

The Music of Dame Ethel Smyth

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## 'MUSIC IN LONDON'

SIR,—In your issue for January, 1922, you characterise an 'article' (interview) of mine in *Musical America*, on 'Music in London,' as 'ludicrously inaccurate.' In the course of the last twenty-five years I have made a number of visits to London in the summer—eight or ten, perhaps—and, being a professional singer, feel justified in asserting that I have some knowledge of what might be called 'normal' musical conditions at that season in London. This last summer I was in London for three-quarters of the period limited by my arrival and my departure—June 28 and August 3. You show that I was in error in implying that Sir Henry Wood's orchestra could never have been heard in July; but certainly there was no opera during July at either Covent Garden or Drury Lane; there was no orchestral music of a serious nature in any music-hall; there were no concerts by artists of high standing, if I may be permitted to except from this category one or two Albert Hall programmes of a popular shade. Am I too sweeping in these assertions? I think not. In the course of my visit I was able to locate and enjoy just two fine performances by English musicians—*The Beggar's Opera*, and a song-recital by Mr. John Coates in Chelsea Town Hall. Mr. Coates's programme was so wholly delightful that I borrowed a large part of it for my own programmes here. If there was anything comparable in merit with these two performances my detective qualities were surely at fault. If I thought there was any chance of your granting a request of mine, I should ask you to print or send me a list of last July's musical performances that escaped my notice.—Yours, &c.,

FRANCIS ROGERS.

144, East 62nd Street,  
New York City.  
January 15, 1922.

[Mr. Rogers has shifted his ground. In the interview he expressed the opinion that so far as music was concerned there was 'nothing doing' in London, and he seemed to base this view on the fact that there was no 'grand opera' season with 'star' performers. Now he wishes us to understand that his remarks applied to the few weeks at midsummer. Our complaint, like that of Mr. Sorabji quoted in our 'Occasional Note,' was called forth by the fact that Mr. Rogers made sweeping assertions on the general lack of musical life in London, with no better evidence than the experiences gained during a brief visit at the fag end of the season. Had he told his American readers that he happened to find London concert-givers packing up and going off for their holidays he would have been right. But his remarks certainly appeared to refer to the whole of 1921—a year during which, as we pointed out, London was visited by practically all the outstanding contemporary musicians, and made acquaintance with new works by all but a very few of the leading composers of to-day, many of whom conducted or took part in the performances.]

Mr. Rogers is unduly pessimistic as to the chance of our granting a request of his. On the contrary we gladly produce the lists he asks for. First, however, we may be allowed to point out that we never contended that there was feverish musical activity in London during July. Nevertheless, there were a few good concerts in the early part of the month. We do not know the exact dates of Mr. Rogers's arrival in London, so we will deal with the period he mentions—June 28 to August 3. We find that concerts and recitals were given by the following: John Coates, Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford, Dorothy Moulton (first performance of a batch of songs by Bax, with the composer at the pianoforte), Guild of Singers and Players, Gabrilowitsch, Boris Hambourg, Una Truman, Louise Aussenac, Ticerti, the Chamber Music Players (a combination second to none), Patron's Fund (first performance of the Ballet from Holst's *The Perfect Fool*), Oriana Choir (a concert of a type unknown in New York, we believe: so much the worse for New York), and the League of Arts (Purcell's *Mask of Dioclesian* in Hyde Park, under the greenwood tree). There were also a performance of the same work by a company got together and directed by Gustav Holst, a six days' Festival of the English Folk-Dance Society (a prominent feature of which was some delightful singing by the Oriana Choir, the Northern

Singers, Miss Gwenn Frangçon Davies, and Clive Carey), a performance of Holst's Opera *Savitri*; a week of 'opera intime' given by Rosing (June 25-July 2); and the Russian Ballet at the Princes Theatre (Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, *Pulcinella*, *Firebird*, and *Enchanted Princess*, and the rest of the repertory), with fine playing under Ansermet of orchestral interludes by Stravinsky, Prokofief, Goossens, Berners, Bliss, Bax, Quilter, Ravel, and overtures and extracts from Russian Opera. We could add a good deal to the above list, but we think it better to mention only concerts given by well-known performers, though it may well be that some of the remainder were quite as enjoyable. We think Mr. Rogers must admit that although he came at the beginning of the 'off' season there were still a fair number of concerts worth his attention. And their discovery called for no 'detective quality.' They were well advertised in the chief daily papers, and, had Mr. Rogers glanced at our weekly contemporary, the *Musical News and Herald*, he would have seen plainly set forth, so that he who read might run to the booking-office, a complete list of the concerts for the ensuing seven days, with full particulars, including the titles of the chief works down for performance.

Finally, we may revert to the point made by Mr. Sorabji in the letter we quoted. So called 'grand' opera was never a reliable test of the musical life of this country, especially during the past few years, when this most expensive form of music has suffered from the post-war hard-uppishness of the class most willing to support it. Happily, these financial difficulties appear to have benefited the art by increasing the number of chamber music concerts and other performances calling for a modest number of performers. The best concerts of this type are musically more important than many a 'grand' opera whose main interest is centred in the vocal fireworks of a puffed-up and over-paid prima donna.—ED., *M. T.*]

## THE MUSIC OF DAME ETHEL SMYTH

SIR,—Ever since my Memoirs were published I have been in the habit of receiving letters from all parts of the country, even America, expressing a wish that my readers could hear some of my music. An article recently published in the *Daily Mail* has brought me too many such letters to answer personally; but may I suggest to these kind sympathisers (especially to women concert-goers) that it would be a good plan to express their wishes to the conductors and committees of their local orchestras and choral societies? For in nine cases out of ten it is merely that one gets forgotten in the crowd of male composers.

I may add that the London and Continental Music Publishing Company, 40, Great Marlborough Street, London, W., has a timed catalogue of all my concert works, and, together with Messrs. Novello, hold most of my music, either on hire or for sale.—Yours, &c.,

Woking,  
January, 1922.

ETHEL SMYTH  
(*D. B. E., Mus. Doc.*)

## THE WRONG COPY WAS SENT FOR REVIEW

SIR,—I have much sympathy with your reviewer when he says in your February issue that my valse *Moods* has 'a little too much repetition.' In fact he puts it very mildly. I therefore feel that I must explain that this repetition is caused by the fact that in the pianoforte solo edition I was compelled, in the interests of simplicity for the home-pianist, unmercifully to lop off all kinds of fresh counterpoint and to substitute therefor bald restatements of what had gone before. The valse appears as I wrote it in the 'piano-conductor' copy, and it was specially arranged that only the latter should be sent out for review. Unfortunately, however, through somebody's blunder, this has not been kept to, with the result that my poor effort in the 'popular style' is being given an extra handicap even beyond its true deserts.—Yours, &c.,

GERRARD WILLIAMS.

February, 1922.