by an English writer who has gradually come to see the uneven yet indisputable genius of this Austrian symphonist. And for compression and lucidity of style A. K. Holland's chapter on the Beethoven symphonies cannot be too highly praised. One is glad, by the way, to see him avoid making heavy weather of Beethoven's own doubts as to the wisdom of the choral finale of the Ninth. Only a pedantic and formalistic approach will object to a movement which, if not in actual musical content, yet in spirit and expression provides a dramatic *dénouement* of a cathartic power that has not been equalled since. Julian Herbage and Scott Goddard write with authority and insight on Sibelius and Vaughan Williams, respectively.

That a book of so wide a scope and with a score of contributors should show some vulnerable points lies in the nature of the thing. One must point, for instance, to certain important omissions. The Editor's ruling to exclude

the symphonies of living composers under the age of sixty because 'their symphonic work is incomplete and perhaps not yet established' could surely have been relaxed in the case of Walton. His symphony is an essential landmark in English symphonic thinking and by now has become almost a 'classic.' Its exclusion seems unfair in view of the fact that two chapters are devoted to such rarely performed works as the symphonies of Rachmaninov and Bax. And why was Mahler's *Song of the Earth* left out? It is actually his Ninth Symphony and next to his Fourth happens to be his most frequently heard work, both in this country and abroad. From the general listener's point of view an analysis of it would have been preferable to the shoddy note provided by Geoffrey Sharp on the Ninth, a work whose English performances can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In the discussion of the Haydn symphonies the local Austrian aspect – an important feature of the Viennese classics – has been completely overlooked, and it surely is hyperbolic to say that '*all of them are worth performing*' (my italics). In writing on the *Military Symphony* No. 100, Mr Gray has a fanciful theory that Haydn's 'achievement of his century undoubtedly prompted the composer to a celebration of the event, with an appropriate firework display.' Haydn did nothing of the kind. The current numbering of his symphonies refers to the Breitkopf & Härtel Catalogue, and had Mr Gray consulted Haydn's own catalogue of 1805, he would have found that the *Military* is in order of composition his 112th symphony. Thus Haydn, if it ever occurred to him at all, celebrated his symphonic century with an entirely different work. Similarly, it is surprising to find so informed a writer as the Editor of *The Musical Times* tripping up over Schubert's *Unfinished*. He refers to the sketch of the Scherzo as 'too short a fragment to afford any real clue as to the quality

of the movement to follow.' The fact is that Schubert left a piano draft of the *complete* Scherzo and sixteen bars of the Trio – all published in the critical notes to the Collective Works – from which it is quite apparent that the Scherzo is in comparison with the two preceding movements a very inferior piece. *Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus!* *

However, these are minor blemishes in a book that for a ludicrously cheap price provides an excellent guide to all your favourite symphonies, and to a number of neglected ones into the bargain.

For the musical biographer there can hardly be a more rewarding subject than Liszt. His life reads like pages out of fiction, his personality shows as many facets as only a writer's imagination might have invented, and his work remains the subject of fierce controversy at times amounting to plain partisanship for and against it. Was Liszt a great figure or was he only a great actor on the romantic stage of nineteenth-century Europe? He was probably both, and judgment on him is unlikely ever to reach finality. Ralph Hill, in his *Liszt* (Great Lives, Duckworth, 4/6) is wise to skirt this controversial aspect, and, instead, concentrates on a factual and lively account, at the same time sketching in the highly interesting social background of his hero's career. First published in 1936, this handy volume has now come out in a second edition.

Mosco Carner.

* This has been corrected in the second edition.—Editor.

NEW PRINTED MUSIC

J. Raymond Tobin

DESPITE the time spent and the tears shed over the learning of Greek, Latin and the modern tongues, the second language of the Britisher is – Music. It is the only language which finds a place at every stage of our educational system, from the nursery school to the university; and it is not surprising, therefore, that the output of printed music is considerable. There are so many needs to be met, so many aspects to be covered. There is music specially designed for the development of instrumental technique and interpretative powers; and a curious breed known as 'music for recreation' though, basically, all music should be recreative. Even the output of Tin Pan Alley cannot be ignored, for some 'song hits' of yesterday are, to-day, near-national or quasi-folk songs. The recently published *Sixty Old Time Songs* (Francis Day & Hunter), for example, will arouse many a memory for music-lovers who can throw their minds back to the music halls of the time of Gus Elen, Tom Costello, Vesta Victoria and Florence Smithson. Music is needed for every instrument in the modern symphony orchestra, for pianoforte, organ and voice, and for almost every possible combination of these. Even the harmonica requires its repertoire; and, should any be disposed to smile or to sneer, it is well to recall that Darius Milhaud, one of *Les Six*, composed a suite specially for that supreme artist of the mouth-organ, Larry Adler. There is the saxophone, too. Though much abused in the dance-band world, composers from Meyerbeer onwards have made and continue to make good and artistic use of it, as witness *Concerto*

for Alto Saxophone and Strings by Phyllis Tate. This work, together with the same composer's distinctive setting for solo voices, string quartet, double-bass, bass clarinet and celesta of a poem by Sidney Keyes entitled *Nocturne*, was performed at the Cheltenham Festival; and the score, just published by the Oxford Press, confirms, through head and eye, the good impression made upon the ear. It shows a fresh facet of Miss Tate's art, with a new warmth and geniality. And certain obsolete or revived instruments, for example, recorder and harpsichord, have a current literature: Falla, Poulenc and Martinu have written concertos for the harpsichord. Reprints of non-copyright music can, on occasion, assume importance as, for instance, the new Penguin miniature scores, which claim attention by their practical format, excellent editing, good production and low price. The works published, to date, are: *Symphony in G Minor, No. 40* (K 550), Mozart; *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G*, Bach; and (in one volume) Beethoven's *Coriolan* and *Egmont* Overtures. Boosey & Hawkes provide an interesting voice from the past: an *Oboe Concerto* by Mozart which has never previously been printed and was, for long, thought to be a concerto for flute.

One other type of published music needs mention – 'arrangements' or 'transcriptions.' There is purist objection to these, but they increase the availability of music: a concerto for piano and orchestra may be made available in a reduction for the keyboard, with one pianist playing the solo part while another provides a representation of the orchestral score. Or it may be a piano arrangement of the music of a film or ballet; and, while the colour of the orchestral tone is lost, an arrangement does provide a black and white reproduction which either enables one or two players to experience the joy of music-making, or facilitates performance so that a wider audience may appreciate or

assess the music. And 'arrangement' is a two-way traffic; the suite *Kaleidoscope* by Eugene Goossens, for instance, which has, for years, delighted pianists and audiences, has been orchestrated by the composer and the score recently published by J. W. Chester, Ltd.

No mention need be made of that percentage – not inconsiderable – of the published output which from the first dot seems to have no purpose other than to swell the paper salvage drives. Fortunately, there is music which is just music and which, because it marks consolidation or advance, has significance in creative art. This is the music which is most liable to find its way to performance in concert hall, theatre and home via record and radio; and this is the music in which the readers of *Music 1950* will feel and find interest. Even this section of the printed music output is weighty so that treatment must, of necessity, be selective – and sketchy.

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Signs of the times are the popularity of orchestral music and the increasing acceptance of the values of the miniature score. The probationer-choristers in our cathedral choirs, during a period of months of enforced silence, learn much by looking and listening; and music-lovers have found, through a study of the scores of orchestral and chamber music, a new and deep joy. In the case of major compositions, publication often follows on the heels of public performance. The end of 1948 saw the *première* of Vaughan Williams's *Sixth Symphony*. This year, the Oxford Press has published a small (not quite miniature) score of the symphony. Here is music of imagination and insight, of poetry and power, planned and presented by a master of the craft. From the G.O.M. of Music (b. 1872) we move to Benjamin Britten (b. 1913), whose latest work, *A Charm of*

Lullabies, Op. 41 is a setting for voice and piano of poems from Blake to Burns. Economy of means, which is the hall-mark of the true creative artist, is apparent here. The words are set with Britten's particularly sensitive touch. Another of the younger school commanding attention is Michael Tippett, whose *Little Music* for String Orchestra is published by Schott & Co. It gives further evidence of technical advance by way of a streamlining of the size of the force employed; and from the same publishing house comes Hindemith's *Sixth String Quartet.*

We think of Gordon Jacob as a fine craftsman and skilful colourist. Few composers so consistently make rewardful, arresting and novel use of the orchestral palette. This command of colour is evident even in his *A Symphony for Strings* (Novello). He reconciles a respect for tradition with a pioneering spirit; he is one of our true progressives – an expansionist. The same composer's *Concerto for Bassoon and Strings* (Joseph Williams) is published in an arrangement for bassoon and piano; it is a most attractive work and the musical as well as the technical possibilities of the solo instrument are delightfully displayed. Jacob's productivity is impressive and he gives no sign of over-writing. His *Prelude, Passacaglia and Fugue* (Joseph Williams) for violin and viola, first performed by Frederick Grinke and Bernard Shore at the R.A.M. in 1948, and broadcast last July by David Martin and Max Gilbert, is, despite its ponderous title, most attractive music. And it is good, too, to have the full score of Alan Rawsthorne's overture *Street Corner* (Oxford U.P.). This work, written during the war and recorded by H.M.V. in 1946, is a tone-poem of the town. It conjures up a picture of a busy industrial city in the North, with its bustling, jostling crowd, its lights and shadows, its grimness and gaiety, its street music – maybe a Salvation Army Band playing a vigorous, vulgar tune. But

this is a deep-sighted, deep-etched impression and not a photographic reproduction; it conveys the urgency, tenseness and speed of everyday existence at work or play, and the nocturnal effect is quite Whistler-ish. The score is also available of Rawsthorne's *Concerto for String Orchestra*, which received its performance at this year's Proms. Robert Groves has reduced the score of *Concerto in D for Bassoon and Orchestra* by Eric Fogg (Elkin). This bassoon and piano version makes the right approach: it sets out to catch the character and colour of the score rather than to write deftly for the keyboard. Fogg, whose life and high promise were so tragically ended, in 1939, by a tube train, was a true and sensitive musician; and his music has a rhythmic purpose which seems to rob extreme dissonance of its harsher edge. The printing is facsimile: more personal and intimate than normal type, and so neat that it is very easy to read. The score of a Concert Suite from the ballet music *Miracle of the Gorbals* by Arthur Bliss (Novello) is an elegant production which creates a sense of pride in both British composition and music publishing. It is a joy to the sense of sight and touch, just as surely as its powerful and pictorial sounds are a joy to the ear.

Two English composers celebrated their seventieth birthday last year – John Ireland and Cyril Scott. Both played a prominent part in the renaissance of British music which marked the turn of the century. Both took harmonic progression out of its strait-jacket: Ireland employed an original scale which gave all his work a fingerprint, while Scott indicated and anticipated almost every modern harmonic expression witnessed during the last forty years. Both have maintained a measured yet distinctive productivity; and both are represented in the publications of the year. Ireland's first orchestral work, *The Forgotten Rite*, was composed in 1913; it is enjoying increased performance-

frequency and is now available as a miniature score (Augener), and his latest work for orchestra, *Satyricon* Overture, has already enjoyed many performances under the baton of Beecham, Boult, Sargent and others. The score is published by Joseph Williams Limited. Cyril Scott's *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* in a reduction for oboe and piano, and a two-piano version of his popular *Lotus Land* have been published by Elkin. Two-piano works, original and transcriptions, are on the increase. Herbert Murrill has made excellent arrangements of *Old Sir Faulk* and the *Swiss Yodelling Song* from Walton's *Façade* (O.U.P.). These arrangements do the difficult thing which, however, is the only justification for employing four hands and two keyboards – they retain the spirit of the music and increase the extent and variety of the tonal range. Each fits so perfectly in all its parts and 'comes-off' so excellently that the arrangement would seem to be Walton's original conception. From the publishing house of Curwen come two-piano versions which have a fascinating link with the past, namely Warlock's popular *Capriol Suite,* based on Arbot's *Orchesgraphie* (1592), and the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* by Vaughan Williams, both skilfully arranged by Maurice Jacobson. Jacobson is a writer of distinction and imagination. His own composition for piano duet, *Mosaic* (Curwen) is marked by the basic qualities of ideas, taste, judgment, and artistry; this work shows his skill in patterning the finely-drawn phrase, and in shaping music which possesses and demands technique and imagination. Few composers can secure greater effect from the keyboards than Arthur Benjamin. The two-piano version of his *Two Jamaican Street Songs* and *Caribbean Dance* are fascinating slices of life in colourful sound. On the bigger scale, we have Béla Bartók's *Second Piano Concerto* (Boosey & Hawkes) brought within the reach of two pianos. Its chromaticism

has the freshness and warmth of the modern romantic. The concerto has attractiveness coupled with the stability which is the possession of all music which has a clearly-defined, chordal basis.

In the choral field, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Dominici* by Edmund Rubbra is published by Lengnick & Co., who have recently acquired the rights of Rubbra's Symphonies 1 to 4. Rubbra is regarded by many as the rival of Walton for the leadership of the younger school of composition. He certainly has great skill in the piling-up of orchestral tone and colour, but it is in vocal music such as the *Missa* that strength and delicacy of texture are fully revealed. For the tercentenary of John Blow, the Lyre Bird Press have issued a magnificent new edition, by Anthony Lewis, of *Venus and Adonis*. In 1939 the first part of Dyson's *Quo Vadis* was performed at the Three Choirs Festival and, this year, the complete work was performed at Hereford and the vocal score published (Novello). Dyson stems from the finest traditions of English choral music and it may be that his influence is greater and more enduring than his music. The vocal score, with orchestral parts arranged as 3-stave organ part of *Requiem* by Maurice Duruflé (United Music Publishers) proves this French work to be of first importance; and, as it becomes known through performance, it may well rival the work of Fauré. The same publishers have also issued Duruflé's *Scherzo,* which was heard during the Edinburgh Festival, and also the two Suites from Albert Roussel's ballet *Bacchus et Ariadne*.

Possibly as a brake upon the wildfire popularity of the concerto, composers this year have shown a discreet, discerning enthusiasm for the sonatina. Rawsthorne's latest works are a *Sonatina for Piano* (O.U.P.) and a *Sonata for Cello and Piano,* both of which are imaginative in scope and personal in utterance. The chromaticism is inherent and not

a dressing-up of dull diatonicism. Gordon Jacob's *Sonatina for Viola (or Clarinet) and Piano* (Novello) has the shapely strength one associates with Jacob; and the alternative clarinet shows that the upper reaches of the viola are employed – and with good effect. Mervyn Roberts's *Sonatina for Piano* (Novello) has a degree of distinction which leads one to make a note of the composer's name. Thomas B. Pitfield who, by the way, publishes through Francis Day & Hunter a diverting and delightful album of linocuts and limericks on music, *Limusicks,* has a *Sonatina in C* for piano, published by Augener. Pitfield has great variety and ingenuity in development, which results in economy of means, but he never allows this skill to let him worry a theme until it is threadbare. G. A. Collings gives us a *Sonatina for Violin and Viola* (J. W. Chester Ltd.) which explores effectively new tone effects. Each of these sonatinas proves that Ravel banished the bad odour which attached to the sonatina form; and in all, the diminutive can be applied, in the main, only to the length of the work.

Works which are replete with musical insight and interest are the *String Quartets Nos. 14 and 15* by Darius Milhaud (United Music Publishers Ltd.). These two miniature scores are of intriguing interest. They provide the perfect amalgam of deep artifice and true art; for, when the two quartets are played together, we have an *Octet,* and the result proves that one and one may sometimes make more than two.

The Russians have great gifts in the creation of pictures in sound and *Le Monde en Vitrine Showcase* by Alexandre Tcherepnine (Boosey & Hawkes) will be welcomed. In this suite Tcherepnine set down, in 1946, his musical impressions of various *objets d'art* in the showcase of Madame Amos in Paris. Immense rhythmic flexibility is allied with freedom in tonality.

York Bowen's skill as solo pianist and his versatility – he

once gave a concert of his own compositions at which he performed on piano, French horn and viola – obscures his great gifts in composition. Few composers for the keyboard can write more beautifully or effectively; and these gifts are abundantly shown in the piano pieces *Three Novellettes* (O.U.P.); and *Eight Inventions* (Elkin). Bowen's imaginative touch never extends to the titling of his music. As we still live in the warm glow of the Chopin centenary year, attention should be directed to the first-rate complete edition of the works of the poet of the piano which is being issued, serially, by British & Continental Music Agencies Ltd. York Bowen is doing the editing in scholarly, thorough fashion.

The music of American composers makes steady, if slow, headway. The name of Samuel Barber occurs with increasing frequency in personal performances and reproduction. The scores of his *First Essay* for Orchestra and *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* have been published by Chappell & Co Ltd. These works were composed in 1937 and 1939 respectively, but the concerto is a revised version; they serve to show the giant strides Barber has taken along the road to recognition – the widening of technique and maturity of thought and expression. Lukas Foss's *String Quartet in G;* David's Diamond's *Symphony No. 4;* Virgil Thomson's orchestral suite *Louisiana Story* and *The Seine at Night,* an orchestral tone picture, all prove the variety and fertility of creative minds across the pond – and all are published on this side by Chappell.

A final word devoted to songs. The fine edition of *Schubert Songs* with English text by Richard Capell has been further enriched. The Music Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* contrives to catch the spirit of the German poets in English which fits the music like a glove (Augener). *Chansons de Ronsard* for voice and piano by Darius Milhaud with English text by Henry Pleasants (Boosey & Hawkes) is rewarding

material for the listener, if the singer is blessed with the great trinity – tone, technique, temperament. *Selected Songs* by Serge Rachmaninov (Boosey & Hawkes): if singers are wise enough to know that music-lovers will be interested in music by Rachmaninov other than the C minor Piano Concerto, here is admirable material: a dozen numbers ranging from Op. 4 to Op. 34. Schubert's *To Music* is enjoying renewed popularity – if one can speak of the popularity of a lovely and immortal song such as *An die Musik*. O.U.P. publish a version with the original German text by Schober and an English translation by Sir Steuart Wilson. The conflict which is perhaps inevitable in translation between *sense* and *sound* is here very happily avoided.

NEW GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

Richard Bryceson

> 'Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records'.
> *Shakespeare:* HAMLET

To attempt a survey of records issued during the last six months or so is a formidable task; and one wonders if it is possible to do justice to what seems to be a real effort by the gramophone companies to enrich the recorded repertoire.

The H.M.V. Special List fills a real gap for music lovers, and gives confidence to those who feel that the years which gave us outstanding Society Issues and Connoisseur Catalogues are now to be challenged. I have heard rumours that other companies are to follow this admirable example and I hope this is so. The catalogue, obtainable from The Gramophone Company, Ltd., Hayes, Middlesex (Price 3d.), is well worth getting and, in general, the records appear to be chosen for their excellent reproduction as well as for their musical value.

An important point to remember is, I think, that it is a 'special list.' It does not necessarily contain new recordings but records that are of special interest. They range from Monteverdi's Madrigals, performed by a vocal and instrumental ensemble under the direction of Nadia Boulanger, to Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin played by Yehudi Menuhin. Incidentally, I am glad to see the reappearance of some notable records from the old 'connoisseur' catalogue.

I do not propose to go into this 'special list' at length but

I must mention some features of it that have given me particular pleasure.

The complete recording of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, conducted by the composer, made I believe seven or eight years ago, may be disappointing in some ways, but surely it bears authenticity and the cast, which includes Beniamino Gigli, Bruna Rasa and Gino Bechi, sing with an infectious enthusiasm which is so necessary with a work of this kind. The orchestra and chorus are particularly good.

The sensitive playing of the Pro Arte in Fauré's Quartet, Op. 121, is well captured on the records and this, together with Menuhin's record of the Bartók Unaccompanied Violin Sonata and also Brahms's Cello Sonata in E Minor, Op. 38, played by Piatigorsky and Rubinstein, appealed to me amongst the instrumental records.

An exceptional issue both for performance and recording is Poulenc's setting of Paul Eluard's poems, *Tel jour, Telle Nuit*, made by Pierre Bernac and the composer.

The symphonic and orchestral choice is a large one. There are Bruckner and Mahler Symphonies and there are gems such as Rossini's delightful Overture, so seldom heard, to *Il Signor Bruschino*. But I will leave you to browse over this 'special list' and pass on to the normal issues.

For Schubert devotees January was a memorable month. Decca gave us the Octet in F Major, Op. 166, played by members of The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, and Columbia gave us the 'Great' C Major Symphony by the whole Vienna orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. The Octet was beautifully played and the recording did the performance full justice. The Symphony was well performed and recorded too, but there are other good recordings of this work which many gramophone enthusiasts will not wish to abandon in favour of this.

Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, recorded by the Con-

certgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam under Eduard van Beinum, was also issued in that month by Decca, and seems to be a very fine recording of a fascinating work.

The month's operatic records made an attractive collection. Outstanding were Nemorino's romance *Una furtiva Lagrima* from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, sung by Ferruccio Tagliavini, and two records of music from Verdi's *Simone Boccanegra* made by the artists who were singing in the Sadler's Wells production.

February was a month that gave high hopes. I was delighted to see included in the H.M.V. lists recordings of John Ireland's *These Things Shall Be*, Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony and a new recording of Debussy's *La Mer*. I must, however, confess disappointment. The Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli seem to rush John Ireland's magnificent setting of John Addington Symond's poem. And as for hearing the words, I defy any listener to these records to know, unless they had read the text or had it by them, what it was all about.

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, by The New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodzinski, was disappointing for technical reasons. This seemed to me to be American orchestral recording at its worst – shrill and brittle.

Ernest Ansermet and L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande contributed the new *La Mer*. Again I blame the recording for my disappointment. Incidentally, the score used is the revised one of 1909.

February was not an entirely disappointing month, as I may have led you to believe. There was an exhilarating performance by Heifetz, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under its conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, of Mozart's Concerto in D (K. 218) and a first recording of Mozart's Sonata in B Flat (K. 333) by Lili Krauss. This may

not be one of Mozart's most interesting sonatas, but it is beautifully played.

What a pity there is so little of Lord Berners's music recorded! The three excerpts from his ballet *Les Sirènes*, played by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Ernest Irving, are wholly delightful, and the performers seem to be enjoying the pieces as much as the listeners will enjoy them.

In spite of the success and sensation that Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* made on its first production, we have had to wait nearly twenty-five years before any of this music has become available on records in this country. In March our patience was rewarded. Gertrude Ribla (soprano) and the Philadelphia Orchestra, under its conductor Eugene Ormandy, gave us the concert 'Fragments from the Opera.' On the whole the records are good and the atmosphere of the work has been well caught.

Benjamin Britten's setting of the *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, which he made in 1946, were also issued in that month. Britten accompanies Peter Pears, to whom the work is dedicated, and although the recording is patchy the discs are well worth having.

Mozart's *Masonic Funeral Music* (K. 477), which he wrote in memory of two brother Masons, made its record début in March played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. It is an excellent recording and performance of some lovely music, which, for some reason or other, has been consistently neglected.

March for me was an outstanding month. We also had an excellent performance by the Augusteo Orchestra, Rome, under Victor de Sabata of Debussy's *Fêtes* (No. 2 of *Nocturnes*), and a record by L'Orchestre de la Société du Conservatoire de Paris, conducted by Charles Munch, of Saint-Saëns's *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, which is a perfect example not

only of the finest French style of wood-wind playing, but of as near-perfect recording as one can ever hope to hear.

A new recording of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* by The London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir under Ernest Ansermet also appeared in that month. As this work is scored for wind, percussion and only 'cellos and basses in the string group, and contains important parts for piano and harp, it is a real test for the engineers. Decca passes this test with honours.

April 29 being Sir Thomas Beecham's 70th birthday, H.M.V. headed its April supplement with a special album to commemorate the event. Not part of the album, but no doubt part of the company's birthday present to Sir Thomas, was his recording of Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* with Paul Tortelier ('cello) and Leonard Rubens (viola). *Don Quixote* is well recorded and Tortelier plays very beautifully. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which played *Don Quixote,* also plays under its conductor the works in the Birthday Album. Mozart's Divertimento No. 2 in D (K. 131) – in which is included the Menuetto and Trio from Divertimento No. 15 in B Flat (K. 287) – Haydn's Symphony No. 40 in F and the Overture and Pastoral Symphony from *Messiah*. All these works are well played in the true Beecham manner.

Among the instrumental records issued in April there is a good performance of Hugo Wolf's *Italian Seranade,* played by the Schneiderhan Quartet; a magnificent recording by Solomon of Beethoven's Sonata in C Op. 2 No. 3; a first-class recording by Szymon Goldberg (violin) and Gerald Moore (piano) of Handel's Sonata No. 4 in D; and a lively interpretation of Milhaud's popular suite for two pianos, *Scaramouche,* played by Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick.

In May the Griller String Quartet gave us a very good performance of Haydn's *The Seven Last Words From The*

Cross. This very moving work, which Haydn wrote at the request of a Canon of the Cathedral of Cadiz, is seldom performed these days and I welcome the enterprise which gives it us now.

Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor, played by Gioconda de Vito with the London Chamber Orchestra conducted by Anthony Bernard, and with Geraint Jones playing a continuo on the harpsichord, is a real 'must' for record collectors. The recording is as good as the performance and altogether one feels that everybody concerned with the making of these discs was really inspired.

Decca and Columbia both issued Sibelius's Second Symphony in May – Columbia with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy, and Decca with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Basil Cameron. I do not hesitate to say that I found the American recording and performance well below the standard of the English one; and Basil Cameron is to be congratulated on the fact that his authoritative reading is so well reproduced.

Jennie Tourel (mezzo-soprano), with orchestra, conducted by Maurice Abravanel, is also to be congratulated on making such delightful records of four songs from Offenbach's *La Perichole*. As one critic said when these records were issued: 'I cannot believe that the original singer, Hortense Schneider, could have interpreted this music in a more enchanting manner.'

Prokoviev's ballet *Cinderella* was one of the most successful productions at Covent Garden last spring. Columbia lost little time in giving us this music played by the Royal Opera House Orchestra conducted by Warwick Braithwaite. Whether the music stands on its own or not is a moot point, but despite a good performance I found the records dull.

Ballet was also to the fore in June. The Philharmonia

Orchestra recorded, with the composer conducting, two more numbers from Constant Lambert's ballet *Horoscope*. These two records, together with the three other pieces from this ballet which were issued in 1945, leave only four more numbers to complete the recording of the whole work. I suppose one cannot help this 'to-be-continued-in-our-next' attitude in a commercial world, but it seems a pity.

June, too, was the month that Rudolf Schwarz made his record début with the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, and they are to be congratulated for choosing something so out of the way as Cherubini's Overture to *The Water Carrier* for this occasion. The Overture is well played and well recorded. Toscanini and the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra contributed movements from Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* this month, and they are most welcome, although I was not very impressed by the quality of the recording.

Among the instrumental records issued in June, I found Handel's Sonata in A Minor, played by Carl Dolmetsch (treble recorder) and Joseph Saxby (harpsichord) particularly attractive. We had also an excellent performance and recording of Beethoven's violin and piano sonata in C minor Op. 30 No. 2 played by Wolfgang Schneiderhan and Friedrich Wührer.

Three vocal records particularly attracted me this month, the two published by H.M.V. under the auspices of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and Gigli's record of two Sicilian songs.

The issue of Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony in July by H.M.V., under the auspices of the British Council, was surely the confirmation, if one was necessary, of the tremendous impact that this work made at its first and subsequent performances during the past year. This recording by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult is excellent in every way, and is a fine presentation of

a great work that no serious-minded person can afford to miss.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under its conductor Sir Thomas Beecham gave us Dvořák's symphonic poem *The Golden Spinning Wheel*. This is a good recording of a neglected work, and perhaps now we shall hear it more often in the concert hall.

There were several good vocal records issued in July, but I think the most outstanding was that by Victoria de los Angeles (soprano), accompanied by Gerald Moore, singing two Spanish songs, one by Fuste, the other by Granados.

Another July issue I must mention is Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli's recording of Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Op. 35. This work is rarely heard in the concert hall in the form in which the composer wrote it. Michelangeli plays it here as he plays it in the concert hall, and, excellent as the playing and recording is, I feel he would have done greater service – especially to students of the piano – by recording the work in its original form.

I think most people will agree that John Ireland's music has not been well represented on gramophone records. The fact that he was 70 last August has probably jerked the companies into action. Five months after the recording of *These Things Shall Be* August gave us *The Forgotten Rite*. This work, which was also issued under the auspices of the British Council, was played by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli. It is a great favourite of mine and is excellently served here by performers and engineers alike.

At long last we are given a performance of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. This set was made in the Royal Opera House, Rome, with a strong cast including Beniamino Gigli, Elda Ribetti, Gino Bechi, Tancredi Pasero and Maria Caniglia. The conductor is Tullio Serafin. Taken as a whole,

it is an excellent recording. One feels that one really *is* in the opera house and the set should give much pleasure to opera lovers.

An interesting August issue was Eugene Goossens's Oboe Concerto in one movement, played by his brother Leon and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Süsskind. The Concerto is an attractive work and though the oboe seems to me to be over-amplified it is, as one expects from this artist, beautifully played and the orchestral accompaniment is sympathetic.

Although it is not a great work I think most people will be glad of a new interpretation of George Gershwin's *An American in Paris*. It is played by the R.C.A. Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein. The performance is good and the recording does it justice.

This year being the centenary year of Chopin's death there has been a certain amount of attention paid to him by the gramophone companies. A new set of the Twenty-four Preludes, Op. 28 by Benno Moiseiwitsch was issued in September. The recording is very good and Moiseiwitsch's playing is splendid. I particularly like the way he does not over-sentimentalize the music. I found Monique de la Bruchollerie's record of Chopin's Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 very disappointing, but I can certainly recommend Malcuzynski's records of the Fantasie in F minor, Op. 49 and the C sharp minor Nocturne, Op. 27 No. 1.

Mozart's Duo No. 1 for Violin and Viola in G major (K. 423), played by Szymon Goldberg and Frederick Riddle, is a very welcome addition to the recorded repertoire. It is a good and well balanced performance.

New recordings of Sibelius's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies made their appearance in September; the Fifth by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf, and the Seventh by the Hallé Orchestra under

its conductor Sir John Barbirolli. The Fifth Symphony, one of Sibelius's most popular works, is well done, but the Seventh, from the point of view both of recording and performance, is superlative.

It is nearly twenty years since Constant Lambert's *Rio Grande* was first recorded. Excellent as the original was, a new reproduction was overdue. This happened in September, when it was issued with Kyla Greenbaum (piano), Gladys Ripley (contralto) and the Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus conducted by the Composer. It is a worthy replacement.

The last September issue I can refer to is The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company's complete recording, under the direction of Bridget D'Oyly Carte, of *Trial by Jury*. I am sure this will give great pleasure to Gilbert-and-Sullivan lovers all over the country.

October, which is where I have to end this article, gives us two records from *Der Rosenkavalier*. One is of the *Presentation of the Silver Rose* sung by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Irmgard Seefried and the other of the finale of Act 2. I found both records most enjoyable and Ludwig Weber a particularly good Ochs. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Otto Ackerman, as one would expect, is excellent.

While on the subject of operatic records I must draw your attention to Boris Christoff's interpretation of Boris's Farewell from *Boris Godunov* and to Victoria de Los Angeles's excellent record of the *Ballad of the King of Thule* and *The Jewel Song* from Gounod's *Faust*.

Among the instrumental records there is a very good performance of Haydn's String Quartet in E Flat, Op. 64 No. 6 by the New Italian Quartet, and an excellent record from Cor de Groot (pianoforte) of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 8 in F sharp Minor.

In conclusion, I freely admit that I have but touched on the year's output, but I have tried to show what a varied selection of records we have been given and to say 'thank you' not only to Columbia, Decca, H.M.V. and Parlophone, but to companies like 'L'Oiseau-Lyre' and 'Neglected Masterpieces.' We are grateful also for those subsidiary issues from companies already named (and those not named) which have added to the recorded repertoire with performances ranging from *Wozzeck* to those of the Welsh Recorded Music Society.

Criticism one hears so often, of such things as the tremendous amount of duplication that goes on and the ever-controversial question of the quality of recording, is surely another subject for discussion.

MUSIC IN THE THEATRE

1. OPERA: *Stephen Williams*

WHEN a promising and highly imaginative young fellow of our acquaintance falls in love with a girl who seems to us to have no promise, no imagination, 'no nothing', we look at each other in astonished dismay and ask 'Whatever does he see in her?' When an eager young neophyte comes away enraptured with a perfectly shocking performance of *Faust* or *Cavalleria Rusticana* by a seventeenth-rate fit-up company (if any such still exists) we look at each other in wonder and ask 'What did he see in *that?*' The answer in each case is, of course, that he sees – or hears – for the most part what he puts there. The lover, all as frantic, sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt. Why? Because he has read about Helen's beauty, he has drugged himself with dreams of Helen's beauty, and when he meets Flossie Featherhead, who perhaps has never heard of Helen or read a line of poetry in her life, he uses her subconsciously as an incarnation of his dreams, and looks exultantly round for another Troy to burn. It is imperative that he should have someone to embody all the loveliness with which the poets have stuffed his mind; and – well, Flossie Featherhead just happens to be there. To him she becomes a creature of magic. But he is a promising, and highly imaginative young fellow, and a great part of the magic is already in himself. She is the spark that sets it alight.

Now when I was a schoolboy I fell in love with opera. Night after night my feet led me, as if of their own volition, to the gallery door of a large theatre in the North of England, and night after night I climbed the seemingly

interminable stone steps, straining my ears for what is surely the most evocative and exhilarating sound in the world – the sound of an orchestra tuning up. Quite often I climbed those steps without the least idea what the opera was going to be; whatever it was, it would be an evening of magic. And in the later stages of my infatuation I never dreamed of buying a programme: there was not a single inflection of a single voice in that opera company that I did not instantly recognise and could not imitate when I got home. And after the performance I would linger in the side street hungering for a glimpse of my gods and goddesses – especially gods – as they emerged from the stage door. I was far too shy to speak to them (I should have made a wretched autograph-hunter!); I just watched and worshipped.

And now, as Bully Bottom says, we draw to a point. And the point of these touching sentimental reminiscences is that those singers and performances were to me – and still are in my memory – the greatest in the world. I have heard greater singers and performances since but they have not bewitched my heart with anything like the same magic. Why? Because my heart in 1949 is not what it was in 1919. Because those singers came into my life when I was at an acutely impressionable age; they were sparks that lit the fires waiting to be kindled in me and I myself brought with me a great part of the magic with which I invested them. A great part? Yes: do not misunderstand me. I do not for a moment wish to imply that it was all on my side, as it so often is with first love. These people were by no means Flossie Featherheads, they did not belong to a seventeenth-rate fit-up company. They were highly accomplished artists. But I would hesitate to say that they were the most highly accomplished artists in the world, however strongly I might still think so. 'Whatever did I see in them?' A great deal

that was there to be seen already no doubt; but also, seeing Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt, a great deal that I put there myself.

That is a point I should like to emphasise to all those who have been lamenting the passing of the great and glorious days of opera and trouncing our present-day enterprises, Covent Garden especially, for the miserable substitutes (say they) with which they are fobbing off the young public of to-day. There have been a good many of them this year. Not only eminent critics but also distinguished conductors and singers who (for some strange reason) have not found it convenient to conduct or sing at Covent Garden, have blazed into print or speech about the deplorable mess we are in, sighing nostalgically for the age of Melba and Caruso and inveighing against the ignorant charlatans and aspiring nonentities who have, so it would seem, made a corner in opera and are not only keeping worthier people out of it, but with their incompetent productions giving the new public a mistaken idea of opera altogether.

Now these sighers and inveighers have no doubt some reason on their side. No doubt the days of Melba and Caruso *were* great and glorious days. No doubt there *has* been a lot of fumbling, a lot of well-meant incompetence in our management of opera since the end of the war (or rather the end of hostilities; the effects of war will not end in *our* lifetime). No doubt there has passed away a glory from the earth. *But* – these sighers and inveighers contributed to the glory of the singers they first heard, as the imaginative lover contributes to the glory of Flossie Featherhead. How is it possible to assess what one hears to-day in comparison with what one heard thirty or forty years ago? If I could hear again the singers of my youth as they were then, should I think them as great as I did?

Would the lover at fifty still see Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt, or even in the brow of Helen? It seems a point so obvious as to be hardly worth labouring, yet it is remarkable how often it is missed. 'Ah, my boy, you've heard nothing yet!' my seniors say to me; meaning simply that I have not heard those artists who enchanted them at the age, of all ages, when they were most ready to be enchanted. 'Ah, my boy, Punch is not what it used to be!' No, and it never was. To me it is a never-ending source of astonishment and gratitude that only a few years after the most devastating war in history we have any opera in England at all; that when we are still woefully short of the so-called necessities of life there are people bold and intelligent enough to see that we get the so-called luxuries. I am not implying that they ought not to be criticised. Let us criticise them by all means. Covent Garden and Sadlers Wells have very grave responsibilities to a new public and they must not be allowed to forget it. But let us criticise intelligently, not sentimentally; nor judge them by our extravagant memories of standards they very wisely do not attempt to reach.

Not even the most credulous young person could get a mistaken idea of opera from the Covent Garden production of *Figaro*. This was perhaps the most evenly balanced, smoothly polished performance the company has yet given us. It was also in the best sense a performance of Mozart. That is to say, the singers sang the music Mozart had written for them instead of showing that antiquated bungler how to force applause by sensational top notes. Thus we had no high G or even D at the end of 'Non piu andrai.' Cherubino finished 'Non so piu' without the customary high B flat and Bartolo did not try to beat the band by finishing the 'Vendetta' song on an upper D. I do not know who was responsible for this, but it was a joy

to hear these things as Mozart intended and to realise afresh how right he was. It is curious, in passing, to consider the licence opera singers have in this matter and it is a licence that exists in no other art. What would we say, for instance, of an actor who altered the words of Hamlet's soliloquies because he had thought of others which might get more applause? Yet an operatic tenor or soprano can go on night after night altering and distorting cadences written by men with more musicianship in their little fingers than the singers have in the whole of their voluminous bodies. On rare – very rare – occasions the singer is right, the most obvious instance being the end of the *Pagliacci* Prologue. The baritone who first carried that concluding phrase up to the high G showed a flash of genius, and Leoncavallo probably kicked himself for not having thought of it first. But eighteenth-century music is more rigid in its formalism, and Mozart's closing cadences, in particular, are so perfectly poised and shaped that to alter them destroys the whole balance of design. It is like someone trying to put an extra angle in a square.

To return to *Figaro*: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's Susanna was, as one would expect, a creation of sheer delight, and Geraint Evans was a competent and attractive Figaro, needing only a little more dash and confidence to be an excellent one. To the Countess fall two of the loveliest airs ever created by mortal man, and Sylvia Fisher made the most of her chances. As we would say in the vulgar jargon of musical comedy (and what, pray, is *Figaro* if not a musical comedy?) her 'Dove Sono' fairly 'stopped the show.' The only disappointment was Hans Braun as Almaviva. He sang and looked like a count, but his English was so unintelligible that he might as well have been singing in German. And now I come to think of it, perhaps he was!

Then we had the first complete performance of *The Ring*

for ten years. That fact alone ought to have been enough to make the sighers and inveighers reflect. Four years after the war which we thought would kill opera altogether, England's national opera house produces the most gigantic saga ever put on the stage. Was it up to Bayreuth standards? Of course not; but it was intelligently directed by Friedrich Schramm, incisively conducted by Karl Rankl and sung and acted so forcefully and clearly that those threading their way through this magic forest for the first time were able to see the trees as well as the wood. Hans Hotter's magnificent Wotan dominated the cycle, as, of course, it should. A Wotan who cannot dominate is worse than useless. Hotter's voice is so full and bounteous that perhaps it may seem a little carping to wish occasionally for a sharper 'edge' or 'bite' to his tone; but the fact remains that towards the end of a long evening this incessant booming tends, by its very grandeur and opulence, to become slightly monotonous. One is conscious of a lack of colour variety. But, when all has been said, this Wotan's home is definitely Valhalla, and, just as definitely, he is master in his own house (despite the exceedingly powerful Fricka of Edith Coates). It seemed to me a slight error of judgment, however, to cast him as Gunther when throughout the cycle that splendid voice and presence had meant Wotan and Wotan alone. His Gunther was a finely-studied performance, but one could not escape the disconcerting idea that the chief of the gods (who was in some ways a slippery customer) had recovered from his humiliation by Siegfried and returned to the scene in one of his many disguises.

Kirsten Flagstad's Brünnhilde was in the same spacious world, although, of course, Brünnhilde has not so many chances of spectacular domination as her enterprising father. Set Svanholm was again an agile and youthful Siegfried, though here also one would welcome a wider

range of colour in the voice. There was an admirable Hagen in Dozsoe Ernster, a bass new to me whose voice was as dark as his wig and had much of the appropriate iron ring. Two other performances linger in my memory: Peter Klein's Mime and our own Grahame Clifford's Alberich. Both were well-considered studies (which is usual) and both were well sung (which is *not* so usual).

After the passions of *The Ring* which 'burn like the mines of sulphur', there descended on us the green-and-silver twilight of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* performed at Covent Garden by the Paris Opéra Comique. The sighers and inveighters were present in full force and, as I wrote at the time, immediately used it as a stick with which to beat the English company – with a few glancing blows at Wagner. What a relief Debussy was, they cooed, after the vulgar bawlings and bellowings we had last heard in that august temple of the muses! And the company! What style, what grace, what finesse! Well, I freely admit that the company had all those qualities. There were no great voices, but then what is probably the most understated opera ever written does not demand great voices. It demands exactly what Wagner does not: an emotional aloofness, a subtle reticence of approach, the suggestion of star-crossed lovers drifting to their doom as though they are walking in their sleep. Wagner says everything ten times. Debussy hardly says anything at all; he merely hints at unfathomable truths. So I will be scrupulously fair: I will sum up by saying that the English company would probably have been far too blunt and direct in its methods for Debussy, and that the French would very likely have seemed hopelessly ineffectual in Wagner or Verdi.

The Covent Garden autumn season opened in festive style with the much-heralded Bliss-Priestley opera, *The*

Olympians, which had the distinction, rare in opera, of composer and librettist meeting on equal terms, instead of the composer being a distinguished artist and the librettist a mere *valet-de-théâtre*. The libretto is based on the legend that the gods of Olympus, come down in the world and earning their living as strolling actors, regain their divine powers every hundred years on Midsummer Eve. In 1836 they find themselves in a French village, taking a hand in local love affairs and even indulging in a spot of thunderbolt-throwing. The opera is, on the whole, a fine achievement. Priestley's libretto may not be genuine poetry, but it often approaches it; Bliss's score may not be great music but it is a very fair and exciting imitation of it. It has reminiscences (no doubt unconscious) of Puccini, Strauss and Holst, but there is real dramatic point in the writing and many passages of a melting lyrical beauty. Not all the singing was on a high level, but Margherita Grandi was a commanding Diana, Howell Glynne a resonant *basso-buffo* as a rich *parvenu,* and James Johnston and Shirley Russell, as a pair of young lovers, brought to ecstatic life the romantic music Bliss had given them to sing. The production of *Salomé* later in the season, with scenery and 'special effects' by Salvador Dali, roused hysterical controversy, but there was no doubt about the magnificance of Ljuba Welitsch as Salomé. Unfortunately there *was* some doubt about the magnificence of Boris Christoff, the Bulgarian bass, as Boris Godunov. After a fine start, his voice seemed to shrink, and the big dramatic scenes were woefully disappointing.

Sadlers Wells maintains its standard of efficient teamwork. No, that is too tepid a term. Let us call it rather a kind of glittering and triumphant co-operation. *Simone Boccanegra* remains one of the company's strongest productions, and early in the year Stanley Clarkson took over

Howell Glynne's part of Fiesco, displaying a fine voice and presence and wearing his 'lacerato spirito' as prominently on his sleeve as Verdi meant him to. The opera might be described as a fascinating patchwork of pre-*Ballo* and post-*Aida*. The pre-*Ballo* sections are apt to weary us a little, but the Council scene, with its unmistakable foreshadowings of the great choral scene in the third act of *Otello*, is one of the most powerful and exciting stretches in all Verdi. Sadlers Wells also added to its repertory Vaughan Williams's tenderly beautiful pastoral *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* and a lively production of *Gianni Schicchi*. The autumn season brought us new productions of *Falstaff*, *Traviata* and *Don Giovanni*.

The New London Opera Company began a six weeks' season bravely enough at the Stoll theatre with a glittering production of *Falstaff*, in which Mariano Stabile again proved himself the supreme Falstaff of our generation. True, he is no longer as Falstaff was when he was page to the Duke of Norfolk, and he has occasionally to stage-manage his high notes and to get the orchestra to support him with a reassuring *fortissimo* when he is not quite sure of their quality. But on the whole it is a ripe, robust and rubicund impersonation, 'gorgeous as the sun in mid-summer.' This Falstaff is no mere clown, no mere ale-house cadger, but one who has not forgotten that he was born a gentleman and has been the companion of princes. As a sheer exhibition of accomplished singing his performance was a model and his *mezza voce* was as mellifluous as the pipes of Pan. Yes, it was a brave start, but I am sorry to have to report that the season as a whole – in spite of such firm favourites as *La Bohème, Rigoletto, Tosca* and *The Barber* – did not create box office records.

The following letter I received from Jay Pomeroy speaks for itself:

'A few figures and observations on the running of the Stoll Opera Season may be of interest to you.

Financial side:

Six weeks at an average of £5,000 per week (Gross takings)		£30,000
Cost:		
Orchestra and rehearsals	£7,500	
Cast, chorus and rehearsals ..	12,000	
Theatre and back and front expenses	10,000	
Conductors and coaches	2,000	
Advertising	2,500	
		34,000
Deficit		£4,000

'It must be borne in mind that the six operas presented this year cost nothing in so far as décor, costumes and props are concerned, having been produced at great cost for the Cambridge Theatre. On the other hand we have learned that the public is not prepared to hear certain operas.

'Thus *Falstaff*, in spite of a very strong cast, in its four performances produced under £600 per performance.

'Likewise *Don Pasquale*, that used to play to full houses at the Cambridge Theatre, does not seem to attract the public, with the result that the five performances we intended to give of *Don Pasquale* have now been reduced to three, the other two performances being replaced with *Rigoletto* (a very great favourite) and *Tosca*.

'The capacity of the Stoll theatre, reached on several occasions, amounts to over £1,200, and therefore by proper planning, even spending a few thousand pounds on a new production, it should be possible to arrange first-class seasons of Italian opera at that wonderful theatre without any or much loss.'

Mr Pomeroy added that with the backing of a few public-spirited men who believed that a world metropolis like London deserved a first-class Italian opera there could be no doubt that one or two annual seasons of four or six weeks' duration could be given at the Stoll Theatre. It seems a consummation devoutly to be wished. All we have to do is to find men whose private purses are as large as their public spirit.

Fired with patriotic ardour at the production of another new full-length opera by a British composer, everyone tried hard to say a good word for Inglis Gundry's *Avon* produced by the Exploratory Opera Society at the Scala Theatre. And if the good words were a little halting it must have been because everyone had been battered almost to insensibility by Mr Gundry's perfectly elephantine energy. I have rarely heard music that bludgeoned its way along so aggressively without getting anywhere very much. One stood aghast – nay, fell back exhausted – at the immense labour involved in such a score. The composer wrote his own libretto – an Elizabethan story combining Essex's rebellion with the rivalry of English and Italianate musicians – and perhaps that was rather a mistake: for the action, like the score, was so crowded and overburdened with incident that only the simplest and directest music could have pointed it with dramatic clearness. And Mr Gundry's music, virile and resourceful as it is, is neither simple nor direct.

S.W.

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Of all the new entertainments last year Benjamin Britten's *Let's make an Opera,* which has for sub-title 'An Entertainment for Young People', was the most engaging. That day at Aldeburgh attention was, in fact, immediately engaged. I have found Britten's later music difficult to make contact with at a first hearing; but not this. For all its novelty of conception – the notion of a public rehearsal so designed

as to form part of the entertainment as a whole, bringing the audience itself into the scheme and setting it rehearsing the four songs it is to sing in the little opera – the construction of the entertainment was at once clear and one knew where one was with it. Then too there came the quick appeal of the story to strengthen the general atmosphere of amusement and pleasure that had already been created while the rehearsal was going on. Finally there was the manner in which the entertainment was carried through, a quite unforeseen freshness and unselfconscious charm.

The entertainment was in two parts, the rehearsal and the opera. There are four adult people in the cast, as against at least twice that number of young people, some of them very young. We in the audience, by now rather apprehensive of the part we discover is to be ours during the show, watch while two of the elder youngsters are shown how to set the stage and how the lighting goes; and for the female side of the thing there is one of the women in the cast directing make-up and dressing. The conductor appears and puts final touches to details in the singing and at length he turns to the audience and rehearses them in their four unison songs. Interval. And then the opera in three short scenes. Eric Crozier's libretto is a pretty little piece of artifice and from the point of view of operatic story-telling it is admirably clear. The three scenes tell the tale of 'The Little Sweep' who, being sent up the chimney to clean the flues at Iken Hall with his own poor wee body, is discovered by the children of the house, revived, and hidden from his stern elders and betters, the magnificent Housekeeper and the brutal Master Sweep, until he can be spirited out of the house. It is all very touching; and perhaps because the audience plays its own part in the performance it directly affects our sensibilities. That may be a contributory cause of the enjoyment *Let's make an Opera* produced that even-

ing at Aldeburgh. But the main reason was the singing and acting of the boys and girls. There was no nonsense about it. The whole thing went through plainly and straightforwardly. Nobody seemed conscious of his own particular self. And they sang Britten's music easily and fluently as though it contained not one strange interval. It was a revelation to us onlookers who had forgotten our own youth and of course had been provided with nothing like this entertainment to sharpen our wits on and to sing and act in, while learning at the right age how to do it all. *Let's make an opera* has proved that if you catch people young, before conventions have clamped down on their alert minds, you can teach them to sing, as by nature, music which, if they come across it later, when their ears have been conditioned by the usually accepted notions of what can be and can't be done, they will learn contemporary music, angular and precipitous though it be, and it will become simple for them. Britten's music in this work has a few intervals, for instance, that are unusual. But, since these boys and girls from Ipswich manifestly had been extremely ably, sympathetically and thoroughly taught, they took Britten's music in their stride, showing no sign of hesitancy, singing with the same freedom as so astonishingly was in their acting. *Let's make an Opera* is designed for production in small towns and villages by the people of the locality. It should succeed in that. The vocal parts are not difficult, scenery and costumes can be run up locally. The orchestra raises a problem, for it demands a fairly high amateur standard; piano duet, string quartet and percussion. It is the two latter that may take some finding locally. Otherwise the entertainment is within the normal scope of amateurs. And above all it is a show for small groups, not for huge theatres and never for grand opera houses.

S.G.

II. BALLET: *Scott Goddard*

THERE has been singularly little new ballet music during 1949. Some pieces fresh to London, though in themselves not new, have appeared in the programmes of visiting companies from abroad. But the programmes at Covent Garden suggest that the Sadler's Wells Company is content for the moment to revive the old, keep the novelties of the last couple of years in go and for new ventures to turn to old music, as in Ashton's choreography based on Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*. It may be that composers are busy writing operas, an activity much in the fashion just now, and have no time for ballet music.

The outstanding event has been *Cinderella* to Prokofiev's music, again an Ashton ballet and as regards his part in it a resounding success. Ballet music can be judged from two angles which give different perspectives. One is as music and music only; it is a point of view that many will not allow, declaring that the music of a ballet exists to subserve the choreography and cannot be judged, indeed should have no existence, apart from it. Yet even this school of thought has eventually to admit that the music of a ballet must have in itself musical worth or it will so weaken the general effect that, no matter how excellent the choreography, the work will suffer and so die. The other perspective is gained by refusing to listen to the music, by simply hearing it as a background to the stage action, neither more nor less important than décor and scenery. This is the approach of the majority of connoisseurs of choreography who, like opera goers who collect singers' performances, can dispute with great technological acumen the claims of one dancer against another and appear not to have heard even the name of the composers of the ballets discussed. There is, as usual, a *via media;* the music of a

ballet must be judged both as an adjunct and for itself. It must do nothing to hinder the free expansion of the choreographer's vision (and he, if he is sensible as well as sensitive, will do little to harm the musician's vision) while holding firmly to its own right to expression through the finest subtleties of the creative musician's art.

Prokofiev can be subtle when he wishes. In *Cinderella* he appears to have decided in favour of broad, generalised effects, such as leave small room for subtlety. He, like Tchaikovsky before him, took the only reasonable line when faced with three acts to fill somehow or other with music But Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* is filled with good melodies, while Prokofiev's *Cinderella* is stuffed out with clever effects. As music in its own right it fails to hold the attention for more than a fleeting moment here and there; and presumably one is justified in judging it on its own merits, since a great deal of it has been issued in suite form. There remains its other aspect as background to dancing and, we must remember, inspiration to choreographers. Manifestly Ashton has found something there; the music has had for him some compelling force that has raised visions as he listened and thought. And, since his choreography in *Cinderella* is always apt, often exquisitely fresh and altogether witty and vivacious, then it must be owned that Prokofiev's rather cold, soulless music has done at least one thing required of it. It has provided a starting point for the ideas of a choreographer of genius and given him a framework (of steel) within which he has moved his dancers with such freedom and grace as to make one momentarily forget the banality of Prokofiev's efficient score. It is impossible to escape comparisons and so perhaps impossible to be fair. *Cinderella* gorgeously dressed, romantic and lovely to watch; *Sleeping Beauty* magnificently dressed, warm to the heart and moving to watch. Tchaikovsky's waltzes

eternally entrancing in *Sleeping Beauty*; and because of that we demand that the waltzes in *Cinderella* shall be as thrilling. Unfair but understandable; and if we are unfair we are punished by having to listen not to the beat of a heart but to the throb of a dynamo.

MUSIC OVER THE AIR

Elway Strogers

TWICE during the first half of 1949 the official journal of the B.B.C. gave us a musical cover picture: one for the Festival of Light Music, the other for the Elgar Festival which was held in London during May and June. Relays from the latter event included *The Apostles,* the cello concerto, the A flat symphony, and some chamber music – but this was no place for the elegant Elgarian trifles which so endeared him to the people who (in the early years of this century) were still a little wary of 'ops.' Opus numbers, nevertheless, continued to be attached even to these very trifles, though the man who asked for 'Sally Damner' at a symphony concert when Elgar himself was conducting, could hardly have been expected to add 'Op. 12' as an additional means of identification. He knew Elgar as a composer of light music only, though he may not have realised that it was good light music. This side of Elgar's genius also had its share of the limelight during the Light Music Festival, which was certainly one of the largest pieces of interior decoration ever carried out by the B.B.C. Many cobwebs were swept away during that particular week, and it was heartening to notice that subsequent planning had been influenced considerably by this large-scale operation. Constant Lambert (at one time labelled 'Highbrow Prophet of Jazz') acted as spokesman for the Festival, and the twelve special concerts bore out adequately what he had to say about the 'false distinction between light and serious music.'

The B.B.C., however, was alive to the fact that several

thousands of listeners would probably reject this idea of a false distinction; and so, for their very own consumption, there was a performance of Bach's B minor Mass in the middle of the week, coupled with an adamant Third Programme which took several weeks to wake up to the light music idea, in spite of the magnificent opportunities for programmes on light music of the middle ages and the Renaissance. Surveys such as these would have enabled the Third to maintain a certain amount of dignity (through the historical significance of the music) and at the same time to show its appreciation of the role played by light music throughout the centuries. There are some fine mediaeval dances waiting to be heard, and fruitful comparisons to be made between the dance music of Henry VIII's time and that which won popularity in France when Claude Gervaise and Etienne du Tertre were at their busiest. But this might shock the planners who have an antiquarian-phobia! They admit discussions on *The Physical Basis of Mind* and *The Technique of Acting*, but musical scholarship (and the fruits of it) are rarely, if ever, allowed to become a front-line feature. During this very period now under review, an American musical scholar was transcribing unknown and unpublished English keyboard music, from manuscripts which had somehow found their way to Paris. Not a mention of this gigantic task was there, not a single illustration of the music which had been deciphered for the first time in three hundred years. New and thrilling musical discoveries take a back seat, while all that is fresh in art, literature and science is automatically given pride of place. Precisely why this should be so is hard to understand, unless one can put it down to individual prejudices in some inaccessible corner of one of the Corporation's many buildings.

Few really new trends are noticeable. Chamber music

has as its allotted times – Thursday evening and Friday night, opera happens on Wednesdays, and orchestras can be heard at lunch-time, except on Saturdays when they appear for elevenses, and on Sundays when they turn up with unfailing regularity at three o'clock. In the old days the Sunday symphony concert was a much more formal affair, and came on at either six-thirty or nine-thirty. The material it contained was often re-broadcast during the Wednesday concert of the same week, which meant, of course, an extra rehearsal on one of the days between Monday and Wednesday. Now, the repetitions are close together, Saturday night concerts being repeated on Sunday afternoon, so that the extra rehearsal is avoided. Doubtless these tactics are more convenient for the B.B.C., but the listener is not served so well. It may be advantageous to hear a new or unfamiliar work on two occasions fairly near to each other, but to repeat *within* twenty-four hours is surely a mistake. Listeners run the risk of getting harmonic indigestion, or duo-contrapuntal ulcers. They may of course console themselves by thinking of the wear-and-tear they have saved the orchestra, but again the evil could have been averted by other methods. The method recommended in this case would be to give the orchestra less to do: then they would play much better. If anybody queries the logic of this remark they have only to compare the work done in one season by the B.B.C. Orchestra, and that done by an American orchestra of the same size. A British conductor once showed a B.B.C. Symphony schedule to the orchestral manager of the Boston Symphony. 'Incredible activity', explained the Bostonian, 'for one year's work!' 'Year?' came the reply, 'that all took place in three months!' So, after one of the heaviest weeks of all – the week which gave us two memorable performances of *Wozzeck* – the orchestra had to stay up till nearly eleven at night for a live repeat of the latest symphony

by Villa-Lobos. One day, perhaps, there will be planners who plan, and controllers who control.

The B.B.C., however, is not the only offender. It arranged to broadcast one of the concerts given in the provinces by the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the result was a fine, almost breath-taking contribution to that particular Sunday's entertainment. But few listeners could have realised that the orchestra was rehearsing and playing on nearly every day of its short visit, thanks to the belief of their English promoter (not connected with the B.B.C.) in 'full production' and/or 'total employment.' Many members of the orchestra, visiting England for the first time, were thus deprived of seeing much of the country, apart from its railway stations, hotels, and concert halls.

The practice of welcoming to the microphone visiting orchestras and artists from abroad cannot be too highly praised. In the first place, it gives listeners a chance which they might otherwise not have of comparing foreign products with British ones. The outcome of such comparisons need not necessarily be malicious, as some critics suppose, for English music will always be *interpreted* best by our own artists. Visitors may *play* better, but they are not better attuned to the inner meaning of the music. This was noticeable during the relay from the Elgar Festival, when Pierre Fournier played with his customary finesse the Elgar Cello Concerto. His approach to the work was original, highly sensitive as only a French musician could make it, and technically well-nigh perfect. But the Elgar portrayed was a character rather different from the one we are used to; it cannot therefore be said that visiting artists are driving our own players off the pitch. We look forward to a 'local' performance with as much enthusiasm as ever.

In the second place, these relays give our own musicians

the opportunity of eavesdropping, as it were, on extra-mural methods of technique and interpretation. Whether they all seize the opportunity is a matter open to debate: they may be too busy to listen. Much can be learnt by listening, though, and the musician who deliberately denies himself the privilege of hearing the world's greatest players is simply refusing to learn. That way insularity lies.

International, as opposed to insular, is the only word to describe the opera at Covent Garden. There were several transmissions during the Wagner season, thanks to the settling of the dispute between the Musicians' Union and the B.B.C. It cannot be said, however, that the increase inside the pay packets of the instrumentalists concerned had an immediate effect on the sonority of the orchestra as a whole. Indeed, there were times when the lack of body in the tone seemed to be due to fatigue, if not to a reduction in the actual personnel. Studio opera, on the other hand, had more zest than in previous years. Who can foretell what will happen now that the Theatre Orchestra has become the Opera Orchestra? They always did play with zest, no matter who was conducting them, but the change of name may involve alterations in the make-up of the group. *Die Fledermaus* was permitted to sparkle on the Third as well as on the Home Service, the success being due in this instance to a cast chosen with more than the usual care. The same could be said of the Rameau selections which were broadcast under the expert direction of Roger Desormière, then on a short visit to England. Unfortunately the atmosphere of these productions is too often lost by entrusting the historical notes and resumé of the plot to an ordinary announcer. Everybody knows he is provided with a script which he merely reads, acting as an intermediary (pleasant enough at times) between the source of information and the listener. It would be sounder policy to get a

musician to do it, preferably somebody who specialises in the period covered by the opera and the epoch to which its composer belongs. And preferably somebody who can make it interestng. To have information straight from the source's mouth is one virtue, but this one alone does not constitute an interesting or successful introduction. The announcer is really the salesman, trying to interest a slightly suspicious public in music which it hardly knows at all. The trouble is that his gallant efforts are often so completely watered down that the door is slammed in his face, and nobody really achieves anything. One fears that the B.B.C. is so scared of commercial broadcasting that it refuses to sell even its own goods, good as they may be.

The *History of Music in Sound* is another scheme which suffers from the same lack of perception. It is rather like an ungainly ancient engine trying to pull along too many carriages. Having covered twenty-five lengths, its wheels begin to slip, so it returns to its starting point and is duly unloaded of unwanted bulk, sand being sprinkled liberally on the rails in the meantime. Now it has gathered speed once more, and an expectant audience watches its progress with bated breath. The scripts, based on professorial notes, often go astray in points of detail; professorial wrath is the inevitable result. The music, based on recommendations from the same source, often goes astray, too, and there are so many middlemen that the finished product, instead of bearing the stamp of originality, bears the stamp of nobody in particular. The idea behind the idea is, one assumes, to educate and amuse such listeners as may be attracted by the potentialities of the scheme. But education by chronological methods is third degree, not Third Programme. The only sound way to build up a *History in Sound of European Music* is to make an analysis of the eight centuries with which we are immediately concerned, by genre, form,

and sound itself. In other words the logical as opposed to the chronological. A master-mind would be needed for such a task, and at the present moment there is none in the field of British musical scholarship.

Contemporary music fares better. There were many exciting first performances, mostly of works by our own composers. Charles Groves, who has trained the Northern Orchestra in expert style, conducted Rubbra's *Sinfonia Concertante*, when the solo part was played with understanding, both technical and emotional, by Phyllis Sellick. The work should make a valued contribution to the near-concerto type, which is a welcome change, now and again, from the more formal copies of ancient masters. Then there was a startling concert of music by Stravinsky, Wilfrid Mellers, Constant Lambert, and Humphrey Searle. It was arranged in collaboration with the London Contemporary Music Centre, which has done fine work in the past for the encouragement of British music. Problems of balance loom large in first performances such as these, and it cannot be said that full justice was done to all the works in the programme, especially the *Two Motets in Diem Pacis* by Wilfrid Mellers. His music nevertheless made a striking impression, and it is to be hoped that future performances will have either a stronger chorus or slightly less obstreperous brass. Lambert's *Trois pièces nègres* came over well, and the same could be said for the composer's speaking voice, which was heard in the second half of the concert in connection with Searle's *Gold Coast Customs* based on a libretto (if it may be so called) by Edith Sitwell. The effects extracted from speakers, male chorus, chamber orchestra and percussion – including two pianos – were remarkable enough to warrant a live or recorded repeat, but this must have proved impossible for some reason or other. What did occur later in the week was a less sensational, but extremely pleasant

recital of new music by May Sabeston, J. B. Roepmann, Antony Hopkins, and Clarence Raybould. The first and fourth of this quartet of composers appeared in the actual programme, thus adding a touch of authenticity to the performances.

The Third continues to have series of programmes devoted to one particular aspect of a composer's style. They are useful programmes in many ways, and they are thorough without being fanatical. Four sessions of Vivaldi was quite enough, and the halt came just at the right moment. Fauré (piano pieces) and Dvorak (chamber music) were each allotted a substantial share of the time set aside for smaller-scale recitals. A Monteverdian miscellany, directed by Anthony Bernard, was a great improvement on previous essays to capture the tricky style of this most original of composers. With Monteverdi it is essential to have singers who understand him fully, and who are able to modify their tone and technique to his inimitable ornamentation. Otherwise a magnificent chaconne like *Zefiro torna* degenerates into a duet of bleating sheep, and the effect is not even clever as it is in *Don Quixote*. Much of the appeal in Monteverdi's music is bound up with scenic effects, however, and until we can have a televised reproduction of his pieces *in genere rappresentativo* we shall feel that something important is lacking.

Thinking back over programmes in a general way, the listener probably feels that very little is lacking in the choice and range of music offered. It would be instructive, though, to learn something, however slight, of the vast musical goings-on in America. In last season's Promenade syllabus there is not a single work by an American composer, unless one includes Bloch, who really belongs to the central European group, though he is in fact resident in, and a citizen of the United States. Surely room could be found

for such acknowledged masterpieces as Barber's first symphony, or Roy Harris's third? One of the most delightful parts of the broadcast by the Philadelphia Orchestra was the Suite from *Louisiana Story* by Virgil Thomson; but apart from isolated performances of this kind the listener has very little chance to judge what is being produced by the Americans. If only the short waves were good enough, an exchange programme would be the thing. The link across the Atlantic is still a dream of the future, but not even the waters of that mighty ocean are deeper than the gulf which separates commercial broadcasting and the B.B.C.

NORTHERN DIARY

SCOTLAND: *Maurice Lindsay*

HOWEVER many singers and pianists come and go, the staple diet of Lowland Scotland's musical life must necessarily be provided by The Scottish Orchestra. This year, musically speaking, there have been food troubles; so much so that Edinburgh removed her custom from the old firm, preferring to take out short-term, emergency ration cards with such far-away firms as the Hallé, the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, and the City of Birmingham Orchestra. But, of course, the old firm carried on. That it got the worst of the competition, however, was apparent when the management make known the high call upon the guarantors. On the other hand, the travelling costs of the English orchestras made the rivalry rather too expensive, in spite of Edinburgh's greater support for them. So an uneasy compromise has been reached.

The causes of the dispute are twofold. (1) The Festival City wants to see in existence a permanent Scottish National Orchestra able to take part in the Edinburgh Festival (it has now more or less withdrawn its impossible claims for a separate city orchestra). (2) Edinburgh wants to have some considerable say in the running of that orchestra. At present, in spite of what conductor Walter Süsskind said in his annual winding-up speech, the orchestra comes up neither to Festival nor recording standards.

Compromise has been reached on the understanding that a plan for a permanent National Orchestra will be put forward, and that the Management Committee will carry more Edinburgh members. A few additional Edinburgh

folk have certainly been added to the Glasgow band, but far too many of the 'over seventies' are still cluttering up the various committees. One speaker at the Annual General Meeting suggested that the manager, Joseph Barnes, having given a lot of excellent service in the past, might retire. Mr Barnes's ideas of orchestra-running are neither progressive nor in keeping with the conditions of the times, and it is perhaps a pity that he failed to take this gracious hint. For, like the celebrated Irishman, the plan for a permanent National Orchestra seems to be suspiciously 'backward at coming forward'. More than four months have now passed since to quiet the critics the existence of the plan was first hinted at. Nothing further has been heard of it.

Meanwhile, an Edinburgh plan for the establishment of a national orchestra, with a body of about 68 players in Glasgow and a chamber orchestra of about 34 in Edinburgh, has been announced. It has won some support from both citys' Lord Provosts, and in spite of Mr Barnes's automatic opposition, it may lead to some action.

So much for the state of unrest which is still preventing a fuller development of Scottish musical life. What of the past year?

The series of concerts which ended in Glasgow on Saturday, 9th April, gave us during the winter months programmes which, in spite of much to commend them (including twelve-and-a-half per cent of 'modern' music), were still not as satisfying as they ought to have been. Even the gratifying fact that Vaughan Williams' Sixth Symphony received two performances – it 'won' the plebiscite which decides the composition of the final programme of the season, 'beating' Sibelius No. 1 by only a few votes – was not complete compensation.

On undertaking some programme analysis, the following

points emerged. 'Modern' music included too little English and Scottish work. It also included far too much that is nowadays 'modern' only by reactionary courtesy (Strauss, Elgar, Sibelius, Delius). Amongst the classics, too few excursions were made away from the well-beaten track.

Let me elaborate these points a little further. Glancing down the lists of works performed to spot the real moderns, the names of Rawsthorne and Walton are noticeably absent. Britten and Berkeley are represented only by two very minor, and, in the case of the former, relatively insignificant, works.

Now, it might be argued that Scottish audiences are much more interested in Shostakovitch and Stravinsky than in contemporary British composers. I don't agree. It might also be argued that the Russians are in some way 'more important.' Again, I don't agree. Too many of the later Stravinsky works which Mr Süsskind puts before us show only a spent force. And too much of the work of the younger Russians shows the influence of Communistic state hankey-pankeying with their creative talent. We ought to be having more Scottish, English and American contemporary music, even if it does have to be at the expense of Russia.

The list of classics is even more disturbing. True, we had a number of rarely-heard overtures presented to us throughout the season, including works by Méhul, Cherubini and Pfitzner. But the heavier fare was less daring. Mozart was represented only by the *Linz* and *Jupiter* Symphonies, both frequently played. (He was certainly credited with a Symphony No. 37 in G, but, as everybody except the programme compilers know, this work is by Michael Haydn, and not even one of *his* best.) Why shouldn't we be hearing some unashamed Michael Haydn for a change – the music to *Zadig*, for instance? Why shouldn't we hear

an occasional work by some other minor 18th and 19th century composers – Boccherini or Dittersdorf, Gade or Raff? Why shouldn't we be having some of Mozart's earlier symphonies and serenades, or some earlier Joseph Haydn?

Yes, we know the answer. The full orchestra has to be kept employed. But that is not really a healthy approach to music-making, though no doubt it is an approach which is by no means peculiar to Scotland.

To which the counter-answer is that room could easily be found for more rarely-heard music if certain war-horses were not run twice or even three times. We do not really need to hear Tchaikovsky No. 5 three times in a single six-months season; nor Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and Schubert's *Unfinished* twice each. The fact that on the repeat days audiences were noticeably smaller ought to suggest to the Management that the plugging of one-time best sellers, however excellent in themselves, no longer pays. The appearance of Vaughan Williams No. 6 on the plebiscite programme supports this view.

The playing was, of course, erratic and uncertain. A great deal of effort went into the Vaughan Williams work. Odd outbursts of near-brilliance in unexpected places – Schumann's First Symphony, for instance – contrasted with the general level of mediocrity. No matter how much effort a conductor puts into his rehearsals and score-study, if he cannot rely completely on every man (or woman) in his team, then first-class performances can rarely happen, and second-class only occasionally. And that brings us back to the hopelessness of even trying to achieve a high standard with an orchestra which is in session for only six months of the year.

Both Glasgow and Edinburgh have had visits from the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli. The two series

of concerts were well patronized, and it was just a pity that the programmes should all have been of a very light nature, especially in Glasgow. The excellencies of even the Hallé were dwarfed quantitatively by the appearance in Glasgow of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy, chiefly in the sheer sweep and power of the strings. Not everyone was convinced that Mr Ormandy's interpretations of Brahms and Sibelius were as authentic as was the playing of his orchestra. He was more at home with such contemporary works as Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* suite, Hindemith's *Mathis der Mahler,* and the suite from *Der Rosenkavalier.* A London friend told me, rather surprisingly, that the Glasgow programmes were much more interesting than those offered in the metralopolis. Certainly, it was not the music so much as the alarmingly high cost of admission that prevented Glasgow music-lovers from turning out in larger numbers. Mr Fielding's Glasgow loss was eased by the sum of £1,500 guaranteed by Glasgow Corporation. When one remembers that this sum, to back three concerts, is about a quarter of what the same body has given in the past to the Scottish Orchestra as backing for over sixty concerts; and when one notes that the new Progressive Lord Provost has so far shown his 'progressive' principles of economy only by threatening even that inadequate municipal support, one pauses to wonder if Scotland really deserves any orchestra at all!

Outside the orchestral field, Denis Matthews, the Royal Danish Quartet, the Belgian Quartet and Bruce Boyce are among those who have strayed into Scottish pastures and left memories of their excellences strong enough to survive the winter. The promised visit of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears had unfortunately to be postponed, but Scottish Britten-fans are to have the chance of seeing their idol in the flesh next season.

A visit from the Intimate Opera Company was much appreciated by Edinburgh and several smaller towns. Their repertoire contained Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne*, written when the composer was a boy, and first performed under circumstances rather similar to those in which I saw it, in the Vienna drawing-room of Dr Anton Mesmer. Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* – a little gem – and Henry Carey's rollicking roast-beef-of-old-England-like piece, *True Blue*, were the most interesting items from a fascinating repertoire.

The Carl Rosa Opera Company paid its annual visit, playing to packed houses in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. Smetana's *The Kiss* had its Scottish première in the capital on April 5th. It was the only really satisfactory presentation which the company gave. Perhaps one ought not to blame it too much for doing over and over again the old stand-bys – *Trovatore, Faust, Traviata* – although it is interesting to note that *The Kiss* drew just as full a house as even the best-tried favourite. They are all great operas. But such never-ceasing repetition sooner or later leads to second-rate performance. Still, the Carl Rosa does provide a valuable service to Scotland, where, but for their activities, many young people would never see professional opera at all.

It is pleasant to be able to end with a note on some Scottish achievements. The Third Edinburgh International Festival was not only a Scottish achievement of organisation. Several of the most outstanding contributions were Scottish. A repeat presentation of Sir David Lyndsay's 400-year-old *Ane Satyre of the Three Estatis* again scored a major triumph. Cedric Thorpe Davie and Robert Kemp, who made the adaptation, were also responsible for the revised version of Allan Ramsay's 18th-century pastoral ballad-opera, *The Gentle Shepherd*, which was presented in the lovely Regency hall of the Royal High School by

candlelight at the hour of 11 p.m. The charm and grace of Ramsay's best lines, the loveliness of the Scots airs, the dress and décor of Tyrone Guthrie, and the sense of period 'atmosphere' about the whole thing, made this an entertainment that no one who saw it is likely to forget in a hurry.

Cedric Thorpe Davie and Ian Whyte were represented in the orchestral sphere too – the one by his short piece, *The Beggar's Benison,* the other by his Symphony. Davie's setting of 'Six Poems by Violet Jacob' made a pleasing impression, as did the group of songs by Francis George Scott. The Austrian composer-musicologist now resident in Edinburgh, Dr Hans Gál, had his variations on *Lilliburlero* played by the BBC Scottish Orchestra, and subsequently roughly handled by Mr Newman. This 'New Irish Tune', as Purcell called it, is too English to be amenable to the Romantic treatment Dr Gál imposed on its rugged features. Dr Gál's finely contrapuntal Concertino for Organ and Strings made a much more favourable impression.

In general, programmes were a little lower in musical standard this time, though performing standards were, if anything, higher than in previous years. The need for an over-all musical plan has become apparent; and the need for the inclusion of some contemporary Scottish drama, rather more than apparent.

The Glasgow Grand Opera Society, that enthusiastic, mainly amateur body whose performances of *Idomeneo* and *The Trojans* once drew North many of these peculiarly provincial birds, the London critics, this year essayed Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera,* thus anticipating both the Festival authorities and H.M.V. by some months. Needless to say, it was by no means a perfect performance, but it provided a useful foretaste for prospective Festival-goers and record-buyers, and gave those in neither of the wealthier groups

a chance to make at least the acquaintance of a neglected middle-period Verdi opera.

An achievement of which Scotland can be justly proud, however, is the Saltire Society's publication of 'Thirty-Five Scottish Lyrics and Other Poems, set to music by Francis George Scott.' The 'other poems', French and German, are fortunately few in number, for Scott needs a Scottish text to stimulate his vigorous muse. At last, the Scottish Press has realised just how good these songs are, and I can do no better than quote the words of the *Glasgow Herald*, formerly somewhat unappreciative: 'It has taken singers a long time to realise that in Francis George Scott, we have not merely a local composer of note, but one whose songs are worthy a place among the great songs.'

To which one might add that it has taken England a long time even to acknowledge Francis George Scott's existence. The all too London-Dublin Third Programme deserves to be taken seriously to task for recently refusing to give its listeners the chance of hearing the best of these songs.

LIVERPOOL: *A. K. Holland*

THE musical season in Liverpool normally starts round about the end of September, so that a review of the year 1949, or so much of it as can be covered at the date of writing, begins by taking us, as it were, in mid-career. By January we have got our second wind. The usual orgies of Christmastide Handel have been forgotten and we are looking forward to whatever pleasures the future has in store.

The year has been clouded by a lamentable dispute within the Philharmonic Society which shook the whole of musical Liverpool to its foundations. Into the rights and wrongs of that dispute I do not propose to enter. By the time this article appears I can only trust that it will be past history

of the type that is best forgotten. But some account of its origins must be given if this record is to make any pretence to completeness.

At the beginning of the season it was announced that owing to the increasing demands on his time Sir Malcolm Sargent was unable to accept the position of resident conductor and was relinquishing the post of conductor-in-chief which he had occupied for a number of years. In his place Mr Hugo Rignold was appointed, while to Sir Malcolm was allotted such a considerable proportion of the concerts as would entitle him to be considered as the principal guest-conductor. He also retained the position of conductor of the Philharmonic Choir.

Mr Rignold immediately set about putting his house in order, and for the time being the critics of his appointment were silenced. But by February it had become apparent that there was serious restlessness within the orchestra itself, and in March Mr Rignold handed in his resignation, which was accepted by the committee. In face of the new situation the names of no less than 21 English and 6 foreign conductors were considered. The result of this enquiry was a decision to approach Mr Rignold with a view to his withdrawing his resignation. The upshot was that the resident conductor was re-appointed.

The public was next surprised by the announcement that the contracts of 22 of the existing players would not be offered for renewal at the end of the season. That the committee itself was divided became clear when it was further announced that its Executive had resigned and a new body been appointed. As a result of the ensuing negotiations with the Musicians' Union it was confirmed that in the case of 13 players contracts would be offered for renewal, while the remainder were to be put on probation for a period of 6 months. Into the tale of protracted negotiations, Extra-

ordinary General Meetings, public controversy and private acrimony, it is unnecessary to enter. The whole sorry business profoundly shocked Liverpool ... Fortunately, a solution was finally reached and we still have our orchestra. Under the new arrangement between the Philharmonic Society and the Musicians' Union, all members of the orchestra are offered a nine-months' contract, with three months' notice on either side, and then a continuous contract on those same terms. A few members of the orchestra left of their own volition and have been replaced, but in general the solution would seem to be one which should prevent a recurrence of such a lamentable disagreement.

Meanwhile the orchestra had been carrying on its normal routine of concerts inside and outside the city. The three main series of concerts (on Tuesday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons) proceeded as usual. No one could seriously quibble at the programmes, taking them by and large. They were not as theory-ridden as they tended to become in recent years (with the pet notion that a modern work must be surrounded by a lot of bait in the form of potboilers) and there was a fair number of works which were new to Liverpool. One of these, Arthur Benjamin's first Symphony, came it is true from Manchester when the Hallé Orchestra under Barbirolli visited us on February 1. But Sir Malcolm Sargent gave us Kodaly's *Comedy Overture* and Mr Rignold the amusing *Beckus the Dandipratt* of Malcolm Arnold. As to other outstanding works, we had such things as the Busoni pianoforte concerto (Newton-Wood) Bax's third symphony, Bartók's third pianoforte concerto, Prokofiev's third, Kodaly's *Hary Janos*, Goossens's Oboe Concerto, the Khachaturian violin concerto, the Bartók violin concerto and the Ireland pianoforte concerto. Among the guest-conductors were Jorda and Malko,

who treated us to a Tchaikovsky concert. All in all, and in spite of inevitable repetitions, Mr Rignold's first season achieved much in the way of solid work. And it was incontestable that the standard of the string playing, at least, showed signs of improvement.

In the choral sphere we had *Gerontius* which was supplemented by the Welsh Choral Union's *Apostles* and a fine performance of the *St Matthew Passion* under Sargent. The Union also put on a successful concert-version of *Aïda*.

And that brings us to opera, in which we have fared none too well in recent years. Liverpool, once the home-town of Carl Rosa and still keenly interested through its Young People's Opera Circle in keeping the operatic flag flying, has somehow gained the reputation of being a chancey city for touring opera companies. But Covent Garden which descended upon us in March had no reason to lament any lack of support. They brought *Peter Grimes*, risking it on the first night, when an ill-lit stage did it less than justice and left us to await a second performance before really seeing it. In addition there was a reasonable bill consisting of *Aïda* and *Mastersingers* – novelties, almost, to the younger generation – *Figaro* and the popular handful. It is an encouraging sign, moreover, that two local amateur societies specialise in 'grand' opera and occasional productions such as *Romeo and Juliet* enliven the scene in between times.

Ballet is almost a total stranger, apart from a flying visit here and there (Esmeralda and Yoma Sosburgh, the Dutch dancer, brought a little colour into the drab scene).

To revert to the Philharmonic (and in Liverpool we are always reverting to the Philharmonic) one of their more successful ventures has been the development of the idea of the Industrial Concert, that is the concert exclusively for employees of industrial firms. Beginning as an experiment,

the scheme has had a pronounced success in tapping a new or newly-formed public. These concerts are now run in triplicate and nearly always ensure a good house. Apart from their entertainment value they keep the orchestra busy when it is not dashing about the country, and one may suppose that a similar motive, besides the Educational one, inspires the concerts for schools and the occasional concerts for Youth organisations. And in this connection one may mention the visit of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain under Dr Reginald Jacques, which put up a remarkably proficient performance.

During the summer months we largely lose sight of our orchestra, which City Councillors never cease to remind us is a trifling charge on the rates. But occasionally they issue forth in a special series, as in May when we had four very ordinary concerts with the inevitable Beethoven-Tchaikovsky bid. So you see, London is not alone in maintaining this dreary box-office fetish, which nowadays does not always meet the needs of the exchequer. We were grateful, however, for the re-discovery of Beethoven's too-neglected overture *The Consecration of the House*.

One of the surprises last year was the resilience of the old-established Rodewald Society which has undeviatingly persued the ideals of the purest chamber music when all the signs were that there was no public for it. Under wise management and with a little bounty from the Arts Council, it has contrived to keep its head above water. Indeed it may truly be said that for quality of performance the Rodewald Concerts, with such quartets as the Hungarian and Paganini, set a tone which we should like to see emulated elsewhere. For the rest, recital music on a first-class level is almost confined to the concerts promoted by the firm of Rushworth and Dreaper and the occasional rare celebrity visitor. We do not indeed get quite so much from the outside as in

time past; Gigli and the Glasgow Orpheus Choir were exceptional events.

It is to be placed on record that Liverpool managed to celebrate, though not in a very convincing fashion, the 70th birthday of Sir Thomas Beecham, who came down to conduct an anniversary concert, and paid some handsome tributes to the orchestra, whatever others may think.

In the world of competition festivals there is a surprising liveliness. Two local music firms, Rushworths and Smiths, each sponsor a festival in the city and in addition the annual Lewis's Eisteddford caters more especially for Welsh interests. The entries are enormous.

It has for some time past been a source of reproach to the city that it does not possess its own college of music, though it is not deficient in teachers of ability and has a flourishing Matthay School which is by no means confined to the teaching of the Pianoforte. During the year it was announced that an anonymous donor had offered the sum of £10,000 owards the establishment of such a college. So far there are no concrete developments, but the proposal has received the blessing of the City Council, which is no doubt the next best thing to hard cash, and in due course it may no longer be necessary for students desiring an ampler musical education to make the journey to Manchester.

In the matter of education, though we lag behind in certain respects, there are some reasons for satisfaction. The long-awaited Chair of Music which has been filled at the University by Professor Gerald Abraham, cannot fail to make its mark, as time goes on, upon the musical culture of the city. We are spending no inconsiderable sum of money in promoting musical education in the schools, and orchestral concerts for the young have become a regular feature of the curriculum. Whether the money is being wisely spent, whether there is enough co-ordination between the various

efforts, is a moot point, but it is something that the claims of music have received official recognition, though still falling far short of what is required. Much useful work has been done in the Evening Institutes in promoting amateur orchestras and Youth Clubs have also played their part in disseminating musical interest.

A comprehensive picture of musical life in such a city as Liverpool would no doubt include a good deal that does not come into the public limelight at all, the various little clubs and societies that maintain an active life in one form or another, the small choral societies as well as the larger ones that make a public appearance from time to time, the suburban festivals, the church choirs, the organ recitals which even when they are of distinction fail to arouse more than a passing interest (incidentally, Liverpool, once the home of a celebrated organ tradition, no longer has a City Organist, and the famous St George's Hall organ still awaits its rehabilitation after the damage it sustained during the war). The effect of the war was certainly to decentralise music for the time being and there is no doubt that the seeds then sown have borne fruit in an increased local activity.

But recognition and encouragement of local talent is still very far from being generous, and it is one of the major problems to provide opportunities for both the executive and the creative musician. The stigma that seems to attach to the so-called local musician will take a lot of removing. There are those who argue that it does not matter where a musician comes from. So! – but it matters very much where he lives and works.

The revival of many of the interests which lapsed during the war should be a matter of concern. Among these, perhaps the most urgent is a society devoted to the cultivation of contemporary music, such as was exemplified in pre-war days by such bodies as the British Music Society, of which

Liverpool had at one time the largest provincial membership. The biggest injury that the cult of the permanent whole-time orchestra has done is to monopolise the services of local instrumentalists who are consequently debarred from taking part in such activities.

Tail-piece: Some time in the mid-summer a famous American orchestra landed at the Liverpool quayside, took one look at the city, found there was no hall available, and passed on.

LEEDS: *Eric Todd*

WHEN it became known that Leeds City rates were to be increased by three shillings in the pound last year, friends of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra naturally began to have misgivings about its future. Letters in the local press made it clear that there was a fairly strong, if unorganised, opposition to the scheme on account of its cost, and it seemed reasonable to assume that if estimates were to be pruned the latest of the city's amenities would be the most likely to suffer. However, the City Council has recently resolved all doubts by authorising the continuance of the orchestra for a further three years after present contracts expire, a most welcome decision especially as it was supported by both the main parties.

According to the published estimates the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra will cost the Leeds authority approximately £32,000 during the coming year, which is rather more than a twopenny rate. This may seem a great deal of money to spend on music, yet when one compares the figure with that of £144,000, the cost of the libraries and museums, or the £230,000 devoted to 'parks, pleasure grounds and open spaces', the sum is not unreasonably large. The cost of the orchestra to Leeds may be substantially reduced if more local authorities take advantage of

the scheme, but there will never be any question of the concerts being self-supporting as far as Leeds is concerned. One of the most important features has been to provide the best in orchestral music at a price which is within the reach of everyone, and as the average cost per seat when the orchestra performs in Leeds is slightly less than two shillings and threepence it is obvious that, to keep such a price level, large subsidies will always be needed. Incidentally, in passing, I wonder whether there exists any other place in England, or in the world for that matter, where one may hear music finely performed by a full-time professional orchestra at such low cost?

In these circumstances there is no real justification for calling the debit of the orchestral accounts a loss, and those who issue statements of the financial cost of the service to the city would be wise to avoid a term which naturally arouses a certain amount of resentment. One notes in this connection that the term 'loss' is never used with reference to the cost of art galleries, libraries or similar services.

During the past two years the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra has held its concerts in Leeds with rare exceptions on Saturday evenings. In the present season, following the example set by the Liverpool Philharmonic and other provincial orchestras, there will be three separate series with different approaches, popular concerts on Sundays, a more or less standard classical programme for the Saturday series, and a Wednesday series which will be rather more ambitious as regards programme content. Another innovation will be the availability of season tickets for each series. So far advance booking has been limited to one month, ostensibly to prevent the best seats being snapped up by those whose pockets were sufficiently well lined to afford the necessary outlay. In response to many requests, particularly from the Y.S.O. Supporters' Club, it has now been found

that such facilities can be granted without anyone being placed at a disadvantage. Ever on the watch for opportunities of doing missionary work, the executive of the orchestra has now instituted special concerts for industrial workers. As the two which have already been given drew capacity audiences the experiment will no doubt be continued.

Artistically the Y.S.O. has made very satisfactory progress during the two and a half years of its existence: indeed with the personnel virtually unchanged and the rehearsal time adequate it would have been strange if the enthusiastic and knowledgeable guidance of Maurice Miles had not produced good results. Like every other orchestra it has a somewhat variable standard of performance, but on the whole the standard has been high and occasionally, as in the recent performance of Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony, interpretation and execution have both been on the highest level. A glance through my notices of recent concerts reminds me that many of the outstanding performances have been of piano concertos, notably the Khatchaturian with Moura Lympany, the Bartók No. 3 with Kendall Taylor, and the Rachmaninoff No. 3 with Colin Horsley, who is perhaps the best of the younger group of pianists. To these names must be added that of Denis Matthews who, after lecturing wittily and eruditely one Tuesday evening on the Piano Concertos of Beethoven, proceeded to illustrate his thesis by playing Nos. 1 and 2 on the Wednesday, Nos. 3 and 4 on the Thursday, and finally the *Emperor* on Friday, all accomplished with superb technique and consummate musicianship.

Arrangements for the 1950 Musical Festival are well in hand with orchestras and conductors engaged and the chorus selected. Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic will open the Festival on September 30, and give the first three concerts, Maurice Miles and the Y.S.O. will

take the next two and Sir John Barbirolli and the Hallé the last three. There will be seven evening concerts and one morning concert instead of the usual five and three. Information about programmes is not at the moment of writing forthcoming, though I have a strong suspicion that Mr Miles will be asked to present the Vaughan Williams Sixth Symphony.

Herbert Bardgett is again the chorus master and his main preoccupation at present is to fill adequately the vacancies among the tenors. He apparently had no difficulty in securing sopranos, contraltos and basses of the required standard, but at least twenty more tenors are needed. Most Yorkshire choirs seem to be having trouble in this direction, which makes one wonder whether tenors as a class are dying out, or if it is that a higher standard of vocal quality is demanded nowadays. I seem to remember hearing some very throaty and forced singing in that register during the early years of the century, singing which would not be tolerated at the present time.

Turning now to Leeds Philharmonic Society, though not because of any association of ideas, for its tonal quality is always adequate and frequently distinguished, we find the Society intent on putting its house in order during the present season. Since the death of Sir Edward Bairstow, who brought the choir to a high degree of unanimity, certain refinements, such as its sustained pianissimo and the splendid vigour of attack, have gradually been lost under a series of guest conductors. To put these matters right the committee approached Sir Malcolm Sargent with a view to his appointment as permanent conductor. As a result Sir Malcolm, who is reported to have made certain stipulations with regard to balance of the various sections and to have asked for fresh auditions, will conduct two of the Society's concerts this season.

Since my last notes its most successful effort was the Benedicite of Vaughan Williams, when the soprano solo was beautifully sung by Elsie Suddaby, whose voice remains as fresh and pure as when I first heard her I dare not say how many years ago.

Our other great choir, Leeds Choral Society, has made considerable progress during the last two years under Norman Strafford as conductor. My chief grievance against it is lack of enterprise in the matter of programmes. Last season its contribution was confined to *Creation* and two performances of *Messiah*. Now every choir may be permitted one *Messiah* per year, if only to keep the pot boiling, but one wonders what conceivable purpose, other than money-making, could be served by the second.

No record of choral activities during the past year would be complete without a reference to the Leeds Guild of Singers, the small choir of 26 voices which Dr Melville Cook, organist and choirmaster at Leeds Parish Church, has selected and trained for the performance of the more intimate choral works. On the last occasion I heard it the programme included Palestrina's *Stabat Mater,* Kodály's *Missa Brevis* and the Kyrie and Agnus Dei from Byrd's Four-Part Mass, each sung with such precision, tonal quality, balance and understanding that one naturally places their performances among our major musical events. During the present year Dr Cook and the Guild will honour the Bach bicentenary by giving a series of recitals of his lesser known choral works.

For the outstanding musical event of the year we were indebted to the Covent Garden Opera Company whose fine production of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* revealed it as Wagner's ideal of a music-drama wherein appeal to ear, eye and mind is so exquisitely adjusted that selective praise becomes almost an impertinence. It was gratifying

to find on its completion that the vast audience which packed the Grand Theatre should accord the company the greatest reception I remember seeing, being so enthusiastic that it positively refused to go home.

Apart from *Peter Grimes* the most noteworthy feature about the Covent Garden productions was the unusually high standard of orchestra and chorus. In the provinces we are accustomed to make do for theatrical performances with orchestras deficient in size and sometimes in quality, but here we had a body of players containing enough strings to balance the singing and providing playing of a quality we normally associate only with the concert hall. As the chorus was far beyond the average of operatic companies and as they were trained by Douglas Robinson, a native of Leeds, there was additional cause for gratification.

One reason for the success of opera in Leeds, and it is taken for granted now that the visit of an opera company means full houses, is the existence of a large and well-organised group, the West Riding Opera Circle, which makes it its pleasure and duty to support opera in the district. Among its other activities is that of providing lectures, and one recalls that the capacity audience for *Peter Grimes* was partly the result of a lecture given by the Earl of Harewood, who spoke with obvious authority on the work. Not content with mere listening the Opera Circle has now a production section, from whom we recently heard a very praiseworthy concert performance of *The Bartered Bride*.

Another duty which this society has undertaken is that of sponsoring a series of four concerts by the Northern Philharmonic Orchestra, which once again has obtained a limited number of Saturday bookings of Leeds Town Hall. We can, therefore, expect artistic rivalry in the orchestral field this season and, though the odds will be in favour of the Y.S.O., with its more extended rehearsal time, I have

no doubt that the Northern Philharmonic will, as it has done so often in the past, give a good account of itself.

In the field of chamber music Leeds Concert Society has made a most successful come-back after the failure to obtain enough support in the previous year. That the loss of these concerts was keenly felt in the city was demonstrated by the enrolment of twice as many subscribers as the previous record. The Wednesday mid-day concerts provided by the municipality continue to be well attended, but the new series promoted by the Corporation under the title of *Musical Anthology* failed, perhaps by lack of publicity, to obtain the support it deserved.

All this uncoordinated activity has meant the overlapping of appointments, and on one occasion there were no fewer than five musical events of importance taking place in the city at the same time. To help in the avoidance of these unfortunate clashes an appointments' diary, available for consultation by concert organisers, will be kept in future at the Central Public Library.

Music in Sheffield, largely provided by the Sheffield Philharmonic Society, appears to be in a very flourishing condition according to a communication received from Mr Kenneth Crickmore, Director of the Society.

Attendance at the concerts given by the Hallé Orchestra during last season broke all records, 22 of the 30 concerts being completely sold out, and the Sheffield City Hall incidentally has a seating capacity of some 2,800.

In addition to the main symphony concerts, chamber concerts and recitals which the Society presents, there is a choir of 300 singers, an orchestra of 90 which concentrates on contemporary music, a Listeners' Club of 1,000 members and a Mobile Unit which tours youth clubs and similar organisations in Sheffield and district.

Arrangements for the present season include 22 concerts

by the Hallé Orchestra and five by the City of Birmingham Orchestra. The Society's chorus will be heard in the Verdi Requiem, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast,* the Choral Symphony of Beethoven and, of course, in Handel's *Messiah.*

As a Yorkshireman I note with pleasure that, whilst Sheffield acknowledges the pre-eminence of Lancashire's orchestral music, the Society's chorus will proceed to Manchester to let them hear there how *Messiah* should be sung.

MANCHESTER: *J. H. Elliot*

I HAVE from time to time been chided, in terms ranging from polite protest to vehement vilification, for giving too little attention to amateur music-making hereabouts. The difficulty, of course, is to know just where to draw the line. Amateur performance embraces not only the activities of a number of first-rate choirs but also Miss Anastasia Throttlebotham's pummelling of the Sonata Pathétique on the domestic upright, with Uncle Jasper's portrait dancing a jig among the seashells atop. Generally speaking, I think that amateur effort – I speak feelingly, as one of the world's worst pianists – should be its own reward (or penalty, as the case may be) until such time as it oversteps normal boundaries and either associates with professionalism in public music-making or, better still, performs a service to music which professional enterprise is too timid or too economically harassed to envisage.

In the pre-war days, when Erik Chisholm announced one of his many outstanding operatic ventures at Glasgow (I touch my forelock to Mr Lindsay) my fingers itched to seize pyjamas and toothbrush preparatorily to rushing for a northbound train, just as I now long to fly to Birmingham (a bob in the direction of Mr Waterhouse) and other places where there are similar great goings-on among the ama-

teurs – and would do so if circumstances arising out of Hitler's machinations had not unkindly clipped my wings. On the whole, however, I feel that a critic should normally concern himself chiefly with professional activity, if only because the public stands in more need of protection therefrom. I say all this with the sincerest respect for amateur effort and a very real admiration for much of it that has come within my purview.

However, as I received a most courteous invitation to sample the work of the Adult Education Institute Orchestra, which is ably trained and conducted by Cecil N. Cohen, I attended a concert in March and was much impressed. The orchestra was founded in 1944, and is among the many musical amenities provided by the Manchester Education Committee. While on the subject, I may say that the path of duty led me on a May Sunday evening to hear the 95-year-old Gorton Philharmonic Society present an orchestral programme at Belle Vue. The longer experience of this ensemble has perhaps given its performances more cohesion and polish than those of its younger relative aforesaid, though I am bound to point out that the A.E.I. programmes maintain symphonic traditions with integrity, whereas those of the Gorton players range widely and draw some queer, not to say dubious, fish into their net. I am rather guiltily conscious of the existence of many other admirable amateur societies and trust that no susceptibilities have been touched. However, I feel that henceforward I must shape these notes in stricter accordance with the creed outlined above.

The year, up to the moment of writing, has been consistently entertaining but hardly overflowing with outstanding events. The Hallé Concerts, which are of course the principal pen-fodder for the musical scribe in this area, have for the most part avoided excursions into the unknown, in

accordance with a policy manifestly based on economic considerations, Manchester being notorious for its musical conservatism. Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* Symphony was given by the Hallé Orchestra, under Sir John Barbirolli, at the first Albert Hall concert of the year: an event announced – incredibly, but as far as I know accurately – as the first Manchester performance. Many another modern work, long since familiar elsewhere, could be played here under the same sub-heading. *Mathis* had quite a run subsequently. Charles Groves and the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra broadcast it in March before an invited audience in the Town Hall, and the Philadelphia Orchestra included it in one of their concerts at Belle Vue in June – but of this more anon.

Later in January we had Arthur Benjamin's Symphony for the first time – a work which, without quite convincing us that it is likely to stay in the repertory, aroused the liveliest anticipations of what may follow from the same pen. In March came our first contactual experience of Vaughan Williams's latest symphony, of which Barbirolli conducted a finely eloquent performance. An interchange in April brought us the Hague Residency Orchestra, with Jan Out conducting – an admirable ensemble, though we had no misgivings about any critical comparisons that might be made in Holland – and also some unfamiliar music of note in the shape of Léon Orthel's Third Symphony: an impressive work heavy with dark and tragic implications, yet at rare moments illumined by an optimism that had no stigma of facile cheerfulness, but seemed to have been hardened by severe and chastening fires. Other novelties have been a trifle shabby or small-beerish, grateful though we must be for the tiniest unhackneyed mercies. But one must certainly add that Barbirolli's flair for programme-making is constantly in evidence and that there is

always something relatively spicy to which one can look forward – some alleviation of that dull oppression which settles upon the critic's chest when he contemplates the average bread-and-butter syllabus through which he must perforce wend his more or less weary way. Moreover, our permanent conductor miraculously avoids, without any suggestion of eccentricity, the staleness of interpretation to which some of his brethren are prone, and comes up fresh – or gives the impression of doing so, which is the same thing as far as we are concerned – to any repetition of any hoary chestnut. We may disagree with him from time to time, but we cannot fail to respond to the zest and zip which never seem to falter. It goes without saying that the performances *qua* performances never fall below a certain high standard. (At the point of going to press I am glad to be able to add that the 1949-50 Hallé syllabus includes a respectable share of novelties).

While on the subject of orchestral performance, let me deal with those phenomenal Philadelphians, who promised us a single visit and ended by paying us three, after the last of which they hastened (or would have hastened if the special train had not uncivilly derailed itself at the start) overnight to their ship at Southampton. I suppose there is no harm in saying that the actual playing of this extraordinary ensemble, apart altogether from its advantages in bulk and hence depth of tone, is immeasurably ahead of anything we can offer in this country, even (added he, with a modest cough) in Manchester. No doubt it was our schooling in orchestral excellence that accounted for the wild enthusiasm shown on those three May-June nights at Belle Vue. Mancunians know a thing or two about orchestras and do not grudge a visiting team its due – so much so that Mr Fielding, who spoke to us that final evening about the next tour (yes, in spite of everything, the next tour) of

the Philadelphia Orchestra, suggested that the main festival should be at Belle Vue instead of Harringay – and Eugene Ormandy agreed, with the stipulation that Barbirolli should have the rostrum for one concert.

The performances were terrific: I have hardly recovered breath since. But was that beauty – that spellbinding, almost perfect beauty – very much deeper than skin? Could we love this charmer, year in and year out, with the fidelity which the Hallé Orchestra demands from us and is granted as a matter of course? Candidly, no. If our own orchestra can attain such a standard of playing and at the same time preserve her own depth of character, well and good. But such icy excellence as that of our visitor, without the inner musical quality which the Hallé possesses, would soon cause our loyalty to waver and our bedazzled eyes to rove. We saluted the American beauty and will hail her return with infatuated delight, but her blandishments shall not seduce us from the abiding joy of companionship with so choice and mature a corporate personality as our own beloved Hallé.

Operatic experiences during the year are worth mentioning because of one or two special features, including our first stage contact with *Peter Grimes* – has Britten, taking all in all, surpassed this remarkable achievement, with its psychological truth and its mordant, almost gruesome musical beauty? – which was put on here by the Covent Garden Opera Company, who gave us a fortnight of the best opera performances I have heard in Manchester since war broke out. Wagner came back to our boards during these two weeks with adequate if not brilliant presentations of *Die Meistersinger*. The measure of our new audience's Wagnerian innocence may be gauged from the fact that naïve applause destroyed some of the choicest moments – notably that wonderful merging of the overture into the chorale which opens the first act. Which reminds me (alas,

poor Richard!) that I have recollections of only one complete *Ring* cycle in Manchester during the past quarter of a century. I suppose, generally speaking, a city gets the opera seasons it deserves. A subsequent Carl Rosa visitation broke no new ground, though *Carmen* was given in its original *opéra comique* form, with spoken dialogues. With all due respect to purists and Mérimée-haunted scholars, I must say I prefer the familiar recitatives of Guiraud. At least the work, in his version, remains on one art-plane. It is difficult enough to preserve a straight face in the opera house without having to hop from one form of artifice to another.

The Manchester Contemporary Music Centre startled those of us who like to tickle our palates with what is here almost forbidden fruit by announcing for May three concerts at which the full series of Bartók quartets would be played by the Laurance Turner String Quartet. The performances, given in the Art Gallery – with the quartet placed against a sombre, not to say ghastly, background consisting of somebody's picture of some bygone notability standing at the bedside of his dying wife, executed on a wantonly colossal scale – overcame all handicaps and were quite admirable. The audiences, though small, were suitably enthusiastic. But, present or absent, we should all feel grateful to Mr Turner and his colleagues for the hard work they devoted to an enterprise which gave a special touch of distinction, and even a suggestion of daring up-to-dateness, to the musical calendar for the year. Even the die-hards, assuming that they heard about the recitals, could console themselves with the reflection that Bartók is, after all, dead. Incidentally, the Hallé leader played with Lucy Pierce all the Beethoven violin sonatas during March. What with one thing and another we owe Laurance Turner a pretty handsome bouquet.

The Tuesday Mid-day Concerts again provided an ad-

mirable syllabus, and the work of the Manchester Chamber Concerts Society, which is the only firm and connected chain binding us to the sphere of chamber music, carried on its excellent activity. There were the usual fugitive concerts given by all manner of people, including a piano recital by Costa, the 19-year-old Portuguese: an event which intrigued me mightily. Never before have I heard so startling a combination of consummate technique and musical immaturity. Given a few years for sober reflection this youngster might well be a world-beater. But how is his career likely to be affected if he gallivants around Europe to display his dexterity and expose the present callowness of his musical outlook? It may be counted to him for righteousness that he freshened up his programme with some music by his compatriot, Vianna da Motta, slight though its attractions proved to be.

At the time of writing, the gutted Free Trade Hall is still a gaunt and forbidding skeleton. Thus we remain without any adequate concert accommodation in the city centre, though there is some talk of the famous old building being washed, brushed up, and generally rehabilitated enough to reopen coincidently with the big national festival of 1951.

But perhaps our choicest item of news during the year was that of the knighthood conferred on John Barbirolli, to whom we owe so much. Hail, Sir John! It is no more than bare justice that you should be knighted, for without you we were in truth like to have become utterly benighted.

BIRMINGHAM: *John Waterhouse*

BIRMINGHAM'S 1948–9 musical season has been busy enough. In music, as in other affairs, this is a persistently busy city. The newspaper critic can never feel at all confident in advance that he will have a single free evening among the seven of an approaching week, even when he has

developed for himself quite a harsh system of rules as to classes of concert which do not justify a place in his paper's hard-pressed columns.

Yet it has not been altogether a cheerful season, in its broader aspects and prospects. Two of our principal institutions, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the office of City Organist, have given cause for much anxiety: the latter, perhaps, only for a period now at an end, but the former in still-gathering crescendo.

The C.B.S.O., administered by an independent committee but assisted by sizeable grants from the City and from the Arts Council, continues to fight a desperate and apparently a losing battle on two fronts: against rising costs and against falling attendences. For the seven months preceding April the gross deficit was £11,787, though this was reduced to £248 by the substantial grants from the City and from the Arts Council. Salaries of players, conductors and secretarial staff had amounted to £29,557. One stares and stares again at this last figure. It represents only seven months' decent wages under present economic conditions. But are the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven etc. really worth so very much more than their string quartets? Why, oh why did that great sprawling succubus the modern professional full orchestra ever come into being as a seemingly prime essential of our musical existence, when there are such worlds upon words of other fine music to be explored at incomparably less expense?

It is noteworthy that the largest component of the C.B.S.O's income came from concerts *outside* Birmingham. At home, support has certainly been poorer than in any previous season since the orchestra's full-time establishment in 1944. The alternate-Sunday concerts – general programmes with a popular bias – have been fairly well attended. But the concerts devoted to single composers on

alternate Tuesdays (an experiment which the committee imagined would bring extra compensation for some probable loss on the weekly Thursday concerts, with their more 'adventurous' policy) have failed to draw well-filled houses, even when the composers have been Tchaikovsky and Beethoven: Tchaikovsky and Beethoven have figured three times each in the course of sixteen one-composer concerts, which gives some measure of the desperation in the search for support, as does also the recent frequency of 'Ballet' concerts and concerts consisting solely of a string of selections from Gilbert and Sullivan (in one case, from musical comedy).

The Tuesday concerts are to be discontinued. The weekly Thursday concerts which (although Thursday, unlike Tuesday, has long been established as a regular 'orchestra night') have fared even worse, are to relapse into a less adventurous policy. This latter is particularly sad news, even though the policy has not so far been carried out in a wholly satisfying way. Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony, Rawsthorne's 'Symphonic Studies', Bloch's Concerto Grosso and Copland's *Quiet City* were works which any lively-minded music-lover should have welcomed to our repertory; John Veale's Second Symphony and Ruth Gipps's Piano Concerto were new compositions which well justified a hearing; piano concertos by Skerjanc and Erkin were no great shakes, but at least of some interest as throwing light on the present state of music in Yugoslavia and Turkey respectively. That, however, accounts for only eight works in a total of thirty-five Thursday concerts throughout the season; and too many of the other 'novelty' places have been occupied by tiny innocuous pieces of trivial account, which provided the merest 'token' substantiation of the policy, which gave no satisfaction to the enquiring-minded, and which probably drove away the stick-

in-the-Griegs just as much as more significant unfamiliar music would have done. As it was, one correspondent in *The Birmingham Post* complained of 'quinine, cascara and third-rate vodka.' Khachaturian's *Sabre Dance* and *Mezginka* (two of our Thursday adventures) might not inconceivably pass as 'third-rate vodka.' Quinine and cascara were harder to identify.

It must be added that one feels every sympathy with a certain bewilderment of policy in an orchestra struggling to please all tastes in order to avert financial collapse; and the warmest admiration for the way in which Mr George Weldon, Mr Harold Gray and the players have maintained a very high quality of performance despite the depressing circumstances.

The Committee seems to have arrived at a conclusion more than once suggested in *Penguin Music Magazine*, that Birmingham (despite the cascara) is suffering from severe orchestral dyspepsia. The Annual Report considers 'whether it would not be advisable to cultivate a still wider connection with other towns and reduce the number of concerts at home; and thus, by avoiding satiation, to stimulate what may have become a jaded appetite.' The orchestra is eagerly welcomed at various towns in the Midland region to which it pays visits, and there is evidence that others would like to receive it. The time is surely ripe for taking very seriously such a suggestion as was made by a Wolverhampton correspondent in the issue of *The Birmingham Post* that published the 'cascara' letter aforementioned. The C.B.S.O. obviously needs a large, regular income if it is to survive and to develop and maintain a culturally fertile policy. 'Why not (wrote Mr L. B. Duckworth) invite to a conference representatives of as many Midland local authorities as could stage symphony concerts, and ask how many would be willing to give the

Orchestra a regular grant from the rates in return for a series of concerts?'

Provincial orchestras, that is to say, may look for hope towards the present development of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra. And are not, perhaps the days of struggling private committees, magnificent though the pioneer work has been, drawing to a close? And the age of the 'sixpenny rate' leading to direct civic or (much preferably) regional employment?

Our organist, unlike our orchestra, has always been among the 'municipal amenities', and anxiety in this case has been of quite another nature.

When our beloved G. D. Cunningham died, in August 1948, he had been with us for close on a quarter of a century, having won the appointment through open contest in 1924. It was obvious that his place would be difficult to fill worthily, and that some delay was only to be expected. By the end of the year, however, the city was beginning to buzz with anxious organists and organ-followers all seeking to discover just what the Public Works Committee (which has charge of the appointment) was up to. Some rumours circulated that the contest-method which had brought us 'G. D.' was not to be adopted this time; and that Dr Genge Thalben Ball had been offered, and was likely to accept, the office. Then, at the time when many were expecting an announcement, came a statement that Dr Thalben Ball had agreed to organise a series of guest recitals, with himself as player on the alternate dates. This postponement of the issue proved, for a time, a very acceptable diversion, for it allowed us to hear a number of organists of high distinction. But when, at the end of the series (which ran from January 26 until April 13) the mysterious P.W.C. still had nothing to declare except that there was now to be another guest series of the same kind, the buzz of enquiry

grew to something like a roar (organists and organ-lovers when roused, are much more ferocious people than you would think).

At long last, after the beginning of the second series of recitals, the P.W.C. announced that Dr Thalben Ball was to be our City Organist, subject to the approval of the Council (which, needless to say, was in due course given).

Dr Thalben Ball's eminence in the musical world and his brilliance as a virtuoso are matters of common knowledge. He has special links with our tradition in that he was a close friend of Dr Cunningham, who gave him piano lessons in his boyhood and who held a very high opinion of his talent. We might, indeed, declare all well at the time of writing were it not for a certain residue of anxiety arising from the fact that we have as yet no definite assurance that he is to make Birmingham his home centre. Dr Cunningham was 'one of us' throughout his long period of office. He conducted the City Choir, often played organ-parts for other choral societies, constantly collaborated with the Orchestra, and was right in the heart of the City's musical life. If his successor, as many seem at present to fear, is to be merely a distinguished visitor and an arranger of other distinguished visits, it will be a regrettable lapse from what we have known in the past. If such be the future, Dr Thalben Ball himself will certainly not be blamed for accepting the terms; but the P.W.C. will not be very popular.

Probably owing to poor attendences last year, we have not of late been nearly so congested with piano recitalists and other 'celebrity artists.' Lamentation is not here so vociferous as in previous sections of this article. We have had a great deal to welcome in other departments of our music. Following the Midland Music Makers' remarkable autumn essay at Berlioz's *Trojans* (mentioned in the last *Penguin Music Magazine*) the Clarion Singers gave, in March,

a most joyous and high-spirited if not highly-polished production of Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love*. The Music Makers are now under weigh towards *William Tell* and the Barfield Grand Opera Society towards Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. The City Choir, though its B minor Mass in April was not quite up to its best previous standards, is clearly well served by Dr Cunningham's successor as conductor, Mr Weldon. The Birmingham Bach Club (now 'Society') and the Singers' Club have given interesting concerts in the Cathedral – the latter one devoted to settings of the Psalms of David from Clemens non Papa to Holst. The Ridgdowne Club, the Barber Concerts (a little apart from our main dietary now that they are exclusively University feasts) and the Art Gallery Concerts keep us well supplied with excellent chamber music. The Birmingham School of Music continues to hum with activity, and has lately sponsored three recitals of compositions by members of its teaching staff: Dr Ian Parrott (a University lecturer, and an interesting composer), Mr Herbert Lumby and Mr Peter Wishart. Mr Wishart's work was highly praised in one of my previous bulletins. It is good to know that the Oxford University Press has begun to publish it.

Of new developments by far the most important has been the activity of the University extra-mural department, which in 1948 appointed Mr Wilfred Mellers as its music lecturer. Mr Mellers organised, from January until May, a most valuable course of lectures on modern music, all of them given by composers (by no means all of whom talked about themselves): Darnton, Mellers, Bush, Frankel, Wellesz, Parrott, Searle, Seiber, Reizenstein, Berkeley, Rubbra and finally – the biggest 'catch' – Mr Aaron Copland himself. The department has also, with the aid of the Arts Council, brought us concerts by the 'Pro Musica Antiqua' ensemble of Brussels, by the viols of the Schola

Cantorum Basiliensis, and by the Zurich Motet Choir. Still richer activity is promised for next season,

In June our neighbour, Wolverhampton, held a Festival of Contemporary Music, consisting of three concerts by the C.B.S.O., a chamber-concert by the Blech Quartet, a "critics' forum" and (after a week's interval) a visit from the English opera group. It was only a beginning, and it was not very well supported; but the Civic and Wulfrun halls (in the same building) are such excellent concert-rooms, and are so fortunate in their lively and friendly management, that hopes may be set high for the future.

This notice must end by recording with bitter regret, the death of a veteran hero of Birmingham music: Mr. Appleby Matthews, originator of the City Orchestra.

SOUTHERN DIARY

John Durrant

CONCERT audiences during the past year have tended to fall off slightly, but a very great deal of large- and small-scale music-making has gone on under existing organisations in the South and some new bodies have made their appearance.

The Brighton Philharmonic Society, under which the Southern Philharmonic Orchestra functions, is guided by Herbert Menges, a very able conductor and sound musician of wide interests well able to give the S.P.O. the general training and rehearsal that it needs to fulfil its variety of engagements. Membership is not full-time but such players as are needed on any occasion are booked from a small pool of musicians who have worked with Mr Menges, as they are available. This excellent compromise solution of the 'regular rehearsal' problem works very well in practice – over half the orchestra appear at all concerts and the remainder (principally in the wind sections) vary to the extent of being the available two or three out of a choice of about five good players on their instrument.

The S.P.O. provides regular series of concerts at Brighton, Hastings and Portsmouth and was at the Mozart-Beethoven Festival held in Hastings last June. This Festival was a more than considerable success, being laid on with vision and incorporating other activities besides the purely orchestral programmes given at the evening concerts. One afternoon, for instance, there was a chamber music recital by the Martin String Quartet and Leon Goossens; on another a public musical Brains Trust with Scott Goddard, Ralph

Hill, Frank Howes and Leslie Woodgate, while trumpeters from the Royal Military School of Music heralded the proceedings with fanfares on various suitable occasions. Guest conductors at the Festival were Sir Thomas Beecham, who directed Mozart's C minor Mass, Symphony No. 31 and other works with that sparkle and verve that he has made so particularly his own, and Basil Cameron who did the *Eroica* and the Third Piano Concerto with Louis Kentner. On the final evening Herbert Menges conducted the *Jupiter* Symphony and the *Emperor* Concerto with Solomon. A truly festive occasion in every sense, which it is sincerely to be hoped will be repeated on an even bigger scale next year.

The usual spring season of Municipal Concerts was given in Portsmouth, the S.P.O. and Herbert Menges again being the mainstay of most of the programmes. This series was on the whole both an artistic and a financial success, although audiences were not quite so large as a year ago. From the point of view of solid worth Gina Bachauer's playing of Rachmaninoff's D minor Piano Concerto must be given first place, although the 'high spot' from a popular point of view seems to have been the Paganini Rhapsody by the same composer, with Cyril Smith. Miss Bachauer has unusual power and virility for one of her sex, coupled with the delicacy and ease required for the more poetical aspects of the concerto, and whenever I have heard her I have been struck by the sense of authentic contact with the composer's intentions that she displays. Mr Smith dealt with the Paganini Rhapsody with extreme precision and beautifully crisp attack, but no amount of skill can disguise the fact that it is not particularly good music, although of course a useful vehicle for a display of virtuosity. It glitters famously, like an over-painted woman, but (to pursue the simile) with no more proof of character beneath.

An announcement was made in July inferring that since the 1948-49 season of Municipal Concerts in Portsmouth made a profit, it is proposed to hold a further season along the same lines in 1949-50 – a rather naive remark. Bournemouth probably lost about £10,000 on the first season of their newly organized orchestra; the Hallé receives large subsidies from more than one city and the Brighton Corporation pays a subsidy to the Brighton Philharmonic Society. Yet we have Portsmouth and Southsea, one of the leading holiday resorts in the South, spending thousands of pounds on illuminated fountains, rockplants, wallflowers, tulipbeds and fireworks but only grudgingly admitting that it will organize a further series of Municipal Concerts because the last season made a profit! While on that subject it is only fair to admit, of course, that very much work on the Portsmouth concerts is done by the City Librarian and his staff, which would represent a very heavy additional charge if any private body were obliged to arrange it. But where concert promoters are concerned almost entirely with making a box office success there is a dreadful tendency for programmes to become completely stereotyped. Instead of a live and responsible attitude towards the musical life of the area, we are given constant performances of the popular concertos, familiar overtures and hackneyed symphonies. Heaven forbid that I should decry the established giants of the symphonic world just because they are fed to us *ad nauseam,* but a balanced diet is essential to good health. Portsmouth has not been the worst offender in this respect by any means, having recently included works by Sibelius, Arthur Bliss, the less often played Rachmaninoff D minor Concerto, Brahms's Second Symphony and a Bax Piano Sonata in the programmes.

The Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra under Rudolf Schwarz continues to consolidate its reputation, from the

point of view both of technical brilliance and of wide range of programme choice. I was privileged to hear this orchestra very soon after its re-organisation under Mr Schwarz and expressed the view then (also held by my more distinguished colleagues) that this orchestra was one of the two finest outside London. Mr Schwarz appears to give scarcely any dynamic indications to his players, but achieves, apparently miraculously, a remarkable sense of drama and most satisfactory unanimity.

The Western Philharmonic Society is the supporting body of the Western Philharmonic Orchestra, an orchestra which under the direction of Haigh Marshall is doing good work in Exeter, Plymouth and the West Country generally. One of its principal events this year was the Exeter Promenade season in July for which the orchestra was augmented to 60 players for a series of concerts in the Exeter Civic Hall. The relatively popular programmes drew the biggest audiences, of course, although it is interesting to note that there were more people present for programmes including Beethoven's and Brahms's symphonies than attended concerts of ballet music and the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto. In other parts of the South it has usually been the other way round – light programmes of Viennese and stage music with a solo singer attracting larger numbers than symphonies and instrumental concertos. This Society has very ambitious plans and intends to establish if possible a full-time permanent symphony orchestra in the West country (in addition to various other activities calculated to extend the influence of music generally), which is an enormous task and would be possible only with substantial assistance from various local authorities.

Worthing has launched a new venture this year – the Citizen's Orchestra founded and conducted by the Director of Music, Herbert Lodge. The orchestra is made up entirely

of amateurs but is supported officially by the Borough. Its first concert in March contained a Haydn symphony, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik,* and a Corelli suite for oboe and strings. Worthing already has a Municipal Orchestra, but this new venture should not only prove of great value in enabling the amateur to indulge his hobby relatively free of charge but also should make a contribution to the musical life of the district complementary to that of the smaller professional orchestra. I am glad to see that Brighton keeps alive the concertgoers' interest in the summer months, and only wish that more towns would follow its example. Bournemouth of course has its summer season of symphony concerts and a more 'popular' variety on Saturdays and Sundays, but too many of the other musical centres allow everything to stop in the hotter months. Solomon gave a recital in Brighton in August with a very wide range of pieces in his programme. He is an artist of supreme ability who might well serve as a model to all concert pianists for his complete integrity and musicianship; his approach to the business of concert-giving is so apparently matter-of-fact that he sometimes deceives one as to his technical skill – unlike some more flamboyant figures on the concert platform who must be appreciated through the eye rather than the ear!

1949 would so far seem to have been a choir year among amateurs in Portsmouth, the emphasis in most of the major concerts being on the performance of large choral works, and the general standard of singing surprisingly high. Where other districts go in for tone quality and ensemble, with the words taking second place, in Portsmouth the reverse seems to be the case, both in the serious societies and in those which are occupied mainly with the performance of lighter music, first-rate diction being one of the most striking features in most of these choirs' work. I have many

times complimented the Glee Club, the Choral Union and the Choral and Orchestral Society on this aspect of their work and this opinion has been further strengthened by the appearance of the combined Methodist Choir in Mendelssohn's *St Paul* in May. These singers were recruited from at least ten churches and had very little rehearsal at which all were present, doing most of their preparation in small groups of three or four choirs at a time, but the net result was excellent from a technical point of view, to say nothing of the singers' proper approach to this subject in an atmosphere of dignity and reverence such is due to a full-scale work dealing with the conversion and teachings of St Paul.

The same, perhaps on a higher level, may be said of the C. & O.S's moving performance of the B minor Mass at the Cathedral, which was undoubtedly one of the supreme musical experiences of the year. The performers were almost entirely local people – including the soloists Dorothy Wassell, Reginald Wassell, Veronica Gulvin, Ethel Bishop, Peter Jameson and Alan Hutchings – and their conviction of purpose and sincerity of approach greatly enhanced their actual performance of this sublime work. John A. Davison, the conductor, has great insight into the music of Bach.

The Choral Union under Bertram Bradshaw gave excellent performances of *King Arthur* and *Acis and Galatea* in their last concert of the season in May with three distinguished soloists: Isobel Baillie, Tom Purvis and Frederick Woodhouse. A common feeling is abroad in the minds of those nurtured on the romantics with their emotional surge and colourful orchestrations, that this simple-sounding pre-baroque music is too rigid and fails to express the ideas in the libretto. It can readily be learned, however, to appreciate the simple directness of this kind of music for its own sake and to give it its proper place in our musical experience.

The Glee Club, which in the past has sometimes earned my censure for being too concerned with light stuff and with to some extent wasting its excellent large choir, gave us Martin Shaw's new oratorio *The Redeemer* in April, a courageous and successful effort, and I am glad to say very well attended.

Competition Festivals are very vigorous in the South, those at Southampton, Bournemouth and the Isle of Wight being most worthy of mention this year. Portsmouth's (the 18th) was revived for the first time since the war, and attracted a record number of entries, but suffered a financial loss owing to various difficulties, not least amongst which is the complete absence of a suitable concert hall of any size since the blitz. Here again, very high standards were reached by choirs and solo singers, and the string classes showed considerable promise, although the general level of piano playing was deplorably low.

The Petersfield Festival was its usual aesthetic success – it is not merely a competition, of course – and although the spirit of rivalry is present it is used only as a means to bring entries up to the necessary high standard to take part in the large works performed at the evening concerts, when winners and losers alike sing as one entity.

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THE AUTHOR

RALPH HILL comes of a professional musical family on both sides, for his grandfather, Henry Weist-Hill, was not only an eminent conductor and violinist, but also first principal of the Guildhall School of Music; and his other grandfather, Joseph Williams, was both himself a composer and the head of the oldest English firm of music publishers. Born at Watford in 1900, Ralph Hill was educated at the Upper Latymer School, studied to become a professional cellist, went into the family music-publishing firm, and wrote his first article on music in 1923. He decided to become a music critic after studying the books and articles of Ernest Newman. After editing *The Musical Mirror* from 1929 to 1932, he was deputy music critic to Edwin Evans on the *Daily Mail* from 1933 until 1939, and music editor of the *Radio Times* 1934-45, and from then until 1948 chief music critic of the *Daily Mail*. In 1946 he became editor of *Penguin Music Magazine* and he now writes music criticism for the *Sunday Express*. He has frequently lectured and broadcast on music. His publications incl
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