

Competition Festival Record

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pleasant talent, with less ambitious music. It is rather pale music, but it falls gratefully on the ear, for while it essays no audacity it does possess a certain gentle character and independence of its own.

Dr. Vaughan Williams's beautiful scene from 'Pilgrim's Progress' is curiously little known. One recalls only a performance or two at the R.C.M. It is very characteristic. Who else knows how to diffuse this sense of a high stillness and a deep-breathing awe? The singers were Messrs. T. D. Alexander, Tom Goodey, Arthur Cranmer, Johnstone-Douglas, and J. Dean.

The last piece—Manuel de Falla's 'Puppet Show,' a scene from 'Don Quixote'—was a *bonne bouche*. It is said that nowhere had this brilliant trifle before been given in public. We witness, along with Don Quixote, a puppet show, nearly related to Punch and Judy, telling of the Princess Melisendra's rescue from the Moors by a Knight of Charlemagne. The showman's boy narrates the ballad in a high-pitched recitative. We take as much delight in the gay and droll puppets as the simplest of Don Quixote's contemporaries; and all the while there is a curious, lively, brightly-painted music going on—open-air music of fair-ground noises, nasal voices, rustlings, and occasionally recognisably Spanish turns of phrase and rhythm. It is an extraordinarily witty and engaging little score. It ends, of course, with Don Quixote, excited to madness by the artful story, laying about him with his sword to the damage of the puppets and the terrifying of the audience.

Mr. J. B. Trend's translation was used. Miss Tannahill sang the narrative cleverly, though we did not hear her words. Mr. Arthur Cranmer was Don Quixote. The conducting was a brilliant feat of Dr. Sargent—the little piece is full of queer places. Mr. Cuthbert Smith's puppets were capitally right and jolly. Londoners will relish de Falla's 'Puppet Show' when it reaches them. C.

## Competition Festival Record

### BLACKPOOL FESTIVAL

The outstanding features of this week of music (in the order of their occurrence) were the Tudor music on the opening day; the chamber music and orchestral work on the second; the operatic classes on the third; the vocal solo work occupying the third and fourth days; and the choral singing on the closing day. Reference to aspects of the juvenile competitions will be found in the *School Music Review*. It is just two years since the introduction at this Festival (Sir Richard Terry said 'for the first time at any festival') of an attempt to cultivate interest in the solo writing of the Elizabethan lutenist poet-musicians—an interest which it was hoped would develop along as serious lines as it had done gradually in the ordinary vocal solo classes. Its study was introduced in the two-fold hope that it would, *e.g.*, do for England what the cultivation of national folk-tune has done in Scotland, and also that this Tudor-study would purify the too-prevalent style of solo singing, just in the same way that madrigal work has purged choral singing of many impurities—in short, that it would contribute materially to the elevation of a finer musical style. Of course these ideals cannot be accomplished in one year, or in five. The growth may seem almost imperceptible, but it is showing—showing to the extent that Sir Richard Terry this year chose to make some comment analogous to that of pruning, in the interests of the later musical life of the plant. The problems of the orchestra and chamber music have baffled the Northern festivals for years; progress in these two branches of musical activity has seemed so slow in comparison with the rapid advance in choral art. Why?—and, How can it be remedied? have been the all-important questions. It was difficult enough in pre-war days, and the obstacles to progress seemed to multiply after the peace. And then came one of those amazing transformations which for two years has meant the allocation of one hall for two sessions to chamber-music entrants alone, and, what was much more encouraging, a big crowd of attentive listeners. So in the orchestras; last year a 'Marching Song' of Holst, and five or six bands on a night—in mid-week too, which meant men

and women getting leave of absence from business. This year Mendelssohn's 'Ruy Blas' Overture brought five bands, two approximating reasonably to the description 'full orchestras,' and those two able to give really good performances. The others, not so strong numerically, resorted to the device of 'cueing in,' some instruments making shift for a missing (say) wind part. Although here full sonority was lacking, and some themes fell strangely on the ear in their new colouring, yet there was abundant evidence of true musicianly feeling. Possibly the use of 'Carmen' (as against 'Fidelio' last year) was responsible for the rather embarrassing entry in the operatic classes. No fewer than three songs, two duets, one trio (the 'Card Scene'), and the great quintet were heard in competitive classes all the afternoon and evening of the third day. The Blackpool audience must know its 'Card Scene' by heart, for it heard ten performances in succession. The difficulty ahead of the selection committee will be to find an opera of which such a condensed or (in 'Co-optimist' parlance) 'potted' version can be provided. Soloists who desire to excel at Blackpool have to cultivate great versatility in addition to much hard vocal work. Gone are the days when you could, by singing 'Who is Sylvia?' 'Aufenthalts,' or 'Les Divinités du Styx' very well at this Festival, get your foot on the ladder of success, as did Miss Clara Butterworth or Miss Lucy Nuttall (just to instance a couple of notable Blackpool winners). Now a bass must do Haydn, Schubert, and Moussorgsky; a tenor Bach, Bax, and Borodin, and do them all well, before he can merit distinction here. This encouragement of all-round competence has been carried to extraordinary lengths. The baritone (from Bedford) and the bass (a butcher at Bradford) were two instances of the sort of thing which it is possible to hear only at this Festival. The performers go through the hurly-burly of the preliminary competitions, which constitute a kind of refining process, are proved again and again, sixty voices being reduced to ten, and then to five, and narrowed down gradually, to the ultimate victor. You need nerve and staying-power, as well as uncommonly good vocal equipment to win through. Distinguished members of the Carl Rosa, Moody-Manners, and latterly of the B.N.O.C., know something of the 'Rose Bowl' classes at Blackpool; their experiences there must have been of incalculable value to them in their later careers. On its choral side, we had the experience of hearing in one day more good choirs than have ever before been gathered together in one place; and, for the most part, the music was worth all the pains expended on its preparation. C. H.

MENBOROUGH.—The seventh Festival occupied three halls for two days (October 3 and 4), and was highly successful in every way. The singing of the Birdwell Working Men's Club Male-Voice Choir was one of the features of the Festival. The tests were 'The Siege of Kazan,' by C. M. Edmunds, and Bantock's 'The Fond Lover.' An orchestra from Barmboro' Colliery, conducted by Mr. W. Williams, did excellently in Holst's 'St. Paul's' Suite for strings and in Beethoven's 'Coriolanus' Overture.

Six entries—six first prizes: surely this must be a record. The feat was achieved at Blackpool by Mr. Percy M. Dayman, who carried off the *Daily News* Challenge Shield for full orchestras (fifty players) for the third year in succession; the Hargreaves Rose Bowl for church choirs (twenty-four voices); the Duckworth Cup for church choirs (thirty-five voices); the Stansfield Trophy and Smith Rose Bowl for ladies' choirs (an open class in which were twenty entries); the Franceys Trophy for mixed-voice choirs (sixty voices); and the first prize for string orchestras. Mr. Dayman is an insurance manager, who manages to spare time to conduct the Blackpool Amateur Symphony Orchestra, the Blackpool Lyric Choir, the Lytham St. Anne's Orchestral Society, the Blackpool Choral and Orchestral Society, and a church choir. On Sundays he plays the organ! As a combination of business man and successful musical enthusiast, Mr. Dayman will be hard to beat.

We have received the syllabus of the third Elizabethan Music Competition Festival (February 23, 25, 27, and 28, at Kingsway Hall). It is, as usual, a fine list of delightful

old music of great variety. There are classes for large and small choirs (church and otherwise), girls' clubs, schools, &c., and a particularly attractive section for vocal duet, trio, quartet, and quintet, for male, female, and mixed voices. The instrumental side is of course strongest in the string department, with works for three, four, five, and six players. Copies of the Syllabus are to be had from the hon. secretary, Mr. A. H. M. Kempe, 36, Connaught Square, W.2.

## Music in the Provinces

**ABERDEEN.**—Sketch programmes have been issued of the Aberdeen choral and orchestral concerts. They run as follows: November 19, the Scottish Orchestra under Weingartner; December 11, 'The Hymn of Jesus,' 'Blest Pair of Sirens,' selections from 'Parsifal' and the B minor Mass; February 5, Berlioz's 'Faust.' Mr. Willan Swainson conducts the last two concerts. A new 'Aberdeen Junior Choir' is being formed by Mr. Swainson.

**ALNWICK.**—A branch of the B.M.S. has recently been started, and within a few weeks forty-seven members had been enrolled.

**BANGOR.**—At the first concert of the season, on October 2, the works performed included Brahms's Trio in C, Mozart's Trio in E, and Handel's Violin Sonata in A. Mr. E. T. Davies lectured on 'Music Appreciation.'—At the second concert on October 9, the Prelude from 'Sleepers, wake' (Bach), Tchaikovsky's String Quartet, Op. 11, a 'Cello Sonata by de Fesch, a Trio, 'Celtic Prelude,' by Rutland Boughton, and Mozart's String Quartet in D minor were performed.—The Choral Society is preparing the 'St. Matthew' Passion.

**BATH.**—The winter season opened on October 7, with Mr. Jan Hurst and his orchestra of fifteen players—the acquisition of the orchestra being a new venture. Weekly symphony concerts will be given.

**BIRMINGHAM.**—The City of Birmingham Orchestra opened its season with a Symphony Concert on October 8. Taking his place for the first time as permanent conductor, Mr. Adrian C. Boult drew from his players no more than a passable performance of Brahms's Symphony in C minor. There was too little light and shade in the playing, and it lacked the imaginative qualities without which Brahms is dull and grey. Strauss's 'Don Juan' was hardly eager enough, but in 'The Flying Dutchman' Overture the Orchestra was heard to great advantage. The novelty of the concert was Armstrong Gibbs's 'Vision of Night.'—A series of nine Saturday afternoon children's concerts has been arranged. At the first of these Mr. Boult explained each piece before it was played, and showed a real understanding of the child-mind. An audience of school-children crowded the hall.—At the first popular Saturday night concert the third 'Leonore' Overture of Beethoven and the second 'Arlésienne' Suite of Bizet were included in the programme. Miss Winifred Browne, whose technique improves at every hearing, played Rimsky-Korsakov's Pianoforte Concerto.—At the Sunday concert at the Futurist Theatre the orchestra gave some really fine playing in Beethoven's second Symphony and the 'Shropshire Lad' Rhapsody of Butterworth. Mr. Samuel Saul sang a 'Fidelio' Aria and some Dvorák songs.—The Midland Musical Society gave Mendelssohn's 'Hymn of Praise' on October 6. In order to offer seats at cheap prices the orchestra was dispensed with, and Mr. G. D. Cunningham substituted on the organ.—At one of the Mid-day concert series the Elizabeth Trio gave some charming madrigals.

**BOURNEMOUTH.**—Sir Dan Godfrey opened the thirteenth season of symphony concerts at the Winter Gardens on October 9, with a programme typical of Bournemouth music: Beethoven's seventh Symphony, de Falla's 'Three-Cornered Hat' Suite, Rachmaninov's D minor Concerto (played by Miss Maud Agnes Winter), and Chabrier's 'Gwendoline' Overture. A feature of the season is to be a series of appreciation lectures for children, given by Sir Dan Godfrey.

**BRISTOL.**—The choir and orchestra formed by members of the staff of Messrs. Frys' works gave the major part of the programme of the first concert in Central Hall on October 4. The organization has been rearranged with a view to undertaking work of wider variety than the Cecilian Choral Society did. Mr. Charles Read is the conductor.—On October 8 the Symphony Orchestra's season opened with Mr. Albert Coates as guest-conductor. Brahms's Symphony in C minor, Tchaikovsky's 'Romeo and Juliet' symphonic poem, and Borodin's 'Danses Polovtsiennes' were the orchestral programme, and songs were given by Miss Pauline Pastore.

**BURNLEY.**—An excellent series of Municipal concerts has been arranged, at prices from 3s. 6d. to 6d. The first, on September 28, brought the Habbergham Glee Union and the Manchester Wind Trio, and the second, on October 5, the Municipal Symphony Orchestra, Miss Miriam Licette, and Miss Beatrice Harrison. 'Hiawatha' was the feature of the programme arranged for October 20. The concert of November 23 is for children. The Hallé Orchestra comes on November 30, to play under Mr. Hamilton Harty. The Municipal Choir gives 'The Messiah' on December 28, and Verdi's 'Requiem' on March 29. Concerts on January 25 and February 22 will be given by the Municipal Symphony Orchestra, of which Mr. Fred Myers is conductor.—The Burnley Clef Club, which is a branch of the British Music Society, has an unusually varied and enterprising programme of thirteen concerts. For November the scheme is a concert of Blackpool Festival Competition music on the 14th, and a lecture-recital by Mr. Rutland Boughton on the 28th.

**BURY ST. EDMUND'S.**—On October 7 Miss Dorothy Sexton, a local violinist, gave a recital, assisted by Miss Dorothy Callender (pianoforte) and Miss Myrtle Stewart (vocalist). Brahms's Violin Sonata in D minor was the chief item.

**CARDIFF.**—The Council of University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire has decided that the chamber concerts given on Saturday evenings, which have hitherto been carried on with the voluntary help of members of the College staff, shall in future be regarded as a necessary part of the work of the musical department. The members of the instrumental trio also undertake concert work in towns and villages in the area served by the College. The concerts during the coming winter will number twenty-five.

**CHACEWATER.**—A musical society has been formed for general instruction in music, under the direction of Mr. D. Behenna, organist of St. Agnes' Parish Church.

**DUNFERMLINE.**—The Choral Union has been resuscitated, and Mr. A. M. Henderson, organist at Glasgow University, has been appointed conductor.

**EXETER.**—The season opened on September 29 with two concerts, given by the London String Quartet, at one of Messrs. Paish's series.

**HARROGATE.**—Mr. Basil Cameron and the Municipal Orchestra are making Harrogate a musical centre of some importance. The weekly Symphony Concerts maintain a high standard in their programmes of classical and modern works. The following have been recently given: Glazounov's sixth Symphony, Franck's 'Symphonic Variations' for pianoforte and orchestra (Miss Olive Bloom), Cowen's 'The Butterfly's Ball,' the 'Jupiter' Symphony, a Harp Concerto by Pierné (Miss Hilda Atkinson), Arensky's variations on a theme by Tchaikovsky, Delius's 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' and 'Summer Night,' Mozart's 'Ein kleine Nachtmusik,' and Beethoven's first and third Symphonies.

**IPSWICH.**—The season of municipal music opened on October 8, when the Conservatoire Ensemble Class, conducted by Mr. Sydney Robjohns, played movements from Purcell's 'Golden' Sonata. Mr. Noel Ponsonby played Bach organ music, and the Ipswich Male Choir sang Walford Davies's 'Hymn before Action' and Grieg's 'Landerkenning.' Mr. A. H. Welburn gave short explanations of the music.