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The Welsh Musical Festival

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brought about the Reformation in Germany largely through the use of music. Something of the same kind happened with the Methodist revival in England; but though in some respects the former was a political move, the latter most certainly was not. Of the connection between the Catholic Revival and the renaissance of Church music there is also no need to speak, for this equally was in no respects a political movement.'

Upon contemporary history perhaps the most important influence exerted by music has been that caused by the number of musicians who gave their lives to crush the tyranny of a nation that once was musical. That there were other influences is now recognised by all in authority, official or otherwise. Government departments, Army officers, the Y.M.C.A. and numerous soldiers' and sailors' aid societies have encouraged the study of music in its more serious, as well as its practice in its less serious, aspects. Its cumulative influence and the reactions of that influence cannot be assessed until the history of our days has become a distant past, and can be viewed with entire detachment.

THE LEAGUE OF ARTS

The Musicians' Company gave a dinner to the founders and some of the members of the League of Arts at Stationers' Hall on June 7. The Lord Mayor, as Master, presided. His Lordship read the following message from the King:

Buckingham Palace.

It has given me, my Lord Mayor, the utmost satisfaction to learn that the ancient Musicians' Company of the City of London is assembled to-night, under your presidency, to take the lead in propagating among the workers of this country a true realisation of the attractive influence of music and art. I welcome with joy this new development as a further proof of the spirit of comradeship that unites all classes of the community, and I wish every success to this praiseworthy movement.

GEORGE R.I.

The object of the meeting that night, continued his Lordship, was to interest the members of the Company in the new effort to take the art of music, and especially the art of vocal music, to the masses of the people. They felt that music should be a more important factor in our national and civic ceremonies. On last Lord Mayor's Day, which rather concerned him, two things that he enjoyed most were the singing outside St. Michael's, Cornhill, of 'England, awake,' by the choir under the conductorship of Dr. Darke; and the singing outside St. Paul's Cathedral by a large choir, of beautiful old English songs under the direction of the League of Arts.

He would have liked to get out of the State coach and listen to the music; but he was due at the Law Courts, and he could not keep the Judges waiting. To his mind, there was no music that touched the heart so much as vocal music. It was all very well to realise that, and to see what should be done; but what stopped them in their desires was the everlasting question of money—or the lack of it. They would all like to do a great deal more, but they had not got the money. Therefore, he was asking for gifts of money, or, in the alternative, for the formation of a guarantee fund, to provide a choir on the occasions of national festivals. They had come there that night to talk about the subject, and to provide the money.

Speeches in support of the proposal to raise a guarantee fund for the League were made also by Mr. W. H. P. Leslie, Prebendary Gough, Mr. Clement Edwards, M.P., the Hon. Herbert Gibbs, and the Lady Mayoress.

As a result the Musicians' Company decided to open a fund in furtherance of the aims of the League.

THE WELSH MUSICAL FESTIVAL

By GERALD CUMBERLAND

Most of us give Wales credit for being more deeply musical than she really is. We hear many of her best choirs, are profoundly impressed, and conclude that only a nation musical in every fibre of its being could produce bodies of such fine singers. In a sense such a conclusion is perfectly just: that is to say, Wales is, from the emotional point of view, profoundly musical. Excitable, quick to respond to the easy beauty of flowing melodies, brimming over with fluid emotion, she throws herself into the sea of music with a most admirable abandon. The voice is the readiest instrument, and it is the voice she uses, for one can, after all, get quite useful results from singing after a year's, or even three months' study, whereas all other instruments for the interpretation of music demand a long period of close application. And by means of singing she gives vent to the simple joys and sorrows that assail her: that is to say, she sings, and sings sincerely, from the heart.

But singing from the heart without intellectual control is the practice of barbarians—and, indeed, there is something barbaric, something elemental (or should I say elementary?) in the manner in which these people regard music. Music to them is all gusty emotion tinged with the faint stirrings of imagination; the subtler feelings, the more magnificent heights to which the human soul can aspire, are beyond their ken. In a word, they are without culture and therefore without taste; their imaginations are fired only by the more obvious passions, and their intellects remain outside, or take only an occasional peep within, the courts of music.

These assertions may appear rather sweeping, but their truth may be demonstrated by a close examination of the kind of music that one finds in the homes of Wales. I have been in many Welsh homes in which musical people live, and I have seen there an abundance of songs from the latest revues and vaudevilles, 'religious' songs, fox-trots, crude part-songs by Welsh composers, perhaps a clean, unused copy of Beethoven's Sonatas, a few pianoforte pieces by Chaminade, and so on. But not a note of Elgar, or Wolf, or Strauss, or Debussy, or John Ireland, or, indeed, of any contemporary composer who writes real music. I have found everywhere an incredibly low standard in the playing of instrumental music. Never yet have I come across a really good amateur pianist or violinist, for instrumental music demands study and intellectual effort; moreover, it is not popular. For this and other reasons, Wales has never possessed even a third-rate orchestra. She knows practically nothing of orchestral music—Beethoven's Symphonies are little more than a name; Wagner is a man who wrote the Overture to 'Tannhäuser'; Elgar is recognised as the composer of 'Land of Hope and Glory'; Delius is regarded as a foreigner who somehow or other has crept into British music. And so on. With very few exceptions—and these occur only in the large towns—Wales is

given over to a musical emotionalism that inhibits the critical faculty, that swamps the intellect, and that runs to seed in the kind of rough vulgarity that is found in the great bulk of native compositions.

Something of all this has been said over and over again by English critics and musicians during the last ten years. It was said in his genial way by the late Editor of this paper; it was said recently by Prof. Granville Bantock when, at a local Eisteddfod, he refused to adjudicate on a certain competition because of the low standard of the test-pieces; it was said the other day by Prof. Walford Davies. Wales, indeed, is accustomed to being rated and, it must be admitted, she has taken her scoldings with exemplary composure; indeed, in the years immediately before the war there were many signs that she had begun to think of saving her musical soul, and was even taking steps to do so.

During last Whitsuntide, Mr. Cyril Jenkins, who is the moving spirit of the Welsh Musical Festival, temporarily took the matter into his own hands by holding a two days' competition at Mountain Ash and by engaging the London Symphony Orchestra to give two concerts in that town and concerts at Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport. The five days' Festival, organized on a lavish scale, was devoted almost exclusively to contemporary music, and among the British composers represented were Sir Edward Elgar, Granville Bantock, Julius Harrison, Cyril Jenkins, Dr. Vaughan Thomas, Delius, Josef Holbrooke, and Dr. Vaughan Williams, the first five of whom conducted their own works; in addition there was music by Wagner, Rimsky Korsakov, Borodin, Scriabin ('Le Poème d'Extase'), Dukas and others. These composers, familiar enough to every concert-goer in London and in the larger provincial towns of England, are little known in Wales; so novel were they indeed, and so incomprehensible to the only partially educated musicians of Wales were the idioms employed, that one heard on all hands, both from the Press and the public, that adjective of execration—'revolutionary.' What to us is familiar daily food is to Wales the very Leninism of music.

But not all the music proved caviare to the general, for an overwhelming surprise awaited us at Mountain Ash. The huge pavilion there accommodated an audience variously estimated at from 5,000 to 7,000 people, most of whom were of the so-called working classes—miners, engineers, and the like. One would have expected that so novel and hectic a composition as Scriabin's 'Le Poème d'Extase' would leave such a gathering bored and contemptuous; but the exact contrary proved to be the case. Mr. Albert Coates's interpretation whipped his listeners to an enthusiasm that found vent in a physical demonstrativeness such as the Albert and Queen's Halls can never have witnessed: at one point it appeared as though the complete work would have to be played a second time. It was this demonstration that made those of us interested in the musical welfare of Wales feel that we had underestimated the capacity of the working-man in that country to assimilate and understand the more difficult compositions of modern times; and it was this demonstration which indicated that, if orchestral music were supplied with some approach to regularity, Wales would provide the necessary support.

A rather different aspect, however, was presented at Cardiff, where the audience was unaccountably small. Here Sir Edward Elgar conducted his

second Symphony. But at Swansea and Newport the success of Mountain Ash was repeated. It was at Newport that Mr. Cyril Jenkins's cantata, 'Freedom,' written for soli, chorus, and orchestra, was given for the first time. I hope I am not prejudiced in Mr. Jenkins's favour because I wrote the libretto of 'Freedom,' but it seems to me that this composition is quite the most satisfactory piece of work that has come from musical Wales for many years. Prof. Granville Bantock, addressing a large audience at Mountain Ash, referred in terms of high praise to Cyril Jenkins's work, and reminded his listeners that it was in that hall, eight years previously, that he had called this composer 'the hope of musical Wales.' His prophetic words, he declared, were already in process of being fulfilled.

The objects of the Welsh Musical Festival—which, it may be said, will henceforth be held annually—are purely educational. In no sense has it been organized to compete with the National Eisteddfod, though it offers that old institution many object-lessons in the kind of music that is chosen for test-pieces. Mr. Jenkins has succeeded in showing South Wales that his native country is sadly behindhand in its musical development, and that if she is to progress she must not only absorb and assimilate the music that is being written elsewhere, but she must, by hook or by crook, form and maintain a first-rate orchestra of her own. No one can doubt that Wales is a little complacent with regard to her musical achievements; she has done wonderful things in choral music, and has been deservedly praised for what she has accomplished; but by insisting on the importance of the orchestra as an essential factor in a healthy musical life, the Welsh Musical Festival has already demonstrated that the attitude of self-approval is no longer tenable. After all, Welsh musicians are not likely to write orchestral compositions if she has no orchestra to play them.

The most striking features of the two days' competition at Mountain Ash were the very high standard of the test-pieces and the detailed criticisms of at least two of the adjudicators—Prof. Granville Bantock and Mr. Samuel Langford. Mr. Langford's short extempore lectures were felt on all hands to be of the utmost educational and æsthetic value, and most of the adjudicators have good reason to know that the competitors regarded the two days' work as an opportunity for obtaining as much information and advice as possible. The winning of prizes at Festivals and Eisteddfodau is of little moment; what matters is the exchange of views, the helpful criticism of competent men, and the spread of the conviction that art should have a place in the lives of all intelligent men and women.

THE END OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL SOCIETY

BY J. PERCY BAKER

After having been in a state of suspension for nearly six years, the International Musical Society may be said to have come to a peaceful end consequent on the decision of the committee of the English Section to resign its position. It was no doubt inevitable, but at the same time one may be excused a sigh of regret that an undertaking fraught with such possibilities of good to music and opportunities for exchange of thought amongst the musicians of the world should have failed somewhat ingloriously.