

A Bruckner Festival at Weimar

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master. Notable among his pieces was a Trio for violin, viola, and guitar, a combination that makes for interesting sonority. More interesting and characteristic than this early piece were pianoforte compositions, and notably a Septet; here Uhl speaks quite his own language, and speaks it with an assurance and temperament that promise important things for his future. Music by Arthur Willner, the Viennese composer, was heard at a concert given in honour of his fiftieth birthday. He is a deep and serious musician, as free from conservatism as he is from far-fetched modernism. Splendid invention, deep knowledge, and excellent workmanship are the distinguishing features of his production. A young pianist from Cologne, Willy Stech, created something of a sensation at this concert.

RECITALS

Chamber music was heard at the concerts of the Léner Quartet, and the Kolisch Quartet (Alban Berg's fascinating 'Lyric Suite'). Two new Viennese Quartets made their successful débuts, the Popa Grama Quartet, and the Galimir Quartet (formed of three girls and one boy, all brilliantly gifted). Other Viennese chamber music organizations that were heard in fine work were the Anita Ast Quartet, the Jella Pessl Trio, and the Georg Steiner Trio. Erwin Nyiregyhazi, former boy prodigy and now a mature artist, numbered among the most interesting new-comers of the season: a pianist of enormous temperament and power, with forceful and original conceptions of his music. Dorothy English, a young British pianist, made a successful début. Mitko Tortschanoff, a young Bulgarian violinist, was a welcome acquaintance; a boy of thirteen years who seems destined for a great career. Among the Lieder singers of recent years Alexandra Trianti deserves a prominent place; this Greek artist has the secret of Lieder singing that so few of her German colleagues possess. André Burdino, announced as a tenor from the Opéra-Comique of Paris, has a small but pleasant voice, and sings with the taste and finish that count among the assets of the French school.

PAUL BECHERT.

A BRUCKNER FESTIVAL AT WEIMAR

By W. GILLIES WHITTAKER

Art, in all forms, is passing through a severe trial in Germany. The old patronage of the nobility, with its consequent financial and social support, is no more; municipalities are feeling the strain in the present world depression; political parties are interfering with matters artistic, and where there is party strife, economies are usually sought for in departments of life which should stand above party. Music and musicians, in particular, are suffering badly; mechanized music has resulted in even greater unemployment than in Britain, and lack of money among the populace results in an enormous falling-off in support of opera and concerts. Yet notable ventures are conceived and carried through in spite of these adverse forces. Of all towns in central and western Germany, Weimar is the most attractive and the most hallowed by association with great men of the past. Dürer, Bach, Goethe, Schiller, Liszt, Cornelius, are only a few of the stars in constellations of other times, and Weimar is still a great artistic centre. The town musical director, Herr Ernst Praetorius, has this summer conducted a Bruckner Fest at which the whole of that composer's symphonies have been given in chronological order. The Fest occupied the Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays of three successive weeks, and on Monday, June 15, the eve of the opening, there was a lecture by Prof. Richard Wetz. Only one symphony was given each evening—an admirable plan, for the absence of other music enabled one to concentrate on the main issue. The performances were given in the spacious Herderkirche, which, apart from its associations with Bach, proved well-suited for this purpose, if one may be allowed to except the hardness of the seats. Acoustically it is excellent, though the position of the

orchestra, near the organ, in the first gallery at the west end of the church, negated to a certain extent the value of the upper strings, while allowing the other departments to be heard to advantage. The strings were not so numerous as we are accustomed to in the usual concert-hall (after all, Weimar has less than thirty thousand inhabitants; what British town of that size could support any kind of orchestra?), and one missed, even in the quieter passages, much that the score promised that one should hear, particularly in the viola line. The absence of the usual conventions of the concert-hall, the dimness and quiet of the church, the silence after every movement, all were potent factors. Prices of admission were ridiculously small: the highest charge two shillings, one shilling for the rest of the church, and sixpence for students. Even the former prices were reduced if one subscribed to the series. There was only a sparse attendance on the opening nights; it took time before the venture became noised abroad, and people were evidently afraid that such a gargantuan feast of unfamiliar music would be indigestible. But the audience grew in number, grew in friendliness, grew in enthusiasm, until the closing evenings showed an adequate response to the daring project. It was no small feat to give these works in rapid succession with the regular opera going on as well; they are not symphonies in the normal *répertoire*, and all are long. Yet the performances were on a very high level, sensitive, finished, with excellent tone, and moreover both conductor and players were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of these complicated and interpretatively difficult works. All credit is due to Herr Praetorius for his idealistic scheme and its success. The latter is all the more notable because a considerable proportion of the orchestra were apparently very young men.

In giving my impressions of this Fest, I write with no special knowledge of Bruckner, but rather with a special ignorance. I had heard only two of the symphonies previously, I read no analytical notes beforehand, no literature about the composer, and merely looked over, in advance, in rather a hurried way, the scores of about half the works. I had no prejudice, either for or against Bruckner. My impressions are therefore purely personal, the outcome of this one series of performances, and can claim no further importance. When one comes to Bruckner as a comparatively unknown composer, it is rather difficult to obtain a correct historical perspective. He is not a modern. The first symphony was composed nearly seventy years ago, before Brahms had appeared publicly as a symphonist, and it was completed just after the first performance of 'Tristan.' There is no need to speak in detail of the first three symphonies. The composer was only finding himself slowly, although the first was finished when he was forty-two. His development was late and his progress tardy. The influence of Schubert is apparent in the uncompact structure of these early works, in their opulence of ideas, in their frank, straightforward tunefulness. There were often themes which were un-symphonic, and others which lacked relationship with their context. Some reflections of Wagner were there, too, the Nothing motive on the trumpet, some familiar sequences, and other chord-progressions. In particular was it evident that two types of music were rarely far from Bruckner's thoughts, the chorale and the peasant dance. Son of the church and son of the people, he reveals his devotion to both. There is much interesting music in this first third of his symphonic output, which one would willingly hear again, but its immediate impression was somewhat swamped by the six great works which followed.

With the second week of the Fest one stepped at once on firmer ground. In No. 4, the 'Romantic,' Bruckner began to speak more his own language. One remembers chiefly the numerous lovely horn-calls. The Trio of No. 5 is really a wayward and artless *Ländler*. It serves to ease the mind before the *Finale*, in which a lengthy and complex fugue unfolds itself, slowly, inevitably. The huge contrapuntal movement

never fails in resource, it piles climax on climax until, at a thrilling moment, an additional force of ten brass instruments solemnly intones a chorale, against the continued polyphony of the main orchestra. Here one felt verily in the presence of a master-mind. The Herderkirche lent itself admirably to this number; it was true Church music, and the placing of the extra brass in the gallery above the main orchestra attained an effect difficult to realise in a concert room, where such a noble and serious work must assuredly suffer. No. 6 contains a slow movement, of enormous length, but gripping one to the very end by its deep feeling and its great beauty. It was among the most impressive experiences of the Fest.

In No. 7 one felt for the first time that all three quick movements were of equal merit. One must again place the slow movement in the highest place. Also, for the first time, Bruckner here realises a true scherzo, Beethovenish without being in any way borrowed. It was a surprise to find in it passages almost identical with some in Elgar's 'Enigma' variations, the sequential figures based on a dropping seventh, a skittish canon at a beat distance with reversed accents. Can it be that Elgar had heard one of its rare performances (it was produced by Nikisch, at Leipsic, in 1884), or was it just the chance lighting of two independent minds on the same idea? Elgar is never a plagiarist.

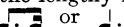

The eighth is another evenly-balanced work. It is the longest of all, yet Bruckner's mastery carries it triumphantly through. The mysterious mutterings of the first movement are reflected in the Scherzo; the opening of the slow movement is the religious counterpart of the love-ecstasy of the second Act of 'Tristan.' One cannot help wondering at the friendship between these two strangely diverse men, and speculating on the effect it had upon Bruckner; on Wagner it could have had none. A listener at the first performance of 'Tristan,' a constant visitor at Bayreuth, Bruckner, with his profoundly religious and other-worldly nature, must have felt at the opposite pole, yet he sought Wagner's companionship and idolized him. Whatever influence Wagner may have had was transmuted by the strength of Bruckner's own character. Although the last three symphonies came after 'Parsifal,' their truly religious music shows not the slightest trace of that apotheosis of Christianity.

The last symphony was unfinished; he was busy with sketches for the Finale when death overtook him. When he found himself unable to complete the work, he thought of advising that his *Te Deum* should form the last movement, but eventually changed his mind. But in a sense the symphony is not incomplete. That his last work should end with a great and wonderful Adagio, solemn, exalted, mystic, is surely the most fitting conclusion to the life-task of a man than whom no more serious and simple-minded artist ever existed, who looked upon his journey on earth as merely a prelude to eternity. Before this marvellous Adagio comes a most human and whimsical Scherzo, with a delicate, almost Mendelssohnian Trio! He thus leaves us with two complementary pictures of himself, the one his occasional mood of relaxation, the other his yearnings after things spiritual. We can desire no more appropriate swan-songs.

Like all composers, Bruckner has his mannerisms. He is as much addicted to the turn as Wagner; his movements nearly always begin with a few bars of string tremolo or pizzicato, to prepare for the enunciation of his theme; he is fond of a pizzicato contrapuntal bass; of very long timpani rolls, which frequently bridge over a gap between two sections; many of his themes have as a prominent feature two adjacent semitones, *i.e.*, D flat, C, B. He is fond of pedal basses, and of prolonging a single chord to a great length, as if he loved the sheer static sound. In his seventh symphony the first movement ends with thirty-one bars of the chord of E major, the second with twenty-five bars (eight beats in a bar) of a C sharp pedal, and the Finale has the same number of bars of the chord of E to end with.

Of all composers he is the most leisurely. He often casts his melodies as if they were rainbows leading to Valhalla, spanning earth to heaven; he builds up climaxes with infinite slowness and patience; he will take many bars to round off an idea which seems to the ordinary observer to need no such conclusion. He can win no admiration from those moderns who have a liking for cocktail-music. In his lifetime he was called, by way of sarcasm, an 'Adagio composer.' As a nickname it was apt, for he was never so happy as when writing slow music. Nearly all his Scherzi have slow Trios, most of his other (so-called) quick movements lapse into Ruhig, Langsam, Wieder Langsamer, or Adagio before very long. Of the hundred and sixty-eight pages of the score of his sixth symphony, nearly half are marked so, which means that the vast majority of the length of performance is occupied by slow music. The Trio of the Scherzo of No. 8 consists of a hundred bars of Langsam, after the repetition of the Scherzo comes an Adagio lasting twenty-eight minutes. The Finale begins with sixty-eight bars of 'Feierlich, nicht schnell,' and then drops into 'Langsamer, $\text{♩} = 60$.' But how many composers could have written so many magnificent Adagios, all with their own individuality? The term 'Adagio composer' had more meaning in it than his detractors knew. He might equally well have been dubbed a 'Pause composer,' for pauses on chords and on rests, and long rests between phrases, are common.

Most puzzling to a new-comer is Bruckner's form. To say that it is loose-jointed and sprawling, possessed of those faults which mar some of the unsuccessful instrumental movements of Schubert, is to beg the question. There is nothing, for example, except in the Scherzi, where such treatment is almost essential to the style, of the frequent re-statements of loved tunes in other keys, in which Schubert frequently indulges. Seldom do Bruckner's ideas appear twice in the same manner. He gave infinite care to details of this nature. But of the compact, closely-mortared structures of Beethoven or Brahms there is little. Many lovely episodes never recur or are recalled in any way, and there are long stretches which have apparently no thematic relationship to any other part of the movement. Then again, themes are submitted to varied treatment, harmonic, contrapuntal, rhythmic, but development in the Beethoven sense, in which an idea gives rise to some phase of thought totally new and unexpected, is rarely to be found. His own statement is illuminating: 'I am, as it were, a wanderer whom a summit attracts and compels, but I do not go direct—I find many alluring paths which, however they may retard, never obstruct my objective.' To censure Bruckner as formless shows a lack of understanding of the true nature of form, which in essence is the appropriate treatment of the material at hand. Bruckner's form is his own, conditioned by his own strong individuality, and by his admiration for Wagner's application of instrumental principles to another form of art, which eventually brought about fresh developments in absolute music. To the Brahmsites of his day his movements were shapeless and inchoate; we may view both men dispassionately and admire their own solutions of their individual problems.

One mannerism is the lengthy repetition of a short time-pattern, often  or . In No. 8 the latter continues uninterruptedly for seventy bars.

His orchestration is most individual. Two especial idiosyncrasies are his fondness for melodies on all the 'celli, and for prominence of the horns. Surely no composer ever overworked his horns so! He is fond of rich, romantic colouring; his mass of tone glows refulgently. His view of colour and treatment is strongly influenced by his association with the organ. This is not said in a derogatory sense; I mean that he frequently aims at organ effects, through orchestral transformation. (The same influence is shown in his pauses and long silences already referred to.) He has many big tuttis in which a long-sustained power

is achieved with only few harmonic changes. The introduction of ten brass instruments at the end of his fifth symphony suggests a left hand on a fourth manual with the right on the Great coupled to Swell and Choir. In the eighth he adds two tenor and two bass tubas to his horns, retaining the contra-bass tuba in its customary position under the trombones. In the ninth he begins with eight horns, reverting to the combination of the previous symphony in the Adagio. These are used consistently, not for occasional effects. He seemed to have found in this addition to the normal forces his ideal; he achieves a magnificent orchestral-organistic sonority. In Nos. 8 and 9 he demands three each of wood-wind, with contra-fagotto. The cor anglais he never uses. In only one movement does he include a harp. He keeps his symphonic character pure by the absence of the organ. Another organist-composer, Saint-Saëns, introduced an organ into a symphony, we all know with what appalling results. Bruckner's orchestration is an unerring delight; many and new are his combinations, and seldom do they betray any influence from Wagner.

One of the surprises to a new-comer to Bruckner is the character of his harmony. It is enormously in advance of his contemporary Brahms. It is not experimental, it is rich, fresh, full of colour, full of new interest to-day when our ears have become accustomed to almost unbelievable extravagances. It moves steadily forward throughout the Nine, becoming more and more complex, more and more chromatic, yet with firm assurance. It is crowded with unexpected progressions, unrelated to any other composer. His sequences are never trite, there is always something novel in them. His modulation is often surprising. At the beginning of the Trio of No. 7, in thirty-seven bars, one beat in a bar, he moves thus: F, D flat, C sharp minor, D sharp minor, G, F sharp minor, D sharp minor, F sharp, E minor, D, an astonishing series of modulations.

Brucknerites speak much of his contrapuntal skill, acquired by hard study under Sechter, when considerably over thirty. His command of fugal devices is consummate, and his many combinations of chief themes almost savour of the spectacular. But the chief joy derived through this power is from incessantly contrapuntal accompaniments; every part is of interest, he is ever fruitful in the invention and working-out of fresh counter-subjects. Perhaps this complication bewilders the unaccustomed hearer, and makes general outlines difficult to grasp. But familiarity must increase one's delight in the music a hundredfold. One of his favourite devices is the use of a theme in inversion simultaneously with the original, a combination more for the eye than for the ear.

I have already mentioned certain influences of Schubert and Wagner. Bruckner not only followed Schumann's advice to young composers to 'think of the openings of Beethoven's symphonies,' but applied the dictum to other parts as well. The Adagio of No. 6 recalls Beethoven's No. 9, not so much in actual material as in character, the slow first theme, afterwards embroidered with string sextuplets, and a second theme, syncopated, in triple time. He begins his ninth as did Beethoven—tremolo strings, with premonitions of a coming theme, and in the same key, D minor! But did not Brahms raise antagonism because of the resemblance of the theme of the Finale of his first symphony to that of his predecessor's last? There are few other traces of outside influences. Bruckner stands secure in his own strength.

I can only express my deep gratitude to Herr Praetorius for the unique opportunity of tracing the development of this 19th-century giant to the fulness of his powers, and of gaining some knowledge of a notable composer whose intense seriousness, lofty spirituality, and other-worldliness, combined with great creative gifts and originality, have produced some of the most heart-moving music of recent times. I attended the Fest with a brother-musician of wide experience, and we both felt that we

had passed through a wonderful phase of our artistic life, and one which will not be without lasting effect in the future.

DISCOVERY OF MOZART'S 'LIEBESPROBE'

A BALLET PRODUCED AT GRAZ

Who would have thought that a hundred and thirty seven years after the master's death, a completely unknown work of Mozart's would come to light?

And the most curious thing about this find is that Graz, a town with which Mozart had no connection, made the discovery. Dr. Ludwig Seitz, in re-arranging the catalogue in the archives of the Graz Musikverein, came across the text in 1928. The beginning of an operetta under the title of 'Die Liebesprobe' was printed in the second volume of Albert Jahnschen's great Mozart biography, but this has nothing to do with the newly discovered work. Mozart was himself a dancer, and in his correspondence refers to having composed pantomime dances with scenery. This work belongs to his last year (1791), when, distracted by illness, by debts, and hunted down by duns, he produced with the speed of a magician the scores of the 'Magic Flute,' 'Titus,' and the 'Requiem.' In the score of the pantomime ballet he took a new departure, selecting dances from older works and threading them together with fresh and consistent melody. During the recent Festspiel performances at Graz, the Ballet was given together with Mozart's favourite opera, 'Bastien und Bastienne,' in the courtyard of the historic Landhaus under the June sky. The renaissance architecture of the fine old building formed an effective background. Without altering in the least the music and delicate instrumentation, Dr. Roderick Moisisovics had adapted the 'Liebesprobe' for the requirements of the modern stage, transferring the *mise en scène* to the time of the Kalifs and endowing it with an enchanting Oriental atmosphere. The artistic production of this rare Mozartian treasure in the open air was one of the unqualified successes of the Graz Festival in June, and a feather in the cap of the Festspiel organizers.

BEATRICE MARSHALL.

NEGRO-AMERICAN MUSIC

OR

THE ORIGIN OF JAZZ

By NORMAN AND TOM SARGANT

(Continued from July number, p. 655)

III.

Gradually such bands as Brown's Band, the Dixieland Band, and Alexander's Ragtime Band made their entrance into all the big cities of America, to meet with mixed receptions. They all exploited the main characteristics of the blues. The gap between the verses was filled in extempore with such vocal efforts as Too-Ti-ootoo-Hi, &c. This was known as the 'break,' and the player of each instrument took his break and put all he knew into it. Naturally the next instrument tried to go one better, and there was fierce competition to make the most noise in the time available. There were also the 'blue notes,' involving a slight flattening of the third and seventh of the scale, which gave a certain mournful flavour to the music.

What was the effect of this invasion upon the dancing of the day? At this time the old Ragtime was the prevailing dance music. Ragtime was a syncopated air brought into sharp relief by a steady bass, with the accent on the weak beat. What we know as jazz is a combination of the blues and ragtime, a grafting of the one on the other. The string bands of pre-war days gave way to saxophones, clarinets, trombones, strangely muted trumpets and banjos, with the additional effects of various percussion instruments. All the features of the negro blues were introduced, the 'blue' notes, the 'hot' choruses, and the 'breaks.'

Surreptitiously, and amidst violent opposition, negro dances made progress by way of down-town saloons and shady dance halls. They had such names as the