The Ideas of M. Vincent D'Indy. I

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We already suffer too much from such things. As the old lady in 'David Copperfield' said, 'Let us have no meandering.' The author also gives exhaustive registration for a large number of pieces, laying them out for organs of various sizes. Many of the solos are of such poor quality that it is waste of space treating them. Moreover, such schemes are of little practical use, for the reasons given above. On the whole, it is a pity Mr. Truette did not perceive that the excellent first part of the book tells us all we want to know. Like so many organists to-day he is inclined to over-register. We shall soon need a text-book setting forth the advantages of the use of uncoupled manuals and single stops, and the importance of not breaking the rhythm and flow of a piece by too frequent pulling-up for stop changes. Generally speaking, it is only the feeble kind of music that depends for its effect upon constant changes of stop. Recitalists should occasionally test their *répertoire* by playing it on the pedal-pianoforte. If they then discarded nearly all the pieces that had left their interest and effect in the organ loft, it would be a good thing for the status of the instrument and its music. And what a jolly bonfire we could make with the throw-outs!

THE IDEAS OF M. VINCENT D'INDY

BY C. SAINT-SAËNS, DE L'INSTITUT

(*Authorised translation by Fred Rothwell*)

I.

By reason of his talent and erudition, by virtue of his position as the founder of a school, M. Vincent D'Indy has acquired great authority. Everything he writes must of necessity possess considerable influence.

Under the sway of such considerations, it has occurred to me that it might be useful to point out—even though it be to my detriment—certain of his ideas in the 'Course of Musical Composition' which do not agree with my own. Not that I claim to be a more or less infallible oracle; it does not follow, because M. D'Indy's ideas are not always mine, that they are therefore erroneous. I will state my arguments: the reader shall judge for himself.

On opening M. D'Indy's book one is immediately struck with admiration at the loftiness of his conceptions. We see how careful the author is—an attitude which cannot be too greatly admired—to look upon Art as one of the most serious things in the world. He ascends higher and ever higher until we suffer from vertigo as we follow him, and find that he places art on a level with religious faith, demanding from the artist the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity—and not only faith in art, but faith in God! We may remark that Perugini and Berlioz, who were lacking in this faith, were none the less admirable artists, even in the religious style, but we need not labour the point.

Religions, in themselves admirable objects of art, are incomparable springs of artistic expression. Deduct from architecture, sculpture, painting, even music itself, everything that deals with religion, and see what is left!

All those Jupiters and Junos, Minervas, Venuses and Dianas, Apollos and Mercuries, Satyrs and Nymphs, those mythological scenes painted on the walls of Pompeii—all that art, which we regard as profane, is religious art. It is the same in Egypt

and India, in China and Japan, and even among savage tribes.

Such considerations make it easy to imagine that art has its source in religion. All the same, its origin is an even more modest one. Art came into being on the day that man, instead of being solely concerned with the utility of an object he had made, concerned himself with its form, and made up his mind that this form should satisfy a need peculiar to human nature, a mysterious need to which the name of 'æsthetic sense' has been given.

Afterwards form was enriched by ornament, or decoration, which serves no other purpose than to satisfy this æsthetic sense. Subsequently it became man's desire to reproduce the form of his fellow beings, human and animal, and he began to do this—as a child still does—by a stroke or line. This line does not exist in Nature.

Here is the starting point in the radical difference between nature and art; art is destined not to reproduce nature literally, but to suggest an idea of nature. This principle, badly interpreted, gives rise to the aberrations which manifest themselves at the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants.

It is by virtue of this principle that the most insignificant sketch affords a sensation of art which will never be supplied by the finest photograph, however 'artistic.'

It is also on this account that the purists are mistaken when they attack imitative music. Real imitative music would consist of the green-room noises by which a life-like imitation is given in the theatre to the wind and the rain and the various other sounds of nature. So-called imitative music does not imitate, it suggests. Composers have described storms, but there is not one that is like any of the rest. The singing of birds, which offends certain persons in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, is there imitated in very imperfect fashion; it is this very fact that constitutes its charm.

Nevertheless, it is from the sounds of nature, the sounds produced by the wind blowing through the reeds, and more particularly from the utterance of the human voice, that music had its birth.

When art was born, religion took possession of it. Religion did not create art.

M. D'Indy, like Tolstoi and M. Barrès and many other thinkers, seems to see nothing in art but expression and passion. I cannot share this opinion. To me art is form above all else.

It is perfectly clear that art in general, especially music, lends itself wonderfully well to expression, and that is all the amateur expects. It is quite different with the artist however. The artist who does not feel thoroughly satisfied with elegant lines, harmonious colours, or a fine series of chords, does not understand art.

When beautiful forms accompany powerful expression, we are filled with admiration, and rightly so. In such a case, what is it that happens? Our cravings after art and emotion are alike satisfied. All the same, we cannot therefore say that we have reached the summit of art, for art is capable of existing apart from the slightest trace of emotion or of passion.

This is proved—speaking only of music—by the fact that during the whole of the 16th century there were produced admirable works entirely devoid of emotion.* Their true purpose is thwarted when an attempt is made

* There are a few exceptions, notably in Palestrina's 'Stabat Mater.'

to render them expressive. Wherein does the Kyrie of the famous Missa Papæ Marcelli express supplication? Here there is absolutely nothing else than form. On the other hand, see to what a low level music descends when it disdains form and sets emotion in the forefront!

It may here be worth while informing amateurs that music is not—as Victor Hugo has well said in giving form to the most widespread of all feelings—the *vapeur de l'art*; it is a plastic art, one that is made up of forms. True, these forms exist only in the imagination, and yet, does art as a whole exist in any other way? These forms are but imperfectly reproduced in musical writing, though sufficiently to suggest them. On this account music should not be written with figures which represent nothing to the eye. It is also for this reason that those who do not read music have some difficulty in forming an idea of it, unless they happen to be gifted with a special aptitude for this art. To them it is indeed the *vapeur de l'art*, a source of sensations and nothing else, and so we find that they take pleasure in listening to the most divergent works, the finest and the most despicable alike; they see no difference in them.

(To be continued.)

London Concerts

BY ALFRED KALISCH

Concerts have been very numerous, but have not been conspicuous for the amount of novelty they have introduced. Still the month's harvest of new things is not inconsiderable.

It is not always the largest works that are the most important. Thus Mr. Julius Harrison's 'Worcestershire Pieces' (an orchestral version of a suite of pianoforte pieces), produced at a Queen's Hall Symphony concert on January 24, are slight, but charming. One of them, entitled 'Pershore Plums'—a serene little idyll—attracted a good deal of attention on non-musical grounds. The last, 'The Ledbury Parson,' is a brisk open-air treatment of a conspicuously jolly folk-song. At the same concert Mr. Lamond's playing of Brahms's second Concerto was quite masterly, but one could not resist the feeling that this work was beginning to date. Some new pieces by the revolutionary American, Leo Ornstein, which were announced, could not be played because the parts had not arrived in England. The Queen's Hall Symphony Concert on February 7 was notable for the fact that for the first time for many a month the 'House full' notices were displayed. This was no doubt largely due to the names of the soloists (Madame Suggia, who played Schumann's 'Cello Concerto superbly, and Mr. Gervase Elwes), and the presence of Dr. Ethel Smyth, who conducted 'On the cliffs of Cornwall' (from 'The Wreckers'). The Symphony was Brahms's No. 1. The other orchestral numbers were 'L'Après-midi d'un Faune,' and the Prelude and Liebestod from 'Tristan and Isolde.' This may be put on record as a guide to programme makers.

Mr. Anderson Tyrer continues to improve his position. At his last concert, on January 27, Mr. Hamilton Harty introduced Granville Bantock's 'Overture to a Greek Tragedy,' the tragedy being Sophocles's 'Œdipus Coloneus' (unfortunately misspelt 'Colonnos,' and so reproduced by many

writers). It is nine years old. When a work by a man of Mr. Bantock's position takes nine years to reach London the cynic will usually find the reason is the piece itself. It was to be found there in this case. It is solid and dignified, but is hardly the real Bantock.

At the Albert Hall Sunday Concerts the policy of introducing us to conductors not well known in London is being pursued with good results. Thus we heard Mr. Ainslie Murray, of Edinburgh, who justified his choice, and Mr. Godfrey came from Bournemouth—but he hardly needs introduction.

Mr. Frank Bridge is rapidly assuming an almost official position of the conductor who is sent for in an emergency. A few weeks ago he replaced Sir Henry Wood at a few hours' notice. On February 10 he took the place of Mr. Raymond Rôze, who was unfortunately too ill to conduct the concert of the British Symphony Orchestra. The novelty of the concert was Mr. Rôze's effective 'Poem of Victory,' for violin, with the solo part beautifully played by Mr. Sammons, and Mr. Holbrooke conducted his own early work, 'The Viking.' It is one of his most lucid and picturesque scores, though possibly not the most original. Mr. Holbrooke is not easily pleased, but he can have no reason to complain either of its performance or its reception by the audience.

At the London Symphony Orchestra concert on February 16 Sir Thomas Beecham conducted a programme in which Leonardo Leo, Mozart, and Handel represented the 18th century—of which he is specially fond—Wagner and Brahms the 19th century, and Delius the 20th. All the works were well known, except the little Symphony of Leo. It has a middle movement with a heartfelt little melody (charmingly played by Mr. W. H. Reed), but for the rest it is only of educational interest. This, however, is considerable. It would be greater still if we knew exactly how much the arranger had done to the work. Mr. Sammons's playing of the Brahms Concerto won the admiration of all except those who look upon the introduction of anything like charm or beauty into the music of Brahms as a pollution of the well of music undefiled. It is hard to believe that Brahms himself would go so far in this matter as some of his less judicious idolaters.

In his interpretation of Brahms's fourth Symphony at the Philharmonic Concert on January 29, Mr. Adrian C. Boult struck a happy mean and pleased everybody. He has never done anything better. Mr. Sammons played Delius's Concerto. It does not improve on acquaintance. The lack of anything like a broad melodic phrase for the soloist makes itself almost painfully felt. The constant figuration for the violin ends by sounding almost fussy. The atmospheric beauty of the music is, however, undeniable, and the last pages appeal to the heart. One wonders whether Delius had heard the ending of 'Don Quixote' before he wrote it.

The pianistic giants have not appeared in London lately (except for the playing of the Brahms Concerto by Mr. Lamond, mentioned above), but there has been some unusually good pianoforte-playing by younger artists. The two Scriabin recitals by Miss Lilius Mackinnon and Miss Eurydice Draconi were interesting. The latter struck me as having more charm, the former a completer grasp, but each was good in both respects. Mr. York Bowen played some Brahms thoughtfully, and the Variations of Rosenbloom, the Berceuse of Clutsam, and the