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Erik Satie's 'Parade'

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followers, was typical of the degeneracy of the Second Empire and among the causes of its decay. What should be said, then, of the so-called lighter music of this Georgian England?

While it is folly to bar all cheerful music, and to deny it any good quality, there is quite as much danger in the theory, very popular just now in certain quarters, that all music of serious aim is inherently dull. That, I think, is the lesson which can be drawn from this revival by those—not necessarily pedants or superior persons—who go to a performance like this seeking something more than just a couple of hours' entertainment—in other words, by what may be assumed to be the majority of readers of a journal like the *Musical Times*.

It was a bold stroke of policy to entrust the principal parts to singers who have made a name in Grand Opera, but it was equally bold to transfer to Grand Opera from the concert-platform artists who had been trained for oratorio and song. The success in the first case is a good augury for the second experiment, and the adaptability shown by the singers was remarkable. They were a little heavy, it is true, on the first night, but they have gained in lightness of touch ever since. Special praise is due to Miss Gladys Ancrum as Mlle. Lange, Miss Ellinger as Clairette, Mr. Webster Millar as Ange Pitou, Mr. Herbert Langley as Pomponnet, Mr. Arthur Wynne as Larivaudière, while the light comedy of Mr. Aubrey Fitzgerald in the small part of Trenitz was admirable. There is nothing but praise for the chorus, for the scenery, and for the drama, which in the second Act are splendid in inverse ratio to their extent.

ALFRED KALISCH.

ERIK SATIE'S 'PARADE.'

BY NORMAN PETERKIN.

In view of the promised production of 'Parade' by the Russian Ballet at the Alhambra,* a few notes and particulars of it may be of interest.

'Parade' was originally planned before the war by Jean Cocteau, a French modernist poet, Paulet Thevenaz the artist, and Stravinsky the composer of 'The Firebird' and 'Petrouchka.' For some reason or other the ballet never materialised and the plan was dropped. Later Cocteau took up the idea again and collaborated with Pablo Picasso, generally regarded as the leader of the cubist painters in Europe, and Erik Satie, perhaps one of the least known and most curious figures in modern music. The result of the collaboration, 'Parade, Ballet Réalist,' was produced at the Châtelet Theatre in Paris in May, 1917, the cast including Lopokova and Leonide Massine, the latter being responsible for the choreography. The production caused a veritable tumult, and there was almost a riot in the theatre. In the end, however, enthusiastic applause silenced the hisses and cat-calls of the objecting faction. I do not know if the London production is to be identical with the original: if so it is fairly safe to prophesy that Londoners have a unique thrill in store. Whether they will like it is another matter.

The characters in 'Parade' are a Chinese Juggler, two Acrobats, a Little American girl, and the three Managers, the action taking place in a Paris street, outside a music-hall, and on a Sunday. In order to entice the public to come to the show there has been a parade of some of the artists, similar to the way in which, as we all can remember, Barnum's and other circuses went in procession through the town before a performance. The managers of the troupe are outside the theatre indulging in tall talk and bombast about the merits of their performers, and endeavouring to induce the public to 'walk up.' The audience, mistaking the preliminary parade for a sample of the show inside, is not impressed and does not respond to their blandishments. Seeing the non-success of their managers the performers come out of the empty hall, and themselves try to persuade the public to patronise the performance, but without any success.

Quite a natural and simple story this, but it was the treatment of it that aroused such violent antagonism in Paris. Cocteau, the writer of the scenario, compares it to a Punch and Judy show and is at pains to tell us that there is no

hidden symbolism in it. Referring to the sub-title, 'Ballet Réalist,' he writes, 'I wanted to give true realism its place in the ballet. What has been known till now as realistic theatrical art is a kind of absurdity, as that sort of realism consists in putting on the stage real articles which lose their reality as soon as they are introduced into artificial environments. The theatre is the art of illusion and should always remain so—a pronouncement that most of us will not quarrel with, I think. He goes on to say with regard to the work of Picasso, who designed the scenery and costumes, 'In all his work there is true realism, that is to say, the world is weighed, measured, verified and felt, with a love and respect for its volumes, its material aspects, its movements, its shadows. He often declares that he goes along the street armed with a foot rule measuring objects before putting them on canvas.'

Whether the general public, uneducated in cubist esthetics, will find much that it can regard as true realism in the work of Picasso for 'Parade' is to be doubted. They will probably prefer the theory to the practice. Most of the derision that the production met with in Paris seems to have been vented on the costumes (though of course this does not necessarily mean they were bad), the like of which had probably not been seen on the European stage before. In their strangeness and remoteness from convention, the designs used in the Javanese Puppet and Shadow plays seem, however, to bear an affinity with the cubist costumes of 'Parade.'

The Paris critics did not like the dresses, and said so in unambiguous terms. Their ire was greatly roused by the horse that appears in the ballet, and which, truth to tell, in Picasso's version of it resembles nothing so much as those animals we were accustomed to see in the pantomimes of our youth, animals in which the front portion is operated by one person and the rear by another.

The dresses of the Managers also excited great hilarity. They were enormous, and gave the effect of marionettes of unnatural size. The 'Manager from New York' had a costume with suggestions of sky-scrapers and other modern works in it, while the 'Manager in Dress Clothes' was totally unlike anything ever turned out by our best tailors. The curtain and scenery for the production do not appear to have aroused such violent feelings as the costumes did, the Paris public probably being inured by Picasso's pictures exhibited there from time to time.

As regards Massine's choreography we are told that there was no attempt to achieve decorative effects as in the older ballets, but 'a desire to amplify the real, to introduce the detail of daily truths and rhythms into the vocabulary of dancing; for truth can always arouse the highest emotions.'

For musicians, the most interesting part of the ballet would be Satie's music. As I have said, he is one of the least known figures in modern music, yet undoubtedly one of the most intriguing, though quite a number of authorities regard him as nothing but an eccentric poseur and charlatan. This I think is a hasty and superficial estimate on the part of those who, failing to penetrate beyond the surface of his music, have missed the irony of it, and have been repelled by the extraordinary titles and indications in his scores.

This is not the moment for a dissertation on Satie's aims and achievements, but it might be mentioned that the more widely known Debussy, in the formation of his unique idiom, owed far more to Satie than he did to the Russians, a fact generally ignored. Both Debussy and Ravel saw the importance of his work, and it was mainly through their efforts that he at length emerged from the obscurity in which he dwelt for so many years.

Satie has been termed a cubist composer, though what the term exactly signifies in this connection I am unable to say. If it means that his music is mordantly witty, perverse, and unlike anything else, then by all means let him be cubist. In any case it is said that he is the preferred composer of the cubists. He cannot be classed with any other writer of the day, but he might be defined as the incarnation of the comic spirit in music, comic here bearing the significance that George Meredith gave to it. Obviously he was the destined collaborator for Picasso and Cocteau, and his music for the ballet hardly met with less hostility than their share of it.

Convention and Satie are leagues apart, and so it will be understood that his music has nothing in common with what

* As we go to press we learn that the production will not take place during the present season.—ED., *M. T.*

we understand by ballet music. We are saved from trying to formulate its basis by his own comments on it :

'I composed only a background to throw into relief the noises which the playwright considers indispensable to the surrounding of each character with its own atmosphere. These, imitating noises of waves, revolvers, typewriters, sirens, or aeroplanes, are in music of the same character as the bits of newspapers, painted wood-grain, and other everyday objects that the cubist painters employ frequently in their pictures in order to localise objects and masses in nature.

This is a sane and luminous attitude, and might have helped the critics, one is tempted to think, to keep in correct perspective and to treat as details only the very things that have usurped all their attention, to the detriment of their judgment of the music as a whole.

Satie's score opens with a 'Prelude du Rideau Rouge,' which is in the form of a fugue, wholly orthodox and quite charming. On the entrance of the first Manager, the music changes in character and becomes more sprightly, being cleverly evolved from what has gone before. Then the Chinese Juggler performs to music that is delightfully *bizarre* and illustrative, besides being of suitable Oriental flavour. As this ends the second Manager comes on, and one hears the music for the Little American Girl, quite typical Satie with suggestions of syncopated melody and rhythm emerging to the surface now and again in a whimsical manner.

In turn this is succeeded by a 'Ragtime du Paque-bot,' which Satie marks *Triste*. The opening section of this would enormously tickle the ears of our ragtime-lovers, and they would no doubt imagine they were in for a good thing by Irving Berlin or Nat D. Ayer!

The second section, I am afraid, would soon disillusion them and speedily make them think that something had gone wrong with the orchestra! Then comes 'Acrobates,' written in valse-time with the quips and quirks of the performers cleverly suggested in music that is quite simple. The concluding numbers are 'Suprême effort et chute des managers,' built out of previously-heard material, and 'Suite au Prélude du Rideau Rouge,' also developed from the opening fugue.

Scattered throughout the score are such indications as *A mi-corps, Prendre un air faux, Vertueux, Tremble comme une feuille* (In the ragtime), *Gluant*, and others equally lucid.

Over their significance we need not ponder, for Satie long ago decided that to become famous one must be eccentric, and these are but part of the surface mannerisms that have procured for him the name of a charlatan and made him more famous as a humorist than as a composer. One wonders why this music so infuriated the critics. It is simple, quite melodious in parts, not particularly dissonant, delightfully witty, impertinent, and ironical, and very French. It fulfils its functions in the ballet in a most admirable manner, exactly carrying out what Satie claims for it.

In this particular score there are but few of those disconnected, vague, and sonorous harmonies that one meets with in a great deal of Satie's other work, and which pointed the way for Debussy and others who followed.

There is no doubt that 'Parade,' taken as a whole, is a step in a direction that has infinite possibilities—possibilities that the Russian ballet would do well not to ignore. That it has already exerted influence is evidenced in the productions of the Balli Plastici at Rome last year. These were the joint enterprise of the Swiss poet Gilbert Clavel, the Italian futurist painter Fortune Depero, and a group of young musicians including Casella, Malipiero, Bartok, and Lord Berners. It differed from 'Parade' inasmuch as the performances were not by human actors but by marionettes, which Depero designed, and which show the influence of 'Parade.' The music of Casella and Lord Berners also betrayed the influence of Satie's ironical spirit, but used a more advanced and pungent idiom—an idiom that seemed a little heavy-handed for the purpose and not so finely poised as the work of Satie in 'Parade.'

The French composer's work is not well known in England, and one looks forward with keen anticipation to the production of the ballet. Will the occasion prove to be a repetition of what occurred when the music of Schönberg and Ornstein was first heard here?

SIR W. H. HADOW ON SIR HUBERT PARRY.

A crowded audience at the Musical Association meeting on June 17, with Sir Frederick Bridge in the chair, had the privilege of listening to a finely worded appreciation of the late Sir Hubert Parry, delivered by Sir W. H. Hadow, which was illustrated by some choruses from the deceased musician's works, admirably sung by students of the Royal College of Music under the direction of Prof. H. P. Allen. The lecturer began by remarking that our musical history contained a lamentable number of what Bacon called the deserts and waste-places of time. Of all our dark periods the blackest was the third decade of the 19th century, of which the records of our provincial Festivals gave sufficient evidence. At the nadir of our fortunes, when we had entirely ceased to count among the musical nations of Europe, there appeared at the Gloucester Festival of 1880 a cantata entitled 'Scenes from Shelley: Prometheus Unbound.' The audience was frankly bewildered by the new idiom, the critics filled the air with their customary complaints of obscurity, extravagance, and an undue straining of resources. No one seemed to have had any idea that on that evening English music had after many years come again to its own, and that it had come with a masterpiece in its hand. Sir Charles Stanford's generous appreciation of Parry's music was the first authoritative pronouncement in its favour.

The year 1894, when he succeeded Sir George Grove as director of the Royal College, saw a notable turning-point in Parry's career. The oratorio form, which he had always used with considerable freedom, had ceased to be a fit vehicle for his thought. For the rest of his life his chief choral compositions were, with a few exceptions, either settings of the Latin Liturgy, or the cantata and symphonia sacrae,—close-woven, concentrated, simple almost to austerity, in which he found expression for some of the deepest thoughts that have ever penetrated the heart of man. It was worth noting how the form grew under his hand, resolutely discarding all that was non-essential, turning aside from every external appeal, intent on one thing and one alone, to interpret the very centre of the vision, and gaining in power and intensity as the years wore on. Yet it would be wholly wrong to conclude that even in these later days he took an ascetic view of art. No man touched life at more points than he, and music to him, as Dr. Vaughan Williams has well said, was a part of his life. To the end of his days he had a boy's high spirits and a boy's sense of enjoyment, but as he himself has told us, 'every great artist is serious at heart,' and though his laughter was irresistible, yet he never forgot that 'if fun is good, truth is better, and love best of all.'

His music might be conveniently divided into the customary three periods: pupillage, adventure, and discovery. The gift of composition does not issue at full growth like Athena from the head of Zeus; it is the reward of long training and steady endeavour. During his early years Parry had already begun to show some of the qualities which he was afterwards to turn to such account: dignity and sincerity of theme, firm intellectual grasp of design and texture, purity of line, beauty of concerted sound. It needed only that all this equipment should find its due occasion for use; that it should be vitalised by an inspiration which should lift it from the heights of perfected craftsmanship to those Olympian peaks where dwell alone the immortals. Such an inspiration he found in Shelley's 'Prometheus.' With it he entered beyond cavil or question into the company of the great creative artists. In 'Blest Pair of Sirens' he began to show his power for building up great epic masses of sound. In all his works of this period there were moments of that sheer divine inspiration which are possible only to the highest genius, and which the highest genius does not often attain.

Goethe in a fine simile compared poems to the stained-glass windows of a cathedral: if you stand outside they are dark and unmeaning; if you enter the portal the master's design is made manifest by the light of heaven shining through it. This truth lay at the heart and centre of Parry's later cantatas. We should wholly misunderstand them unless we realised that their essential purpose was to lead us within the gates, to show us the true meaning of the words which they interpreted. Their astonishing technical skill was so entirely subordinated to this end that we were in danger of overlooking it, as indeed he