Birmingham Town Hall Organ

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'SYSTEM IN MUSICAL NOTATION'

SIR,—I am not by any means a hide-bound conservative in matters musical, and I should not be greatly averse to changing the notation even of established masterpieces if there were some real gain, in clearness or convenience, through doing so. I cannot help feeling, however, that some of the examples of 'improvements' put forward by Mr. Elliot Button (and quoted by you in your October number, p. 688) are, to say the least, rather unfortunately chosen. Take, for instance, the opening of the Schumann Romance in F sharp. Is it not perfectly apparent that in Schumann's version the melody stands out far more clearly to the eye than in Mr. Button's? (I think also that here 6-8 is preferable to 3-4 as time-signature.) The example from Bach (Toccata in D minor) seems even more unfortunate. Surely everyone will agree that the impression produced on the eye, by the original, differs absolutely from that produced by the 'amended' version: and who will be bold enough to assert that this will not make itself felt in performance?

May I add that while, in German music, the method of notation often appears clumsy and heavy, yet I have generally found on examination that this proceeds from a genuine and essential turgidity of thought, and cannot therefore be altered without producing a clear incompatibility between the thought itself and the means adopted for its outward manifestation.—Yours, &c.,

A. R. CRIPPS.

10, Ambrose Place, Worthing.
October 14, 1920.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE RISING SEVENTH

SIR,—Will you allow me to correct a slight omission, which however serves to obscure the sense, in my letter on the 'Chronology of the rising 7th' in your last issue? Line 3 of p. 701 should read: *With regard to the first [i.e., of the two progressions mentioned] I find it first mentioned, &c.*—Yours, &c.,

F. T. ARNOLD.

University College, Cardiff.
October 17, 1920.

THE NEW WAGNER POLICY AT QUEEN'S HALL

SIR,—Forgive me for alluding to this matter once more, but I find it very difficult to square Mr. Kalisch's statement about Bayreuth refusing its permission for excerpts of this kind, with one by 'Schaunard' in *Musical Opinion* who says: 'The idea is old enough; in the provinces it has been a commonplace for at least a generation . . . There however the practice of giving in concert-form a whole Act from the Wagner music-dramas has an equal vogue.' In justice to Mr. Kalisch I must say that during a year's stay at Munich (1912-13), where there were Wagner concerts every week, I never heard anything else except the usual snippets. If on the other hand 'Schaunard' is right—and I think that you will agree that even Cæsar could not lay down one law for London and another for the provinces—then Mr. Kalisch will have to find a better excuse for this extraordinary lack of enterprise on the part of the Queen's Hall authorities.

As this is a 'Prom.' subject, may I tack on a 'Prom.' question, which however has nothing to do with the above matter? Would it in your opinion be a worse libel on Sir Henry for the Underground Railway to publish a poster showing a likeness of him, than it actually is to publish one caricaturing the excellent leader of the first violins, who however only very occasionally conducts at the extreme end of a concert when an overworked Sir Henry is tired out?—Yours, &c.,

ROBERT LORENZ.

14, Craven Hill, W. 2.
October 17, 1920.

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL ORGAN

SIR,—I was interested to read in your September issue, p. 635, of the contemplated alterations to the Birmingham Town Hall organ, and the fixing of 439 A as the pitch. I cannot, however, understand your correspondent when he states that Mr. Perkins has been compelled to play a semitone higher, unless the organ pitch was *below* 435 A. As you are aware, the British Music Society has passed a resolution asking for the adoption of 435-4 A as the standard pitch.

This will mean that all organs and concert pianofortes must be tuned to 439 A, to allow for the sharpening which occurs with the wind instruments. Singers would be most grateful to know that they can always rely on having the same pitch. We performed the 'St. Matthew' Passion with the 'high pitch' in 1906, and I am glad to say that the principals and choir *survived*. After much persuasion, the Hanley Corporation adapted the organ to 439 A; this was done after consultation with Sir Henry Wood, Mr. Perkins, and other musicians. We have had the Queen's Hall, London Symphony, and Hallé Orchestras, and have found the above tuning most satisfactory.—Yours, &c.,

JOHN JAMES.

Mons House, Havelock Place,
Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent.
September 15, 1920.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

SIR,—As one who lives in a remote place, and has little chance of hearing good music, might I suggest through the medium of your paper how welcome records of the great Elizabethan madrigal-writers would be to those who, like myself, have a love for this beautiful music, but, owing to circumstances, never get a chance of listening to it?

This class of music is a closed door to many of us who do not live in centres where it is performed, and there are many who pine to hear a great heritage in music, a type of music in which England excelled and has had few rivals. Apart from the pleasure of hearing it, even on a gramophone, such music would be helpful and instructive to those who are 'fed up' with listening to records of modern music, much of which we cannot understand and probably never will. There are many (I know plenty) who would hail with delight and buy records of such masters as Gibbons, Benet, Wilbye, Bateson, and others. The demand at first might not be great, but it would increase directly the opportunity was given for hearing these classics.—Yours, &c.,

Seascale, Cumberland.
September 12, 1920.

R. T. RICHMOND
(Country Doctor).

DR. PERCY BUCK'S RETIREMENT FROM
DUBLIN UNIVERSITY

SIR,—Since I resigned the post of Professor of Music in Dublin University I have been asked in many quarters if there were any unpleasant reasons for my action. Will you allow me to say that I had only one reason for resigning. The desirability of the post lies, I think, in the distinction it confers on its holder; and having enjoyed that distinction for ten years, I thought it reasonable that it should be passed on to someone else, and not be 'held up' indefinitely.

From first to last I met with such kindness, friendship, and hospitality within the walls of Trinity College (and, for that matter, outside of them), as to make any attempt at acknowledgment ludicrously inadequate. Whoever my successor may be, he may set his mind at rest as to the goodwill awaiting him. I envy him his assured happiness.—Yours, &c.,

PERCY C. BUCK.

Harrow-on-the-Hill.
October 9, 1920.

'THE LETTERS OF GREAT COMPOSERS'

SIR,—Mr. Pearson, in his article on 'The Letters of Great Composers' in the September issue, expresses regret that a volume containing Mendelssohn's letters is not published. I have the 'Letters of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, from 1833 to 1847,' edited by Paul and Dr. Carl Mendelssohn, and translated by Lady Wallace. The book was published by Longmans in 1863, but is probably now out of print.—Yours, &c.,

F. SINCLAIR TERRAS.

Woodville, Newton Road,
Ashton-on-Ribble.
September 12, 1920.