

NEWS AND NOTES OF THE WEEK IN THE MUSICAL WORLD

A Centenary of Anton Bruckner—Fortunes of His Music in New York

By RICHARD ALDRICH.

ANTON BRUCKNER'S hundredth birthday occurred on Sept. 4 last. So this would be the right musical season for the centenary observance in honor of the Austrian composer. This fact being taken into consideration, it seems fairly certain that New York is not being deeply involved in such a celebration. Comparatively slight damage has as yet been done. One of Bruckner's symphonies, the third, was played by Mr. Stransky, the first Bruckner performance of the centenary season. Mr. Stransky was alert and achieved a triumph. Perhaps it is on this laurel, partly, that he now feels that he can retire and devote himself to the picture business. Mr. Wagner succeeds him, with what views about Bruckner has not yet been made known, but perhaps the followers of the State Symphony Orchestra may say, loudly enough to be heard.

Insatiable archer, could not one suffice?

And perhaps the more numerous followers of the Philadelphia Orchestra may intone similarly, even after the admirable performance of the seventh symphony—a little trimmed—that Mr. Stokowski gave them last week. Mr. Mengelberg proposed to play the eighth later in the season, but persuasion was brought to bear and he will be content with playing a single movement, the adagio, as a commemorative observance.

The views of the New York public on Bruckner have been pretty well made known, since he was first heard in New York, now thirty-nine years ago, by Walter Damrosch with the New York Symphony Society. It was found then commendable that "Herr Bruckner attests his devotion to Beethoven by writing a symphony at a time when many would have us believe that in this department the last word was spoken long ago, and by borrowing, consciously or unconsciously, much of the feeling of the first movement of the 'Choral' symphony for his first movement." Then the obvious appropriation of much thematic material from Wagner was adduced, and this observation was the prelude to many other similar ones that have continued from that day to the present moment.

The next season Damrosch and Theodore Thomas had one of those races for the E major symphony, the one heard last week, that they used to indulge in for the postscript and first performance of a new composition by a European master. Thomas seems to have got it first and after trying it in Chicago had the Philharmonic Society play it in November, 1886.

"The music," it is recorded, "fell like lead upon the listeners, fully one-third of whom left the hall after the second movement." Some of the New York press pronounced condemnation upon it. "In a superficial and flippant manner," the music was found vastly learned; it was thought to be "polysyllabic gone mad." It made "Tristan" and the "Nibelung Ring" seem simple. The six brass instruments aroused wonder and consternation. The harmony was "revolutionary," but the whole thing seemed as cold as a problem in mathematics.

A good deal of water, as they say, has flowed under the bridges since then. The symphony no longer sounds so learned; in fact, a good deal of it last week sounded, as Bruckner's symphonies have always sounded, half and even helpless in parts, and they are large parts. The harmony is no longer revolutionary. Time has attended to that, if to nothing else about it; as time has a way of attending to "revolutionary harmonies." The "coldness" of the work was not so conspicuous to the listeners of 1925 as

the dullness which pervades so much of it, the lack of knowledge and ability to treat and develop musical material, even material sometimes of notable value.

Mr. Krehbiel in his comments upon the seventh symphony made a wise and courageous remark: "Remembering that it is not always the highest type of beauty which is obvious at a glance, we are yet constrained to say that for the present the work is a failure. It may be beautiful in twenty-five years; it is not beautiful now." The twenty-five years have passed and many more, yet it is not possible to say unqualifiedly that this symphony is beautiful now. Many of its fellows have been heard here in those years, and by none of them have Bruckner's admirers succeeded in establishing him here in anything like the position that he has held and still apparently holds without abatement in Germany.

In another year the Fourth, or "Romantic," Symphony was played in New York by Anton Seidl at one of his symphony concerts and was found "rhapsodical, episodic and spasmodic"; and, sad to relate, in its last movement "Meyerbeerian." That was the most unkindest cut of all to give the symphonist who so gladly and eagerly surrendered himself to Wagner.

Bruckner's name did not again appear on the lists of the Philharmonic Society till the first year of Gustav Mahler's consulship, when he played the Fourth, or "Romantic," Symphony after twenty-two years. These years had brought a change of view and the Fourth Symphony was now found considerably more worth hearing than the others of Bruckner that had been heard in the meantime—"more interesting in its substance, more spontaneous, more concise."

Dr. Muck had started in to champion Bruckner with the Boston Symphony Orchestra—he was one of his champions in Germany—playing the Seventh in December, 1906, and the Ninth in November, 1907. When he went back to Germany Mr. Fiedler took up the cause and played the Eighth Symphony in the next season. Four years ago Mr. Bodanzky gave the Fourth. None of this was greatly to Bruckner's advantage in the estimation of New York. The works were not found on the whole capable of being swallowed. Some wondered and expressed wonder that great conductors should so sincerely admire and so persistently devote themselves to music that repeated performance showed to observers in this latitude and longitude to be so lacking in so many of the qualities of great symphonic art. There was nothing in it to elude the grasp of concert-goers; it was not above or beyond them; there was obvious beauty in certain themes; there were ideas, grandiose, pathetic, vigorous; there was a great display of orchestral sound, the up-building of great climaxes. There was promise in it all, but it never turned out to be fulfillment. The composer continually found himself in dilemma. He spoke the symphonic language insufficiently to bring his ideas to coherent or eloquent issues. He had no notion of proportion of orchestration. He substituted for those qualities inordinate length, breadth and thickness, a prolixity which seemed to be an indispensable part of his message. He was addicted to what the Germans call "Rosellen"—long strings of repeated progressions like beads strung upon a string. There were noble pages like the beginnings of inspiration, but the inspiration dropped and they were smothered in the dry leaves of platitude, of commonplace, of music-making and padding.

One of the puzzling claims of Bruckner, or of his admirers for him, has

Musical Prague at the Year's End

THE Gazette de Prague comments with enthusiasm on the musical life of the city. Its principal organizations are the Czech Philharmonic Society, the Choral Society, the Societies for Modern Music and for Chamber Music; all have a large following and their concerts are always well attended. The Czech Philharmonic has organized twenty Sunday matinees, the programs featuring Czech classics and foreign works. At one of these concerts were heard for the first time in Prague, a Serenade by Svorak, "Fête du Printemps," by Roussel, and "Tara Bulba," a rhapsody by Leoš Janáček. The reviewer said: "The serenade by Svorak is a light and amusing work, its melodies are spontaneous and its instrumentation is happily chosen. Leoš Janáček, now in his 70th year, is the most original musical figure in Europe today. The composer of 'Genevieve' and 'Kata Kabanova' is full of creative force; the premiere of his new comic opera 'The Fox' shows that. The composer's rhapsody 'Tara Bulba' was written during the war in 1915-16; Leoš Janáček said, 'I composed this rhapsody inspired by the Kreuzer sonata of Tolstoy, also by the legend of N. V. Gogol, not because Tara Bulba kills his son to punish him for the betrayal of his people (first part—massacre of Dubno), not because of the martyrdom of his second son (second part—the butcher of Varsovia), but because they will never find either butcher or torturer capable of annihilating the Russian people. It is because of the words which fall amid the sparks and flames of the stake where I composed my 'Tara Bulba.' This work inspired by a great love of the Russian people has an ardent musical expression and original rhythms. Its powerful sincerity has conquered its public."

The Chamber Music Society, at its first concert, played quartets by Mendelssohn, Gossens and Hindemith. At its



Nadia Boulanger, French Organist, Guest of Symphony Society.

into the oblivion that overtakes all such artistic feuds, sooner or later. There are not many now who will deny that the overtopping position of Brahms, his commanding place in the world of nineteenth century music, the greater certainty of that high position the further one recedes from him, have made the Brahms-Bruckner controversy seem as unimportant and unintelligible as the quarrels of the Lullists and Ramists, or the "Guerre des Buffons" are today—a matter of historical reference, not a living subject.

Perhaps it is well to present a symphony or so of Bruckner in this hundredth year, for the reminding of an older generation and the instruction of a newer. The matter has not yet taken the position of a historical question, but there are some who think it may before very long. Bruckner's whole method of practicing his art had the seeds of dissolution in it. There was undoubted enjoyment for some, and at times for most, in the performance Mr. Stokowski gave last Tuesday. It might not be to Bruckner's advantage to attempt an appraisal of how much was due to his ideas and treatment and how much to the enveloping beauty of the performance in tone, rhythm, color, dynamic scale and finish.

Newcomers in Opera and Orchestral Programs

NEW to a New York audience is Nadia Boulanger, the French organist, who appears with the orchestra of the Symphony Society under Walter Damrosch today at Aeolian Hall in this program:

Air and gavotte.....Bach
Concerto, D minor.....Handel
Prelude, "Funeral March".....Brahms
Gavotte.....Bach
Prelude, "Paraphrase".....Wagner
Overture, "Die Meistersinger".....Wagner
Overture, "Die Meistersinger".....Wagner
Prelude, "Die Meistersinger".....Wagner
The Friends of Music at the Town Hall today present their chorus trained by Stephen Townsend and the orchestra of the Metropolitan under Bodanzky, assisted by Tevja, Altglass, Schlegel and Bender:

"Tragic" overture.....Brahms
Biblical songs, with piano.....Brahms
"Aurora Night".....Mendelssohn
The Philharmonic Orchestra, playing four times at Carnegie Hall this week, will be heard there this afternoon in the following program, which is the second conducted here by Wilhelm Furtwängler:

Overture to "Fidelio".....Beethoven
Prelude and finale, "Tristan".....Wagner
Prelude, "Die Meistersinger".....Wagner
Mr. Furtwängler on Thursday night and Friday afternoon leads the Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in the following music, with Olga Samoroff as soloist at both performances:

Brandenburg concerto No. 3.....Bach
Fifth symphony.....Schumann
Fifth symphony.....Tchaikovsky
Willem Van Hoogstraten leads a special concert of the Philharmonic played by Ernest Hutcheson and Ely Ney, pianists, on Saturday night at Carnegie Hall in the "artists' series" for the Association of Music School Settlements.

ARTISTS IN RECITAL

Feodor Chaliapin has a second song recital this afternoon, when he appears at the Metropolitan Opera House with new classic numbers and old Russian favorites like that of the "Volga Boatmen."

Bronislaw Huberman gives his third violin recital this evening at the Manhattan Opera House, playing Franck's sonata, Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole," Bach's adagio and fugue in C and transcriptions by Wilhelmj and Joachim.

Allen McQuhee, tenor, lately heard in "The Messiah," appears tonight in recital at Carnegie Hall, singing airs of Handel, later groups of German, French and English composers and another of Irish folk songs.

Elena Barbieri, a young Italian-American pianist, in her third recital at Aeolian Hall tonight, plays Beethoven's sonata Op. 27, No. 2; a Chopin group and pieces by Bach, Brahms, Scriabin and Moszkowski.

Josef Lhevinne tomorrow night gives his last recital of the season at Carnegie Hall, presenting Beethoven's sonata Op. 81 and music of Liszt, Tausig, Chopin, Joseph Marx, Walter Neman, Bartok and Busoni.

Mischa Levitzki on Tuesday night at Carnegie Hall plays Scarlatti's sonata in A, Beethoven's "Waldstein" and works of Schumann, Mendelssohn, Debussy, Albeniz, Rachmaninoff, Rubinstein and Liszt.

Maria Gabrielle Leschetizky, at her delayed debut in Aeolian Hall on Tuesday evening, plays Liszt's B minor and Chopin's B flat minor sonatas, the Violdi-Bach "organ" sonata and a group by Debussy.

Marcel Salinger, baritone, in a concert at the Town Hall on Tuesday evening, will sing airs from "Don Carlos" and "Herodias," and with Sonia Winfield, soprano, two duets from "Maggio Flute" and "Don Giovanni."

Arne Søllvi, violinist, at his debut

Move to Save Opera in England—American Dollars to Aid Deficits

GRAND OPERA at a shilling a seat is the aim of a group which is trying to collect £2,500,000 with which to erect and endow an Imperial Opera House in London capable of seating 4,000 persons. The best seats in the house would sell at five shillings if the plan went through, as told in a report by The Associated Press.

Isidore de Lara, leader of the movement, wants 2,000,000 persons to contribute £1 each and says he will not accept larger remittances. He thinks it humiliating that "Great Britain alone of all the civilized countries does not possess a national theatre or a national opera house."

He is going ahead despite the knowledge that every attempt to revive interest in opera in Britain since the war has failed, just as did Hammerstein's pretentious pre-war effort to put opera on a paying basis here. His magnificent theatre in Kingsway is at present devoted to the celluloid creations of Hollywood.

American dollars are being called in to relieve the British National Opera Company, which has had no more luck than before in getting the public greatly excited about its efforts to establish opera in the native tongue. The National lost £1,000 in Glasgow, and suffered a similar dent in its exchequer at Leeds. The Carnegie trust fund has offered to guarantee the company against loss in the production of operas which the fund's trustees consider of educational value but not likely to become commercially successful. The company's director says the losses thus far have not been due more to lack of support than to the heavy entertainment taxes, which in the last twelve months have taken £15,000 out of the box office receipts.

The London Bach Choir with the London Symphony Orchestra gave a memorial concert for Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music under the leadership of Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams in December. It was an appropriate occasion because Stanford directed the Bach Choir, an amateur organization, from 1885 until 1902; Vaughan Williams was one of his most distinguished pupils and Plunkett Greene, the English baritone, one of his best song interpreters. The program included Purcell's chorus, "Soul of the World," and a choral setting of "The Song of the Sea," which was first heard at the Leeds Festival in 1907, and his choral work, "Stabat Mater." The London Telegraph said of this: "It is impossible to listen to this deeply felt work without being conscious of the momentum of creative

Music in France

THE new lyric comedy in five acts by Jean Sarment and Max d'Ollone, which had its premiere at the Paris Opéra Dec. 24, was hailed by Henri de La Tour as a work full of intellectual charm and musical beauty. It was sumptuously mounted by M. Jacques Rouché, Director of the Opéra. M. Malherbe finds in the work something of Andersen, Ibsen, Verlaine, Maeterlinck, Chabrier, Humperdinck, Debussy and Fauré; "the score and the libretto contain most of the literary and harmonic discoveries which stimulated the curiosity of the preceding era. The authors have combined all kinds of ingredients calculated to delight the ear, the eye and the mind. Jean Sarment, author of 'Cronique de Carton,' is one of the most gifted of the younger French dramatists; the text of Arlequin will probably be his masterpiece. He has borrowed the naïveté of Andersen and retained the meditations of Hamlet.

"The plot opens in the Happy Isle, not far from Naples. The King lives only to make his people happy. Arlequin is called in to amuse the Princess, and the two make a runaway match; but the Princess dazels him by the talent of her actor, is disappointed in the husband. They arrive at Capri, where the Princess is abducted by the reigning Duke. Arlequin is vain to rescue her. She is reclaimed in a dying condition by her father's envoy, and the three return to the Happy Isle, where the Princess dies and her father abdicates in favor of Arlequin.

"There is much allegory in the poetry of M. Sarment, hidden meanings and symbolism and many scenes of striking beauty. The score of M. Max d'Ollone is light, transparent and capricious, yet nothing is left to chance. Everything is done with a mastery that is at once modern and classic. Arlequin is the ancient opera bouffe on a modern graft. Max d'Ollone has adopted the harmonic, contrapuntal and tonal grammar so dear to Debussy and Fauré; he has employed a modern vocabulary and created an exquisite musical atmosphere. Vanni Maroux, with his title role with his accustomed artistic insight, and Mr. Ruhlmann conducted."

In Central Europe

PITZNER's opera, "Rose von Liebenstein," was played for the first time in Berlin, Dec. 24. Twenty-four years have passed since it received its premiere in the German provincial theatres. Since then the work has been given on all the large and small stages of Germany, only Berlin remaining indifferent, and now the Staatsoper has rectified this neglect. In his book, "Vom Musikalischen Drama," quoted by the Voessische Zeitung, Pitzner says of his own work: "The Liebenstein is a species of German Paradise inhabited by a few happy and higher nature. Massive walls flanked by towers guard this haven, to ward off the inimical influences of the outer world. From this centre emanates an influence which spreads far and wide. There are certain rules, somewhat similar to those of the Holy Grail, which determine the reception of the postulants in the circle of the blessed and whose duty it is to spread the cult of God. The hero is one of the young guardians, enticed by the beauty of the outer world, who falls into disgrace and is shut out of his Paradise to share in the grief and death of the dark human earth. No one unworthy may enter the higher kingdom." This reminds one of the "circle of silence" of the earthly but "invisible cities of the soul," of the esoteric religions.

"Those who are untrue to their mission can only be redeemed by the expiation of death. The heroine is worthy to enter this higher life. She carries in her hand a rose, the love pledge, which will give her the courage to pass through death, the portals of death. The rose from the Love garden alone will open and close the doors of Paradise."

The seventieth birthday of Leoš Janáček was celebrated in Prague in December by two concerts. They were a tremendous success. At the first it was interesting to discover what the Prague "Tosca" was like. The later compositions were better than the earlier ones; they showed the unbroken development of the composer. His wind instrumental suite, "Mládí," and his piano composition, "X. 1905," were played for the first time. The first was interesting for its original application of wind instruments and because of its beautiful and cheerful character; the second struck the note of pathos. Both can be counted among the best of Janáček's compositions.

A Crop of Anecdotes of Puccini

Puccini's life, like Verdi's, will probably yield a small crop of anecdotes," remarks The London Telegraph. The writer of the obituary notice in the Corriere della Sera recalls Puccini's impressions of various cities he had visited. "London," wrote the composer, "six million inhabitants (there is no mistake about it; there are six million); life is intense, indescribable; the women are most beautiful, the streets gorgeous, and pastimes without number. Paris, prettier and merrier, but less lively and less characteristic. Most movable of all Italian cities, useful to me for my affairs. Torre del Lago—this is my summum bonum, my Eden, Turris Eburnea, as spiritual; inhabitants, 120; houses, 12. The solitude of the country may favor concentration and meditation, but not witty sayings or odd situations. Very significantly the greatest fountain of anecdotes, Dr. Johnson, chose to live in the largest city in the world."

Puccini had written "Le Villi," which was performed with success. The production had cost a good deal of money, contributed by friends, and the young composer was not a penny the better for the favorable verdict of the public. He still had his meals at a little osteria which he frequented as a student, and where he often stayed a young man's appetite by "encoring" the cheapest dish of the bill of fare. There he met friends and colleagues, equally poor and equally merry, for all of whom the cost of a meal was a serious item in the day's budget. One day Puccini, after ordering "the best," finished up a noisy banquet by tendering in payment a banknote for 1,000 lire. The phenomenon created a great sensation in the osteria and outside it. The youngest student of the Conservatorium heard of it, and wondered what it meant. The explanation was very simple. Verdi's publisher, Ricordi, had bought Puccini's opera for 2,000 lire, and by this act not only freed him from

the cares of necessity but proclaimed his belief in the young man's talent. When Puccini met Sardou in Paris prior to the composition of "Tosca" the playwright resented every cut and every alteration suggested by the composer. "Tosca," wrote the composer, "he gave me on this point and that point till the last scene was reached, and it was pointed out to him that Tosca, falling from the high terrace of Castle Sant Angelo, could not possibly end in the Tiber, which is some way off. The French dramatist seemed to think it essential that she should, and where he often raged when he was told that the thing was a material impossibility. The discussion was long, but at last a map of Rome was produced; the arguments of the Italians won the day, and Sardou was convinced. Puccini's teacher and director of the Conservatorium, Ponchielli, had himself urged the young musician to write "Le Villi" for a competition. Puccini did not get the award, which went to M. Zucchi, for an opera entitled "La Fata del Nord." But the public judged rightly both of adjudicators and composers, for "La Fata" is now utterly forgotten, while "Le Villi," though obviously immature, is still known. The commemoration of Puccini in the Italian Senate has cleared up a misunderstanding as regards his refusal during the war to sign a manifesto of the Italian intelligentsia supporting German art and culture, which resulted in the temporary banishment of his operas from the Paris Opéra. The President of the Senate, Signor Tittoni, in recalling that incident, said that the composer's refusal was due solely to the peremptory manner in which the request had been made. Through the intervention of the French Minister of Art and of Signor Tittoni, "Tosca" was again produced in Paris after a while, and acclaimed by the public. But it is only now that the reason for Puccini's refusal is made known.



Nanny Larsen-Todsen, a New Isolda, at the Metropolitan.