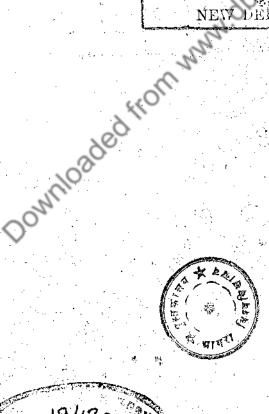


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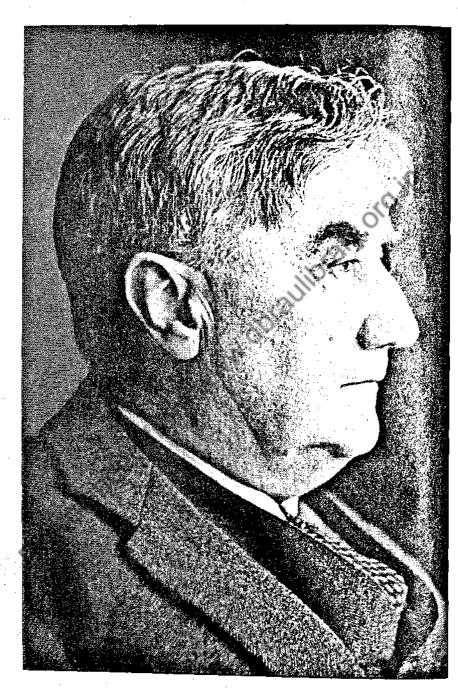
### THE YEAR'S WORK IN MUSIC

This is the first issue of what will, it is hoped, be an annual publication of the British Council. The editor, Mr. Alan Frank, Music Editor of the Oxford University Press, has got together a team of writers, each of whom is an acknowledged authority in his chosen field. The articles in the first half of the work are on special aspects of British Music, while the surveys in the second half give an account of the chief musical events of the year. The list of recordings and the extensive bibliography with which the book concludes make it a useful work of reference, and the whole bears adequate testimony to the present lively state of British Music.

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Ralph Vaughan Williams, O.M.

# THE YEAR'S WORK IN MUSIC

Published for THE BRITISH COUNCIL BY LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO, LONDON · NEW YORK · TORONTO

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# INTRODUCTION

'The Year's Work in Music' is designed to give an account, in the form of a half-dozen or so articles, of what has been outstanding in musical activity in Great Britain during the year 1 June 1947 to 31 May 1948. There is no significance in these dates: events of importance may well have occurred on 31 May 1947 or 1 June 1948. In the latter case, the reader may be assured that the next annual issue of 'The Year's Work in Music' will be likely to cover it. In at least one article in the present issue, the contributor has rightly reached back to the period preceding our 'Year'. This is the account by Dyneley Hussey of the B.B.C.'s Third Programme, which was in fact initiated eight months prior to June 1947. An exceptional contribution is Scott Goddard's essay on Ralph Vaughan Williams. Strictly, this subject did not arise directly from 'the year's work'. But its appropriateness is evident since the year saw both Vaughan Williams's seventy-fifth birthday and the first performance of his new (Sixth) Symphony—the most notable single event of the year.

In general, contributors have limited themselves to the stated period. But it was not part of their duty to chronicle every important event in that period: it was felt that such a course would have resulted in very dull reading. Rather it has been the intention to gather together a series of well-informed, extended essays which deal with trends in preference to day-to-day happenings; which point with pride to many positive achievements but which are critical where necessary of our shortcomings (notably in the field of opera); which draw attention to our problems, such as the lack of concert-halls, and of instruments and teachers in the schools; essays each of which it is hoped is readable in its own right and which, taken together, do provide a clear picture of the quite extraordinary

activity to be witnessed in this country's musical life at present.

For here, as in most countries, the post-war rebuilding of culture is bringing changes, sometimes exciting ones, in its train. 'Music is finding its way into the very hearts of a great many people's lives. Taste, in the sense of discrimination, will come,' writes Martin Cooper on p. 57. The

Local Government Bill newly enacted in 1948 empowers Local Authorities to spend up to a sixpenny rate on cultural activities. How this public money is to be spent, as far as music is concerned, is bound to be reflected in the pages of the next issue of this publication. Another change: for the first time Great Britain is to possess a State Opera House.\*

In the meantime, certain municipalities are already supporting regional orchestras. An outstanding example occurred during the period under review. In September 1947 the first concert was given, in Leeds Town Hall, by the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, a permanent orchestra of seventy-five players under a permanent conductor, Maurice Miles. Eight towns in the area assist Leeds to subsidise this orchestra, which gives only about one hundred concerts per year and therefore has ample rehearsal time. Thus Leeds is now added to the other towns in the north and midlands of England—Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham—which each possess a first-class orchestra of their own.

On the south coast of England, Brighton and neighbouring towns support the Southern Philharmonic Orchestra and Bournemouth its recently revived Municipal Orchestra. Glasgow is the base of the Scottish Orchestra, while in the west and east of England concerts have been provided by the Western Philharmonic and the Eastern Symphony orchestras respectively.

Such regional orchestras are mentioned here, and others could be, since less attention is given to them in the following pages than is their due. Space in any one issue is limited, and if the present one appears rather to focus on London, that must not be taken as meaning that Great Britain's musical activity is concentrated on the capital. A future number of 'The Year's Work in Music' will surely redress the balance, as it will similarly rectify the omission, or scant treatment, of other subjects of importance. The chronicle of musical work in Great Britain can only be built up over a period of years: it is hoped that a succession of annual issues will provide the reader with a record which will be both comprehensive and permanent.

ALAN FRANK

<sup>\*</sup> Sec footnote on p. 38.



# BROADCASTING— THE THIRD PROGRAMME

### BY DYNELEY HUSSEY

Although its inception lies outside the period covered by these chronicles, the Third Programme of the British Broadcasting Corporation is so important an addition to the resources of education and entertainment in Great Britain that some account of its establishment and history seems in place. It is a little difficult, after nearly two years of constant listening to the Third Programme, to realize what conditions were like before 29 September 1946. At that time the activities of the B.B.C. comprised two programmes—the 'Home Service' designed to cover every kind of interest from news and political discussion to symphony concert and music-hall, and the 'Light Programme' devoted mainly to popular entertainment.

Listeners whose interest lay in serious music had to be content with one or perhaps two symphony concerts a week, occasional quartet and song recitals, and an opera, relayed from a theatre or performed in a studio, about once a month. There were also, here and there, short musical programmes, often containing items of great interest, but generally the programme-planners had to consider the tastes of the majority of listeners, and naturally the familiar classics tended to predominate even in the weekly symphony concerts, which are still broadcast in the Home Service on Wednesday evenings during a great part of the year.

Moreover, owing to the strict necessity of maintaining the timeschedule of the main programmes, it often happened that performances were faded out before the end—to the great annoyance of the musical public who resented the mutilation of a masterpiece in order that some variety entertainment or the news might begin punctually.

The Third Programme was designed to cater for an intelligent public interest in the best forms of music, art, science and literature in all their manifestations in all countries and all ages—a large programme embracing anything from talks on pre-history to the plays of Sartre and the music of the most advanced contemporaries. There is no strict time-schedule,

so that if an individual programme overruns its allotted period, the next one must wait. In the event, this latitude has been used with discretion, and the programmes, in which elasticity is maintained by the allowance of brief intervals, rarely run more than a few minutes late. The six hours (reduced for a time, owing to the fuel crisis, to five), from 6 p.m. until midnight, during which the Third Programme is broadcast every day, provide ample room for every variety of interest.

Music is naturally the greatest beneficiary of the new service, for music obviously lends itself most readily to the medium of broadcasting. The emancipation brought about by freedom from the consideration of majority views and by an ample amount of programme-time resulted at first in producing an impression of mere lavishness and incoherence. The musical listener, presented suddenly with such a wealth of interesting and unusual programmes, was apt to overload his mind with confusing experiences. He might hear in one evening a programme of Bach's organ music, a performance of Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis*, a classical chamber concert and some orchestral works by the lesser-known romantic composers. It must be said that the programmes were at first not always discreetly planned. There was one evening when a complete performance of Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* was immediately followed by Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, both works demanding close attention over a long time and appealing to the same audience.

It is a mistake, however, to regard one evening's events as a fair sample of the Third Programme's plan. The right way to look at it is over a period of several weeks. Then it is possible to detect the intelligent organization of what appears, on any given evening, to be a haphazard sequence of events. Different aspects of a composer's work or of a given subject or form of music are constantly presented in conjunction. As an example of this intelligence in planning one may mention that in the week during which Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin was performed, there was also a

complementary talk on Pushkin's poem.

The structural girders of the musical programmes were, from the beginning, the series of programmes designed to cover the foundations of music from the sixteenth century to the present day, and comprising individual series of concerts devoted to such subjects as early choral music, Bach's cantatas, Haydn's quartets, Schubert's songs, and so on. The plan is best appreciated in diagrammatic form, and the schedule printed on p. 11 of the first quarter's programmes in these series gives some idea of the amount of ground covered.

This schedule does not take into account a wide range of Third Programme broadcasts including important symphony concerts and operas, both from the studios and from concert-halls and opera-houses

Week Commencing	29 Sept.	6 Oct.	13 Oct.	20 Oct.	27 Oct.	3 Nov.	10 Nov.	17 Nov.	24 Nov.	Dec.	8 Dec.	15 Dec.	Dec.
Bach Cantatas		9	13		27	3, 3	ļ		30	ı	8,8	`	22 22, 23
Mozart Pf. Sonatas			15	21	30	3	11	18	29	5 .	10	19	
Haydn String Quartets		9	16		30	6	13	20	25, 27		13		
Schubert Songs		9 .	17, 17		2, 2	·	16	18, 19	28	3, 4	∴ 8		
Russian Songs		10	14	26		ĺ		Г <sup></sup> .	26				
Grieg Songs	i .			22 -	31		Ĭ	19		L	[		٠.
Bach Partitas		8	Ì		Ĺ		14	<u> </u>	26			! 	<u>.                                    </u>
Beethoven String Quartets				ļ			İ	ĺ		2, 3, 4 5, 6, 7	Į	*4	^
Sixteenth-Century Choral Works	90	<del>  -</del>	19	_	29		16	17, 18	<b>24</b> 326, 29		4	Ò	
The Romantic School Lesser-known artists		10, 12			31	8	<u> </u>	21	24	1,6	7.0	17, 20	
Contemporary Music	1, 3	6	15, 16	21, 23	2	. 4	10, 10	17 20, 29	25	્છે	9, 10, 12 13, 14, 14	16 19, 20	28
Music for Worship		<del> </del> -	<del> </del>	20		-			Ti)	1		15	22
Song Cycles British and Foreign		7,10	14	21, 22	2			3	),	<u></u>	8, 10, 10	,	:
Scarlatti Sonatas		1		<u> </u>			N	1	İ	2, 5	9, 10	· _	

The figures in the squares show the actual days on which performances were given

at home and abroad. The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, under its permanent conductor, Sir Adrian Boult, or under guest conductors, has naturally undertaken the greatest part of the work. A regular series of Saturday symphony concerts was begun when the Third Programme started, that on the opening night being devoted entirely to music by British composers. At these concerts, a number of modern works have been introduced, including symphonies by Burkhard, Stravinsky, Eugene Goossens, Honegger, Martinu and Vaughan Williams, as well as rarely heard works like Bach's The Art of Fugue, Brahms's Rinaldo, the Faust and Dante Symphonies of Liszt (to whose music in all its forms special attention has been paid), Debussy's Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien, and the complete version with chorus of Ravel's Daphnis and Chloe.

Special attention has been paid to the work of various individual composers. Liszt has already been mentioned. Others include Berlioz, Mahler, whose nine symphonies were performed at close intervals last winter, and Stravinsky, whose two latest symphonies and Concerto for Strings in D were introduced to British listeners in a series which included also Le Sacre du Printemps, Les Noces and the opera Mavra. Richard Strauss was the subject of a number of programmes during his visit to London in the autumn of 1947 and himself conducted performances of the Symphonia Domestica and the Burlesque for pianoforte and orchestra, while

the exact time at which the performance began and make allowance for a delay in starting, or the listener would have been more confused than

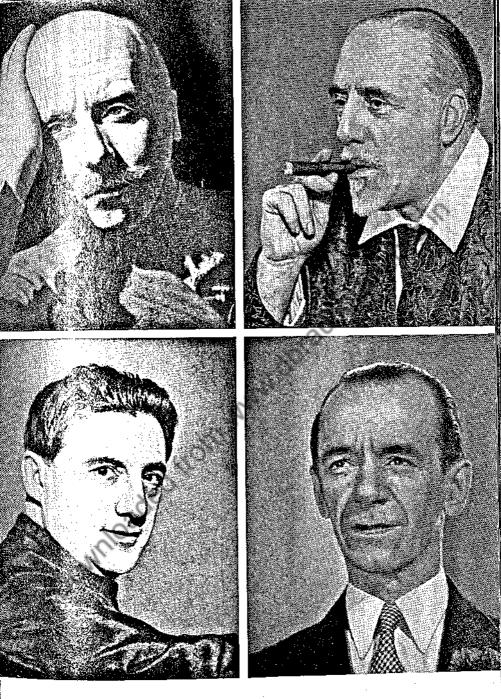
helped.

Bluebeard's Castle was only one of a number of interesting and unfamiliar operas which have been heard in the Third Programme. From Czechoslovakia came Smetana's Dalibor, an outstanding success which had to be repeated, and The Kiss, and Dvořák's Rusalka. Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov was given a studio performance in English from the definitive edition of Paul Lamm, and Glinka's Ivan Susanin, recorded in Paris, was another Russian opera in the programme. Paris also contributed a performance of Bizet's Les Pêcheurs de Perles and the singers for a studio broadcast of Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande. From the Salzburg Festival of 1947 came a new work by the Austrian composer von Einem (Danton's Tod), and from La Scala, Milan, Verdi's Nabucco and Otello. There were also broadcasts of Berlioz's Les Troyens in French-a signal success under Sir Thomas Beecham, of Busoni's Turandot and of Strauss's Elektra of which also Sir Thomas Beecham conducted a magnificent performance. Salome was given during the Vienna company's visit to Covent Garden. Modern English works in the programme included Delius's A Village Romeo and Juliet, again under Sir Thomas Beecham's most sympathetic direction, and the three operas of Benjamin Britten, including a relay of the first performance of Albert Herring at Glyndebourne.

It must be noted that since the beginning of 1948 the B.B.C. has had to abandon 'outside' broadcasts of operas from theatres in Great Britain in the face of demands from the orchestral players for additional fees in respect of the broadcast which were considered excessive. A special television broadcast of La Bobème from the Cambridge Theatre given in April 1948, though outside the terms of reference of this article, deserves mention as being the first televised performance of a complete opera.

The form of music which has specifically benefited more than any other from the establishment of the Third Programme is chamber music, comprising as well as consorts of soloists (string quartets, etc.), solo and due sonatas, songs and Lieder, and music composed for string or chamber orchestras. Formerly chamber music was rarely heard on the air owing, apparently, to an ignorant prejudice against it on the part of the average listener. It may be remarked, however, in this connexion that a weekly programme consisting of short selections of chamber music disguised under the title of 'Music in Miniature' has scored a remarkable success in the Light Programme which is designed to make the wider popular appeal.

From the beginning the Third Programme has abundantly made good this lack of opportunity of hearing good performances of chamber music. In the first year of its existence it had given performances of two complete



Sir Adrian Boult John Barbirolli

LEADING BRITISH CONDUCTORS

Sir Thomas Beecham

Sir Malcolm Sargent



MUSIC AND YOUTH

Above: A junior class (ages 8-11) at a Northamptonshire council school practises pipe playing in the open air, Below: Young people stand in crowds at a Promenade Concert.



cycles of Beethoven's string quartets, all Mozart's pianoforte sonatas and the majority of his quartets, including some outside the usual repertory, and his quintets, Haydn's sonatas and Bach's partitas, while a beginning was made with the task of broadcasting all Haydn's string quartets and all the keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti and of Beethoven, the last being entrusted to Solomon who has given excellent performances. It has not always proved so wise to entrust a whole series to a single artist. Schubert's quartets and other chamber works have also been well represented, while admirable performances of his pianoforte works were given by Clifford Curzon. Lizzt's pianoforte music, including the complete Années de Pèlerinage, has, like his other compositions, been amply represented, while recently Chopin's books of Preludes and Studies have been given complete performances in commemoration of his visit to England in 1848, the year before his death.

Contemporary chamber music has been given a full share of the programmes, and the Third Programme had the opportunity of giving the first performance of William Walton's String Quartet in A minor on 4 May 1947, the day before its public performance. Other first performances have included those of works by Vaughan Williams (a new version of his Double Trio, now arranged as a Partita for strings), Dennis Apivor, a young Welsh composer of considerable promise, Lennox Berkeley (a beautiful setting of four poems of St. Teresa for contralto and strings), and Phyllis Tate, whose Nocturne, a setting of a poem by the late Sidney Keyes for four solo voices and small chamber orchestra, made a striking success. Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Webern, Milhaud, Poulenc, Janaček, and Bartók (all of whose string quartets were superbly played by the Hungarian String Quartet) have been given a sufficient hearing to enable listeners to form their own judgement upon the value of their several explorations of modern harmony. Among the younger or unknown Continental composers of chamber music who have been introduced to us by the Third Programme may be mentioned the Frenchmen, Henri Dutilleux and Léo Préger; the Pole, Roman Palester; the Swiss, Frank Martin, who, though of mature years, was hardly known in England; and young composers from Scandinavia and America. British composers who have contributed important works, both vocal and instrumental, to the concerts of chamber music include Arthur Bliss, Gerald Finzi, Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten.

It is impossible to attempt to cover in any detail the enormous range of songs performed in the Third Programme, but some of the more important series may be mentioned. All of Schubert's six hundred Lieder are gradually being covered by a large number of singers; both English and foreign. Schumann, Brahms and Hugo Wolf have been served with

a similar liberality, while the lesser masters of German song, in particular Loewe, Franz and the Romantic School generally have not been forgotten. Such composers as Marschner, Meyerbeer and Gounod have figured as song composers and have, thereby, sometimes been rehabilitated in the opinion of listeners. French song has been well represented by Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and Poulenc, while attention has been paid to the Scandinavian, Russian, Finnish and Spanish composers. The English composers have had their due share in the programme from Dowland and Purcell, whose enormous output has been well covered, through Parry and Stanford to the present generation.

As we have hinted, not all the performances have been first-rate. Indeed, it must often be difficult for the B.B.C. to find artists capable of performing the many unusual works included in the Third Programme, who are also willing and able to devote the requisite time to their study. This handicap applies also to a good deal of the music, especially by the older composers with whose style singers and players are not thoroughly acquainted, in the orchestral and operatic programmes. It accounts for the fact that performance sometimes falls short of promise. It is fair, however, to remember, alongside such failings, remarkable achievements like the really excellent performance of as difficult a work as Monteverdi's L'Incoronazione di Poppaea, presented by the enterprising Morley College Concerts Society.

Among the chamber orchestras that have contributed to the programme, that directed by Boyd Neel deserves special mention for the range and variety of its programmes and the high standard of playing maintained in its performances. Dr. Reginald Jacques's string orchestra has also done good work, especially in the performance of works by J. S. Bach and his contemporaries. Among visitors must be mentioned Nadia Boulanger, the Dutch 'Musica Antiqua', the Belgian 'Pro Musica Antiqua' whose work has behind it the authority of Professor Charles van den Borren, and the French orchestra conducted by Mme Claude Crussard, who with many of her players was killed in an aeroplane accident shortly after her visit to London early in 1947. All these have extended our knowledge of old music and, in the case of Mlle Boulanger, also of the contemporary composers who have studied with her.

The great masterpieces of choral music, from the earliest times until the present day, have had their due share in the programmes. Besides such inevitable works as the Masses of Palestrina and William Byrd, and of Beethoven and Bach (whose two Passions, Christmas Oratorio and Magnificat have also been included), we have had the opportunity of hearing settings of the Mass by Couperin, Schubert, Ethel Smyth, Vaughan Williams and Rossini, whose Petite Messe Solemelle proved to be a charming and, for

all its apparent triviality, a touchingly sincere work. Special attention has been paid to the music of Schütz, who is revealed as something more than a forerunner of Bach, and of Monteverdi, the performance of whose Vespers was an outstanding event, while two performances were given of the famous, but hitherto rarely heard, 40-part motet of Thomas Tallis, and of the Passion Music of Graun.

Oratorios by modern composers have included Parry's Job (in celebration of his centenary which brought also performances of two of his secular cantatas), Elgar, Vaughan Williams, whose Sancta Civitas was revived after an undeserved neglect, William Walton (Belshazzar's Feast) and Michael Tippett (A Child of Our Time), while among older works Handel's Saul and Joshua were revived. Among the secular choral works performed in Great Britain for the first time were the remarkable version of the Tristan legend by the Swiss composer Frank Martin (Le Vin Herbé), Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher, by his compatriot, Honegger, and a cantata by Léo Préger, a pupil of Mile Boulanger. Patrick Hadley's The Hills was also broadcast at its first performance at one of the winter Promenade Concerts in January 1947 and repeated a few months later. An Ode for St. Cecilia's Day by Gerald Finzi was given its first performance on the Saint's day in November 1947.

The earlier composers of polyphonic music, even down to the end of the sixteenth century, were at first treated in somewhat niggardly fashion. During the first year of its existence, Palestrina, Lassus and Victoria contributed less than a dozen pieces between them to the Third Programme. This neglect may have been due, in part, to the difficulty of obtaining really good performances. It may be that the programme-planners were also chary of music which is apt to suffer more than any other in the process of wireless transmission. It seems to have been felt, too, that, especially where music of a still earlier period is concerned, some explanation of its style and purpose is needed if listeners who are not already acquainted with its idiosyncrasies are to appreciate it. Something was done towards solving this problem in the series of Music Anthologies edited by Anthony Lewis, who laid the foundations of the musical policy of the Third Programme both soundly and with imagination, and in the series Music for Worship edited by Steuart Wilson, now Musical Director of the B.B.C.

Both the series just mentioned were incomplete in themselves and ranged here and there over the centuries. On 3 January 1948 a new weekly programme was started under the title of A History in Sound of European Music. This immense undertaking, which is designed to cover the whole course of musical history in Western Europe from its Byzantine origins in the Dark Ages to the present day, is the most important single

contribution made by the Third Programme to musical education in Great Britain. Edited by Professor Gerald Abraham, who is supported by a band of expert musicologists, it sets out to bring to performance, with a minimum of lucid commentary necessary for its understanding, the most important music of a given period or form or country. It will take something over two years to complete the whole series, the first six months having covered music up to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The series will be resumed after an interval, during which the recordings made of the programmes already given will be broadcast for the benefit of those who want a second hearing or who missed the first.

Apart from their educational value, these programmes have proved interesting and, for the most part, worth hearing for their own sake, thanks to the varied selection of music made by the different editors, its admirable performance (which must have involved much care in rehearsal) and the lively way in which the programmes are introduced by Alec Robertson.

It should not, indeed, be supposed that the Third Programme is all work and no play. It offers what is, in the best sense, entertainment as well as instruction. A History in Sound of European Music is an outstanding example of this procedure. 'It has been worked out', to quote its editor, 'by people who believe that the music of every known period contains a proportion of living art, well worth listening to if only we can conquer its strangeness of idiom.' This History is linked up with the New Oxford History of Music which is now being prepared under the editorship of the Professor of Music at Oxford, J. A. Westrup: the majority of the contributors are common to both projects. Furthermore, the Gramophone Company plans to issue albums of gramophone records containing a proportion of the music used in the broadcasts. These in turn will serve as illustrations to the text of the New Oxford History of Music. The student of the future will thus be able to hear as well as to read the music which the historians discuss.

Entertainment of a lighter kind is sometimes offered—and there might be more of such intelligent frivolities—in such programmes as *Curiosities of Music*, which have brought down from the shelves all manner of forgotten and amusing oddities. Here one may hear a Turkish rondo for harmonium by Bizet, or a solo for the double bass by Dragonetti, or a set of songs of American provenance, inimitably sung by the B.B.C.'s Director of Music himself, which set out in naïve verse the outlines of the biographies of the great composers—in fact, an elementary history of music in sound!

It has not been possible, within the limits of this article, to touch upon more than a fraction of the music broadcast in the Third Programme.

Enough has, however, been included to give some idea of its catholicity. No form of music that can lay claim to artistic respectability is neglected. It has even been attempted to bring an understanding of the music of India to English listeners. It is an unhappy circumstance that, owing to the limitations placed upon it by international agreements concerning the use of wave-lengths, the Third Programme reaches few listeners outside the British Isles (and not even all listeners within them). For it may proudly be claimed as by far the finest broadcasting service of its Downloaded from www.dbraulibrary.org. kind afforded in any country in the world.

The diagram on p. 11 is reproduced by courtesy of the B.B.C.



## RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### BY SCOTT GODDARD

It was in 1932 that Ralph Vaughan Williams, delivering a series of lectures in the United States, spoke about the future of music and the importance of a liberal outlook which would leave freedom for the exploring mind of youth. 'Let the young adventurer', he said, 'branch out into all known and unknown directions.'\* He said that when he was sixty years of age, and it shows the breadth of his outlook and the great extent of his sympathies. And this was no mere lip service paid to youth by a man who had already lost his own. Not only did Vaughan Williams mean what he said, but he was ready to show how it could be done, how an adventurer could explore the unknown. He himself was that adventurer, no longer young in years, but youthful in spirit and ready for adventure. And so it happens that when he celebrated his seventy-fifth anniversary last year people wondered not so much what new work he was going to produce but what new ideas there would be in that work. For by then those who had heard much of his music realized that they would never be able to take him for granted; because he has the exploring mind of the young adventurer and though he may be old in years he has never become set in one system of thought.

Vaughan Williams has been writing for half a century. During that time he has created music in most of the accepted forms. He has written symphonies, operas, chamber music, songs, church music accompanied and unaccompanied, secular music likewise, as well as a large amount of occasional music written to celebrate important national events. He has become a national symbol, and it is to him that people turn when music is needed for such events. At first he was a slow worker. He seems to have found it difficult to express his own personal vision and evidently it cost him immense labour to discover and then to use fluently

<sup>\*</sup> The Mary Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr College, Pa.

the type of music which would express his individual way of looking at things and thinking about them. Gradually he found the means to express what was in him and once that was done he increased the speed of creation. And now in his full maturity he works ceaselessly and with immense mental energy and complete clearness of aim.

Vaughan Williams is what may be called an old man. But the number of a man's years, when that man is a creative artist, means only that he has already had that number of years in which to produce. Inevitably a man's body must have the final word, which one day it will utter when it breaks. Up to the moment when that happens it is the age of an artist's spirit that counts. Vaughan Williams's spirit is that of a young

man filled with the wisdom of seventy-five years of experience.

Vaughan Williams's working life coincides with a change in the musical life of Britain. This change happened at about the turn of the century. It was a time of profound change in every aspect of British life, in politics, in aesthetics, in all manifestations of literature and art. In 1900 the old Queen Victoria lay dying. King Edward, her son, who succeeded her, had waited long and was already a middle-aged man. His cast of mind was very different from that of his mother who had become a slave to the duties of government. It was inevitable that, when at last he succeeded, a change would come over practically every aspect of life in his country. What had been right for the older generation was no longer so for the younger generation when at last it came into power.

The effect was felt chiefly in political and social life. It was a widely liberating atmosphere, however, and people who were young then, as Vaughan Williams was, were so far influenced by it as to feel that now they had for the first time the opportunity for branching out into new directions. For many years, let us say for the previous two hundred years, the people of Britain had become some of the most willing listeners in the world. This country had taken Handel to itself, it had welcomed Haydn at the end of the same century in which Handel died in London, and at the time when Vaughan Williams was born in 1872 Mendelssohn was the idol of the British musical public, Dvořák an honoured guest, and both Berlioz and Wagner musicians whose visits aroused great interest. The British, we may say then, were good listeners. At the turn of the century the moment had arrived when they were themselves to become creative musicians and the public which had crowded to hear Mendelssohn's Elijah and Dvořák's Fourth Symphony were now being taught, though they did not yet know the fact, to listen equally willingly to the work of men such as Vaughan Williams.

Vaughan Williams came of well-placed, intelligent stock. He was born in the west of England, in a small country village called Down Ampney,

in the county of Gloucestershire. His father was a clergyman. The boy had the usual/education of a well-to-do family, first at one of the big English public schools, later at the University of Cambridge. By then he had already begun to study music, and after the usual three years at Cambridge he went to the Royal College of Music in London. His teachers were all British with the exception of Max Bruch under whom he studied for a few months in Berlin, and Ravel to whom he went, also for a few months only, in France. By then the new century had started and Vaughan Williams had begun to be known as a composer though not at all widely. He was still feeling his way.

Great interest was aroused at this time in two forgotten types of British music, both of them to become strong influences in Vaughan Williams's development. Musicians had become aware of the folk music of Great Britain and had started to collect this music and note it down. They were only just in time, for the industrial age had practically killed it. Among these collectors of folk music was the young Vaughan Williams, and gradually the idiom of this music found its way into his own. That kind of enthusiasm led to research of great value in his later development. And during this period research had been started in another direction. It had long been known that hidden away in libraries there was a vast amount of music, unperformed and ignored, belonging to one of the richest periods of Britain's musical history, the Tudor period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Research students now began to work on this rich deposit and, when the results of their work became known and heard, the effect was profound. This was the second great influence in Vaughan Williams's musical development. Here again his own personality was so strong that it could accept so powerful an influence and assimilate this music as it had assimilated and sublimated the folk music that had resulted from his other main line of exploration.\*

The tale of these early years in Vaughan Williams's life is that of a man and an artist whose mind took the less usual turn of going deep before it started to spread wide. This early instinct for the intentional rather than the obsessional life set a personal standard and gave his creative work individual character from the start. Among the great musicians of our day Vaughan Williams is an outstanding example of the deeply rooted, securely founded type.

His education having been leisurely and his development slow, it is not surprising that he was already thirty-five before the stream of creation set in strongly. That was in 1907, and as might have been expected of a

<sup>\*</sup> The reader who is interested would do well to compare Vaughan Williams's unaccompanied Mass in G minor (1923) with a similar work from the Tudor period, for instance one of the Masses by William Byrd.

composer of his country and his musical traditions, it was a choral work. The English have always prided themselves on their choral singing; they were now about to take pride in the work of their own composers of choral music.

Vaughan Williams's first symphony was finished in 1910 and was in fact a choral work, the Sea Symphony. By then he was securely launched on the career of a composer, and the tale of his life is from then onwards mainly concerned with the appearance of his works. For some years he taught at the Royal College of Music in London, handing on to his pupils the precepts of traditional procedure in the technique of composition which he had received from his own great teacher Charles Villiers Stanford, and giving them as much as any creative artist can give of the spirit of that complex and personal art. At about this time, being now in the late forties, he became conductor of the London Bach Choir and later one of the moving spirits of the English Folk Dance Society. He now lives in retirement in the small town of Dorking, Surrey, one of the counties south of London. He has always, from those early days when he went round the country collecting folk music, taken an active interest in the musical life of the average man and woman, whom he looks on not so much as people who come to London concerts to hear his music but as those who make music for themselves in their own towns and villages. To this day, fully active in body as well as in mind, he arranges and conducts annual festivals in the neighbourhood of his country home and goes from village to village conducting the choirs that are to take part and preparing them for the performances they are to give. He is, in fact, one of the greatest forces in the music of Britain today.

It happens that one of the relatively small number of Vaughan Williams's works to have gone out into the world beyond the confines of his own country, is the early but already completely individual Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis for double string orchestra. It is often played in concert halls though it should be heard also in great churches and cathedrals; the music is antiphonal, one string orchestra answering the other, which gives it a dramatic quality that is remarkable when heard in such surroundings. It is a work of deep feeling. The music is based on a hymn tune by Tallis, who was a composer of the sixteenth century. Vaughan Williams incorporates this four-hundred-year-old melody into his own music written in his contemporary idiom, and the manner in which he does this shows how near he is in spirit to the religious outlook of that time.\*

<sup>\*</sup>It was a time when the Roman rite was giving way before the Protestant; Tallis wrote music for both. Similarly, Vaughan Williams four centuries later is found writing an unaccompanied Mass in G minor to the Latin text, one of the finest examples of contemporary English church music and a work of universal appeal that could find acceptance in other countries than that in which it was created.

From that time (1910) Vaughan Williams, having given more years to learning his art than any composer among his contemporaries, produced an increasingly rapid flow of music. Year by year the symphonies, operas, choral works, orchestral and chamber music have appeared, and gradually the speed of production has increased. The first symphony has been mentioned above, a setting of passages from Walt Whitman for chorus, soloists and orchestra in four movements called the Sea Symphony. Four years later (1914) he finished his second symphony, purely orchestral this time, as all his other symphonies are; this was the London Symphony which is an evocation of various moods of that city and of its people. Eight years later the third symphony appeared. This he called the Pastoral Symphony, a title that describes the character of the music and explains the change of vision from town to country. But Vaughan Williams has always been more of a countryman than a townsman, and through a large amount of his music there blow the airs of the countryside.

The Fourth Symphony (Fminor) dates from 1935. It has in it none of the gentle winds of the countryside, such as were felt in the Pastoral Symphony, nor any of the huge but distant storms that sometimes disturb Vaughan Williams's native island, though never for long. In the Fourth Symphony there were sounds of menace and warning. People who had become used to Vaughan Williams's quiet manner and thought of him as a composer who would give them calm, countrified music were startled. This harsh Fourth Symphony was no distant disturbance. The storms were those of the human mind and were full of menace. There is no doubt that some prophetic instinct caused the symphony to be what it is, a passionate, eloquent warning. Coming as it did four years before the second world war, the warning was unnoticed then by many who heard the symphony. Our minds were not ready, and so the reason for this harsh, insistent style was not clear to us; we were more shocked than pleased. Within a few years we knew, and at last understood.

During the war the Fifth Symphony (D major) appeared. People had begun to accept Vaughan Williams, by then the oldest British composer, as a man of vision, one who could sense oncoming shapes of human fate before they were apparent to the average man. Ever since the Fourth Symphony startled people into watchfulness, they had been compelled to realize that he had the poet's gift of insight and the philosopher's gift of analysis. Those who once said that he had become settled with age, that his style would not change, were forced to think again, for they knew by then that he was continually thinking again. That was evident when the bitter Fourth Symphony from before the war was followed during that very war by the Fifth, which is serene and exalting music. What was this, people asked? Another prophetic vision, evidently: the vision of a possible

future for mankind if by any fortunate chance the right turning could be taken instead of the wrong. The four movements of this symphony, in character totally unlike those of the Fourth, suggested such a possible turn of events. The whole symphony and the slow movement in particular is connected with Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and is itself a kind of progress to some ultimate state of goodness and grace. The symphony is dedicated to Sibelius, a composer of whose aesthetic influence Vaughan Williams has for long been aware. Musically, the influence from Sibelius to him is so small as to be negligible. Sibelius has influenced the music of many British composers of the present day, but not that of Vaughan Williams. The aesthetic influence, on the other hand, is great—the example of Sibelius's liberal outlook towards symphonic form, his daring, the individuality of thought there is in his treatment of the symphony and to a lesser but still important extent the symphonic poem; of this Vaughan Williams has been aware as a point d'appui for his own experiments in symphonic development, experiments which have reached extraordinary results in his latest symphony, the Sixth, in E minor.

During this time, the thirty-three-year period which stretches from the first symphony to the fifth, a large array of works in other styles appeared. There are the operas, beginning in 1914 with Hugh the Drover. This is a story of life in the English countryside during the time when Napoleon was threatening to invade the island. The scene of the action is the southern part of England near the coast, a landing place which the French might have chosen had they got so far. The characters in the opera are the common people of that time, such men and women as can be seen in the novels of Thomas Hardy and in his epic drama, The Dynasts, which deals with the same period. For the music of this opera Vaughan Williams calls on melodies from the folk music of that district; but the listener must beware of imagining that all the tunes in this opera are folk songs or folk dances. By that time Vaughan Williams had become profoundly imbued with folk music and was writing music of his own so near in spirit and form to authentic folk tunes that it was, and has always been, difficult to distinguish between them. In this opera there are many instances of this close connexion between the traditional anonymous music and the contemporary individual artistic composition. Hugh the Drover is a tale of passion and the music possesses that high temperature in the scenes between the two chief characters, Hugh and Mary, which is expected in a romantic drama by Puccini but hardly in a work founded upon a basis of Anglo-Saxon (and British) folk music.

This opera was followed eight years later (1922) by a one-act work\*

<sup>\*</sup> It is, in fact, a section of a full-scale opera which Vaughan Williams has now practically finished.

based on an episode from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and called The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains. When this was first heard in England with Falla's El Retablo, an occasion that brought together two of the most individual composers of that time, it showed how perfectly adapted their very different styles were to the purposes for which the music was used; Falla's keen, spare music for portraying Don Quixote's unforeseen attacks of acute insight, Vaughan Williams's polyphony a cool, clear medium for supporting the voices as they sang of the pilgrim Christian and his meeting with the shepherds on his way to the Celestial City.

The next opera (1929) was the three-act Sir John in Love, based on Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor. This is a British view of Falstaff. The music contains signs of all that Vaughan Williams has been influenced by; and because these influences have had little to do with Europe since Bach's time, the elements of Sir John in Love are native in origin, especially the unrecorded, anonymous past of folk music. This opera is primarily of Shakespeare's own country, a tale nevertheless that years before had gone abroad and awakened Verdi's slumbering genius. Verdi's music had taken his view of Falstaff far beyond Italy. And that being so, one would imagine that a public in this case far beyond Britain would be willing to interest itself in an opera about the same Shakespearian character written by an intimate student of Shakespeare, and a fellow-countryman.

After Shakespeare, the Bible. Vaughan Williams's next stage work was the ballet Job, first performed by the Camargo Society in London in 1931 with choreography by Ninette de Valois.\* The tale of Satan being permitted by God to try Job's faith by physical plagues and mental torments is danced to music that is more tense and muscular than anything Vaughan Williams had produced until then. The ballet is based on the late eighteenth-century artist William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job. Blake was influenced by the extreme muscular development of Michelangelo's figures and something of that has penetrated Vaughan Williams's music. This dramatic intensity was new then in his music; it was to appear still more insistently four years later in the Fourth Symphony.

In the year that Job appeared as a ballet (it had already been performed as a concert piece) the one-act Riders to the Sea was written, a word-forword setting of the play by the Irish poet, J. M. Synge. For this Vaughan Williams uses a small orchestra; the work is of the same nature as The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains, intimate opera, suitable for a small theatre rather than a large opera house. Like the play, which seems outwardly quiet and unemphatic while beneath that exterior there are strong passions of sorrow and love, the music is transparent and outwardly simple. The subtlety lies in this very lack of emphasis, in the low

<sup>\*</sup> Job was a notable revival at Covent Garden in the spring of 1948.

temperature of the music which suggests more than it defines, so that the passion in the story of the young men drowned on the Irish coast, leaving their women to mourn, shines through the music and is made even more moving and tragic than in the original play. It is one of Vaughan Williams's most masterly stage works, short, concise and a remarkable blend of words and music. The next opera (the last so far) has a more modern theme. It is called *The Poisoned Kiss* and is a comedy with a fairy-tale atmosphere of the kind that our grandfathers found so amusing in the comic operas by Gilbert and Sullivan. The libretto is the least successful of any used by Vaughan Williams and, though there is entrancing music in the opera, as a whole the work is uneven.

While the operas and symphonies were appearing, a large number of choral works was being produced. Among them are the finest examples of Vaughan Williams's music. As has been noted above, his first symphony was a choral work, and within a couple of years of that there came a Fantasia on Christmas Carols in which Vaughan Williams showed how close he was in spirit to the folk music of his country and how remarkably capable he was in the very difficult task of incorporating folk material into contemporary music without harm to either. His own personal idiom had by then become closely related to folk music. He had studied that music, taking down songs and tunes from the lips of country people, and was profoundly moved by it. So close did he come to it that his own music became filled with many recognizable echoes of folk music. Ever since then he has written works such as the short movement for violin and orchestra called A Lark Ascending and the Pastoral Symphony where, as has already been pointed out, his original melodies and turns of phrases are hardly to be distinguished from folk music. It was this near relationship to folk music which made it possible for him convincingly to blend folk melodies with contemporary music in the Fantasia on Christmas Carols, and in many other works of a similar kind.

There is another aspect of Vaughan Williams's choral music that is significant. His interest in music as it affects the common man has been mentioned earlier. It is for the men and women living in smaller communities such as the one in which he himself lives that he likes to work. He composes music for his neighbours to sing and play. In that way there came into existence the Benedicite for soprano solo, chorus and orchestra. Another aspect of the same desire to give ordinary people an opportunity to make music is in the many noble hymn tunes he has written. Of his larger choral works Sancta Civitas is one of the most individual, the Magnificat one of the most appealing, and Dona Nobis Pacem one of the most moving. In the same year as that powerful prayer for peace (1936) there appeared a work for chorus, soloists and orchestra called Five Tudor

Portraits which showed an equally robust sense of humour. By then Vaughan Williams's hearers had given up trying to foretell his next move. His latest music includes the Thanksgiving for Victory (1945) and an unaccompanied motet Prayer to the Father of Heaven in memory of his master, Hubert Parry. This was performed for the first time at the Oxford Festival in May 1948 and thus brings the tale of his music as far as the present day.

This year has produced remarkable music from him. He is now seventysix, a man of great mental and spiritual maturity, an active, creative musician with the experimenting mind of an explorer. During the last decade, for instance, he began to write music for films. Some of this music has appeared as suites. But the most notable event of the year is the Sixth Symphony. It is in four movements, but is played as a complete entity, the movements joined by a single held note. Since, unlike Vaughan Williams's first three symphonies, this symphony is abstract, with no title and therefore no story behind it, nothing can be said about it more than an attempt to describe it in words, which is in itself an impossibility. The style of the music is what might be expected from a man who has written lyrical music such as the Fifth Symphony, harsh and urgent music such as the Fourth Symphony, and is now living at the height of his powers during a time when humanity is sitting uneasily on the lid of a cauldron and trying to keep the lid from flying into space, taking our humanity with it. No mature musician writing in these days could be unaware of these things or keep the sound of them for long out of his music. Vaughan Williams has already twice prophesied, in his Fourth and Fifth symphonies. While no hint has been given of a 'programme' for this Sixth Symphony, the character and quality of the music are such that one is inclined to suspect that once again he is gazing into the future. The first movement is energetic, the second is menacing; the third movement is a scherzo that has no gaiety in it but an immense urgency, and the fourth movement is unlike anything in the whole history and development of symphony. The music is partly fugal, the kind of fugato that Milton describes in the lines about the player whose fingers 'fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue'. This is no player but a creative musician at work, and the resonance of this calm fugal music is that which resounds within the hushed cells of humanity's innermost being. The whole movement is slow and restrained; the players continually are warned to make no crescendo. The slow interweaving of lines is momentarily interrupted from time to time by huge soft chords on brass or divided strings, after which the imperturbable progress of the music is resumed. The movement, and with it the symphony, reaches the edge of silence with the alternation of two chords, the one less determinate than the other. And on that the symphony ends with an unresolved question. The rest is silence, a silence the weight of which can be felt in the appreciable pause between the dying away of the last chord and the awakening of the audience to consciousness of the usual activities of existence. It is a symphony created as we know by a musician living in the British Isles; the result of a long inquiry, a slow maturing, a gradual awareness of the problem of the twentieth century and a desire to solve it or to suggest a solution. Undoubtedly there is a message for humanity in this music, something addressed not only to Vaughan Williams's country but to the world.

In a sense all music is exportable and therefore importable. And truly all music should be an interchangeable commodity, a world currency available for all. It is important that this should be so, that the channels should be kept open and the lines of communication free for the unhindered passage of music, so that the peoples of the world, however far separated, may continually be reminded that many hundreds of miles away some great mind, brilliant in insight and mature in the slow processes of thought, has produced a work in this branch of the humanities, a symphony or a song.

But to be fully savoured the music of other races and climes must be understood; it must never sound so strange at a first hearing that it seems likely to remain for ever incomprehensible and understanding seems too great an effort. Thus the export of a man's music, a man of individuality such as Vaughan Williams, must at first be controlled in the interests of others to whom the idiom is new and therefore may be bewildering. To begin with, the simpler and clearer works should be exported and some preparatory work might well be done to foster attention and understanding

by explanation of the main characteristics of the music.

In one of his lectures in the United States, Vaughan Williams said that 'each generation wants a new music to satisfy its ideals'. It is the opinion of those who have lived with his music for some quarter of a century that he himself has supplied his own country with this new music. And there are those, the present writer among them, who feel that his music in its scriousness, its humour, its intermittent severity and its expansive humanity interprets the struggles and aspirations of beings in many other countries than his own and may well satisfy the ideals of generations now living, regardless of age, race or faith. As an example there is this latest work of his, the Sixth Symphony, the work of a musician born in Britain, profoundly moved by the music of his country, having attained such mastery of his medium and such wisdom of insight that his music, though it would not have been created by anyone but a person of his birth and upbringing, has a universal application that liberates it beyond the confines of a single country.

### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN SCHOOLS

### BY BERNARD SHORE

It is taken for granted in England and Wales\* that almost every child is capable of being educated to some degree of appreciation as a listener to music, or of attainment as a music-maker. In the whole range of schools under the control of the Ministry of Education, music is studied in some form or other: whether it thrives or wilts in any particular school depends almost entirely upon the inspiration of the music teaching—or whether indeed good teaching is available. A brief picture of the education system of England and Wales may help to explain the school-chain and its various links.

The Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for the education of all children in England and Wales who are being taught in State schools. Although in numbers State education claims the majority of pupils, there are, in addition, a large number of independent schools which are not under the direct control of the Ministry of Education. County and Borough Councils act as the local education authorities, and the Ministry administers its schools through education officers appointed by the education committees of these local authorities. These education officers have wide powers, and carry out the policy initiated by the Ministry of Education.

The State schools are divided into two main categories, those for primary and those for secondary education. Primary schools consist of nursery schools, with pupils up to the age of 5; infant schools for those of from 5 to 7 years; and junior schools from 7 to 10½ years of age. Secondary education begins at 10 plus, and consists of three types of schools: (1) the grammar school, for those children of academic ability who may be suitable for university training; (2) the technical school, for children with ability for training in engineering, skilled trades, commerce, etc.; and (3) the modern school, which caters for children with a bent for practical work of all kinds, as distinct from scholarship.

<sup>\*</sup> Scotland, which has its own independent education system, lies beyond the scope of the present essay.

Music begins in the nursery schools with nursery rhymes and singing games. This develops on the same lines in the infant schools. In the junior school singing takes the chief place, with a beginning made in ear training, music reading and sight singing on the sol-fa system. In the junior school the percussion band is found to provide a valuable stimulus to music. Percussion bands are made up of children playing percussion instruments, such as small drums, cymbals, tambourines, castanets and triangles; the music itself is played on the piano or gramophone and the percussion instruments emphasize the rhythm. Charts are used so that children begin to read rhythm from the staff notation.

In secondary education, music is taught in all grammar schools. It varies from a very limited activity, mainly concerned with singing, in the first year, to a comprehensive musical training, which may include ear training, sight reading from the staff notation, harmony and theory of music, history of music and instrumental playing in the senior forms. The grammar school with a good tradition in music has, generally, a junior and senior choir, and a junior and senior orchestra. But there is an extremely wide range between those grammar schools which are musically alive and those which are not. The difference is largely due to the factor already mentioned—the availability of a good teacher on the staff of a school.

In the technical schools the music mainly depends upon the time available after the heavy demands of technical training have been met. A voluntary school choir or orchestra supplies the main activity. In the modern school there is a great chance for full development of music, as this type of school is not handicapped, like the grammar school, by a heavy programme of School and Higher School Certificate examinations. Here again the supply of music teachers is very limited, and until it can be increased some time must pass before the average secondary modern school can boast of a flourishing musical tradition. The music teaching will be of a more practical order than that in the grammar school, and it is hoped that instrumental work will in time develop.

One of the most difficult obstacles for children to overcome in their musical training is that of sight-reading; yet if it is not mastered they will never be able to take a full part in musical activities. A strong argument in favour of the development of instrumental music in schools is that an orchestral instrument is learnt with the use of staff notation—the two factors are inseparable—so that sight-reading in general becomes easier and more rewarding. As the ability to read music at sight is of such great value in the musical equipment of a child, a picture of the present state of instrumental music in schools may be of interest.

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There is no doubt that heads of schools are realizing more and more that an orchestra is a highly desirable activity both for the musical development of the children and for the good of the school. Many education authorities are seeking ways and means to meet the increasing demand for instrumental facilities in their schools, especially for teachers and instruments. Children's concerts abound, from small intimate concerts by groups of instrumentalists given in schools, to big orchestral concerts for children. Holiday orchestral courses are extremely popular and are, indeed, over-subscribed. Again, in the healthy revival of the festival movement,\* instrumental ensembles play a larger part than hitherto, as is pointed out below.

A few years ago the school orchestra flourished only in a small number of grammar schools, and in some of the better-known independent schools, where good facilities were available. Interest is now spreading, and school orchestras are coming into being up and down the country. The grammar schools have made the most promising start, but many primary schools and secondary modern schools are awake to possibilities.

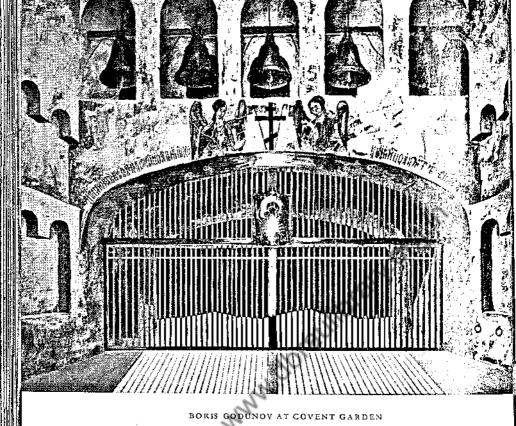
In the year under review the biggest strides have been made in the class teaching of instruments and ensemble playing. As an instance of this, the counties of Worcestershire and Dorset now have violin classes working in all their secondary schools. The County Borough of Bournemouth provided its secondary schools with violin classes and 'cello classes soon after the war, and it is now tackling the primary schools. Doncaster has achieved the remarkable feat of introducing violin, viola and 'cello classes into all its schools. Middlesex is trying the experiment of teaching the violin to about twelve hundred children in the primary schools of the county on the violinda method. The violinda is an instrument of violin shape, especially designed for the training of very young children in large classes. It has all the essential details of the violin, but in addition possesses one or two valuable aids for instruction, so that large classes may be the more easily directed. One of these 'aids' is a tuning device, employing steel strings; this goes far to solve one of the worst problems in class tuition for the violin.

The violin class has now been recognized as the true basis of the school orchestra. This is a great step forward, for it is not long since the teacher of a violin or 'cello class was looked upon somewhat askance by the

<sup>\*</sup>Music festivals have for many years been a feature of musical life. A festival may consist of the gathering of a large number of singers and players, drawn perhaps from a whole region, including ensembles and soloists, and organized on a competitive basis; or it may comprise all the schools from one town, joining together for a day of individual and massed singing, entirely free from the competitive element. Such festivals, planned on a comparatively small scale, have no connexion with the national music festivals discussed on pages 44-50.



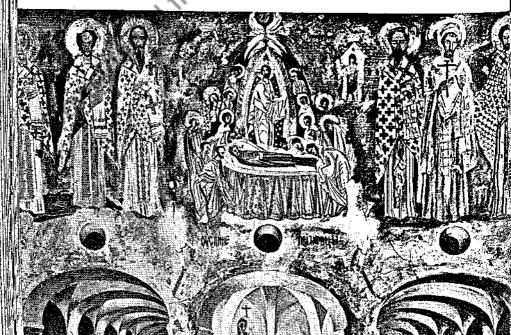
Above: J. A. Westrup, Heather Professor of Music, Oxford University. Gerald Abraham, James Alsop Professor of Music, Liverpool University. Below: Arthur Bliss, composer. Sir Arnold Bax, Master of the King's Musick.



Above: Courtyard of the Novodievichy Monastery (Prologue, Scene 1)

Below: A cell in the Churof Monastery (Act I, Scene 1). Reproductions of the original designs by G. Wakhevitch.

(Platagraphs: Edward



professional teacher of individual pupils: it was considered impossible to teach a stringed instrument in class with any degree of efficiency. Thanks to a few pioneers, and to the invaluable work of those who have devoted all their energies and ability to mastering a technique, the position of the violin class teacher is now becoming increasingly important. It is significant that the Royal College and the Royal Academy of Music have, with enlightened understanding, appointed two of the finest teachers to their training courses.

The shortage of teachers of string class work is indeed the most acute problem, and the Ministry of Education has taken the lead in instituting a series of national courses for teachers of stringed instruments. These courses, lasting a week, are held twice a year at Pulborough in Sussex. Instruction by experts in the technique of class teaching for violin, viola and 'cello is given daily, and a background of orchestral playing and chamber music demands a good standard of playing. A particular feature of these courses is the training of a teachers' orchestra, in preparation for the visit of Sir Adrian Boult, who conducts the final rehearsal and concert on the last day of the courses. It is notable that the members of the first course, held in April 1947, had practically no experience of class teaching of stringed instruments, whereas most of those who attended a year later had attempted this difficult work.

A most valuable contribution to the teaching of instrumental music in country schools has been made by the Rural Music Schools, an institution formed to encourage music and music-making in rural communities. This organization, though not designed primarily for giving help to schools, has generously lent its teachers and brought to many isolated country schools the benefit of string classes and other instrumental activities.

A clear indication that education authorities are alive to the demand for instrumental music is shown by the increasing number of appointments of instrumental instructors. A number of local education authorities now have instructors on their headquarters staff to carry out the teaching of strings in their schools, and the county of Leicestershire has recently appointed an instrumentalist to be Music Organizer, so giving a strong instrumental bias to the music in its schools. Other authorities have a instrumental organizer in charge of a team of instructors. Wales full-time instrumental organizer in charge of a team of instructors. Wales is very active-minded, and can boast the first technical college to have had a training centre for children's violin classes, and an orchestra composed of children and adults. Several of the Welsh grammar schools have promising school orchestras.

It should be noted, where school orchestras are concerned, that wind instruments are only in evidence where schools have already been able to collect them. The price of wind instruments is such that they are

usually quite out of reach of schools. This is not of too scrious consequence at the moment, as a great preponderance of strings will always be desirable.

The recorder, which has been pronounced by experts to be a valuable introductory instrument to the wood-wind, is being widely used, and serves several useful purposes: it is within reach of all schools, it is a great asset to children's sight-reading, a satisfactory study in itself, and a useful addition to the school orchestra. In some schools it has become almost compulsory, and is often used in conjunction with a violin class.

Orchestral courses in the holidays for children and young people are increasing in number and scope. The Sherborne Orchestral Courses, under the direction of Ernest Read, have now been running for some years, and have done valuable work in bringing children together to make music. These courses are now so popular that four separate orchestras have to be catered for, to satisfy the different standards of performance. Derby and Sussex have recently run week-end courses for string players, and Gloucestershire organizes an annual house-party for young instrumentalists.

Two outstanding attempts have been made to raise the standard of orchestral performance by children and young people. The Monmouth-shire County Council instituted, in July 1946, a summer orchestral course for the finest talent in Wales between the ages of fourteen and twenty. This orchestra of eighty players was hand-picked from the whole of Wales and worked for an intensive week under the direction of Clarence Raybould, the strings and wind being trained by two eminent musicians. The standard set was highly promising, and co-operation by all the Welsh educational authorities contributed to a remarkable achievement. The course continues to run every summer, and is a further token that Wales, so known for song, is not exclusively choral in outlook.

The most recent adventure in holiday courses is the formation of the National Youth Orchestra, an attempt to bring into one orchestra the finest young talent in the British Isles under a distinguished conductor. This orchestra, composed of young people between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, appeared in public at the Bath Assembly in April 1948, after a week of hard training. It was organized by Miss Ruth Railton and directed by Dr. Reginald Jacques. Outstanding musicians were available for training their departments, and for individual coaching.

About eight hundred young people applied for the course and a hundred were finally selected to make a full symphony orchestra. The standard much surprised experienced coaches; the keenness shown, in spite of very hard and continuous work, revealed that the players had come with serious purpose and not merely for a holiday. It is hoped that this orchestral course will be held three times a year, at Christmas, Easter, and in the

summer. It is interesting to note that many education authorities co-operated in helping the children with grants to attend.

One of the most valuable efforts at introducing instrumental music to children is being made at Barking. It was initiated soon after the end of the war. A string quartet with piano is engaged, not only to play at primary and secondary schools, but to establish close contact with the children. This project has had the result that a great number of children in this area now want to play, and indeed the demand is far greater than the facilities available. About two hundred children have been selected from the applicants, and are now being taught in violin classes; 'cello classes will follow.

Other local education authorities, among them the West Riding of Yorkshire, employ teams of instrumentalists, both wind and strings, to play in the schools; Buckinghamshire and Kent engage string quartets, and Essex a trio, and the University of Wales has long been assisting schools in this way. Many other authorities are seeking to promote these intimate concerts.

Last come the big Children's Concerts originated by Sir Robert Mayer in 1922. When he started these concerts, nothing of the kind existed elsewhere; now there is scarcely a symphony orchestra which is not concerned in some way with children's concerts. The London Philharmonic Orchestra, for instance, gives twelve annually, in return for a generous subsidy. The London Symphony Orchestra and the Hallé Orchestra are frequently heard, and the seed sown by Sir Robert Mayer and his musical director, Sir Malcolm Sargent, is producing an abundant harvest. In big towns, such as Liverpool and Birmingham, excellent use is made of the Philharmonic and City Orchestras. Not only do these orchestras give big concerts for massed children, but they visit schools in sections of thirty to forty players—an extremely valuable undertaking, since the players can be observed closely by the children, who are brought nearer the music-makers than in a large hall.

Gramophone records and films also play their share. An outstanding film, A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, directed by Muir Matheson, the music by Benjamin Britten, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, has been shown throughout the country, both in cinemas and schools. This remarkable attempt to produce both the sight and sound of the symphony orchestra has been most successful and is now within the reach of all schools. Choosing a great theme of Purcell, Britten has written a set of variations in which each department of the orchestra plays the principal part in turn, singling out the individual instruments clearly in sight and sound against their background. There is a spoken commentary, and a set of gramophone records of the music has been made.

An entirely new series of records is now available called *The Instruments of the Orchestra* (His Master's Voice). In this series each instrument of the orchestra plays a carefully selected solo with piano accompaniment, the solo instruments thus standing out clearly, unobscured by confusing orchestral colour in the background. Sir Malcolm Sargent directed the series and plays all the piano accompaniments.

Music festivals have been in full stride, and whereas instrumental items formerly consisted of numbers of instrumental solos, or occasional groups of players, they now include violin classes, chamber music groups and orchestras. For instance, school orchestras from Sussex schools recently combined to take a full share in the Secondary Schools' Festival. Instrumental 'days' are growing less rare. The county of Dorset gave a remarkable example of the hold that instrumental playing has already taken in its schools, by producing an embryo orchestra from each secondary school; practically nothing of the kind existed the year before. Doncaster recently produced some children's string quartets at its Schools' Festival. These music festivals are of the greatest value. Standards are set, and children and teachers learn alike.

Finally, what of instruments? In general, good teachers seem to be able to find all the instruments they need, and to go to any length to acquire them, from inspecting junk shops to buying from accredited retailers. The teacher either fits the instruments up himself, or sends them to a professional craftsman. A certain number of instruments are coming into the country, but prices are much in excess of value. There is indeed a serious shortage of small violins and 'cellos, and the lack of wind instruments has already been mentioned.

By far the most promising development in the manufacture of stringed instruments is the new violin factory founded at Bridgend, in Wales, by the Disabled Persons Re-employment Association. Superintended by an expert craftsman, a displaced person from Estonia, thirty disabled men are now turning out excellent violins, and it is hoped that this new industry, such as the country has never possessed before, will develop in importance. There may be difficulty in fixing an economic price for instruments until the factory gets into full swing, and until plant is available.

To conclude: instrumental music in schools has made a considerable stride forward during the year under review. Bearing in mind the problems of teachers and their training, the acute shortage of accommodation necessary for the development of the work, and the difficulty in the supply of instruments, results are creditable, and the future is full of promise.



### **OPERA**

#### BY PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

Opera, which is a complex art, is never an easy subject to examine. Opera in Britain, little though there is of it in comparison with many countries on the Continent, is a subject so complicated that it frequently surprises even those who think they know the culture of their own land thoroughly. British operatic enterprises present an extremely confused picture composed of enthusiasm and indifference, very high standards and deplorably low standards, rare occasions—such as the revival of Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the Universities both of Oxford and Cambridge, or the concert performance of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppaea* by the musicians of Morley College in London—and a timid and unimaginative reliance on the stock repertory. Indeed, unless one knows something of the history of British musical taste in the last twenty years one may well find the picture presented by opera in Britain almost incomprehensible.

A point which it is important to keep clear is that interest in opera is comparatively small, and is restricted to a mere fraction of the musical public—a state of affairs without parallel in most other countries, where opera is seen quite naturally as an integral part of the musical life of the country. This is due chiefly to the fact that opera is not a native growth in Britain and has in the past been for the greater part an import, regarded by many British musicians with a certain disfavour as exotic and outlandish. Opera has therefore thrived on the enthusiasm of a minority, and like all products of the taste of a minority it has had champions who were prepared to lose fortunes to further 'their' cause. Those who in the past year have heard performances, for example, at Glyndebourne, the beautiful little opera house owned by Mr. John Christie, standing in the grounds of his country house in Sussex, must remember that, although the standard of performance may be the equal of any in the world, the entire under-

taking is to a large extent a labour of love.

And because one finds oneself sometimes at the opera in London surrounded by people who are evidently connoisseurs and enthusiasts

of the first order, one must not assume that opera means much to the

majority of the population.

It is only in recent years that opera in Britain has received some support from the State\*; it is still not supported by the municipalities of our large cities. Although many theatres in provincial towns are called 'The Opera House', it is unlikely that more than a very few of them have ever staged an opera, and although the music of many operas may, through the medium of the wireless and the gramophone, be fairly well known in a popular way, opera-going is a very rare experience for most British people.

Outside London, save for the respectable, but not always very stylish, performances of a touring company, the Carl Rosa Opera Company, and occasional performances by enthusiastic amateurs, the opportunity to hear opera is extremely limited. It is true that the new enthusiasm for music which was one of the cultural phenomena of the war years roused the curiosity of many younger people to witness some opera 'in the flesh', that is to say, properly staged and not merely in the concert hall; but there was little opportunity for satisfying that curiosity, since the London opera houses had to remain closed for most of the war, and touring companies found the strain of the travelling conditions of those difficult days almost insupportable. The interest in opera, potentially so great, was largely dissipated into ballet and other departments of the theatre and the concert hall.

Curiosity however remained and was stimulated by the return to this country of those armies that had been stationed in Italy during the later stages of the war, where our soldiers had heard and enjoyed much opera, performed with characteristic Italian vigour: a delightful surprise to ears attuned to the decorous traditions of oratorio. The result was that for a short space after the war the opera public was potentially larger than it had been for many years, perhaps for nearly a century. It was the moment when, above all, a new public should have been able to familiarize itself with the repertory, explore new works and generally cherish and cultivate the new-found taste. But, alas, such opera as was available was in a somewhat exhausted condition; the repertory was miserably small and standards had fallen pitifully low.

True, it was a public which had itself few standards and one whose indiscriminate applause dismayed the small number of connoisseurs who remembered something better. But it was a paying public and for the last

<sup>\*</sup>Not direct support but through the medium of the Arts Council of Great Britain, which receives a grant from the Treasury. Of the opera organizations mentioned here, Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and the English Opera Group work in association with the Arts Council. Since this article was written, it has been announced that Covent Garden Opera House has been acquired by the State: it should not be assumed, however, that this acquisition carries with it a change of policy.

two years London has enjoyed the luxury of three opera houses all playing to reasonably large audiences and—what must surely strike the outside observer as lamentably illogical—often all playing the same works. Indeed, during one memorable week, it would have been possible on a given night to make choice between no fewer than four productions of Rigoletto, for at that time a touring company was also visiting the suburbs.

Such dispersal of effort and of audiences cannot long continue. Indeed, the attendances have in the last year been declining sadly, and it seems improbable that the public can be expected to increase much during the coming year. However, a decided change in the public's attitude to opera must be noted, a change which seems to have come to stay; that is, a desire to regard opera as a native product, not to rely on occasional imports; and a desire to build up, if possible, a central tradition of opera performed in English, in brief, to continue the tradition so valiantly laid down and followed by the popular opera house of Sadler's Wells, in North-East London. When Covent Garden, London's beautiful opera house, once more opened its doors,\* it was therefore not merely as a stage for foreign companies (although both Vienna and Naples sent welcome visitors), but as a home of opera in English to be sung largely by native artists or by foreigners who would be prepared to learn to sing their roles in English. A complete organization comparable to the opera houses of the capitals of Europe was to be developed; 'ensemble' was to be paramount and no effort or cost was to be spared to achieve a high artistic standard, scenic as well as musical. First results were not very satisfactory, as those who were used to the Covent Garden of the pre-war days were quick to point out. But only the glories of those days were recalled, when performances given in the original language could be cast with star singers of the first magnitude drawn from a dozen capital cities. What was forgotten was the often deplorable lack of ensemble and, indeed, of rehearsal: it was no uncommon thing for a visiting celebrity to arrive by air in the afternoon and go straight into the performance without more than the scantiest rehearsal. This at least has been avoided in the new organization at Covent Garden; whatever may have been lacking in style, the lack was not due to perfunctory preparation. Indeed, the mistake was of a different sort; over-enthusiasm, inexperience and over-elaboration (with an eye on the ballet public) were the enemies of first-class performance. During the past year we have seen the repertory grow in the most encouraging way; to such stock favourites as Il Trovatore, Turandot and Carmen have been added-all in extremely handsome and bold productions-such 'difficult' works as Peter Grimes, Benjamin Britten's tragic opera, and,

<sup>\*</sup> The first operatic production was Carmen, on 14 January 1947-

more recently, the original Mussorgsky version of *Boris Godunov*. *Peter Grimes*, which was produced by the gifted stage-producer Tyrone Guthrie, achieved nineteen performances in the season.

Meanwhile the smaller opera house, Sadler's Wells, was also slowly enlarging its repertory, but those who had hoped that there would be co-operation in matters of policy between the two houses were disappointed, Sadler's Wells went one way, Covent Garden another. During the past year they have both, for example, mounted new productions of Il Trovatore. The truth is that interchange of singers is a less practical policy than it might seem. Covent Garden is a large house, and singing which is adequate at Sadler's Wells is lost in the larger auditorium. Many good English singers were available, and though there was an inexplicable neglect of some of the best artists, a very presentable company has been collected, together with what is perhaps the best chorus Covent Garden has ever known and an orchestra which, under the baton of Karl Rankl, the musical director, has made much progress from a rather tentative start. From America especially, but also from Europe, came other singers who were ready to co-operate, some of whom have proved valuable acquisitions, for example Miss Doris Doree, who made a very acceptable Marschallin in Der Rosenkavalier and who later took over the principal soprano role in Peter Grimes. The Italian baritone Paolo Silveri, who first came to London with the San Carlo company from Naples, has remained to perfect his English and widen his style to sing, with considerable success, the title role of *Boris Godunov*. So also has the Viennese soprano, Elizabeth Schwartzkopf, who endeared herself to London audiences and set a standard with her Pamina in The Magic Flute. The seal was set on this policy by the revivals of Wagner (two cycles of The Ring had in the old days been an annual event, honoured by the best performers in the world). Die Walküre and Die Meistersinger were both given, with reasonable success, in English and with the co-operation of Kirsten Flagstad and Hans Hotter. The revival of Tristan, exceptionally, was sung in German.

Critical voices have been raised; the policy is a long-term one and many failures are likely before it bears fruit. To insist on singing all works in English limits the repertory and also limits the number of first-class foreign stars available; as yet the traditions of native opera are so weak in this country that British stars are not coming forth in sufficient numbers to ensure a really high standard. But that the policy is a sound and sensible one seems to be generally agreed. A special point in its favour is that the organization understands that it will never coax the British public into a theatre where there is slovenly staging and feeble acting. The London public especially is accustomed to a high standard in these matters, and Covent Garden now strives in a way it has never done before to emphasize

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the benefits of good production, fine and imaginative scenery and well-rehearsed acting. Fresh talent in the matter of producing opera has been encouraged (even over-encouraged). If some of the productions have looked a little freakish, none of them has looked shabby. The sets for *Peter Grimes*, by Tanya Moiseivitsch, and for *Traviata*, by Sophie Fedorovitch, were extremely handsome, by any reckoning.

In the meantime Sadler's Wells has pursued, in a more modest way and without the help of continental artists, a rather similar policy. A good standard of performance is the rule; attempts have been made to offer a fresh interpretation of two such favourites as Tosca and Faust, and some new ground has even been broken. The repertory is small compared to what it was before the war when Strauss, Wagner, and many Russian works were given, as well as the standard Italian favourites. Wolf-Ferrari's I Quattro Rusteghe (translated into English terms and called The School for Fathers) met with only limited success, but will be remembered as a delightful production. A new one-act comic opera-almost a vaudevilleby a clever young composer, Antony Hopkins, set to music almost complete the text of a comic short story, Lady Robesia. The little score was largely a joke at the expense of opera in general, full of allusions to matters as far apart as Leoncavallo's Pagliacci and Britten's Rape of Lucretia, and full of happy strokes illustrative of the farcical stage action, but it seems unlikely to occupy a very important place in the repertory and would hardly bear much repetition. A very creditable reprise of Cost Fan Tutte, conducted by James Robertson (who shares the conducting with Michael Mudie), and a stirring account of Il Tabarro, Puccini's one-act grand guignol, are among the company's current successes.

To complete the picture of opera in London some mention must be made of the enterprise at the Cambridge Theatre which for the past two years has been presenting Italian opera sung in Italian by mixed casts, composed of Italians (who remain as long as their labour permits allow) and British artists who have been trained to sing in the Italian manner and coached by Signor Dino Borgioli to fit into the Italian ensemble. This enterprise, known as the New London Opera Company, and receiving no State aid, even in the form of remission of taxes, has been largely sustained by the enthusiasm of a lover of opera, Mr. Jay Pomeroy. It has been a most valuable addition to the operatic scene—if only as a reminder that other standards than those obtaining at Covent Garden are possible. Singers such as Signor Stabile in Don Pasquale, Falstaff and Il Barbiere have given us a taste of quality not found elsewhere in England: and the revival of Don Giovanni, in spite of many shortcomings, was perhaps the best seen in this country since the pre-war Glyndebourne revivals. The British singers accommodated themselves surprisingly well, and, in short,

the Cambridge Theatre did much to vindicate the view (still held by many operatic connoisseurs) that opera should always be sung in the original language. Signor Alberto Erede has been the chief conductor from the start and among the productions a share has been taken by Dr. Carl Ebert who—for the Glyndebourne management—also contributed productions of The Marriage of Figaro and of Verdi's Macheth to the international festival of the arts at Edinburgh in the autumn of 1947.

An advantage of the system adopted at the Cambridge Theatre was that it allowed a far wider scheme of casting than has been possible at Covent Garden, and if a not inconsiderable part of the interest in opera may be said to derive from hearing different stars in the same role and comparing them, then the advantage as far as the public is concerned lay all with the Cambridge Theatre. A succession of full-blooded Toscas and Rigolettos and a variety of lively exercises in opera buffa have drawn the public again and again to something which they can hardly hope to understand word for word. At the moment of writing the enterprise has come to an

end, but with good hopes of re-starting in the autumn.

Less assured is the future of Glyndebourne, Mr. Christie's opera. Its reopening in the summer of 1947—with a handsome and finely sung performance of Gluck's Orfeo-and the later appearance of the company at the festival at Edinburgh raised great hopes, but it is realized that such an undertaking is a luxury and one in which, in these days, it may be impossible to indulge. The Glyndebourne management was also responsible for a rather austere revival of Il Seraglio at the festival held early in the spring in the beautiful Georgian city of Bath: one looks forward to their reappearance at Edinburgh. The English Opera Group, a small nucleus collected round the talent of Benjamin Britten and devoted largely to the productions of his intimate chamber operas, has toured the country with excellent performances of The Rape of Lucretia and the comic opera Albert Herring. It is also responsible for one of his more recent experiments, a very clever and charming revision of The Beggar's Opera,\* that famous ballad opera of the eighteenth century. Albert Herring was indeed brought, in this production, to Covent Garden and had a far greater success in spite of the size of the house than might have been foretold for a work conceived for intimate performance with a band of hardly two dozen instrumentalists. The libretto—a transposition into native English terms of a tale by Maupassant-was the work, as so often in England, of an inexperienced hand and the whole piece was dramatically somewhat handicapped. But the music contained so much charm, wit and tenderness and offered so many amusing opportunities, that the audience's attention was easily held

<sup>\*</sup> For the production of this opera at the Oxford Festival, mentioned on p. 50, Professor Edward Dent's edition was used.

throughout three acts. The work's appeal outside England, however, seems less certain; the basic joke, for all its French origin, is essentially English. But if it is only a step in Britten's mastery of the art of operatic characterization it was one worth taking. It is still to Britten that we must look for the long-awaited British operatic masterpiece, though-it is an encouraging note on which to end-many other young composers are trying their hand at opera, and may yet surprise us; not the least of them is Michael Tippett, whose originality in handling cantata form may be a pointer. But the lack of accomplished librettists is also, one fears, likely to make itself felt. Opera does not spring out of nothing, and there has been an an an now too long in this country a breach between serious music and the drama which—as these notes may have suggested—is even now only very slowly being healed.



## FESTIVALS OF MUSIC

#### BY FRANK HOWES

The festival of music is not a new idea in Britain, but during the present century festivals have increased in number and become more varied in character. The trend since the close of the second world war is still further in the same direction: new festivals embodying new ideas, perhaps specializing in certain types of music or on the other hand drawing the other arts into participation, are springing up. Holidays with music have become the order of the day. Between the wars the festival habit was no doubt fostered by combining foreign travel with a pursuit of music: the delectable places of the earth, such as Florence and Salzburg, set out to attract visitors with music as well as scenery and amenity. British people went abroad in great numbers, the older and richer to enjoy art in comfort and sunshine, the younger and poorer to further their education more strenuously, hiking, climbing and swimming by day, and crowding concert and opera at night.

Travel is less easy now and Europe is only beginning to cater again for foreign music lovers, so the people of Britain have settled down to cultivate their own festivals more assiduously. Musical life here is keener than formerly, and, though nothing will ever damp our determination to hear the best that others can send us from anywhere in the world, we are more self-sufficient than we were. Even in opera, which is our weakest tradition, we have made a fresh start and strengthened it with our healthy, native English ballet to such good purpose that when Scotland stirred in its long musical sleep last summer and launched a new international festival at Edinburgh, opera and ballet were both features of the programme which it offered to its patrons. Bath this spring has followed suit, using the same organization, Glyndebourne, which owed its initiative to one determined man, Mr. John Christie, and won world-wide fame before the war for its performances of Mozart's operas. The passion for orchestral music greatly increased during the war and won a new audience for itself, so that new orchestras, of which the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra is the youngest,

have sprung up and sufficiently established themselves to undertake ambitious festival programmes. The choral festival is a long-standing feature of our musical life. Among the best known is the National Eisteddfod of Wales, held annually at a different centre: Wales also has branched out latterly beyond national boundaries, with an international festival of choirs from all countries, held at Llangollen. Few even of the newer festivals dispense altogether with choral music. Festivals are indeed so booming that cautious people with an eye to their economic foundations are beginning to wonder whether we are building too fast for safety and permanence.

However, festival-going is no new thing with us, and, since tradition is so strong a factor in British life, what is once established will usually carry on under its own momentum and grow stronger as it grows older. Thus the Three Choirs Festival, in all the 224 years of its existence, has never been more prosperous than now. This is the oldest of our festivals and grew out of an annual meeting of the three cathedral choirs of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester. By the end of the eighteenth century oratorio performances had become a feature of the meeting, and during the nineteenth century the festival settled into its present shape, by which four or five days are devoted to oratorios in the naves of the cathedrals, with a secular concert or two in the town halls of the three cities which take it in turn to be the centre of the festival. Between the wars what had at one time been very largely a Handel festival became something of an Elgar festival, with the composer himself taking an active part. The Three Choirs Festival was revived, after the interruption of war, at Hereford in 1946. In the year under review it was held at Gloucester with Dr. Herbert Sumsion, the cathedral organist, as principal conductor. The arduous duties of conducting seven or eight full performances of miscellaneous choral and orchestral works tend now to be more evenly shared at each festival between the three cathedral organists. This is the latest development in an organization which has been evolving to meet new conditions through two and a quarter centuries but which yet retains its distinctive character; its root and source is of course its habitation in the three westcountry cathedrals.

The Leeds Festival goes back to 1855, when a new town hall was opened by Queen Victoria. It takes place every third year and is, like the Three Choirs, a predominantly choral festival. Yorkshire has a reputation for good voices, especially sonorous basses and indefatigable sopranos, and a long tradition of choral singing. The Choral Society of the smaller neighbouring town of Huddersfield, which sends a contingent to the Leeds Festival Choir, has a history of more than a century and is now teckoned the finest large choir in the country. The Leeds Festival, which

was revived, after war-time interruption, in October 1947, is not the oldest of the big provincial festivals, though it ranks as the most ambitious because of the high quality of its singing. The Norwich and Norfolk Triennial Festival, also revived in the autumn of 1947, dates from 1824, though there had been sporadic festivals before that. Festivals, then, were an established institution in Britain before Wagner thought of his Festspiele. But Wagner's idea of an opera festival spread in continental Europe until, as we have seen, it reached Glyndebourne in Sussex in 1934; and since the war opera has begun to infiltrate into festivals mainly devoted to other sorts of music. The very latest manifestation of this tendency is a festival organized by Benjamin Britten's associates at Aldeburgh, the original of the 'Borough' where the action of Peter Grimes is situated, which in June 1948 has included operatic performances in a varied scheme.

What are the essentials in this idea of a festival which has proved so fertile? Concentration is one, the festivity implied in the word is another, special pains devoted to ensuring a high standard of performance is a third; though, inasmuch as some festivals are inspired by amateur effort, this is not an invariable ingredient. A further feature, which also is not

invariable, is the introduction of new compositions.

Concentration in the past sometimes meant indigestion. At the Leeds Festival in Victorian times, for instance, the morning concert, which was interrupted by an interval for luncheon, really meant a morning concert and a short afternoon concert as well, to be followed by another big performance in the evening; and this heavy schedule was carried out for four days on end. Concentration of material into a short space of time also implied mental concentration, and it was from this that the idea of the holiday festival grew. A festival is more than a series of concerts, because the participator gives himself wholly up to music for the time being. The Promenade Concerts in London are sometimes spoken of as London's summer festival, but though they are a remarkable concentration of programmes into eight consecutive weeks they are not really a festival, because no one takes time off from his daily business to go to them all. The so-called London Music Festival, a frankly popular event initiated in the summer of 1947 at the huge sporting arena of Harringay, in North London, is for the same reason a festival only in name. The true festival is a whole-time business while it lasts. It would seem to follow from this that, just as one swallow does not, according to Aristotle, make a summer, one concert cannot make a festival. Yet the term may perhaps be allowed for the annual folk-dance festival in London's Albert Hall, organized by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, which was revived again in January 1948. For here dancers from all over the country, as well as teams from abroad, all bringing their own traditional music, are concentrated to make an occasion which is certainly festive in spirit.

It arises naturally from the festivity of the holiday spirit that the younger British music festivals are organized in places which are either holiday resorts, beautiful cities with architectural glories to provide the setting for music, or places of exceptional amenity such as Oxford and Cambridge. Leeds and Huddersfield are not pleasure resorts, though festivals have been held there in the year under review for valid local reasons. Norwich, on the other hand, is a city of great historical interest in itself and a pleasant centre from which to see the surrounding country during a free or a truant's afternoon. Bath, the most beautiful city in the British Isles from the point of view of plan and unity—a phenomenon indeed in the British way of life-offers a perfect setting for a festival. One was held for the first time in April 1948 under the title of The Bath Assembly, a name borrowed from the eighteenth century when Bath itself was built, in one of the best periods of English architecture, and became a resort of fashion for a cultured society. Bath was as lucky in its period as it is in its natural situation—a good place in fact for the home of a festival in which not music (including opera) only, but drama, puppers and films added their attractions to those of the city itself.

Not far from Bath, and with some of its period flavour (a somewhat later period, however) and some of its natural advantages, is Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, where they had the vision and courage to found a new orchestral festival even before the war was quite over. Formerly, seaside resorts like Bournemouth and Hastings, which possessed municipal orchestras, offered concentrated programmes of orchestral music to make a holiday festival, but their revival has not yet been possible, and the inland resort has stolen the initiative in their place. It has also given a special interest to its programmes by concentrating the interest on modern English music, as Bournemouth used to do. Cheltenham is by no means an all-English festival, like the experimental one at Huddersfield in May 1948, but modern works of the English school give it a focus of attention which is further assisted by lectures and discussions. It was fitting that four modern works, two of them performed for the first time, should be heard in a Gloucestershire festival, for Gloucestershire is the cradle of modern English music: Parry, who started the revival, was a Gloucestershire squire; Holst, one of the most original minds in English music, who decisively severed the ties which bound our budding English music to continental models, was born in Cheltenham; Vaughan Williams, who is the most representative composer this island has ever produced, came out of a Gloucestershire rectory; and if the boundary may be stretched a few miles, Elgar, who put us back on the map of Europe, was born at Worcester,

and there have been other figures of less fame who have come from the West country, too. Cheltenham imported the Hallé Orchestra and its conductor, John Barbirolli. They gave four concerts in which were played the violin concertos of E. J. Moeran and Benjamin Britten, a new oboe concerto by Alan Rawsthorne, and a new symphony by a Scottish nationalist, Ian Whyte. These works were framed in a setting of standard classics.

Cheltenham came first in the twelve months under review, at the end of June 1947. A few weeks later it was followed by a small festival devoted to Elgar at Malvern, where he had lived during a fruitful period of his life. Next came the big new venture at Edinburgh, during the last week in August and the first fortnight of September. This was avowedly modelled on the Salzburg Festival, and was surprisingly successful. 'Surprisingly' because the British way is normally to let things grow from small beginnings rather than to launch something on a large scale ready-made. Our methods of parturition are not those of Jove, but in this case something almost fully grown did spring from the head of Mr. Rudolf Bing, Glyndebourne's manager. It was intentionally an international affair, and had little connexion with Scotland except its location. It contained no choral music (except one concert from the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, an a cappella body), but it did contain chamber music (played by Szigeti, Primrose, Fournier and Schnabel). It contained also two operas, Figaro and Verdi's Macbeth, which perhaps constituted its distinctive feature. As the festival takes root it may be able to acquire some quality or character which will remove the suggestion of a bazaar or musical store in which luxury goods are purveyed. It was musique de luxe without a doubt. The Colonne Orchestra came from Paris and the Vienna Philharmonic from Austria. Six British orchestras participated, one of them, the string orchestra of Dr. Jacques, being responsible for the only novelties and curiosities of a festival that was mainly devoted to standard works. Two of the orchestras were Scottish, and there was some Scottish music to be heard as well as Scottish traditional dancing by men of Highland regiments to be seen in the great forecourt of Edinburgh Castle. Whether nationalism or, on the other hand, international opera will provide the root which must now strike into the soil remains to be seen. Perhaps drama might help here, in which Scotland is stronger than in music, but there is not much doubt that a festival with so many attractions will rapidly consolidate itself and prove perhaps the new meeting ground for musicians and music lovers of all countries.

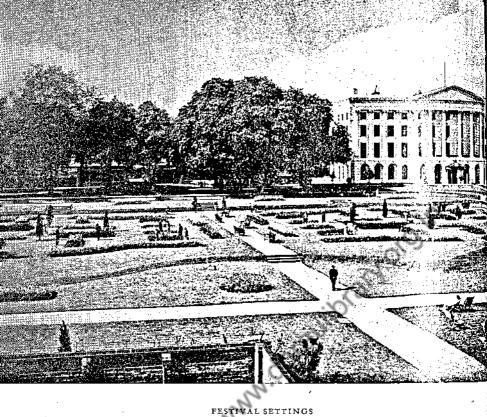
Before Edinburgh was over the Three Choirs Festival had begun at Gloucester. Norwich and Leeds followed within a month. Elgar remains to the fore of the Three Choirs, as is fitting, and his masterpiece, The Dream of Gerontius, was given both at Gloucester and at Norwich, where



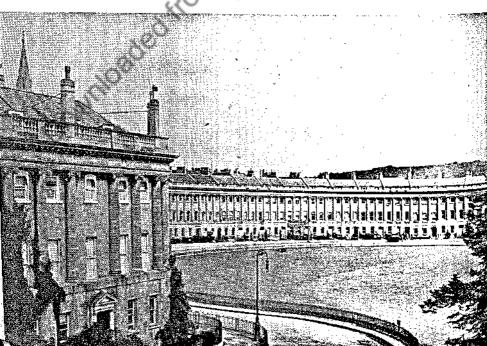
' EMINENT YOUNGER COMPOSERS
William Walton

Michael Tippett

Alan Rawsthome Benjamin Britten



Above: The Imperial Gardens at Cheltenham. Below: The finely curving Royal Crescent, Bath.



Miss Kathleen Ferrier, a contralto singer of the front rank, put the stamp of a great performance upon it. The Apostles and Bach's St. Matthew Passion were the chief choral works at Gloucester, and Edmund Rubbra's interesting and distinguished Third Symphony and Vaughan Williams's noble Fifth were the chief orchestral works.

The Three Choirs Festival is very much a gathering of friends, and since it occurs in vacation is a great resort of academic musicians. Norwich had an even homelier atmosphere; the city is a provincial capital unaffected by London, and though its choirs could not compare with the Yorkshire singers of Leeds, it was able to give a good account of Verdi's Requiem, and of a work full of the most likeable English characteristics, a certain solidity and healthy melodiousness, which has suffered an undeserved eclipse, Parry's The Pied Piper. Written forty years previously for a Norwich festival, it was revived to celebrate the centenary of the chief architect of the English revival. Two conductors shared the festival, the local organist of the cathedral, Dr. Heathcote Statham, and Sir Malcolm Sargent, a good arrangement combining local patriotism with external stimulus.

At Leeds Sir Malcolm Sargent shared the duties of conductor with John Barbirolli. These two men have connexions with two of the principal orchestras in the North of England, the Philharmonic of Liverpool and the Hallé of Manchester, both of which, incidentally, had appeared at the Edinburgh festival. Excellent choral singing was heard in Verdi's Requiem, the Choral Symphony, the B minor Mass, Vaughan Williams's A Sea Symphony and William Walton's vivid cantata, Belshazzar's Feast, and it is for choral singing that the visitor makes his pilgrimage to Leeds. But the programmes were unenterprising even in their choice of masterpieces, and no novelties were heard, which breaks an honourable tradition at this festival.

On 22 November 1947, St. Cecilia's Day, a newly established festival, whose aim is to give public recognition to the part played by music in national life, was held in London. Its principal features are a church service, in which the long and honourable tradition of Anglican liturgical music as sung by choirs of boys and men is recalled, and a choral concert for which a new ode commissioned from Edmund Blunden, poet, and Gerald Finzi, composer, revived a tradition to which Purcell and Handel both contributed. Sir Adrian Boult conducted this concert.

In the spring of 1948 there were festivals at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. That at Cambridge was given in association with the B.B.C. and followed more conventional lines than the normal summer festival given triennially at Cambridge. It commemorated Parry in a performance of *The Glories of our Blood and State* and honoured its present.

professor, Patrick Hadley, with a performance of his philosophical choral rhapsody The Hills. A performance of Schütz's Passion of St. John in King's College Chapel under the organist, Boris Ord, brought into the scheme the work which goes on unceasingly in that magnificent foundation. Oxford's festival in May was like that at Cambridge in so far as it aimed at bringing together all the local institutions for making music and giving to each a place in the scheme, but Oxford's was at once larger and more concentrated, and it revived the triennial tradition broken by the war. It was this time an all-English festival. The main concerts were choral and were undertaken by the Oxford Bach Choir under its conductor Dr. Thomas Armstrong, organist of Christ Church. The works performed were Holst's Hymn of Jesus, Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius and Vaughan Williams's A Sea Symphony. Byrd and Parry had whole programmes of motets devoted to them, two orchestral concerts were contributed by visiting orchestras, and the University Opera Club gave an amateur performance of The Beggar's Opera.

A festival similarly devoted wholly to English music, but in this case purely orchestral and modern, was given by the new Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra under its conductor, Maurice Miles, at Huddersfield in May. Each of the three programmes contained a concerto, Rawsthorne's very striking Piano Concerto, Britten's Violin Concerto, and John Ireland's Piano Concerto. This was a venture of faith since Yorkshire is still loyal to its choral tradition, and inclined to regard orchestral music with reserve and modern music with suspicion.

Looking back over the year we see choral music still the mainstay, though its supremacy is being increasingly challenged by the new interest in the orchestra; we see that organists still carry a great part of English musical life on their capable shoulders; and we see opera edging its way in



# THE LONDON CONCERT SCENE

#### BY MARTIN COOPER

The London musical scene is dominated by the lack of scenery, for with music blossoming as never before into a widely diffused taste, in some cases almost an appetite, we have only two main concert halls, one large and one small. The Albert Hall is an enormous mid-nineteenth-century building, circular and with a flat domed roof, acoustically very bad, draughty, and difficult to heat. It is normally the scene of boxing matches, gigantic choral festivals and the Three Arts Ball, and is in no way suited to ordinary orchestral concerts, still less to the recitals of soloists. The Wigmore Hall is comfortable, central, and good for sound, but it is a chamber music hall only. And so it is necessary to make occasional use of theatres—Drury Lane and Covent Garden, especially—and to fall back on gloomy, inconvenient and uncomfortable makeshifts such as the Central Hall, Westminster, and the Kingsway Hall. This by way of a prelude and to suggest that if music flourishes in London it must be a hardy plant capable of doing well in dusty soil and without much air or light. And yet flourish it does.

Of the leading orchestras the London Philharmonic Orchestra (L.P.O.) has shown itself the most enterprising, organizing itself on a profit-sharing basis and inviting a series of eminent foreign conductors among whom there have been during the last year Eduard van Beinum, Victor de Sabata, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Carl Schuricht, Sergiu Celibidache and Georges Enesco. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (R.P.O.) is the formation of Sir Thomas Beecham, who mostly conducts it, and it has achieved under him a balance and finish, a brilliance of tone and a sense of style which come only with intensive study under a single first-class conductor. The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, under Sir Adrian Boult, is thoroughly reliable and musicianly, though both this and the London Symphony Orchestra (L.S.O.) lack the brilliance and finish of the R.P.O. With the excellent Philharmonia Orchestra, the New London Orchestra, and the Boyd Neel and the Jacques String Orchestras, even when two or

three of these orchestras are touring the provinces or abroad, London need never lack for orchestral music.

The dearth of concert halls—and the scarcity of newsprint which prevents many beginners from getting more than the most cursory press notice—tells most hardly on solo players and singers. It is certainly true that many beginners, especially among singers, are all too anxious to give public concerts long before they are qualified to do so. A musical busdriver, a new 'discovery' much publicized in the press recently, explained that he was starting singing lessons right away and that his singing master promised him that he would be singing in opera within two years, perhaps sooner. No voice can be properly trained in that time, still less any proper musical education carried through; and England does not produce the type of voice whose sheer beauty of tone makes the listener willing to pass over deficiencies of musicianship. If we were well provided with small halls the position would in that way be worse, for a great many unqualified performers give concerts even under the present difficult conditions. In fact, if sheer lack of space retards a first public appearance by even a few months it is probably wholly to the good.

The musical taste of the London public is inevitably reflected in the programmes of the orchestral concerts that are given. Occasionally the B.B.C. gives a public performance of a new or unfamiliar work like Honegger's Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher last February; or a society like the Henry Wood Concert Society makes a bold gesture, as when they gave us Mahler's Eighth Symphony (also in February). But in general the inclusion of new or unfamiliar works in concert programmes is made enormously expensive by the cost of extra rehearsals, and public interest is not yet sufficiently adventurous to make it an economic proposition. Serious orchestral music is still a new discovery to a large proportion of concertgoers, and what they most enjoy is a familiar work-a symphony or concerto by Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky or possibly Sibeliusconducted by an internationally famous conductor with the maximum of glamour. For just as our grandparents or great-grandparents were content to hear Les Huguenots, Faust, Norma or La Favorita again and again, provided there was a new prima donna or tenor, we tend to be conservative in our tastes, slow to enlarge but indefatigable in indulging them. Thus, for three favourite piano concertos—Grieg, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov No. 2—there seems to be an inexhaustible appetite, and one of them has often to be included in a programme containing newer or less familiar music, simply as a bait.

Thenature of the popularity of the Promenade Concerts—a cheap, popular series covering a large part of the classical repertory during eight weeks in the summer and two in January—is at once a sign of how far the

general public has advanced from musical ignorance and how far it has yet to go in forming a reliable and discriminating taste. It is unfortunately considered a social gaffe in England to express anything less than mild approval of any work, even supposing the music itself to be worthless and the performance deplorable; and it is therefore difficult to judge the finer gradations of the public's enthusiasm. More often than not it is an individual—conductor or soloist—to whom the applause is directed rather than to the music. Indeed there are concert-goers who study the form of their favourite conductor or pianist with all the enthusiasm, if rather less than the expert knowledge, of the sporting enthusiast.

Side by side with this preoccupation with the performer, there undoubtedly exists a deep and growing interest in music for its own sake, For many people music has come to take the place in their emotional life that has been left achingly empty by their loss, or complete ignorance, of religious faith; and this undoubtedly accounts for the popularity of late Romantic music, with its leitmotiv of yearning for the unattainable, sober and chastened in Brahms or tensely emotional in Tchaikovsky. Big choral works, too-the Bach Passions and the B minor Mass, Beethoven's Missa Solennis, Brahms's German Requiem, and even Delius's Mass of Lifeundoubtedly exercise an additional, not strictly musical attraction on those who have lost the normal sense of spiritual community in a Christian body and are, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to replace it by some secular equivalent. This, I think, accounts for the popularity of the festival week of Bach's music arranged by Dr. Reginald Jacques in the early spring of 1948 and for the slow progress of contemporary music in the public affection, appealing as it mostly does to the intellect and the refined musical palate rather than to the emotions.

Although our own orchestras, playing the usual classical repertory with comparatively few variations, obviously provide, as in other capitals, the staple musical diet, London entertains a never-ceasing flow of visitors throughout most of the year. In the autumn of 1947, for example, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, and the Turin Symphony Orchestra, all gave concerts in London, and one of our own best provincial orchestras—the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester—visits London fairly frequently and always receives an enthusiastic welcome. Of individual artists there is hardly one of any considerable reputation in his own country who does not sooner or later try his fortune in London. In October 1947 alone we were able to hear Szigeti, Fournier and Schnabel playing a series of chamber music programmes; Menuhin and Thibaud among the violinists; Michelangeli and Edwin Fischer as pianists, and Ralph Kirkpatrick, a comparable virtuoso in his own chosen field, the harpsichord; while

Richard Strauss conducted what virtually amounted to a festival of his own works extending over several weeks. These were followed by Heifetz and Bruno Walter (who tried, I fear in vain, to arouse our interest in Bruckner by conducting a performance of his To Deum) and Segovia, that great virtuoso who almost persuades us that the guitar is a concert instrument, until he plays the Bach Chaconne. One great artist whose appearance was hardly noticed in the press was Jenny Tourel, who gave all too few concerts in July 1947, and has only received slightly more attention this year. Our reaction to singers is erratic in any case and always tends to favour the pretty at the expense of the beautiful, lyrical charm rather than dramatic truth and vigour. Appreciation of the actual art of singing is extremely rare, though there are faithful connoisseurs who see to it that they never miss one of the rare recitals given by Maggie Teyte, one of the unfaltering guardians of the old tradition.

For obvious reasons it is easier to be adventurous on the small scale of chamber music than to risk a serious failure with a big orchestral concert. The series of concerts organized by the late Gerald Cooper gave the London public a unique opportunity of becoming acquainted with the entire chamber music output first of Mozart and then, in a rather looser sense, of Bach. These are connoisseurs' concerts in which the standard of performance is almost always high without being superlative, and the emphasis is entirely on the music played. The Loewenguth and Hungarian String Quartets have paid several visits to London and given us examples of the finest classical quartet playing, while the Busch Quartet has an almost sectarian following among the more old-fashioned worshippers at the shrine of Beethoven. Two admirable series of chamber music concerts never cease to provide healthy variation from the conventional repertory—the Concerts de musique française and those given by the London Contemporary Music Centre. French music has a growing following in Britain, and the former concerts, at which many French artists make their London débuts, bring the music of contemporary French composers and the lesser known works of the previous generation—Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and Roussel-before an enthusiastic public who would otherwise have little chance of hearing them. The Contemporary Music Centre generally divides its programmes between a 'classical' modern work (Berg, Stravinsky, Schoenberg or one of the accepted masters) and new works which are often given a first hearing at these concerts. Thus it was possible to hear during April an excellent performance by Elizabeth Hoengen of Schoenberg's songs from Stefan George's Das Buch der hängenden Gärten, and at an earlier concert Stravinsky's Duo Concertant for violin and piano was played. Occasionally these concerts bring to light new names which may later achieve a wider reputation. Among the general run of undoubtedly sincere but often over-intellectualized and emotionally callow works which inevitably, perhaps rightly, provide much of the experimental part of these programmes, a sonata for clarinet and 'cello by Phyllis Tate, played in December, stood out as an extraordinarily individual and completely successful work in a difficult and unusual medium; and it will be surprising if we do not hear more of her.

This brings us to the whole question of new and unusual works, which

form the main interest of the critic and the more sophisticated concertgoer. I have already mentioned Bruckner's Te Deum and Mahler's Eighth Symphony, works which should undoubtedly have occasional performances but show no signs of finding anything like a permanent place in the British repertory. The question of musical nationality is a vexed one, and there is no doubt that we have all of us said too easily in the past that there is some music which, like some wine, does not travel. Our neglect of Fauré used to be excused on these grounds, but pertinacity in bringing his music before the public has been rewarded and his music is probably more performed in Britain now than in any other country except France (though that is not saying very much). Sibelius, too, who is either ignored completely or regarded as a minor nationalist composer à la Grieg in many countries, has been acclaimed in Britain as a major composer and is regarded by many competent judges as the greatest symphonist since Beethoven, not excepting Brahms or—and here we return to our point of departure—Bruckner. It is possible that a prolonged course of Bruckner's music might break down what advertising experts would call our strong sales-resistance. Certainly there is a following for Mahler, though the Mahler of the Kindertötenlieder, the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and the Lied von der Erde rather than the earlier symphonies, least of all the incredibly conglomerate Eighth. The presence in Britain—and especially at the heart of our musical life—of a large number of Austrian refugees has certainly had its effect in bringing about performances of the music of both these favourite Viennese composers; but I suspect that neither has taken very deep roots in our affections, and that both are cultivated as exotics at present.

It is largely owing to the personal influence and taste of our greatest English conductor—Sir Thomas Beecham—that during the last year we have had something like a revival of the music of Berlioz. The Requiem, Harold in Italy, the Te Deum, Symphonie funèbre and both parts of Les Troyens have been given (mostly in broadcast performances) and recently Sir Adrian Boult has conducted Roméo et Juliette. Nothing but more frequent performances will familiarize audiences with Berlioz's intensely individual idiom and remove the inherited atmosphere of suspicion which still surrounds his music, even among the intelligent. The once popular

Wagner seems at present to be at a discount with British audiences, and the younger generation may well learn to find in Berlioz what their fathers and grandfathers found in Wagner, but without the literary and philosophical associations. Another composer who may come to be reassessed by London concert audiences is Scriabin, whose *Poem of Ecstasy* had a great success in January when it was played at one of the New Era Concert Society's\* programmes. It is obviously his piano works whose disappearance from the repertory is least explainable, and there is scope for an enterprising pianist with determination enough to overcome initial lack of interest.

Honegger's Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher, which was new to London, was something of a disappointment. The combination of the spoken word with orchestral music is very rarely successful, and the cleverness and effectiveness of much of the music did not make up for the hybrid nature of the work—half cantata and half radio drama—or enable the audience to follow the sophisticated details of the text. A suite from Roussel's Bacchus et Ariane, played by the Hallé Orchestra under their conductor John Barbirolli, renewed the interest periodically aroused by the far too rare performances of Roussel's Third and Fourth Symphonies. We hear his chamber music at the Concerts de musique française, but his orchestral works hardly ever. And yet their sobriety and toughness, their rhythmic vitality and astringent quality bring them well within the orbit of British taste. In fact, there is a certain kinship, I always feel, between Roussel and our own Walton, whose Symphony has been performed on several occasions during the last year and seems to grow in favour with both connoisseurs and general public. A noted provincial orchestra, that of the City of Birmingham, conducted by George Weldon, has made this work particularly its own, and included a lucid performance at its London début in February. Walton's String Quartet, performed for the first time in May 1947, showed the same qualities as the Symphony, but with the mellowing of a personality mature not only as a musician but as a man.

The musical event of this spring has been a new symphony—a sixth, that is to say—by Vaughan Williams. In spite of the composer's age (he was born in 1872) there is absolutely nothing in the first three movements to suggest the work of an old man, except an absolute sureness of effect and an admirable succinctness of style, both fruits of long experience. The last movement is something of a problem. Wholly piano or pianissimo, in the composer's own words, 'the music drifts about contrapuntally with occasional whiffs of theme . . . and one or two short episodes'. The slightly

<sup>\*</sup>A newly formed organization under the general musical direction of Richard Austin, the conductor. Its programmes feature less familiar orchestral works, alongside the normal repertoire.

sardonic note characteristic of the first three movements is not wholly absent from the last either, and the symphony inno way suggests the golden tranquillity, 'all passion spent', of a calm old age. The folk-song element is almost wholly absent and there is a suggestion of repressed violence, occasionally rising to the surface, which makes the whole work tense rather than relaxed and gives passages such as the hammered trumpet climax in the second movement an unmistakably sinister quality. (It should perhaps be said that the symphony was begun during the war, in 1944, though it was not finished until 1947.) The humour of the scherzo, too, has a certain bitterness about it, a quality that has been almost wholly lacking in Vaughan Williams's music with the possible exception of the Fourth Symphony. The whole symphony is a most remarkable achievement, intensely musical and yet full of personal character, enigmatic enough to whet the listener's curiosity for many hearings and yet immediately arresting.\*

Concerts in London have now a strong competitor for the interest of the musical public, in the Third Programme of the B.B.C., which caters for more adventurous and curious musical tastes as no public concerts could possibly afford to do. Even so, and with the difficulties of accommodation which at present show no signs of being relieved, London concert life has a vitality which can only be explained by its broad and popular nature. Concerts are early so that shop and office workers can have something to eat after their work, go to a concert and get home comfortably, even to the more outlying suburbs, by 10.30 or 11. No concert is a social event, but slowly, and by a process of trial and error, music is finding its way into the very hearts of a great many people's lives. Taste, in the sense of discrimination, will come: the appetite must first be healthily strong and may well be slightly coarse. Who, after all, expects a schoolboy to be an epicure?

DOMUIL

<sup>\*</sup> For another view of this symphony, sec pp. 28-9.



# BRITISH COUNCIL GRAMOPHONE RECORDINGS Hordin

#### BY ALEC ROBERTSON

There are times when anyone who is at all sensitive revolts against the mechanical age in which, for better or worse, we live. It is then that we long for candles and clavichords rather than electric light and elephantine grand pianos; it is then, if we are unlucky enough to have noisy neighbours, that we wish no one had ever invented the radio or the gramophone.

I found myself recently in such a reactionary and romantic mood, but it soon passed when my eye fell upon the many albums of gramophone records mutely reproaching me from their shelves. Even, I thought, if my fingers possessed the greatest skill, these discs, many of them, contained music that no fingers, however skilful, could adequately render, which the radio can only bring alive for the moment, but which the semipermanent gramophone record enables me to live with, study and make my own.

In the world of today the gramophone record is, however, more than a private pleasure; it acts as one of music's ambassadors and is able, with all its defects, to convey a much more vital and revealing impression of a composer's music than the printed page ever can do. This is a matter of common knowledge. But I doubt if the full implications are yet realized of such valuable missionary work as the British Council's sponsorship of first-class recordings of British music. To the growing list of representative British works five extremely interesting additions have been made in this last year. There are two volumes of English Madrigals, covering the period of England's golden age of music; Flos Campi for solo viola, orchestra, and chorus by Vaughan Williams, first performed in April 1929, at the Geneva festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music; Benjamin Britten's opera, The Rape of Lucretia, first performed on 12 July 1946, at Glyndebourne, Sussex, the lovely small opera house in the heart of the English countryside, owned by Mr. John Christie; Dies Natalis, a cantata for solo soprano and string orchestra, by Gerald Finzi, first performed in January 1940; and the late Walter Leigh's Concertino for piano and strings.

Our great composer William Byrd (1543–1623) ends the introduction to his *Psalmes*, *Sonets and Songs* (1588), a collection which includes some of his madrigals, with these words:

Since singing is so good a thing
I wish all men would learne to sing.

Now, the extraordinary output of English madrigals in the short space of about fifty years shows that men did 'learne to sing', for these madrigals were intended not for concert halls, then unknown, but for performance either in people's houses, particularly in the long winter evenings, or, in the summer, out on the village green and on the smooth lawns of the Elizabethan country houses. Of the thirty-two madrigals contained in these two volumes, ten are sung with one voice only to a part, and naturally these, rather than the ones sung by a larger number of voices, convey the intimacy of madrigal singing in the home when the music books were distributed after supper and everyone was expected to sing correctly at sight from a book containing only his or her part. (One may reasonably doubt whether the singing was always as beautiful, or as correct, as that which you can hear on these records, in which Boris Ord conducts the Cambridge University Madrigal Society and a group of solo singers.) The charming poems of the madrigals are full of our native love of the countryside, and the scent of the fields and the flowers seems almost to perfume the music. We have always been lovers of birds, and in these madrigals you will meet the cuckoo and the quail, Philip the Sparrow with his little cry of 'Yet, yet, yet, yet, and the 'Sweet Suffolk owl' with his 'Te whit, te whoo'. Shepherds and shepherdesses, of course, abound, with Cupid ever near, but there are also madrigals of serious character such as Sir Walter Raleigh's noble meditation, written in the Tower of London on the eve of his execution, What is our Life, splendidly set by Orlando Gibbons, or Tomkins's moving Lament for Absalom. There are massive madrigals, in praise of Queen Elizabeth, such as Bennet's All creatures now are merry minded, and dainty madrigals of the kind called ballets, with a 'fa la la' refrain, such as Weelkes's On the plains:

On the plains
Fairy trains
Were a-treading measures.

To go through these volumes with the words of the poems before you (since the nature of the part writing often makes it impossible to hear them clearly) will prove indeed a voyage of discovery. Not only are there

to be found enchanting melody and rhythm, descriptive detail, lively and moving expression, but, often, the surprisingly adventurous harmonies of these 'unruly, capricious, and fantastic' composers. The choice of madrigals wisely includes those already well known here and abroad, such as Gibbons's The Silver Swan, and Byrd's Though Amaryllis dance in green, but also less known madrigals such as John Ward's astonishing Out from the Vale, and Francis Pilkington's Care for thy soul.

These English madrigals lack one quality which their Italian predecessors possessed, and it is a quality so rarely to be met with in our music that it is all the more remarkable to find it, some three hundred years later, in the music of that very English composer, Vaughan Williams. What that quality is I can most clearly indicate by saying that each of the six short movements of Flos Campi, his suite for solo viola, small chorus and small orchestra, is prefaced with quotations from The Song of Solomon, taken from the Vulgate and from the Authorized Version of the Bible. In this work 'the most sensual he has written . . . the sensuous beauty of sound is of prime importance',\* and from the opening melodic arabesques for oboe and solo viola with their clash of tonalities, depicting perhaps 'the lily among thorns', to the broad singing tune of the final movement, the ear is ravished with lovely sound. Unlike the Fathers of the Church, who gave the Oriental imagery of the words a mystical interpretation, Vaughan Williams finds all the meaning he needs in the human longing of the lover for the beloved and their union in the final movement, which is prefaced by the words 'Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum'-'Set me as a seal upon thine heart'. Through each movement the solo viola, superbly played by William Primrose, weaves its rich and darkly glowing way in pursuit of the beloved, with the wordless chorus of singers painting, as it were, the human background, the longings of all lovers. The second movement, perhaps the loveliest of all, is prefaced with the well-known words 'Jam enim hiems transiit'-'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land'. The quiet opening and very gradual increase in tone to the point where solo oboe and flute enter, preceded by a long cantabile melody for the viola, the touches of colour added by harp and celesta, all this paints a delicately beautiful picture of the coming of spring. It contrasts well with the vividly coloured picture of Solomon's palanquin in procession in No. 4, with trumpet, drums and cymbals sounding. The fifth movement, the most passionate of all, makes another well-marked contrast with the utter peace of the last movement, in which instrument after instrument

<sup>\*</sup> The Later Works of R. Vaughan Williams, by Frank Howes. (Oxford University Press.)

takes up the viola's melody of fulfilment. This recording, with Sir Adrian Boult, the Philharmonia Orchestra and the B.B.C. chorus, at their best—and, as I have said, William Primrose giving a grand performance—is, I think, the most successful of all those the British Council has so far

sponsored.

Gerald Finzi's cantata Dies Natalis inhabits a very different world from that of Flos Campi and one in which soul and heart and mind, directed wholly to God, see in everything His handiwork. Thomas Traherne was a seventeenth-century poet, a country clergyman, who beheld the world that God has made with the simple faith and vision of a child. He could say, and mean, 'I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory'. Some passages from his Centuries of Meditations have found their way into anthologies and in particular the words of the first song in this cantata, here called Rhapsody (Recitativo Stromentato): 'All things were spotless and pure and glorious. The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped nor was ever sown.' In the preceding instrumental Intrada, for strings only, we hear the two cantabile themes of the first song, and to English ears the composer shows here a distinct musical affinity with Elgar (it is even more pronounced in the last song), and a spiritual affinity with the Vaughan Williams of the Tallis Fantasia. A petit maître, Finzi shows great sensibility in the handling of words and great skill in maintaining throughout these five pieces the tranquil beauty and youthful rapture of the lovely words. Joan Cross has the right timbre of voice for this music and the Boyd Neel Orchestra play and accompany most sensitively: but some of the string part-writing is rather blurred in the recording, and I recommend a glance at the vocal score to supply what is lacking.

Scenes from Benjamin Britten's two-act opera, The Rape of Lucretia, with a libretto founded on André Obey's play Le viol de Lucrèce, form the next of the British Council's recordings on my list. Lucretia, like Peter Grimes, Britten's previous opera, has been heard in a number of foreign opera houses and has awakened such great interest that this recording, which contains most of the music, will be doubly welcome. Ronald Duncan, the librettist, gives the tragedy, the scene of which is set in Rome in 500 B.C., a religious emphasis from the start, for the chorus—a male and a female singer—comment on it throughout as Christians. The impassioned threnody, sung by five of the characters over the body of Lucretia, slain by her own hand, is followed by a moving Epilogue, the whole scene forming one of Britten's finest pieces of writing. 'Is this all? Is it for this beauty was begun?' the singers of the threnody have asked. And in the Epilogue the chorus reply: 'It is not all. In His Passion is our hope, Jesus Christ, Saviour, He is all.' The daring use of the little

rhythmic figure to the words 'He is all' is only one of Britten's remarkable inventions in this enormously interesting opera. He performs miracles with his small chamber orchestra. Tarquinius's ride to Rome, sung by the male chorus, has a Berlioz-like brilliance, and the lullaby sung over Lucretia by the female chorus, in which bass flute and muted horn play a large part, is unforgettably beautiful. The trio of women at work spinning, the orchestral picture of the rape, with the interwoven comments of the chorus, the tragic beauty of the music at Lucretia's entrance to confess to her husband, these are some of the outstanding pages of the most inventive as well as the most tuneful score Britten has composed. The performance and the recording (conducted by Reginald Goodall and supervised by the composer) are, on the whole, extremely good.

The last of the works to be recorded under the auspices of the British Council, in the period covered, is Walter Leigh's Concertino for Harpsichord (or Piano) and Strings, composed in 1936, and in this recording delightfully played on the piano by Kathleen Long, with the Boyd Neel String Orchestra under their conductor. Walter Leigh was born in 1903 and studied at Cambridge and, under Hindemith, at Berlin. He was killed in action in Libya in June 1942. The death of this most talented young composer was a great loss to British music. He combined learning with wit, and musicianship with a popular appeal. His works include The Jolly Roger, a light opera in the Sullivan tradition, music to plays, and some beautiful chamber music and songs. The economical and sharply defined first movement of the Concertino, its lovely lyrical slow movement, and its rhythmically subtle final movement will give a very good idea of Leigh's talent. On the last side of this recording the Boyd Neel String Orchestra give a fine performance of William Byrd's Fantasia.

These five recordings, like their predecessors, will act, as I have said, as ambassadors to promote both artistic understanding of the finest British music and good will between our respective countries. The generous appreciation and critical insight with which the previous recordings have been welcomed, a real encouragement to our musical world as a whole,

will surely be extended no less to this year's offerings.

Descriptive notes accompany the records of the madrigals and the Rape of Lucretia, including, in the former, the texts, and in the latter, a synopsis of the opera, which is published by Hawkes. The same firm publishes Dies Natalis, while Flos Campi is issued by the Oxford University Press. The madrigals are sung from E. H. Fellowes's edition which is published by Stainer and Bell.

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Compiled by A. Hyatt King

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- BOYCE, William. The Song of Momus to Mars also Orpheus with his Lute (Vaughan Williams).

  Decca M583
  - Roy Henderson (baritone), with piano accompaniment by Eric Gritton.
- Britten, Benjamin. Folk Songs. Foggy Dew (Suffolk). (a) The Ploughboy.

  (b) Come ye not from Newcastle.

  H.M.V. DA1873
  - Peter Pears (tenor), with piano accompaniment by Benjamin Britten.

The Rape of Lucretia, Op. 37 (Duncan).

H.M.V. C3699-706

Cast: Peter Pears, Nancy Evans, Joan Cross, Flora Neilson, Margaret Ritchie, Norman Lumsden, Dennis Dowling, Frederick Sharp. Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Reginald Goodall (supervised by the composer). Recorded under the auspices of the British Council,

Four Sea Interludes from 'Peter Grimes'. Col. DX1441-2 London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent.

Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia from 'Peter Grimes'. Decca K1702-4 Concertgebouw Orchestra, conducted by Eduard van Beinum.

BYRD, William. See under 'Leigh, Walter'.

DELIUS, Frederick. Song of the High Hills.

H.M.V. DB6470-2

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Luton Choral Society, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust.

Brigg Fair (An English Rhapsody).

H.M.V. DB6452-3

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust.

ELGAR, Sir Edward. Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Op. 47.

H.M.V. C3669-70

Hallé Orchestra, conducted by John Barbirolli. (String Quartet: Laurance Turner, Philip Hecht, George Alexander, Stuart Knussen.) Enigma Variations, Op. 36, also Bavarian Dance, Op. 27.H.M.V. C3692-5

Hallé Orchestra, conducted by John Barbirolli.

Enigma Variations, Op. 36, also Pomp and Circumstance March, No. 5 in C, Op. 39. Decca K1351-4

National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent.

ELIZABETHAN MADRIGALS. Elizabethan Madrigals. H.M.V. C3739-50 Soloists: Isobel Baillie, Margaret Field-Hyde, Gladys Winmill, Rene Soames, Keith Falkner. Cambridge University Madrigal Society, conducted by Boris Ord. Recorded under the auspices of the British Council.

FILM MUSIC. Loves of Joanna Godden (Vaughan Williams). Col. DX1377 Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Irving.

Henry V (Walton).

H.M.V. C3583-6

Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by William Walton. Hamlet (Walton). H.M.V. C3755-7

Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Muir Mathieson.

FINZI, Gerald. Dies Natalis (Cantata for high voice and string orchestra).

Decca K1645-7

Joan Cross (soprano), and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, conducted by Boyd Neel. Recorded under the auspices of the British Council.

- Gardiner, Balfour. Shepherd Fennel's Dance. Col. DX1393

  Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent.
- GERMAN, Edward. Henry VIII Dances also Nell Gwyn Dances. Col. DB2343-4 City of Birmingham Orchestra, conducted by George Weldon.
- IRELAND, John. Sonata No. 1 in D Minor. Decca K1400-3
  Frederick Grinke (violin), John Ireland (piano).
- Leigh, Walter. Concertino for Piano and Orchestra.

  Decca K1832-3

  Kathleen Long (piano) and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, conducted by Boyd Neel. Also Fantasia (William Byrd). Recorded under the auspices of the British Council.
- VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, Ralph. Roadside Fire (from Songs of Travel, No. 3), also Linden Lea.

  Robert Irwin (baritone), with piano accompaniment by Gerald Moore.

Flos Campi—Suite for Viola, Chorus and Orchestra. H.M.V. DB6353-5 William Primrose (viola), Philharmonia Orchestra and B.B.C. Chorus,

conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Recorded under the auspices of the British Council.

The Lark Ascending (Romance for Violin and Orchestra).

Col. DX1386-7

David Wise (violin) and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent.

On Wenlock Edge. Decca M585-7
Peter Pears (tenor), Benjamin Britten (piano), and the Zorian String

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