

The Dramatic Works of Vincent d'Indy

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created here. Occasionally, but very rarely, we have noted the same degree of stillness during a *pianissimo* in the execution of a choral piece: for instance, when the unaccompanied Evening Hymn in Sullivan's 'Golden Legend' was being sung under Barnby; and again, only last month, when the splendid Glasgow Orpheus Choir was singing Elgar's 'Death on the Hills.' These experiences have helped one to form conclusions as to the form of musical sounds that impress the listener most deeply in this huge auditorium. There can be no question, to our thinking, that it is a case of the human voice first, and the rest—not precisely nowhere, but certainly a long way behind. Speaking personally, we consider that relative beauty of musical effect at the Albert Hall, or, in other words, the suitability of its acoustic qualities for the kind of music that is being performed, should be classified in the following order: (1) Choir; (2) solo voice; (3) organ; (4) solo instrument; (5) orchestra; with (6) military band, quite in the rear.

It should be remembered, nevertheless, that when in the 'nineties the 'free' Sunday concerts (free to a few square feet of the gallery) were gradually becoming established, the sole attraction was either an organ recital by Mr. Bending or Mr. Statham, or else the excellent performances of a *string* military band—that of the Royal Artillery—under Cavaliere Zavertal, who happily, unlike some musicians of a later day, had a wholesome dislike for the noise of percussion instruments.

To round off this chronicle of the closing years of the century and of the management of Mr. Wentworth Cole (who died in 1901), there is very little to add. Memorable farewell concerts include those of:

Prosper Sainton, June 25, 1883.
Christine Nilsson, June 20, 1888.
(Also at Balfe Memorial Concert, June 10, 1885.)
Sims Reeves, May 11, 1891.
Edward Lloyd, December 12, 1900.

And, later,

Adelina Patti, December 1, 1906.
Charles Santley, May 1, 1907.
Emma Albani, October 14, 1911.

Among other great artists who have given concerts here, may be named:

Theresa Tietjens.	Nordica.
Trebelli-Bettini.	Paderewski.
Melba.	Jean and Edouard de Reszke.
Tetrazzini.	Caruso.
Lemmens-Sherrington.	Kubelik.
Patey.	Kreisler.
Clara Butt.	Pachman.

For many years, too, during the lifetime of William Carter and Ambrose Austin, all the National Saints'-day Anniversaries used to be celebrated by Festival concerts, which invariably drew large crowds. They belonged to the ballad order, it is true, but they gave opportunity for hearing the more familiar of our national melodies and aroused the right kind of spirit. There is room for them now if they could be revived in a

better kind of way. Meanwhile the grandest and most spectacular Festivals held at the Albert Hall are those connected with Freemasonry. The most noteworthy have been the following:

Installation of the Prince of Wales as Grand Master of the Freemasons (1875).
Installation of the Duke of Connaught as Grand Master of the Freemasons (1901)—when the rank of Past Assist. Grand Director of Ceremonies was conferred upon the new Manager of the Hall, Mr. Hilton Carter.
Bi-Centenary of the Grand Lodge of England (1917).

(To be continued.)

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF VINCENT D'INDY

By M.-D. CALVOCORESSI

I.—'LE CHANT DE LA CLOCHE'

Vincent d'Indy has written four dramatic works: 'Le Chant de la Cloche' (1885); 'Fervaal' (1895); 'L'Etranger' (1902); and 'La Légende de Saint Christophe' (1915). The first is intended for concert performance only, the other three for the stage. The fact that he has always written his own poems has afforded a foundation for one of the many specious arguments put forward in order to brand him as a mere imitator of Wagner, all of which are founded upon some superficial analogies, and ignore essential points—such as the quality of his motives, of his scoring; his methods of construction and working out; the idiosyncrasies of his harmonies and rhythms—in short, all that constitutes the substance of his music and determines its form and colour.

To the influence of Wagner d'Indy certainly owes a good deal: as much, perhaps, as to that of his own master, César Franck. Indeed, he is one of the very few composers upon whom Wagner's influence, generally dangerous in proportion as it is more direct, has proved beneficial. From all that Wagner teaches he has disengaged the vital principle of organic structure in dramatic music—extending it, and applying it to his own purposes: to the utterance of an artistic message which owes nothing to Wagner nor to any other composer, and is expressed in an idiom which, always free from any tendency to imitativeness, grows with the progress of d'Indy's evolution more and more typically his own.

As may be expected, it is in 'Le Chant de la Cloche,' a comparatively early work, that we find the most direct evidence of Wagner's influence—chiefly manifest in a few general characteristics of colour and movement. But the score evinces sufficient originality and vitality to justify in full the verdict by which it was awarded the Grand Prize of the City of Paris in the year 1885.

'Le Chant de la Cloche,' a dramatised version of Schiller's 'Lied von der Glocke,' consists of a prologue and seven scenes. The action takes place in an old city of Germany. Wilhelm, a

founder, is nearing the end of his life. His last labour—his *magnum opus*—will be the casting of a huge bell. Before proceeding with his task he calls up the vision of all the occasions on which bells have played a part in his life, from his baptism to a devastating fire which he helped to suppress, from the sweet hours of his love and betrothal to the lonely night in the bell-tower, during which, amid many fantastic visions, he beheld the wraith of his lost *fiancée*. After all those scenes have loomed and vanished, the bell is cast, and Wilhelm dies. The day comes when the bell is to ring for the first time. Experts have congregated to examine Wilhelm's work, and pompously pronounce it faulty. The bell, they say, will never give forth a sound. The people, noticing the absence of Wilhelm, and thinking that he shirks the result of the test, grow angry and prepare to loot his house. But from the door emerges the funereal procession, and suddenly the bell begins to ring. The pedants are confounded, and the voices of the people join in a hymn of praise to the departed master-founder.

The poem, as one sees, affords ample occasion for emotion as well as picturesqueness. Vincent d'Indy's musical treatment, broad, simple, and forcible, does full justice to all its possibilities. In all its essentials—tonal structure, harmony and polyphony, conduct of modulations, configuration and treatment of motive—the work conforms most strictly to classical principles; and one can hardly understand how the composer at the time when he wrote it could have been described as a remorseless ultra-modernist, eager to accumulate harsh discords and laboured complications. There are certain earlier works of d'Indy—for instance, the orchestral triptych 'Wallenstein'—in which he asserts his temperamental idiosyncrasies more fully, and treads a far bolder path. His 'Symphonie sur un thème montagnard français,' which bears the Opus No. 21 (that of 'Le Chant de la Cloche' being No. 18), marks a far more advanced stage of his evolution—especially from the point of view of harmonic and rhythmic invention. It would be difficult to point to any trait of technique or of style differentiating the music of 'Le Chant de la Cloche' in a manner that calls for special attention, or may provoke special reactions in certain listeners—traits which are to be found in almost every page of 'Fervaa' or of 'Saint Christophe.' Here it is in the spirit of the music rather than in this or that actual peculiarity that the characteristics of d'Indy's individuality are to be found; and in the directness of his utterance, the terseness and plasticity of his motives, his avoidance of ready-made formulæ and ornamentation, of rhetorical commonplaces, d'Indy reveals a dislike for ambiguity that is shown as well in his clear-cut, strictly definite harmonizations (in which the elaborate chromaticism so dear to Wagner plays a negligible part, if any) as in the predilection for pure timbres which characterises his method of scoring.

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The music of 'Le Chant de la Cloche' reaches its highest level in the fourth scene (the vision in the bell-tower). Wilhelm hears the mysterious chant of the bells; the gargoyles and sculptured figures that surround him come to life, a pageant of elves, gnomes, and will-o'-the-wisps heralds the appearance of his lost sweetheart. The chorus blending with the orchestra gives more than a foretaste of the wonderful effects that abound in 'Fervaa' and in 'Saint Christophe.' Rhythms and colours come as the direct expression of perfectly untrammelled and genuinely poetic imagination. This scene is all the more interesting as it affords one of the very few instances in which d'Indy's music devotes itself to evocations of fairyland, the only other two that I can recall being his tone-poems 'La Forêt Enchantée' and 'Saugefleurie.'

The same legendary, dreamy quality permeates the atmosphere of the more intimate scenes, accounting perhaps for the calm, contemplative colour of the love-scene, endowing that of the baptism with subtle charm, alleviating the grim moment of Wilhelm's death. The forcible scenes of the conflagration and the village feast (whose resemblances to the similar scenes in the 'Meistersinger' have often been mentioned) naturally stand in strong contrast, affording fine instances of picturesque music, never over-laden, and telling without condescension to cheap effects.

As a whole, 'Le Chant de la Cloche' is a lofty and delightful work, original enough in conception and in execution to be worthy of being included in the number of works made available to concert-goers. It need not arrest the attention of the investigator to the same extent as the composer's later works. But that point has nothing to do with its value as a work of art.

II.—THE LATER WORKS

'Fervaa,' 'L'Etranger,' and 'La Légende de Saint Christophe' mark three stages in the composer's purposeful, unswerving evolution. Considered severally, they enable us to ascertain beyond the shadow of a doubt—even without the help of the very characteristic 'Treatise of Composition,' in which d'Indy reveals not only his æsthetic creed, but the principles underlying his own practical methods—the influences that really determined his evolution, influences affecting both the elements of his musical style and the process of their co-ordination. The study of those three works will show the essential difference between the influence of Wagner on him—which is general, and manifest only so far as the common principle of deriving practically the whole of the musical substance from leading motives is concerned—and two influences that are specifically musical, both deep and far-reaching in their effects—that of Church music and that of folk-music.

Before dealing with this point, it is well to note that those works, in their chronological sequence, show the progress of d'Indy's dramatic ideal towards mysticism. In 'Fervaa' a strong

undercurrent of religious ideality asserts itself, predominating at times over the purely human elements of the drama, a conflict between love and duty. In 'L'Etranger' the human element is contingent upon a religious mission that the principal character has to fulfil. 'La Légende de Saint Christophe' illustrates the life of the saint as described in the 'Legenda Aurea' of Jacques de Voragine—his long quest for the Supreme power, his errors, the revelation of God, his repentance, and his martyrdom. Therefore the intervention in the music of elements derived from Church music (plain-song and the works of the early contrapuntists) is natural and necessary.

But the question of the influence of Church music (and likewise of folk-music, which has similar consequences), raises a more general and far more important problem, whose terms and solution may be stated here, but only in the briefest and roughest manner. Their full discussion, which I hope to attempt at an early date,* would call for more space than should be taken up in an article upon one composer's works.

There is no lack of good authorities in support of the view that the modal and tonal system founded on the use of the tempered scales, major and minor, with their fixed harmonic tripod of tonic, dominant, and subdominant, their secondary diatonic harmonies, extensible only by chromatic ornamentation or by modulation—a system arrived at after a long and laborious process of evolution—constitutes not only an improvement, but a permanent and inviolable law of musical art; that this system, with the conditions, obligations, and restrictions that it implies—the system whose possibilities were illustrated by the masterpieces of many generations before the ulterior course of evolution indicated a swerving—is final, may and must suffice to all genuine creative artists; that the reversion to the less uniform elements of Church music or of folk-music is a mere regression. That, however, is a question not of theories or of opinions, but of facts. We must consider not whether given that system (and it should be remembered that its consequences, direct and indirect, are far-reaching enough to affect not only the melodic and harmonic texture of music, but its very rhythmical structure, and thence the whole *vexata questio* of form) music could and will progress constantly in one given direction. The question is, Have the art and technique of music actually acquired, under the influence of Church music and folk-music, not only a wider range of expressiveness, but, as regards texture and structure, greater freedom and power than has yet been achieved through ceaseless elaboration and re-elaboration—unavoidably along the line of increasing complexity and artificiality—of the limited range of fundamental elements to which most theorists and law-givers would restrict the composer of 'good' music? It is no matter of arrogant imperatives, but one of criticism pure

and simple; perhaps one of mere preference. The works of many composers of the 19th and 20th centuries are there to show the number and extent of the acquisitions. What remains to be done is merely to decide what is the æsthetic value of those acquisitions.

In connection with that highly controversial point, it is interesting to note that d'Indy, in his 'Treatise of Composition' and in other writings, adopts a most uncompromising attitude towards the composers or critics who deny or ignore tradition. Nothing but error and evil, he says, can result from revolution; nothing good and lasting can be achieved by an artist not instinct with knowledge of and respect for tradition. The introduction to the 'Treatise of Composition' (vol. ii.) warns the student against originality for originality's sake. In 'La Légende de Saint Christophe' a curious episode is, following in the wake of the Evil Spirit, a pageant of 'bogus artists' who sing: 'Down with rules and with study, down with tradition, let us be original.' Even without the signs afforded by such passages, it is impossible to consider d'Indy's personality without becoming aware that all he does is carefully thought out in accordance with an ideal that is the reverse of revolutionary; and that he is the last person in the world whom one might suspect of bringing before the public mere experiments or results not weighed and tested with the utmost care. His knowledge of music and musical science is all-embracing, and coupled with profound understanding: so that there can be no question of finding reasons of principle for challenging the way in which he adapts the teachings of tradition to his own purposes. And if we find in 'Fervaal,' in 'L'Etranger,' or in 'La Légende de Saint Christophe,' formations that appear baffling, written in defiance of custom, we can—without stopping to inquire 'What custom?'—rest assured that it is impossible to dispose of those formations as many critics do of Debussy's, for instance, by describing them as anomalies or exceptions: the problem raised remains entire, and there is no way of appearing to solve it whilst actually eluding it.

Although very different in substance and in style from any other of the modern works that have given rise to controversy or to theories (from Richard Strauss' to Bartók's or from Debussy's to Schönberg's), 'Fervaal' and 'La Légende de Saint-Christophe,' more perhaps than 'L'Etranger,' teem with daring innovations, the description of which will be started in next month's issue. Whether any investigator would be tempted to describe them as baffling I do not know. Indeed, I think that since the days of 'Le Chant de la Cloche'—when the accusation of Wagnerism, which was taken to mean very much what Futurism means to-day, was launched under the flimsiest of pretexts—hardly any writer has included d'Indy among the creators whose originality deserves special mention. I hope to show that 'Fervaal' affords an ample field for those who might care to take up the matter more thoroughly.

(To be continued.)

* I had started it in an article entitled, 'Programme Music, Folk-Tune, and Progress' (*Musical Times*, October, 1913, page 643).