The 'Old Vic'

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THE 'OLD VIC.'

SIR,—It is of course with great satisfaction that we have received the news of the generous donation which has been announced. It will, we hope, enable us to purchase the freehold of the southern end of the building which is now occupied by Morley College, and make the alterations required by the L.C.C.

But I hope our friends will not think us grasping, if I ask them not on this account to cease their efforts to obtain subscriptions for us. We are obliged by our foundation rules to charge our audience as low a price as possible for seats, and in consequence can draw a comparatively small income from our performances. If it were not for an allowance made us by the City Parochial Foundation we could not exist at all. With its help and by paying low salaries to our staff we have run at a small loss up to this season, when I believe we have practically balanced our accounts. This, however, has been effected partly by our having had one or two very successful performances and partly by our having raised the price of our seats, which we were very unwilling to do, and wish as soon as possible to discontinue. I am very anxious to put our affairs on a more satisfactory basis, and to obtain by means of subscription a small endowment fund. I think that the tributes that the press has paid us during the last six months justify me in making this claim. It seems to be universally allowed that under the remarkable management of Miss Baylis and the sound though bold production of Mr. Robert Atkins we have taken a peculiar position in the theatrical world. Miss Baylis, by the force of her personality has created an audience which cares for the play, cares for the paying, and cares for the players too. The West End will not support a Shakespeare theatre; our people will hear him the whole season through, and if anyone wishes to see what sympathy can exist between audience and actors let them come here and witness the welcome given to the actors on their return at the beginning of the season, or the farewell at its ending.

Many persons seem to desire to establish a continuous home for classical and especially Shakespeare drama. This we have practically become, and I am in hopes that the National Shakespeare Memorial Association, to which we have applied, will recognise our claim for assistance. I desire to obtain a small endowment fund in order that we may continue that work without scanting our staff of their just due on the one hand, or living in constant dread of running into debt on the other.—Yours, &c.,

W. P. HENINGHAM
(Chairman of the Governors).

DUPRÉ AND ENGLISH ORGAN MUSIC

SIR,—A statement on p. 401 of your June issue, complaining of 'M. Dupré's consistent neglect of English organ music when touring among us,' needs qualification. At a recital in Westminster Abbey, early this year, he not only played pieces by Purcell and Gibbons, but selected as the theme of his improvisation the notes sung by the sopranos in the first six bars of the final section of Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* (p. 17 of Novello's Vocal Score). To those of us present who recognised the melody, the significance of this graceful compliment to English music was evident.—Yours, &c.,

CATECHU.

London, W.6.

[We fail to see that our comment needs qualification. Nor can we regard M. Dupré's inclusion of a couple of short pieces by Gibbons and Purcell as 'a compliment' to English organ music, seeing that these pieces were written at a period when organs in this country had no pedal department, and were intended as much for the virginal and harpsichord as for the organ. If an English player went touring in France, and paid no more handsome tribute to French organ music than the performance of a couple of pieces by d'Aquin and Couperin, our friends across the Channel would use an adjective other than 'graceful.' And they would be justified.—ED., *M.T.*]

THE ORIGIN OF THE BATON

SIR,—In 1896 you published an interesting article on the baton. I have found an early reference in *Amusemens Sérieux et Comiques*, by Charles Dufresny (1648-1724),

reprinted in the Collection des Chefs d'Œuvres Méconnus, by Bossard (Paris, 1921). Speaking of the Opera, he says:

'Disons un mot des habitants naturels du pays de l'Opéra . . . ils relèvent tous du souverain de l'orchestre, prince si absolu, qu'en haussant et baissant un sceptre en forme de rouleau qu'il tient à la main, il règle tous les mouvements de ce peuple capricieux.'

The first edition of the *Amusemens* was printed in 1698, and published in 1699. It is extremely rare. *Rouleau* most likely was a roll of paper, and if so it anticipated by more than a hundred years its use in London, although it seems to have been displaced by a stick on the Continent early in the 18th century.—Yours, &c.,

WILLIAM WALLACE.

11, Ladbroke Road, N.W.11.
May 29, 1922.

THE RAFF CENTENARY

SIR,—Mr. Algernon Ashton's letter to you under the above heading comes as a useful reminder that much can still be learned from the works of the much-neglected Victorians. Taste, it must be admitted, has changed considerably since Raff wrote, and it cannot be expected that musicians to-day should look upon his compositions with the enthusiasm that some of them deserve. But as studies in certain branches of composition they could do much good to the young composers of the present day—not so much as models to be copied as musical remarks made in understandable language. With the exception of the Cavatina, the amateur probably does not even know the name of any other of Raff's works. But Raff finds himself neglected in good company—Spohr, for example. Writing as a teacher of the violin, I think students of that instrument could do much worse than work at Raff's compositions, even if only as exercises in bowing, phrasing, and rhythm.—Yours, &c.,

JEFFREY PULVER.

24A, Carlton Vale, N.W.6.

NEW FIDDLES FOR OLD

SIR,—In my opinion the above heading (which you use in your review of my book, *The True-Tone Violin*) spoils what would otherwise be a quite nice article. I have always treated 'fiddles' as a very serious subject, and one that was not open to flights of fantastic imagination.

I am neither a necromancer, romancer, nor an Aladdin—just a plain, matter-of-fact man who sometimes makes fiddles, and who has dived pretty deeply into the subject, and spent more time and money to get at the root of the matter than I ever hope to get back. To come to the point, your reviewer says:

'If Mr. Farrell's violins confirm his theories and establish his claim, fame will come to him in his lifetime as it came not only to Stradivari, but to Vuillaume and to James Tubbs.'

Now, while not caring one jot about fame—which, in my opinion, is something a man usually attains after he is dead—I cannot wholly ignore your comments under the above heading.

To begin with: If I had been a man engaged on reviewing books on musical or kindred matters (as, for instance, the writer of the above extract), and a volume like *The True-Tone Violin* had been handed to me for review, after reading and digesting the subject-matter I would have said: 'Hello! this fellow is issuing a direct challenge to the whole of the fiddle world. I'll have to see further into this.'

To end with: I only wish to state that I am prepared for anything which is likely to come along, for as your reviewer pithily remarks, 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating,' &c.; and so long as the issue is left in the hands of unbiased people who are competent to judge I am confident enough as to the result.—Yours, &c.,

W. J. FARRELL.