

The Dramatic Works of Vincent D'Indy. 'Fervaal' (Continued)

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The band (a hundred and two performers) was made up of the united Royal Albert Hall and Royal Choral Society's orchestras, led by Mr. A. W. Payne. This fine body of players, in conjunction with the full choir and supported by Mr. Balfour at the organ, brought out a tone of magnificent volume and satisfying quality, more especially in ensembles such as the refrain of 'Land of Hope and Glory,' the last excerpt from 'The Golden Legend' (pity it could not have been the splendid Epilogue!), and the final chorus of Sir Edward Elgar's 'For the Fallen.' With the exceptions above indicated the whole of the items were conducted by Sir Frederick Bridge, who has practically completed a quarter of a century of solid and useful labour in connection with the Royal Choral Society. Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Sir Edward Elgar were both warmly received, and regrets were expressed at the absence of Sir Charles Stanford, who was detained by an unavoidable engagement at Cambridge. Sir Frederic Cowen was also away from town, but this gave Mr. Landon Ronald the opportunity to which his lengthy association with the Sunday Concerts entitled him. The loudest 'ovations' of the afternoon, apart from the cheers for the King and Queen and the 'one more cheer for our President,' were those bestowed upon Mr. Ben Davies (now approaching the fortieth anniversary of his public *débüt*) and Mr. H. L. Balfour after he had played the Stainer Prelude. Altogether, then, a very enjoyable and memorable function!

[The list of works mentioned at page 395 appears below, reprinted from the Jubilee Concert programme.]

Bach—St. Matthew Passion; Christmas Oratorio; Mass in B minor.  
 Barnby—The Lord is King.  
 Beethoven—Mass in D; Choral Symphony; Ruins of Athens.  
 Benoit—Lucifer.  
 Berlioz—Faust; The Childhood of Christ.  
 Brahms—Requiem; Triumphlied.  
 Bridge—The Flag of England; The Ballad of the Clampherdown; The Forging of the Anchor; Callirhoe; Rock of Ages; A Song of the English; The Inchcape Rock.  
 Coleridge-Taylor—Hiawatha; The Blind Girl of Castel Cuillé; The Atonement; A Tale of Old Japan; Kubla Khan.  
 Cowen—Ruth; Coronation Ode; The Veil.  
 Dvorák—Stabat Mater; Requiem; The Spectre's Bride.  
 Elgar—Caractacus; The Apostles; The Kingdom; The Dream of Gerontius; King Olaf; The Music-Makers; The Spirit of England: The Fourth of August; For the Fallen; To Women.  
 Gardiner, H. Balfour—News from Whydah.  
 Goetz—Psalm 137.  
 Gounod—Redemption; Mors et Vita; Requiem.  
 Hamilton Harty—The Mystic Trumpeter.  
 Handel—Messiah; Israel in Egypt; Judas Maccabæus; Belshazzar; Theodora; Samson; Jephtha; L'Allegro; Acis and Galatea; Ode on St. Cecilia's Day; Alexander's Feast.  
 Haydn—Creation.  
 Henschel—Stabat Mater.  
 Hiller—A Song of Victory.  
 Leoni—The Gate of Life.  
 Macfarren—St. John the Baptist; Joseph.

Mackenzie—The Rose of Sharon; The Dream of Jubal; The Cotter's Saturday Night; Bethlehem; The Witch's Daughter.

Mancinelli—Isaias.

Mendelssohn—Elijah; St. Paul; Athalie; Loreley; Hymn of Praise; Walpurgis Night.

Mozart—Requiem.

Parker—Hora Novissima.

Parry—Job; King Saul; Invocation to Music; War and Peace; Blest Pair of Sirens; The Pied Piper of Hamelin; The Chivalry of the Sea.

Rossini—Stabat Mater; Messe Solennelle.

Saint-Saëns—The Promised Land; Samson and Delilah.

Schubert—The Song of Miriam.

Smyth—Mass.

Spohr—The Last Judgment.

Stanford—The Revenge; The Voyage of Maeldune; St. Cecilia's Day; Eden; Stabat Mater; Songs of the Sea; Songs of the Fleet; At the Abbey Gate.

Sullivan—The Golden Legend; The Light of the World; The Martyr of Antioch.

Vaughan Williams—A Sea Symphony (Part 1).

Verdi—Requiem.

Wagner—Parsifal; The Holy Supper of the Apostles; Tannhäuser (Act 3); Lohengrin (Part 1); Flying Dutchman (Selections).

Wood, Charles—A Dirge for Two Veterans.

*This List does not include numerous Motets, Choruses, Part-songs and Carols.*

## THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF VINCENT D'INDY

BY M.-D. CALVOCORESSI

(Continued from May number, page 322)

### 'FERVAAL'

'Fervaal,' in my opinion, is a masterpiece, a work which all high-class operatic stages ought to include in their repertory, together with Wagner's, with 'Boris Godunov,' Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Maid of Pskof,' and 'Pelléas et Mélisande.' A masterpiece it appeared to me in 1898, when first produced at Paris, and a masterpiece I consider it to the present day.

I am quite aware that the history of the work during those twenty-three years affords little in support of my assertion. Shortly after 'Fervaal's' completion (1895), excerpts of it were given at one of the concerts organized at the Paris Opéra, 'in order,' it was explained, 'to give the public some idea of many contemporary French works which the management was unable to produce.' In 1897 'Fervaal' appeared on the stage of the Brussels Théâtre de la Monnaie. Most of the Paris critics were present, and many of them spoke highly of the work, others criticising it sharply on the ground that it was too direct an imitation of Wagner, that it lacked warmth, and that it was too intricate.

The following year 'Fervaal' was produced at Paris: not at the Opéra, but on the smaller and therefore less suitable stage of the Opéra-Comique, temporarily housed in the building that is now the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt. The balance of criticism, despite strictures of the same kind as before, was favourable. But whether the play might have become 'a success' remained undecided, the removal of the Opéra-Comique to its regular, far smaller premises, having rendered a continuance of the performances impossible.

A revival of 'Fervaal' at the Opéra, on December 31, 1912, seemed to give the work a better chance. The production was excellent. The great quarrel between Wagnerites and anti-Wagnerites had died out, and in any case the intervening years ensured better focussing. (Particularly instructive in that respect is, for instance, a comparison between Alfred Bruneau's article on 'Fervaal' of 1897 and his article of 1913. The former lays great stress on d'Indy's imitation of Wagner, the latter places matters in their proper light, and is full of praise.) The public was far better educated as regards modern music, works like 'Pelléas' and 'Boris Godunof' (to quote but those two) having been produced in the interval. Had that public proved responsive, there seemed to be no reason why 'Fervaal' should not be maintained in the repertory; so that—despite the fact that no great work ever owed its success in the first place to the public of the Paris Opéra—it may be alleged that 'Fervaal' has had a fair chance, and failed to make good. But I feel sure that the last word has not been said.

The allegation that d'Indy imitates Wagner is chiefly founded, as I said last month, on a few passing reminiscences and on a few analogies, some too general to afford a valid argument, and the remainder entirely superficial, if not imaginary. As to the assertion that the music of 'Fervaal' lacks warmth and vitality, I simply cannot understand it. I am convinced that in proportion as more music-lovers get familiar with that music, unfavourable opinions will lose ground and 'Fervaal' will find new admirers. It may contain scenes that are not all one would wish them to be; I think, for instance, that the musical interest flags in several parts of the otherwise very beautiful third Act. Yet as a whole 'Fervaal' teems with emotion, with music that is both lofty and convincing. Where the music is perforce more decorative than emotional—in the greater part of the second Act, with its wonderful apparitions and Druidic ceremonies—it again achieves supreme beauty and striking originality.

The poem is written on strictly Wagnerian principles. In the delineation of its principal characters, humanity and symbolism are blent very much in the same way as in Wagner's heroes, and for similar purposes. Fervaal is a young Celtic chief, the last of his race, the elect defender of his country against the Saracen invaders.\* By yielding to his love for Guilhen, the Saracen princess, he forfeits the favour of his gods. Arfagard, the High Priest, precipitates the catastrophe by recalling Fervaal to his duties; Guilhen, forsaken, launches her devastating hordes against Cravann, Fervaal's country. The Celts are defeated. Amid the horrors of the night following the battle, Guilhen and Fervaal meet again. Their love is stronger than death; and when Guilhen dies of exhaustion, Fervaal lifts her

in his arms, and with his precious burden climbs the slopes towards the peaks to which a choir of mystical voices, heralding the advent of the new and better religion foretold in ancient prophecy, calls him. Truly a splendid climax (despite the alleged obscurity of its symbolism), and one in which the music rises to a wonderful height.

The orchestration of 'Fervaal' is another point upon which certain critics have pounced in order to give a semblance of justification to their plea that d'Indy imitates Wagner. It employs four flutes (one of which alternates with the piccolo), three oboes (one alternating with the English horn), three clarinets, one bass clarinet (with which a contra-bass clarinet alternates), four bassoons, four saxophones, four horns, four trumpets, eight saxhorns, four trombones, one tuba, one bombardon, eight harps, the usual percussion, and strings (which include five-string contra-basses descending to the C). Together with the 'Symphonie sur un thème montagnard,' 'Fervaal' shows d'Indy's scoring at its very best. His methods are as individual as they are effective. And it is typical that, even with so great a mass of instruments at his command, he should evince his marked predilection for unmixed timbres. His scoring, no less rich and mellow in the half-shades or contrasts than in the *tutti*, is as clear-cut as are his motives, his harmonies, his modulations. I have already alluded to that feature, which is the hall-mark of his music.

D'Indy's 'Treatise of Composition' sets forth in unequivocal terms certain principles concerning structure and texture which are no less unequivocally illustrated in 'Fervaal.' The motives, he tells us, should be terse, and rich enough in distinctive features to be easily followed in the working-out. Whereas in symphonic music the composer remains free in his choice of modulations, in dramatic music, the modulations—whose sole object is always expression—are predetermined by the course of the action. Tonality, he adds, should be conceived in a broader sense than it usually is, and the meaning of the term modulation more accurately understood. To think that any notes or chords not belonging to the diatonic scale of a given key introduce a modulating element is a gross mistake. There are so many affinities between notes and chords that most of the possible triads may be included in the scheme of any tonality without disturbing its balance; and it is the alteration of that balance that alone constitutes a modulation.

As regards harmony, d'Indy's views are simple and uncompromising. There is but one chord—the triad. All other formations are merely the outcome of modifications temporarily introduced by melodic processes—adjunctions or alterations; in other words, are the result of melodic movement, do not exist *per se*, and should never be considered as static. Another instance of the important part played by that notion of movement in his conception of the texture of music and its expressive properties is afforded by the stress he

\* The anachronism is deliberate.

lays on the fact that the expressive value of certain modulations may be greatly affected by the interposition, as a transitory step, of even one 'neutral' formation—such as a diminished seventh or an augmented fifth.

It is in accordance with those views that d'Indy mainly uses as material short bold themes, which as a rule are elements of construction rather than constructed units—with the result that from the point of view of thematic structure, the music of 'Fervaal,' without falling short in appropriate dramatic expression, constantly tends towards the state of 'pure' music. Some of those themes play the part of leading motives; others are simply descriptive or decorative figures—at times mere touches—recurring as often as they are needed. The working out is conducted on strictly polyphonic lines. The recurrences and associations of themes may at times suggest that d'Indy devotes too finical a care to details, is too deliberate in his methods of drawing upon the resources of association. But even if one were to see in the idiom of 'Fervaal' signs and symbols as numerous, as definite and constant in meaning as the 'motives' which commentators like Schweitzer and Pirro discover in the works of Bach, it would be no sufficient reason for denying the vitality of the organism of which those 'cells' are the constitutive parts.

It has been remarked that in 'Fervaal' certain keys are almost uniformly affected to the expression of certain feelings, recurring after the fashion of the motives, or with the motives. That is true to a certain extent only; and when it occurs it is not the result of deliberate artifice. Indeed, the 'Treatise of Composition' emphatically states that no key is endowed *per se* with a distinctive colour: that the idiosyncrasies out of which certain theorists make so much capital are due to the relative frequency of open notes on the stringed instruments, of natural harmonics in the wind instruments, and so forth. Hence, a given key may seem to bear a certain character in music entrusted to bowed instruments, and a different character when produced by any other combination. The only true explanation, therefore, is that the keys are brought back by the sequence of modulations following the progress of and changes in the action.

The method followed by d'Indy for the working out of his themes is chiefly founded on the principle of rhythmic amplification and variation. It is in a great measure to the ingenuity and point of the rhythmic treatment that the vitality and expressive power of the music of 'Fervaal' are due. Wagner had very seldom resorted to similar means, which originally belong to 'pure' music, and in dramatic music come to their own for the first time in 'Fervaal.'

A good instance is afforded by the heroic theme:



among whose transformations the following may be adduced:



Further to illustrate the working of the principle, another theme which refers to Guilhen's queenly presence, her feminine grace and tenderness, may be quoted, with some of its variants:



Remembering the composer's axiom, that harmonies, or 'chords,' do not exist *per se*, but crop up as the outcome of melodic lines in motion encountering one another, one may proceed to consider his melodic and polyphonic methods, of which Ex. 2 above affords a very simple yet typical instance—an instance calling for no further comment. But there are cases when the encounter of melodic lines leads to results such as this:



Another very remarkable instance is the choral-writing in passages like the following (from the

wonderfully impressive scene of mythological apparitions in the second Act):

Ex. 7.

SOPRANI. A . . . . . a . . . . .

ALTI. A . . . . . a . . . . .

A . . . . . a . . . . .

a . . . . .

a . . . . .

a . . . . .

a . . . . .

In contrast with those essentially 'horizontal' devices, one finds in 'Fervaal' many instances of purely harmonic beauty and expressiveness. A case in point is the opening of Fervaal's lament after the death of Guilhen and Arfagard:

Ex. 8.

Ils dor - ment, tous ceux que j'ai - mais, Ils

*pp*

And with reference to effects of purely harmonic colour, one should not overlook the very telling use he makes (in the scene of the apparitions) of the whole-tone scale, one of the most misused devices in modern music, and one whose possibilities for good are very few:

Ex. 9.

*p* *cres.*

&c.

(To be concluded.)

## SOME ITALIAN COMPOSERS OF TO-DAY

(Continued from May number, page 326)

BY GUIDO M. GATTI

V.—VINCENZO DAVICO

Although fairly numerous, the compositions of Vincenzo Davico do not make a very bulky pile. They are mostly songs or short compositions for the pianoforte, each containing an image either brilliant or fascinating through the subtle emotion marking its outline. They are nearly always unilineal and monochord; they are born, live, and die in a brief space of time, but not without leaving in the soul of the listener an impression of tenderness. They are very short Japanese *tanke*, a few verses containing a deep thought or an exquisite image which the composer has translated into music, preserving the spirit intact, and with such nicety as not in any way to spoil the delicate design, although he often adds to the precision of the language the indeterminate halo of harmony. They are, in short, subdued cries of the soul, fugitive vibrations, almost imperceptible tremors which the musician knows how to evoke with a simplicity of means that is almost meagre, but full of savour. They show absolute scorn of the *cliché* and of the technical instrumental formula, so that at first sight some of the pages for the pianoforte might seem very little adapted for the instrument by a player who is accustomed to define as 'pianistic' certain traditional passages, and to consider inadequate those compositions that do not contain them.

Davico was among the first in Italy to accept the Debussy gospel. When still very young he had the courage to present himself to the public with works which were certainly not made to captivate the sympathies of the majority, more accustomed to plain, solid—even stale—bread, than to certain exotic spiced ragouts of French make. But Davico was too intoxicated by the breath of liberation which came to us from across the Alps (and which reached him, then living at Monte Carlo, sooner than it did most of us) to be able to practise that self-control of which he has shown himself capable in maturer years. Moreover, he was almost predestined to submit to Debussy's influence by the natural tendency which led him to love in art those same poetical or pictorial expressions which were almost the sole inspirations of the French composer. Davico, from the time he was a child, had disdained the forms of romantic sentimentalism (in music of hyper-melodism); the musing solitude among the mountains of his paternal Piedmont or facing the Mediterranean Sea, had moulded in him a delicate, sensitive spirit, with a tendency to consider the life of men and things as a slender, yet substantial, sequence of inward states of mind. Ever since his first collaborations with poetry he had shown a special inclination and an almost exclusive love for the mezzotint and 'mezzo-voce' poets—artists who are refined to the verge of morbidity, some concealing their ironical vision of mankind under