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If we admit that the composer is a musical expert, and consequently better able to decide what is desirable in music than the public, and agree once and for all that it is undesirable for him to compose simply to tickle the public palate, then it follows that the only way to better the conditions of music is to better public taste.

Mr. Stewart Macpherson's 'Music and its Appreciation' is an attempt to do this. In a book of some 150 pages he covers a great deal of musical ground, and presents a digest of the elementary work that a musician must know, and which he thinks it essential that an audience should know before it is capable of listening in the best sense of the word.

But I venture to think that in this the writer is mistaken, and for this reason: he is attempting to lead the layman to the gates of music along the same path that the professional must traverse, supplying him with a rough technique only modified so that he may acquire it more easily; whereas I believe that the approach may be made in quite another way by those only concerned in deriving pleasure in musical beauty. The composer is bound to equip himself technically, just as the architect must know his building-construction. But does it help you or me to a greater appreciation of, say, the Parthenon to know that the outermost columns in the front are not vertical but inclined slightly inwards? I do not think so, nor do I think it benefits the 'promenade' enthusiast to be able to chatter glibly about 'second subjects,' 'recapitulations,' 'developments,' 'codas,' and so forth.

The beauty of the Parthenon is there on the face of it, and if the inclination of the columns is necessary, it will have an effect without your knowing of it, and it is more than likely that if you do know of it, you will worry over trying to notice it, instead of receiving the æsthetic impression it produces. So, too, the beauty of a symphony is purely in the sound, and the constructive facts necessary for the composition of beautiful sound go out, or ought to go out, when it is complete, just as the architect's scaffold disappears when his building is done. For what is the point of laying out a symphony on certain lines? Simply to produce a feeling of balance, and it does not say much for this sense in us if we have to have it explained before we can realise it. Most people would agree that the first two movements of the 'Peer Gynt' Suite played by themselves sound incomplete, without knowing that the four together produce a whole very roughly in symphonic form.

Mr. Macpherson maintains that the knowledge of technique brings with it additional pleasures, and while I do not deny this I maintain that those pleasures have nothing to do with music. Scaffolding and derricks may be, and often undoubtedly are, very fine, but they have nothing to do with the beauty of the building.

A friend who is an enthusiast for music, but not a musician, once said that the amateur who thinks he 'knows something about music thinks he knows everything,' and this is very often so. The most bigoted person is the one on the borderland, not a trained musician, and not a listener content to know nothing and hear everything. On the other hand, very illuminating and helpful criticism frequently comes from people who are subject to musical impressions, but quite unable to approach the art from the technical point of view. I heard a lady say once that she often saw cathedrals when she heard Beethoven, that Debussy suggested moonlight and vague shadows, and I say this is better criticism and truer to the intentions of the composer than pointing out that the A? Sonata with variations is not a sonata at all, or discoursing on the harmonic licences of the 'Images.'

I would go further and say that it is the only kind of criticism that counts (except, of course, technical analysis addressed to the technician), and that it is by adopting a frankly imaginative attitude that the true beauty of music can be realised, and the reconciliation between composer and audience effected.

Nor do I believe in 'educating' the listener by leading him through the easy to the difficult, but would sooner see him plunged straight away into great musical depths, where the reason must drown and only the fancy float. A painter I know, who has no knowledge of music, is by no means responsive to the simpler kind, but on one occasion was profoundly impressed by Ravel's 'Spanish Rhapsody,' a work of very modern type, and harmonically most perplexing to those who try to 'understand,' which tends to show that the uninitiated are capable of going to the heart of the matter if only they set about it in the right way. In this connection much harm is done by the so-called criticism in the Press. The average critic seems to consider himself a kind of mediator between the composer and his audience. He is there to explain what is not understood, it appears, but he does not realise that the audience cares not two straws for his explanation. Where the critic could be of great service, if he would, is by putting himself wholly on the side of the audience, and giving a purely personal account of his impressions. Once he took this point of view perhaps the public would too, and would play its real and invaluable part as listener.

H. P. S.

LONDON OPERA HOUSE.

BY HERMANN KLEIN.

PRODUCTION OF 'THE CHILDREN OF DON.'

A Cymric Music-Drama in Three Acts and a Prologue.
By 'T. E. Ellis.' Music by Josef Holbrooke.

GODS.

Nodens ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Enzo Bozano.
Lyd ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Humphrey Bishop.
Don ..	..	..	..	..	..	Miss Gertrude Blomfield.

MORTALS.

Math ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Henry Weldon.
Gwydion ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Alan Turner.
Govannion ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Andrew Shanks.
Elan ..	..	..	..	..	..	Madame Augusta Doria.
Dylan ..	..	..	..	..	..	Miss Jacobs.
The Sacrifice ..	..	..	..	..	..	Miss Von Nichols.
Gwion ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Frederick Blamey.
Gowwin ..	..	..	..	..	..	Madame Jeanne Jomelli.
Arawn ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Frank Pollock.
1st Priest ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. De Moraes.
2nd Priest ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Arthur Philips.
Demon ..	..	..	..	..	..	Mr. Henri Altschuler.

Stage Director, M. JACQUES COINI.

Conductor, Herr ARTHUR NIKISCH.

It would have been a joy to welcome as a complete success the ambitious work which saw the light for the first time at the London Opera House on Saturday, June 15. The influence of such a success upon the future of English Opera would have been incalculable; it must have been beneficial in the highest degree. As it is, the question is rather what harm may have been wrought by failure—failure so unqualified that a lukewarm first-night verdict was instantly followed by critical condemnation of the most emphatic kind. A result such as this may have set back the growth of native art in connection with the lyric stage just at its most favourable moment for development; but I fervently hope it has not.

It were vain to dwell upon regrets. But when a salutary lesson can be derived from misfortune, it is worth while to stay and reflect a moment upon causes. How often has it happened that an effort lofty in aspiration and ideal, colossal in plan and structure, picturesque in conception and external qualities, has

proved, when submitted to the practical test of the opera-house, to be disappointing and futile! 'The Children of Don' appears to be a case in point. Here was a subject of Welsh (that is to say, British, not foreign) origin that could lay claim in some essentials to epic grandeur. The suitability of these ancient Sagas for operatic treatment may be open to doubt; but at least the librettist—whom we all now know to be Lord Howard de Walden—had unearthed an elemental tragedy of the 'Nibelungen' order, the sort of stuff that operatic trilogies are generally supposed to be made of, and handed it to an English musician whom good judges have for some time regarded as the likeliest of our 'coming men' to write a first-class, up-to-date opera. Given the necessary opportunities for completion, for casting, rehearsing, and mounting, for ultimate production under an eminent conductor, what could have been more encouraging, more gratifying? Lord Howard de Walden's wealth secured nearly all these privileges; Mr. Oscar Hammerstein's resources and the available services of Mr. Arthur Nikisch did the rest.

The outcome of this laborious undertaking revealed from first to last a regrettable series of mistakes and miscalculations. The plot of 'The Children of Don,' a brief *résumé* of which appeared in the *Musical Times* for May, proved in action to be neither dramatic nor comprehensible. Feeble characterization and faulty construction only intensified the difficulty created by a text which, however sonorous and high-flown its verse, was singularly unfitted for vocal purposes and overburdened with language no less uninspiring to the composer than trying to the singer. Unfortunately, too, these problems of pronunciation were presented to a group of artists who, with two or three exceptions, seemed quite unable to grapple with the enormities of their task. Few of their words travelled across the footlights, and, the auditorium being darkened throughout, the audience found it practically impossible to understand what was being said or to follow what was being done. A finer disregard for one of the most urgent necessities in the crusade on behalf of native opera could hardly have been exemplified. So long as we cannot understand opera sung in English we shall prefer to hear it better interpreted through the medium of a foreign tongue.

Mr. Josef Holbrooke's score is a marvel of ingenuity, a monument of capability and promise. Surely the desert that can provide such oases must one day furnish something entirely beautiful. But first we must get out of the tropical region where Welsh Gods, erring, bloodthirsty mortals and stage wolves become mixed in inextricable confusion. Besides, when he has a fine human story to deal with, this clever composer will be more merciful to ordinary human throats; he will not regard it as his art-mission to fabricate interval after interval that makes neither for good declamation nor significance and beauty of effect. The orchestra may be Mr. Holbrooke's first consideration, the stage may come next, and the singers merely a 'bad third'; but it is not from this order of things that the masterpieces of modern music-drama have been or can be evolved. Even the rare moments in 'The Children of Don' when sheer harmonic beauty and melodic charm show what the composer can do if it please him, tend to disprove such an assumption.

The question of originality, of how much or how little the Wagnerian method has been employed, is in this case of secondary importance. Josef Holbrooke is obviously a consummate master of his craft and has something of his own to say. But if he would write operas that are to live, he must obey certain laws that no man has disobeyed with impunity from the days of

Gluck and Mozart down to this present era of Wagner, Strauss, and Debussy. Moreover, he must cultivate the true sense of the theatre, the art of building up a climax and judging the relative values of dynamic *nuances* (more crescendos, fewer diminuendos), the faculty for imbuing every musical phrase with direct, appropriate meaning,—above all, the courage for eliminating the insignificant, the superfluous, the needlessly ugly and distorted. When he has accomplished this, Mr. Holbrooke will only want a strong libretto to be able to write a great opera. No one who has perceived the real merit in 'The Children of Don' can possibly feel any doubt as to that.

The performance was creditable, and no more. It quite conveyed the idea that a month's rehearsal had been expended upon a work that required three months' rehearsal on top of three months' hard preparatory study. The singers at least knew their music, and struggled through it with a loyalty and devotion beyond praise. But the English diction was neglected, the stage movements and gestures were mostly meaningless, the balance between voices and orchestra was indifferently preserved. The staging of the new opera was on the whole artistic, but the consistent employment of semi-nocturnal scenes and dim, misty atmospheres proved extremely trying.

Church and Organ Music.

THE ORGAN IN ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, BRISTOL.

From an account of the organs in the magnificent church of St. Mary Redcliffe, most ably compiled by Mr. R. T. Morgan, organist of the church, we read that there is little evidence of any organs which were in use there previous to the 18th century. But local tradition has it that the Puritans most zealously carried out the instructions issued in 1644 that among other improvements 'all organs and the frames and cases wherein they stand in all Churches and Chapels aforesaid shall be taken away and utterly defaced, and none other hereafter set up in their places.' In their enthusiasm for sweeping away 'monuments of idolatry and superstition,' the Puritans smashed all the stained-glass windows of the church, and marched through the streets with the organ pipes, the while blowing them, accompanied by others waving flags cut from surplices. We in our more enlightened age can only wish these poor misguided souls could re-visit the scenes of their ephemeral triumph. But before contemplating the latest and most complete protest to their bigotry, it would be interesting to note the gradual progress by which St. Mary Redcliffe has become so famous to lovers of the organ. It seems that after the 'blessed Reformation' St. Mary's possessed no organ until 1726, when the instrument built for the church by John Harris (son of Renatus) and John Byfield, Senr., was finished and opened on St. Thomas's Day, December 21, 1726. This instrument is remarkable as having been the first to possess an octave-coupler. The compass (according to Dr. Hopkins) was in some respects unusually complete, the Great organ descending to CCC. A 'spring of communication' attached to the Great organ brought into action a virtual sub-octave coupler.

The good people of Bristol were very proud of their organ, and seemed peculiarly happy in pointing out its great superiority over the organ then in St. Paul's Cathedral.