

ECHOES OF MUSIC ABROAD

Max Bruch on Eve of His Eightieth Birthday Makes Violent Denunciation of England and Stirs Up English Musicians—Anglo-Russian Pianist a Dominating Figure in London's Concert World—Siegfried Wagner's New Opera Described as a Pendant to "Hänsel and Gretel"—Carl Rosa Company's Record One to Excite Envy of Other Opera-in-the-Vernacular Organizations—Camille Saint-Saëns Still Insists that the Voice Alone, and Not the Orchestra, Should Tell the Hearer What the Composer of an Opera Means—Herbert Fryer Heard Again in London After a Four Years' Interval

ENGLAND'S music world is somewhat stirred up just now by Max Bruch's recent tirade against a country that has been conspicuously hospitable to him in times past. Since August, 1914, it has been a closely followed rule in England to debar all living German composers from concert programs. Max Bruch has been the only exception worth noticing—his G minor Concerto has been blazed by violinists since the war broke out.

Early last month he celebrated his eightieth birthday and just before that event he saw fit to attack in bitterest terms a country in which at one time he occupied an important conductorship, and from which he has received distinguished honors. It was in 1893 that Bruch, side by side with Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky and Arrigo Boito had conferred upon him the honorary degree of "Mus. Doc." at Cambridge University. On that historic occasion he conducted a choral scene from his "Odysseus," and was accorded an ovation. So, too, was he loudly acclaimed by the London musical public when, during the same visit, he appeared to conduct some of his works at a Philharmonic concert.

But, continues the London *Daily Telegraph*, such memories evidently count for nothing in Dr. Bruch's mind. And so he marks the dawn of his 81st year by a violent denunciation of England and all things English (music, of course, included), and by inventing such arrant nonsense, in support of his tirade, as the statement that the committeemen who organized the concerts he gave in Liverpool "made no secret of their hatred of the damned Germans."

The octogenarian proceeds to assail "my English choristers" for being "plebeian, obstinate as mules, and very difficult to manage," while the cordial reception he had from the British public was, he asserts, "hypocritical," giving him the impression of "an immeasurable depth of envy of the Germans." And there was more to the same purpose, it seems, nearly all couched in terms of virulent abuse.

Sir Charles Stanford has come forward with a vigorous denunciation of Bruch in reply, while "Musicus" in the *Daily Telegraph* avows that personally he doesn't think Bruch worth powder and shot.

After all, irritating as such gratuitous exhibitions of ingratitude are, it is doubtless the better part of far-sighted wisdom to ignore them as the ravings of a man afflicted with hardening of the mental arteries, due largely to his age.

FEW are the pianists who would risk their hold upon the affections of their public by asking that public to digest a two-hour program of Brahms music. Benno Moiseiwitsch, the young Anglo-Russian pianist who has more public appearances in a season in London than any other pianist, has now joined the "few."

To be fed the Brahms Sonata in F minor, the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Paganini at one sitting, with five or six shorter numbers thrown in by way of good measure, is a pretty severe ordeal for the average concert goer. It is a dose for an audience of musicians, and even then the majority of them would probably have other engagements that would call them away before the end of the program. Two of the intermezzos, one of the rhapsodies, one of the unfamiliar ballades and the popular capriccio in B minor, were the lesser numbers that fell between the two groups of variations.

Moiseiwitsch has been building up a tremendous repertoire during the past three or four years and apparently he brings the touch of an authoritative interpreter to everything he plays. He vies with Mark Hamburg in the range of the program repertoire he offers to London audiences. His Brahms recital followed close on the heels of a Schumann

recital he had given, and just a week after his Brahms recital came a Liszt program.

And along with it all he was able to work in an engagement with the London String Quartet—to play the pianoforte

good pendant to "Hänsel and Gretel," spoiled, however, by over-heavy scoring.

DIRECTORS of short-lived opera companies in this country may well marvel at the longevity of the itinerant or-



The Francis Rogers Concert Party in France

The photograph shows Francis Rogers, the American baritone, Mrs. Rogers and Nikolai Sokoloff, constituting the Francis Rogers Concert Party which has given more than forty concerts in two months for the American soldiers and sailors in France. "Touring through a country engaged in a life-and-death struggle is often a difficult matter and involves considerable discomfort," writes Mr. Rogers. "But the response of the boys to our efforts makes the work seem well worth while."

part of the Brahms Quintet, op. 34, as well as some solos—and to appear as soloist at one of the Philharmonic Society concerts, at which his numbers were the Second Concerto by Rachmaninoff and solos by that composer and Debussy. He is still midway in the twenties. His wife is Daisy Kennedy, well established in London as a violinist.

SIEGFRIED WAGNER, over-productive in peace times, has not been deterred by the Great War from pursuing the uneven tenor of his way. His way is to compose operas which if brought forward under any other name might achieve an honorable position among the lighter works essential to the repertoire of any opera house, but which, as it is, are inevitably judged as the work of the son of a superman of music drama.

Neither Hamburg nor Dresden—foremost cities in showing hospitality to Siegfried's operas in the past—was the scene of the recent premiere of the new work. It was at Stuttgart that it received its first hearing. The title may be freely rendered in English as "Puck is to blame for it all!" As for the plot, it is said to be compounded of fragments of about three dozen of Germany's fairytales, while in the Prologue the composer, who is his own librettist, represents the ghost of Grimm as hauling him over the coals for the liberties he has taken. The music is described by one chronicler as a

ganizations that bring opera home to the people of England in the language they understand. How Charles Manners and Fanny Moody succeeded in making a small fortune out of a popular-priced, opera-in-the-vernacular company with which they toured the British Isles for fifteen years or so will ever remain a mystery to many of their less fortunate fellow-directors.

But the most eloquent example of longevity is provided by the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company, that veteran English organization, which has cradled many a singer who subsequently found a place in a frame of larger dimensions, and which for over forty years, in all seasons and under all conditions, has bravely carried its banner through the English Provinces, with an occasional visit to the metropolis to minister to a public unable to pay Covent Garden prices.

For the benefit of those who have a taste for figures, as well as those who like to believe that opera-going has really taken permanent root in what is popularly called an "unmusical" country, the London *Daily Telegraph* offers interesting food for reflection in the statement that during 1917 no fewer than 706,000 persons paid for admission to the Carl Rosa Company's performances. What is more, a reliable statistician has elicited the remarkable fact that during a period of just over forty years 28,000-

000 opera lovers have supported the veteran, and still hale, organization by their attendance.

The company has recently started out on what it calls its annual Spring tour, which will probably include at least a short sojourn at one of the London theaters before the Summer sets in.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS, dean of French composers, made use of the opportunity afforded him by the recent revival of his "Henri VIII" at the Paris Opéra to launch one of his characteristic manifestoes against the vagaries of ultra-modernity and anti-national influences on music, says London *Musical News*. He writes as vigorously and entertainingly as ever. He begins by admitting that "Henri VIII," which is more than thirty-five years old, has arias, quartets, ensembles, and so forth—"What an abomination!" he exclaims.

He does not repent, he says, and protests that he sees no reason for recanting the gospel he has always preached that the orchestra was not meant to drown the human voice, which alone should tell the hearer what the composer means. He points the moral with a story of a lady who during certain passages in "The Ring" was explaining to him what was being shouted on the stage, and explained it all wrong.

Incidentally the English periodical quoted notes that "many of us remember the performances of 'Henri VIII' at Covent Garden some years ago and our respectful wonder at the librettist's ideas of London topography and the introduction of Scotch tunes as typical of Tudor taste in minstrelsy."

FRANKLY warning his readers in advance that he is about to be "very disagreeable" and say things which they will find it hard to put up with, Frederick Corder, long a prominent figure in England's music world, proceeds, in the London *Musical Times*, to take his fellow-countrymen mercilessly to task for what they have done, or, more accurately, for what they have not done, "to cultivate and further the progress" of a national music during the forty months and more since hell broke loose in Europe. Performers, publishers, composers, critics and other writers, even the Government itself, all are weighed in the balance and found woefully wanting.

When he reaches the composers in his questionnaire and asks what they have been doing he finds this "very simple" answer:

"Our older composers are very little regarded and work on just as if nothing were happening. Our younger ones are in the experimental stage, and, finding that Debussy and Stravinsky are supposed to be the fashion, make frequent and futile attempts to be 'futuristic' on these lines—with conspicuous ill-success, I am glad to say. For nothing can save us unless we stick to our national style—the style of Purcell, Arne, Macfarren and Sullivan. To those not too proud to stoop there may be a commercial success in the future in the department of educational music; as things are, there is little opportunity.

"There is an extraordinary and deplorable slump even in our one department of choral music, in spite of the grand achievements and real successes of Elgar and others. The gallant attempts to revive an interest in chamber music do not meet with much response from a public which has never really warmed to that form of art. On this

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