The Place of Music in Education

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THE SMALL ORCHESTRA.

SIR,—There seems to be a good deal of loose thought and not a little ignorance among those who so persistently urge a return to the small orchestra of the 18th century. Such a return is not possible unless we are willing to sacrifice our modern wood-wind instruments with all their refinement and improvements for the clumsy, harsh, and very strident-toned older instruments. This would, indeed, be 'an advance backward'!

This of course is not intended to deny that the miniature orchestra is a very charming and appropriate medium under certain circumstances, but to insist on its universal adoption is as narrow-minded and bigoted as to use the big modern orchestra on every occasion suitable and unsuitable—as must be admitted is often the case to-day, when works obviously demanding a small body of performers are overwhelmed by the sumptuous garment of the modern orchestra.

Again, the persistent advocate of the small orchestra completely overlooks the fact that the department of the orchestra that has so largely increased since the 18th century is *not* the purely sonorous portion (*i.e.*, the wood-wind, and, more especially, the bass), but the strings, which can hardly be regarded as the noise-producers of the orchestra! Against this, not only have the wood-wind and brass, especially the wood-wind, not increased in anything like the same proportion, but—as Mr. Cecil Forsyth in his 'Orchestration' points out—the 19th century refinements and improvements of the wood-wind, along with, but much more than, the growth of the strings, have completely deprived them of their old power of balancing the latter. Additions, therefore, to make up the deficiency are surely perfectly logical. Of course the small orchestra enthusiast would say, 'Cut down the strings.' That is all very well, but again it is a matter of common knowledge to those who know anything of the orchestra that it is only large groups of string-players that make possible that wonderful, rich, warm, string sonority which is the glory of every great contemporary orchestra. Even the brass, the 'noisy' portion of the orchestra, has undergone great refinement and has lost a considerable portion of its original power.

All things considered, then, it will be seen that the *numerical* increase in the modern orchestra has *not* been in the direction of volume of sound but of richness and variety of tone-colour. Those who think that the growth of the orchestra, of which they so strongly disapprove, is due to a sort of German conspiracy to impose it on the rest of the musical world are surely mistaken. No German living or dead has ever approached, let alone equalled or surpassed, the truly monstrous demands of Berlioz for his 'Requiem.'

When all is said and done, a plea for any specific size of orchestra is absurd. The constitution of the orchestra should surely be governed by the nature and demands of the composer's work, and not by the caprice of this or that individual. A work like 'Tristan,' or, to come to our own times, 'Prometheus,' or 'Daphnis et Chloe,' is as inconceivable and impossible in terms of the small orchestra as the 'Trois Poèmes de Mallarmé' of Ravel, with their microscopic body of some half-dozen players, would be in terms of the orchestra of 'Prometheus' or 'Daphnis.'

In this, as in everything else connected with the art, appropriateness, taste, discretion, sense of the fitness of things, are and must remain the only guides.—Yours, &c.,

KAIKHUSON SORABJI.

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NASAL RESONANCE.

SIR,—Being a modest individual, with no pretensions to scientific knowledge of vocalism, I am somewhat overwhelmed by Mr. Houston's letter of last month, commencing as it does with such a peculiarly expressed compliment as is contained in his first two sentences. Some five years ago, when, I believe, I knew a little about music and very little about singing, I entered my choir for our local Festival. Thereafter Mr. Hugh S. Robertson, of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, gave me two leading ideas (among others) for the good of my soul—(a) 'Hum much,' (b) 'Don't read books on singing meantime.' Regarding item (a), I merely remark that one can't 'hum much' with milk (or a cold!) in the nose, and as to item (b) I have to thank

Mr. Houston for this latest proof of the excellence of Mr. Robertson's advice—for Mr. Houston has apparently buried his head in his books and consequently been unable to make full use of his ears. The *Musical Times* has too large and well-informed an audience for me to venture to lay down the law in its columns on any subject, but I submit that my statements in your October issue (page 454) are substantially correct. 'The capacity of the nose' may be an 'invariable quantity,' but it *can* reinforce more than one or two tones. (If two, why not twenty?) Madame Larkcom did not specify the capacity of the drinking-glass nor the pitch of the fork used in her experiment on resonance. Why? A bugle and a speaking-trumpet have each an 'invariable capacity.' Can these instruments not reinforce more than one or two tones?

Regarding the third paragraph of Mr. Houston's letter, I have always understood that the safe line to follow in voice-training is to look for quality of tone and to let the quantity look after itself; and regarding his final paragraph I would suggest that the explanation of our adjudicators' favouring (?) the small-voiced choirs might conceivably be very simple—possibly they like the results better!—Yours, &c.,

WM. ROBERTSON

(Conductor, 'William Morris' Choir).
17, Esmond Street,
Glasgow.

SIR,—As my name and pamphlet have been referred to in the discussion on this subject, may I be allowed to comment briefly on some of the points raised by Mr. David Houston in your last issue?

First: Nasal resonance and nasal twang are not the same thing, and it cannot surely be believed that serious voice-trainers are 'out for' the quality of tone popularly associated with Cockney and American speech.

Second: Good tone can doubtless be produced without the active co-operation of the air in the nasal chambers (*i.e.*, without a current of air passing through the nose); but such tone would be little, if at all, affected by the sealing up of an aperture already practically closed by the raised soft palate. The milk experiment, therefore, has no bearing on the point. The only sort of nasal resonance worth discussion is that produced in a direct manner by allowing a portion of the vibrating stream of air to be diverted into the nose by slightly dropping the soft palate. The involuntary resonance of the air confined in the nasal chambers, resulting from vibrations imparted to it through the roof of the mouth, may be left to take care of itself.

Third: The favourable testimony to the value of nasal resonance by such singers and teachers as Webster Millar, Jean de Reszke, Christine Nilsson, Lilli Lehmann, &c., is not adequately opposed by flippant references to the deficiencies of American music-hall artists.—Yours, &c.,

GRANVILLE HUMPHREYS.

145, Elms Road, Clapham, S.W.-4.

THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN EDUCATION.

SIR,—May I draw your attention to the inaccuracy of your Devonshire correspondent's report, in your November issue, of a lecture which I gave at Plymouth recently? The title of the lecture was 'The place of Music in Education'; not 'The place music deserves in standard education.' I certainly never advocated standardization of education! Nor did I advocate the training of the appreciative faculties to the exclusion of instrumental training, as the report suggests. The lecture was simply an outline of a course in music which would bring every pupil in our schools into touch with the masterpieces of music, and lay the foundations of sound musical taste.—Yours, &c.,

A. FORBES MILNE.

Universities House, 25, Bloomsbury Square,
London, W.C.-1, November 9, 1918.

Forthcoming lectures at the University of London by Sir Frederick Bridge are on 'Samuel Pepys' (December 11); 'Evelyn's Diary' (February 6); 'Dr. Burney's Journey in France and Italy' (March 6); 'Sir Henry Bishop's Journeys in France and Belgium—two Diaries' (April 16). The lectures begin at 5.0 and are free by ticket obtainable on application at the University.