

The Alhambra Season

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five, and six parts, composed by the natives of England, which are equally ancient with those on the Continent, but secular songs, in our own language, of two and three parts and in good counterpoint, of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century.' The comparatively high grade of the music of early Tudor England formed the gauge for the excellent—nay, unequalled for its period—music of the Elizabethan era. It is a period that contains Hugh Aston, Cornyshe, Fayrfax, White, Tallis, Taverner, and many others, and thus merits more than passing attention.

Of the musicianship of the King himself, of the music at his Court, and in his Chapel, I have treated at another place (*Monthly Musical Record*, February, 1913). To show how closely Henry VIII. followed in the footsteps of his predecessor I need only quote one or two entries in the Book of Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VII. In 1501 (May 21) we find the entry: 'For a Lute for my lady Margaret [the King's eldest daughter, then about twelve years old, afterwards Queen of Scots], 13s. 4d.' On December 4 of the same year £2 was paid 'To the Princesse stryng Mynstrels at Westminster.' In 1502 (January 7): 'To one that sett the Kings Cleyvecordes, 10s. 4d.'; and on February 4: 'To one Lewes for a Morris daunce, £1 13s. 4d.' In 1504 (March 6): 'For a pr. of Clavycordes, 13s.' and on the same date 'To John Sudborough for a songe, £1.' In 1505 (July 25): 'To the Gentylnen of the Kinges Chapell for a drinke with a bucke, £2' was paid; and on August 1 of that year 'For a lute for my lady Mary, 13s. 4d.' Besides these there are entries referring to payments of sums of money to 'Waytes' of different towns, to bagpipers, harpers, &c. Music was ingrained in the national character; nothing was done without it. Our chroniclers have left us a sufficiency of accounts of masques and plays acted at Court, in the palaces of the nobility, and for the people; and when the King (Henry VIII.) sent a couple of English noblemen to accompany the Venetian Embassy to Greenwich to witness the May-day celebrations (1515), the very woods hid organists, singers, luters, and flautists.

The English youth of the period was required to take music in his curriculum while he was passing through his years of study; and thus were laid the foundations of the Elizabethan edifice. Richard Mulcaster, Edmund Spenser's headmaster at the Merchant Taylors' School, was 'an enlightened teacher . . . who urged the importance of instruction in music and singing' (Sir Sidney Lee), and it was teachers such as these who prepared the mind of the coming generation for the glorious music of England under Elizabeth. Sir Thomas Cromwell was likely to have been unusually careful in his children's training; and in a letter written by the tutor (Henry Dowes) of his son (Gregory Cromwell) we read that the youth studied well and that 'the residue of the day he doth spend upon the lute and virginals.'

To regard the music of Sir Thomas More from the point of view of intrinsic merit may not be worth our while, for, as far as we know, there is no evidence of his having attained to the degree of musical knowledge reached by his royal executioner. But as an example of a class—studious, learned, politically and economically-occupied—he may stand as a type. As he viewed music, many of his contemporaries in his position did also, and in treating of him in this aspect we learn of the status of music in many similar houses. Already early in life More would 'suddenly step in among the players and masquers who made merriment for the Archbishop [Cardinal Morton, in whose household young More was], and, never studying for the matter, would extemporise a part of his own presently among them.' Erasmus, who loved

More so well that he once wrote: 'My affection for the man is so great that if he bade me dance a hornpipe, I should do at once what he bid me,' gives us some information of the music made in More's household. He taught his first wife, an utterly uneducated woman, something of books and music, and thus made of her a true companion. His second wife he made to learn the 'harp, cithern, guitar, and (it is said) the flute, and practise in his presence every day' (Lee). At dinner and supper he entertained his family with high moral purpose; he allowed them, for their recreation, to sing or to play on viols. Lee tells us further that More seldom missed attendance at the Chelsea Parish Church, and would sing in the choir, wearing a surplice. The musical establishment of Cardinal Wolsey was on a lavish scale. 'Of singing priests' he had 'ten, besides a Master of the Children.' In addition, 'The Seculars of the Chapell, being singing-men, twelve; singing children, ten, with one servant to waite upon them' ('Life of Wolsey,' by his Gentleman-Usher, Cavendish). In the matter of expenditure, if not of musical excellence, too, the Cardinal's music could not have been far behind that of the King.

(To be continued.)

THE ALHAMBRA SEASON.

Several more or less familiar ballets have been added to the répertoire of the Diaghileff Ballet at the Alhambra, but the interest in them has been overshadowed by the success of a brilliant new production, 'La Boutique Fantasque,' the first that these gifted people have actually 'created' in England. The music is taken from the slight but amusing pieces with which Rossini used occasionally to surprise the many friends who gathered round his luncheon table at Passy. This was after he had definitely abandoned his operatic career, leaving a projected 'Faust' unfinished. The pieces bear mostly humorous titles, and some of them contain sly musical references to his contemporaries. They are French rather than Italian in character, and at moments even foreshadow the coming of that other jovial musician, Emmanuel Chabrier. More frequently, however, they reveal an affinity with Offenbach, for whom Rossini had a warm admiration. In fact the number which serves for a Can-can is entitled 'Caprice Offenbachique.' It would be easy to belittle this amiable musical persiflage, but it is not unworthy of the best period of the opéra-bouffe, and consequently well in keeping with the period portrayed in the ballet, which is that of the Second Empire in France, or the Mid-Victorian in England. One need only place these two designations side by side to realise its paradoxical quality. It is at the same time naive and artificial, austere and frivolous. It is this paradox that has attracted both André Derain, who has designed the scenery and costumes, and Massine, who has planned the choreography. The former in some measure continues the paradox, for he is a classicist in colour and design and a neo-primitive in expression. Massine, on the other hand, concentrates upon reality as he sees it and feels it through the medium of the conventions of 1865. The result is a remarkably harmonious piece of merriment, in which the various elements dovetail with a completeness that suggests one controlling mind. Even Ottorino Respighi, who has scored Rossini's pieces, is influenced by it, for he has resisted all temptations to make orchestral effects which might be clever though incongruous, and has produced a score which has just the right lucidity.

The dancing is, of course, wonderful. The story, which takes place in a toy-shop, has by now been told

and re-told. The separate numbers danced by the dolls are too numerous for detailed mention. Of them all it is the Can-can of Mlle. Lopokova and M. Massine which is the gem. The popular success of this fascinating production has been commensurate with its artistic value. All London flocked to see it.

The other ballets added to the list are 'Narcisse,' 'Cleopatra,' 'Thamar,' and 'Midnight Sun,' in the last of which Madame Zoia Rosovsky once more sang the two charming songs from Rimsky-Korsakoff's early opera 'The Snow-Maiden.' The music of 'Narcisse' is by Tcherepnin, who has used great skill but somehow contrived to fall between two styles.

The new ballet 'The Three-cornered Hat,' music by Manuel de Falla, was produced too late for inclusion in this notice.

The symphonic interludes remained a striking feature of the Alhambra programmes, and have included several novelties. Unfortunately, the habit of listening to music in a theatre has not yet gained the more fashionable part of the audience. To hear to advantage one must migrate to the upper regions, where democracy enforces respect alike for art and for other people's enjoyment. The unfamiliar Russian works included Liadoff's rustic scene 'Près de la Guinguette'; Glinka's Caprice Brilliant on the theme of the 'Jota Aragonesa'; Dargomijsky's Fantasy on Finnish themes, which is astonishingly modern considering its date; Moussorgsky's Intermezzo in modo classico (which, despite its title, is thoroughly Russian—the composer himself having afterwards revealed the source of its inspiration—and is fully described in Calvocoressi's book); the Scherzo from the Symphony in E flat which Stravinsky wrote when still a student at the Petrograd Conservatoire; and Rimsky-Korsakoff's 'Chanson Russe,' which is an orchestral version of 'Doubinouchka,' a revolutionary song of Russian workmen which was strictly forbidden under the Tsarist regime, and which involved the composer, not for the first time, in some trouble with the authorities.

The French works added to the list include a charmingly scored dance, based on folk-tunes of the Languedoc, which forms an interlude in Deodat de Séverac's opera 'Le Cœur du Moulin'; a clever orchestral version by Ernest Ansermet, the conductor of the Ballet orchestra, of two of the Valses Romantiques which Chabrier wrote originally for two pianofortes; and an orchestral version of Ravel's 'Alborada del gracioso.' It is obviously impossible in the space at our disposal to consider so many works in detail. The mere enumeration of them is sufficient to show how interesting these interludes have been, and how attractive to musicians in these days when the prohibitive cost of rehearsals deters the standard orchestras from introducing many new works at their concerts.

We have reserved two English novelties for the end, one of which need receive little comment here, as it was reviewed in the July number of this journal. It is Eugène Goossens's 'Four Conceits,' of which he conducted the first performance, M. Ansermet taking charge of the subsequent repetitions. The other novelty consisted of three orchestral pieces by Lord Berners (Gerald Tyrwhitt), entitled respectively 'Chinoiserie,' 'Valse Sentimentale,' and 'Cossack Dance.' The composer is a friend and pupil of Stravinsky, but apart from certain matters of technical procedure there is little in these pieces to suggest 'undue influence.' There is in them a strong vein of humour which expresses itself rhythmically in the first and third, harmonically in the second, and instrumentally in all three. They met with a very cordial reception, which is the more gratifying as a

mixed audience such as that which gathers at the Alhambra would have had some excuse for regarding them as 'caviare.' The 'Valse Sentimentale,' in particular, makes demands on the assimilative power of all but the most inured ear, but it proved by no means the least popular of the three. M. Diaghileff is to be commended for producing these two strikingly original works by British composers. Perhaps now we shall hear them in the concert-room.

Towards the end of the season an orchestral version of Arnold Bax's 'Gopak' was added to the repertoire. E. E.

ENGLISH SONG.

Mr. John Coates, having spent the last few years abroad in his country's service, has, like many another we hope, come back to enjoy the best that country can offer. After all, what view in France or Italy or further East equals that of Southampton Water on a clear morning, and what country is so good as Hampshire and Surrey as the train hurries or loiters on its way to Waterloo Station? There are many thousands of men who know the only answer to these questions now, and Mr. John Coates when he faced his London audience at Queen's Hall on June 23 seemed merely to put the same questions in another form. He seemed to say, Who can make songs like our songs, the things which our poets and musicians have been making for the last four hundred years, just as the grass grows and the hawthorns blossom, without any one troubling about them? He took a handful of them more or less by chance, and sang them in a way to make everyone feel with him their freshness, their joy, and their innocent energy. He took enough care in picking his nosegay to see to it that the twenty-one songs represented the work of as many composers. He was not quite so particular about the number of the poets, for Shakespeare and Tennyson each appeared twice, but he was particular about what mattered much more, that every song should be the setting of a real English lyric. There was not a line of doggerel or of false sentiment on the poetic side of the scheme. If there was ever a jar it was due to the fact that some composers are not as English as they would like to be. Does Martin Shaw really think it characteristic of a farm labourer to shriek 'She shall bear my son' at the top of a high tenor voice? The ending of his 'Love Pagan' took us away from the countryside to the footlights of Covent Garden in spite of the talk of 'brown beer' and 'red grain.' Again, Julius Harrison's setting of Gwendolen has surely missed the point of

Hands fold round about the sword
Now no more of Gwendolen;

a point in which William Morris comes near to Sir John Suckling's in 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover,' though in more refined language. Suckling's is a very English view of an apathetic mistress, and Parry revelled in setting it:

If of herself she will not love,
Nothing will make her—
The Devil take her!

Julius Harrison is still wandering 'Twixt the sunlight and the shade,' while his hero takes his sword and resolves, however fruitlessly, to forget the lady.

Nevertheless every song in this programme was an honest attempt to get close to the feeling and form of the poem chosen, and quite seventy-five per cent. of them were much more than attempts, while a large proportion were masterpieces. It is not necessary to speak particularly of such classics as Morley's 'It was a lover,' Purcell's 'I'll sail upon the dog star,' and Arne's 'When icicles hang by the wall.' Among the present-day composers Mackenzie's 'Love flew in at