

LONDON BAFFLED BY SCHONBERG'S ORCHESTRAL PIECES

Composer Himself Conducts His Work and He at Least Is Pleased — "A Wild Cacophony Strangely Reminiscent of a Nightmare"—"Parsifal" Preparations under Neil Forsyth's Directions—Ashton Jonson Lectures Contribute to "Parsifal Craze"—Mengelberg Conducts Philharmonic Concert

Bureau of Musical America,
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THE Schönberg episode at last Saturday's concert at Queen's Hall seems to have caused our London critics a vast amount of mental perturbation, and many of them have assumed a piteously despairing tone and frankly admitted themselves baffled by the "Five Pieces for Orchestra" which the composer himself journeyed over to conduct.

It was a somewhat artificial interest that the Schönberg creation aroused, and only the conventional applause which courtesy exacts should be extended to a guest was bestowed. The strain on the visible faculties was frequently very marked, but on the whole a commendable restraint was exercised, quite in keeping with the finest traditions of the seriously-inclined British public.

Paradoxical though it may sound, there are reasons for congratulations as to the performance, and the first to be considered are the members of the orchestra who wrestled most valiantly with the weirdly arranged score and evidently delighted the heart of Herr Schönberg, whose countenance positively beamed with satisfaction. Then too a vote of thanks should be extended to the compilers of the program who had persuaded the composer to shed some light upon his musical puzzle by a few meagre analytical notes, and by supplying titles to each of the five pieces. These are termed:—(1) Vorgefühl (Foreboding). (2) Vergangenes (Past). (3) Der wechselnde Accord (the changing chord). (4) Peripatetic (Peripetia). (5) Das obligate Recitativ (The Obligato Recitative).

The following extracted from the notes may furnish some clue to the composer's designs, if any design exists in Herr Schönberg's mind. This music, it is affirmed, seeks to express "all that dwells in us subconsciously like a dream; which is a great fluctuant power, and is built upon none of the lines that are familiar to us; which has a rhythm, as the blood has its pulsating rhythm, as all life in us has its rhythm; which has a tonality, but only as the sea or the storm has its tonality; which has harmonies, though we cannot grasp or analyze them, nor can we trace its themes. * * * All its technical craft is submerged, made one and indivisible with the content of the work, and so forth. * * *"

Reminiscent of a Nightmare

The reference to a dream here is more or less accurate for such extreme harmonies, such abruptly changing chords and such a wild cacophony of noises are strangely reminiscent of a nightmare. If there is rhythm in his music, it is entirely non-consecutive, and if there is melody, it has been totally obscured by a disconnected succession of vague and bewildering sounds. Of color or shape there is a complete lack, at least according to any known or accepted theory. Needless to add, the press has exhausted its stock of synonyms in attempting to convey its impressions of the "Five Pieces." There were indeed some unmistakable farmyard tumults, and quite a series of admirable train-whistles. The plaudits of the audience were unusually generous and the composer was recalled several times. Fair-play has even been a virtue cultivated by the English public! The remainder of the concert, conducted by Sir Henry Wood, included Haydn's No. 7 Symphony in C ("Le Midi"), a finished performance of Tchaikowsky's No. 1 pianoforte Concerto in B Flat Minor, in which Adela Verne, who believes in painting a big picture, was the soloist, and as extreme numbers of the program, Brahms's "Tragic" overture and Charpentier's "Napoli" from "Impressions d'Italie."

Several days after the concert Herr Schönberg wrote an open letter to the Queen's Hall Orchestra conveying his thanks for the performance of his work.

"I must tell you," he wrote, "that on the Continent, so far as my knowledge goes, there are at the most only two orchestras which could be compared with yours, the Amsterdam Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic. I must say that it was the first time since Gustav Mahler that I heard such music played again as a musician of culture demands. I presume that this letter will be published, and that is the reason I mentioned this fact, so that it should be taken note of by some of our German orchestras which have too



G. C. Ashton Jonson (Above) Who Has Been Lecturing on "Parsifal" in London, and Neil Forsyth Who Is Preparing the Covent Garden Production of Wagner's Work

much false pride to learn what is expected of them at the present time."

Preparing for "Parsifal"

Among the busiest men in London just now must be classed Neil Forsyth, upon whom devolves the gigantic task of producing "Parsifal" at Covent Garden next month, in addition to several others of Wagner's works. It is an axiom of the profession that a managing-director should be strictly inaccessible to any form of news seeker, and in this respect Mr. Forsyth is to be felicitated on his lieutenants, who display commendable zeal in guarding their chief from all molestation. In the task of staging and lighting the work, Mr. Forsyth has an accomplished co-operator in Professor W. Wirk, of Munich, who has been appointed stage manager for the season. "Parsifal" will be staged in all twelve times, at intervals of a few days, and no fewer than six different artists will be heard in the title rôle. These are Heinrich Hensel (Bayreuth), Robert Hutt (Frankfurt), Johannes Sembach (Dresden), Joseph Vogl, Carl Burrian and Jacques Urlus (Leipzig). The four *Kundrys* will be Berta Morana (Munich), Eva von der Osten (Dresden), Melanie Kurt (Charlottenburg) and Cécilie Rüschendorf (Leipzig). The minor rôles will be undertaken by British singers and with one exception, the Flower Maidens will be English. Each performance of *Parsifal* is to begin at five and terminate at eleven, with an hour and a half's interval for dinner after the first act.

The "Parsifal" "craze" in England is no whit behind that of the Continent, and apart from the actual operatic performances, extraordinary interest is being shown in Wagnerian literature in general and in the story and purpose of "Parsifal" in particular. Prominent among the exponents of Wagnerian lore is G. C. Ashton Jonson, who will be remembered in America for his highly successful lecture tours of 1910 and 1912.

Mr. Ashton Jonson is an Englishman of wide culture and profound learning. He has been drawing large audiences in London this week for a course of three

lectures on "Parsifal," which have proved an admirable and exhaustive exposition of the great musical drama. His treatment and analysis of the leading motives of the opera, with pianoforte illustrations, are singularly lucid, and his method of explaining the different passages wonderfully succinct and entertaining.

An All-Wagner Program

More Wagner! The weekly popular concert at Albert Hall on Sunday was devoted exclusively to Wagner's music, and it is significant of the Bayreuth master's continued popularity in England, that the audience on this occasion was the largest seen for a long time. Felix Fleischer sang operatic selections, including "Wotan's Abschied" from "Die Walküre" with rare taste and expression, and Landon Ronald and the New Symphony Orchestra were responsible for some splendid effects, though the conductor's version of the tempi differed occasionally from the generally accepted standard.

The great Philharmonic concert of Tuesday last was shorn of some of its interest by the unavoidable absence through indisposition of Muriel Foster, who, as already reported in *MUSICAL AMERICA*, was to have been presented with the gold medal of the Society, known as the Beethoven medal. The intrinsic value of the concert was, however, in no way interfered with, and the vast throng was rewarded with one of the rarest musical treats of this season. The Seventh Symphony of Beethoven, under Herr Mengelberg's baton, was given a singularly appealing performance, the tone of the strings being of wonderful richness. Herr Mengelberg belongs to the class of emotional leaders, and seems to find greater opportunity of expressing his individuality and innate musical instinct in the more delicate passages, where fine blendings of light and shade are required. Nevertheless, he is a master of climactic effect, and can produce some truly stimulating and invigorating results. His share of the applause was richly deserved.

Mr. Sapellnikoff delighted with a finished performance of Rachmaninoff's brilliant pianoforte Concerto in C Minor and had to concede an encore. An attractive feature of the evening was the inclusion of Delius's tone-poems, "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring" and "Summer Night on the River"—this latter being heard for the first time in London. Both pieces are charmingly written—light and delicate of form and rhythmically and melodically beautiful.

Muriel Foster, who was to have sung Bruch's "Aus der Tiefe des Grames" on this occasion, can lay claim to being in a category with such artists as Mme. Albani, Clara Butt, Mme. Kirkby-Lunn, Christine Nilsson, Mme. Patti, Mme. Tetravini and Sir Charles Santley, who are some of the twenty-nine singers to whom the tribute of the Beethoven Gold Medal has been paid during the hundred years' existence of the Royal Philharmonic Society.

American Singer's Recital

An American singer, Mme. Gardner-Bartlett, was heard in a comprehensive program of songs on January 20 at Steinway Hall, which included a Handel Aria, and many of the recognized standard works, in addition to American songs, among which figured Jessie Gaynor's "Hush-a-bye Baby" lullaby and Eleanor Smith's "Where Go the Boats." The singer's sympathetic style and clear diction were features and the timbre of her voice was throughout of a pleasing character.

Tina Lerner, who left London yesterday, en route for Paris, has another triumph to record—this time at Liverpool, where she played as soloist in the fourth Akevoed Concert of that city. Her principal contribution to the interesting program was the Tchaikowsky Concerto in B Flat Minor, in the second movement of which her felicity of expression and well-contrived phrasing, combined with her great executive and temperamental gifts, brought her the warmest acknowledgment from a crowded audience. The Strauss-Tausig Valse-Caprice "Man lebt nur einmal" was her second item.

FRANCIS J. TUCKFIELD.

Aline von Barentzen, the Boston pianist, gave a concert in Paris, the scene of her first successes, last week.

Percy Grainger, the Anglo-Australian pianist-composer, is making a recital tour of Holland and Germany.

FAMOUS TRIO AGAIN HEARD IN NEW YORK

Ysaye, Godowsky and Gerardy Evoke Unbounded Enthusiasm by Lofty Art

The second New York recital of Ysaye-Godowsky-Gerardy, given in Carnegie Hall on February 4, revealed this trio of artists in their loftiest moods. The program was alluring, and had two numbers, Beethoven's Trio in C Minor and Schubert's Trio in B Flat, in which the three united. The other numbers were "La Muse et le Poète," for violin and cello, by Saint-Saëns, with piano accompaniment played well by Camille Decreus, and Mozart's Sonata in D Minor, played by Messrs. Ysaye and Godowsky.

The Beethoven work opened the program. In this Mr. Ysaye was heard to splendid advantage, playing with great distinctiveness of phrasing, warmth and clarity of tone. Perfect unison marked the *allegro*. The *menuetto* was much appreciated by the audience, while the *finale* again brought M. Ysaye to the fore. The Mozart Sonata enabled Mr. Godowsky to reveal his technical excellence and exquisite shading marked the *andante* movement. This number brought forth unbounded applause compelling the artists to acknowledge it half a dozen times.

"La Muse et le Poète" was a fine vehicle for displaying the cellist's ability, and Mr. Gerardy was splendidly equal to the task, bringing to it an earnestness and finish that brought forth storms of applause.

The Trio in B Flat ended the recital. Mr. Godowsky gave a thoughtful reading of the first movement, and the *schizzo* was played with great dash. Altogether it was a tactfully diversified program and was completely enjoyed by an audience that nearly filled the hall.

VIOLINIST FROM ARGENTINE

Andres Dalmay Makes His Début Before New York Audience

A young violinist from the Argentine Republic, Andres S. Dalmay, made his New York debut at Aeolian Hall on Thursday afternoon, February 5, before a rather large audience. His program was conventional:

Wieniawski's Second Concerto, op. 22; "Souvenir de Haydn," Leonard; Sarasate's "Capriccio Vasco," Bazzini's "Ronde des Lutins," Simonetti's "Madrigal"; "Tango Argentino," by Cattellani, transcribed by Dalmay; Paganini's "Le Streghe."

Mr. Dalmay's playing of the Concerto was in no sense distinguished by such qualities as might have made its inclusion in the program advisable. He possesses a plenitude of technique, but his tone for the greater part of the afternoon was forced, and when this was not the case a tendency to sentimentality was in evidence.

The "Tango" was given with fine abandon and aroused a great deal of enthusiasm. It is not to be confounded with the popular dances which masquerade under that name and which are a perversion of the Argentine Habanera. The "Madrigal" also evoked much applause and was well played. Paganini's brilliantly empty "Le Streghe" earned the violinist an encore. Manuel Font's was a satisfactory accompanist. B. R.

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