Opera in the Coronation Year

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DR. WALFORD DAVIES'S SYMPHONY.

The prospective programmes of the London Symphony Orchestra announce that the first of the season's concerts which Herr Nikisch will conduct on May 15 will include the production of a new Symphony by Dr. H. Walford Davies. This is not the composer's first work of the kind, for as long ago as 1895 Manns brought out his first Symphony at the Crystal Palace, and it was one of the earliest works which drew public attention to Walford Davies's compositions. It, however, aroused interest more or less as a promising student's work. Nine years later 'Everyman' made the composer generally known to the larger musical public, and even since 'Everyman' his style and especially his command of the orchestra has matured considerably. Two works since that time have shown him working in the direction of symphonic form: 'Lift up your hearts,' produced at Hereford, 1906, which is actually a symphony with chorus, and the Festal Overture, which is almost a symphony in miniature.

The symphony (Op. 32) which Herr Nikisch will conduct is in G major; it has four movements, each one of which is complete in itself and detached, but there is strong thematic connection between the first and the last movements. The bold theme of the slow introduction (Largo maestoso) with which the Symphony opens is the most important of the various features which give unity to the work. A progression of three chords (G major, C minor and E minor) is characteristic of the theme, and a stately rhythmic figure founded upon these is given out at once by the strings and horns (*f*), while drums and basses reiterate the key-note with a persistent tread. The idea is fully dealt with and passed through several phases before it gives way to the Allegro. One smooth, almost ecclesiastical version of it is heard on the strings, another more agitated and plaintive development follows, so that it is quite evident that the greatest importance is attached to it—in fact, that it is one of the principal characters in the drama. The Allegro fervente is brought in by a rushing upward scale-passage which leads to a strong and impulsive subject. The most striking characteristic of the ardent movement which it introduces is the amount of musical material which plays a part in it. The ordinary divisions of first and second subject are scarcely applicable, though the ideas roughly fall into two groups, and one rich and exuberant tune in D major stands out with special prominence. It, like the theme of the introduction, extends its influence into the last movement. The plan of increasing the members of the 'cast,' so to speak, of a symphony is one with which composers have been busy in experiment ever since Beethoven. This work offers some remarkable instances of the modifying effect upon the subsequent form of the whole movement which a large number of clearly contrasted ideas must bring. In the first place the part technically known as the exposition takes up an unusually large proportion of the first movement, and this entails considerable compression afterwards. Development and recapitulation are largely carried on at the same time, the themes being amplified and extended as they are passed again in review. The introductory theme takes an impressive place

in the development, and its presence always introduces a more contemplative attitude of mind, stilling the energetic impulse of the themes belonging to the first subject-group and contrasting with the frank happiness of those in the second group. It grows stronger and more or less takes possession of the Coda.

A slow movement (*Lento espressivo*) in B flat major opens with a sonorous cadence figure which seems to bear some relationship to the introductory theme of the first movement; it clears away and gives place to a serene melody which is the principal theme of the movement, and which when it is expanded recalls some passages in 'Everyman,' such as the Song of Knowledge. The resemblance is probably quite fortuitous, but it is mentioned to suggest the prevailing mood of the slow movement, which has a more strenuous, agitated middle section.

A purely delightful and unfettered Romanza, Allegro felice (D major) takes the place of a Scherzo and is lightly scored for small orchestra (strings, wood-wind, horns and harp). One happy tune springs out of another simply and naturally, the form seems to make itself, and the whole atmosphere is as light-hearted and spring-like as anything could possibly be. This mood passes quickly, and the Finale is preluded by a short episode in which the oboe broods over a plaintive melody added above sustained chords played by a quartet of violoncellos. This seems less of an introduction to the Finale than a delay purposely introduced to check the feeling produced by the Romanza. Soon the chief theme of the Finale, a marching tune in G minor, sweeps away the brooding introduction, and from henceforward the course of the Symphony is scarcely clouded at all. As in the first movement so in the Finale there is a great wealth of thematic material, but the tunes here seem less contrasted and more closely related. Indeed the chief second subject, a tune which quite carries one away by its spirit, is so closely connected with the first that it seems like a sublimated major version of it. As the movement nears the end, the ideas become more closely associated. The main introductory theme, the first of the whole Symphony, is heard in direct contradiction to the most merry of the Finale tunes, and in the Coda the various melodies jostle one another much as do those in the Quodlibet of the 'Festal Overture,' and the Symphony ends in a mood of the utmost exhilaration.

OPERA IN THE CORONATION YEAR.

BY HERMANN KLEIN.

There would seem at present to be no likelihood of such another spell of operatic activity during the current year as was experienced in London in 1910. To begin with, Mr. Thomas Beecham has, for the time being at any rate, joined the Directorate of the Grand Opera Syndicate, and thus secured Covent Garden against the serious opposition which he at one time threatened in the shape of a projected season at Drury Lane. There will be no opera at His Majesty's Theatre; Mr. Oscar Hammerstein's new opera-house in Kingsway will not be ready for opening until the middle

of November at the very earliest. In a word, for the whole of the Coronation season Covent Garden will have the field to itself, and will consequently more than ever reflect the distinction and brilliancy that are peculiar to our leading opera-house in virtue of those unique social advantages which it has so long enjoyed. It is wonderful, if one comes to think of it, how circumstances have tended for so many years to concentrate the interest of the public, as far as opera is concerned, in the brief annual proceedings at Covent Garden. Nothing done elsewhere seems really to count or to matter. Even the best of the autumn seasons given under the same roof appear to possess only a secondary degree of importance in the eyes of opera-goers. Here, as in America, and more especially at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, it is the support, the influence, the caprice of *Society* that keeps Opera going and regulates the movement of its mainspring.

There is leeway to be made up this year—something to be done to make up for the mournful dullness of perfunctory methods which characterized the greater part of last season's opera nights at Covent Garden. What was due then to the shadow cast by the sudden death of King Edward VII. will be replaced now by the extra grandeur and luxurious splendour of the events associated with the forthcoming Coronation of King George V. So much has been made evident, not merely by the unusually early announcement of a fixed date for the Coronation Gala Performance (to take place on Monday, June 26), but by the promise of the largest subscription known in the recent history of Covent Garden. Of the artistic side of things one can only judge by the preliminary prospectus issued a few weeks ago, but this suffices to afford a tolerably clear indication of what is going to be done, and also of what is going to be left untouched, during the fourteen weeks' season extending from April 22 to July 31. Considerable outcry was occasioned, both at home and in the columns of certain sensitive German newspapers, by the fact that German Opera had been entirely omitted from the scheme. There were, however, two reasons for this omission: first, because the French and Italian répertoires had grown to such proportions that it was found impracticable to include the German without doing injustice to one of the three; and secondly, because it had already been arranged, though not publicly announced (as it should have been in the same prospectus), that a season of German Opera was to be given by the Syndicate at Covent Garden some time next autumn. As soon as this intention was made known no further complaints were heard from quarters that in the least mattered, though the stupid cry of 'boycott' raised by a Frankfort paper was maintained for a time with a persistence absurdly suggestive of some claim to an international right. Two cycles of 'The Ring' will duly be given in November, and a representative selection of popular works, old and modern, including, no doubt, 'Salome' and 'Elektra'; but whether 'Der Rosenkavalier' will be produced at Covent Garden or some smaller house remains to be seen. Anyhow it will not be given by the Syndicate at all, but by Mr. Fred. C. Whitney, who will mount

Strauss's new opera here on a lavish scale early in the coming autumn.

On the other hand, two absolute novelties will be brought forward at Covent Garden during the 'grand' season which begins this month. These are Massenet's 'Thais,' an opera of considerable merit and charm, which has enjoyed quite a vogue in America during the past few years; and Puccini's new opera (written for New York), 'The Girl of the Golden West.' The list further comprises:

IN FRENCH.			
CARMEN .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Bizet</i>
FAUST .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Gounod</i>
LOUISE .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Charpentier</i>
PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Debussy</i>
ROMÉO ET JULIETTE .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Gounod</i>
SAMSON ET DALILA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Saint-Saëns</i>
IN ITALIAN.			
AYDA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Verdi</i>
IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Rossini</i>
LA BOHÈME .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Puccini</i>
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Mascagni</i>
LAKME .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Delibes</i>
LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Donizetti</i>
MADAMA BUTTERFLY .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Puccini</i>
MANON LESCAUT .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Puccini</i>
I PAGLIACCI .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Leoncavallo</i>
RIGOLETTO .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Verdi</i>
LA SONNAMBULA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Bellini</i>
TESS .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Erlanger</i>
LA TOSCA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Puccini</i>
LA TRAVIATA .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Verdi</i>
GLI UGONOTTI .. .. .	.. .. .	.. .. .	<i>Meyerbeer</i>

A glance at the above selection will serve to convince the reader that the tastes of the Covent Garden habitué have been carefully studied in its choice. Five operas to the name of Puccini—say a third of the entire Italian group—would alone suffice to demonstrate that fact. It is a phenomenon new to the constitution of these documents, and, be the portent good or otherwise, it is worthy of note as a sign of the times. Verdi now takes second place with three operas, only one of them belonging to his third and best period; while of the French collection Gounod alone furnishes more than a solitary example. Yet as a whole it must be admitted that the repertoire will be fairly representative of its particular schools, and betrays a decided leaning in favour of modern and living composers.

The executive talent so far engaged is quite up to the average. The following preliminary list speaks for itself. It does not include the name of a new French tenor who was engaged early last month, and concerning whom private report speaks very highly indeed:

Soprani.	
Mmes. Emmy Destinn Marie Louise Edvina Maria Kousnietzoff	Mmes. Nellie Melba Luisa Tetrizzini
Contralti.	
Mmes. A. L. Bérat De Georgis	Mmes. Kirkby Lunn Orner
Tenors.	
MM. Amedeo Bassi Charles Dalmorès Maurice D'Oisly Paul Franz	MM. Riccardo Martin John McCormack Edmond Warnery Dante Zucchi
Basses and Baritones.	
MM. Edmund Burke Armand Crabbé Gilly Pompilio Malatesta	MM. Vanni Marcoux G. Mario Sammarco Leon Sibiriakoff
Conductors.	
MM. Cleofonte Campanini, Ettore Panizza, Percy Pitt, Tcherepnine.	

Another notable feature will be the appearance, towards the latter part of the season, of the Imperial Russian Ballet, who will bring with them

their own scenery, costumes and accessories. Then on some evenings the programme will be devoted to ballet only, and on others opera and ballet will be given conjointly. The répertoire of this famous body will be chosen from the following works:

CLÉOPÂTRE (Mimodrame in One Act)	.. ..	Arensky-Glazounov
SCHERAZADE (Drame Chorégraphique in One Act)	.. ..	Rimsky-Korsakov
L'OISEAU DE FEU (Ballet Fantastique in One Act)	.. ..	Strawinski
LES SYLPHIDES (Rêverie Romantique in One Tableau)	.. ..	Chopin
LE CARNAVAL (Pantomime Ballet in One Act)	.. ..	Schumann
LE PAVILLON D'ARMIDE	.. ..	Tcherepnine
PRINCE IGOR (Danses Polovtsiennes)	.. ..	Borodin

The principal dancers engaged are: Mlle. Tamar Karsavina (première ballerine), Mlle. Lapoukova (première danseuse classique), Mlle. Will (première danseuse), Mlle. Ida Rubinstein (première mime), Monsieur Vaslav Nijinsky (premier danseur), Monsieur Boulgakow (premier mime).

THE NEW 'GROVE' ON WELSH MUSIC.

Although some of the statements by Mr. Frank Kidson in the February issue of this journal seem to demand more or less notice, prolonged controversy on the question is beyond my present purpose—even if the continued liberality of the editor in the matter of space may be counted upon. That there is much to be said and done, and possibly unsaid and undone, in connection with the subject is a fact that will be acknowledged by enlightened Welsh musical opinion generally; and the 'native of the Principality' who, according to Mr. Kidson, is 'inclined to present any attempt to set things right' may be treated largely as a negligible quantity.

It was declared by the present writer in the *Musical Times* for November last—a declaration which holds good—that the Welsh people could have no desire to retain as their own melodies which could be proved to be another nation's property, but that each claim made should, nevertheless, be thoroughly examined and tested. No more effective way of inducing the 'inclination to resent,' alluded to, could well be devised than to advance ill-supported and far-fetched claims to melodies that have long been recognized as Welsh. This rule has not always been observed; and if a certain amount of distrust has resulted, that may serve at least as an explanation.

The 'Bells of Aberdovey' has figured somewhat prominently in this discussion, and in support of the contention that the air was Charles Dibdin's own composition Mr. Kidson advances the argument that it was 'quite opposed' to Dibdin's practice to use existing tunes in his operas (*vide Grove*)—emphasizing the statement in the *Musical Times* for February, by quoting the title-page of the opera, 'Liberty Hall,' which 'expressly' states that the whole work was 'entirely an original composition by Mr. Dibdin.' As a theory that looks fair enough, and only requires to be supported by facts; and here I beg to record my deep indebtedness to Mrs. Mary Davies, whose observant eye has discovered another Welsh travesty in the self-same 'entirely original' opera, sung by the same comic character, Ap Hugh,

'Were patience kind to me,' a song containing the refrain, 'Oh, he, de, nos,' an evident parody of 'Ar hyd y nos' ('All through the night'). Here we find the following:

that reproduces the middle part of 'Ar hyd y nos' note for note, practically speaking, and no further comment is needed to demonstrate how effectually it demolishes the little theoretical structure put together above. It may be as well to add, perhaps, that 'Ar hyd y nos' had been previously published—in Edward Jones's 'Musical Relicks,' 1784.

In regard to the 'Bells of Aberdovey' itself, an examination of the Dibdin copy shows that there is absolutely no resemblance between the two airs; excepting the last two lines (four bars), which are repeated, besides a few chordal suggestions. This again carries its plain verdict, to my thinking, without any need to labour it further. Other similar instances may be cited, but no more striking object-lesson is required than that furnished by the 'Queen Dido' examples in Mr. Kidson's article in the *Musical Times* for February. Indeed one almost hesitates to suppose that these are intended to represent the same air fundamentally, inasmuch as no similarity, rhythmic, melodic or any other, is traceable, with the exception of some half a dozen notes which form a very stereotyped middle cadence, and half that number for a final close. Apropos the 'Bells' once more, the self-evident reply to the query that 'if the air be Welsh, why was it not included in any Welsh collection prior to 1844?' is another query: Why were the forty-and-one other airs published by Miss Williams for the first time, and the large number still being unearthed by others, not published before? Miss Williams's footnote to this air, that its origin was unknown, is capable of more than one explanation—without suggesting any doubt respecting that highly esteemed lady's literary probity. Even as it is the note is quite as 'explicit' as some of the others—'A Christmas carol,' for instance.

It may be pointed out to Mr. Kidson that the 'Cerdor Cymreig' was not a 'historical' but a musical journal, as the title, which means 'Welsh Musician,' indicates; and it is to be wished that the editor, who was an able man, had undertaken to 'expose and explode certain myths' created by tradition or the imaginative faculties of collectors and editors of the bardic school. This might have helped to advance the cause of 'saner views,' whether 'from an English point of view' or another, by some years. To say that one has spoken of the 'characteristics of Welsh music' is not a very serious impeachment; nevertheless, the writer fails to discover any mention of it in his November article. And my reference to Dibdin's songs distinctly specified collections of the 'Songs of England' containing some of his composition.

D. EMLYN EVANS.