Music and Drama.

By BAYREUTH.

BOOKINGS.

(Dates subject to alteration.)

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Have You Learned to Listen?

THERE are many people whose hearts find an echo in Browning's beautiful lines:

"Who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once."

But one has only to go to an average classical concert to realise that although the majority of men and women love music with "all their hearts," they do not love it with their brains as well.

To be thoroughly appreciated music must be understood, and as it is a complex art, it cannot be expected that real understanding will come without diligent and systematic study. Everyone, whether so-called "musical" or not, can appreciate a simple melody, but it is wholly unreasonable to expect an untrained ear fully to appreciate the exquisite harmonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, or delight in the more modern methods of Wagner, Strauss, and Debussy.

How to Enjoy the Masters.

For years past the unprofessional lover of music has had to grope his way through masses of unfamiliar, and to him often painful, harmonies, until after many years of concert going he begins to understand a little of what music really means. But it has been left to Mr Stewart Macpherson, the author of "Music and its Appreciation" and other educational works, boldly to suggest that the art of listening intelligently should be seriously taught in every girls' and boys' school. The average parent, says Mr Macpherson, has quite an erroneous impression of what "learning music" really means. They think that if the child is given a few years' piano or violin teaching his musical education is complete. People often do not for one moment consider whether the child has any natural aptitude for his instrument, or in fact for any instrument. If he does not "get on" he is dubbed unteachable, and his musical education is brought to an abrupt finish, or, failing this, he is made to spend so much time in practising that through very weariness from trying to do the impossible, he comes to regard all music as the essence of boredom.

To Give Children a Chance.

All children should have the chance of learning an instrument, but if through the formation of their hands or through any other physical disability they do not make good executants, their musical education should only be stopped as far as the actual instrumental part is concerned.

It should be borne in mind that many thoroughly musical people are quite without power of giving it instrumental expression. To learn to listen to and appreciate with real perception, the material of the music, should therefore be the aim of every student of music.

To further this, Mr Macpherson pleads for the formation of Musical Appreciation Classes in all schools. These classes should not be limited to those pupils who are learning an instrument, but should form part of the general work of the school. The classes, naturally, must be arranged in various grades, so as to suit the ages and musical knowledge of the pupils.

Beginning with the kindergarten, a sense of time and rhythm should be taught by marching and other free rhythmic movements, and a sense of tune by the singing of simple songs and learning through sol-fa the various sounds of the scale, first being brought into touch with such things through the medium of interesting music which they can understand. This should be followed by class singing with ear training and singing at sight. Then the pupils are ready for the Appreciation Class. In this the teachers should play to the pupils, choosing quite simple pieces at first. As the class advances in understanding, sonatas, symphonies, and other works should be studied. The purport and form of each composition should be carefully explained during each lesson, so that the pupil understands as far as possible the composer's meaning and plan. In dealing with such things as symphonies, quartets, etc., Mr Macpherson suggests that the teacher of the class should make use of the good solo or duet arrangements now published of the best works, or, if his own powers of execution are not sufficient to cope with their difficulties, a "Piano-player" might be used instead. The great point in "Appreciation" work is to get the pupils familiarised with the actual music, so that when they have the chance of going to a good orchestral or chamber concert they shall be able to go with ears and mind already prepared, and receptive of the finished and complete performance.

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Weird Taste of Music.

Odd as it may seem to more matter-of-fact individuals, there are many persons who actually see sounds and see odours, or more rarely hear pain or light. Tonal vision—that is, the hearing of light or colour—is very rare; not so is coloured hearing, of which there are almost as many varieties of as persons who report it.

For some time the colouration extends only to voices or to Christian names. They may compare the strawberry-coloured voice of one friend with the mottled Easter-egg voice of another; they may ponder the relative merits of a blue name or a brown one.

Vowels alone may be coloured, and, perhaps, differently coloured when spoken in one voice than when spoken in another. Agreement there is none as to their proper colouration; the letter a, for instance, may range from the black given it by the poet Rimbaud to green, or orange.

For other persons music, and only music, is coloured. The pitch of a note may give its hue, or the instrument on which it is played may determine the tint. Low-pitched notes may range from purple to black; high-pitched ones from azure to white.

Or each instrument may have its own colour; white for the harp, orange-gold for the horn, mauve for the viola. Orchestral music may become a veritable cascade of rainbows. If perchance one gets form as well as colour; from music, the possibilities of arabesque are multiplied. A teacher of design attends concerts in order to see new patterns that she may reproduce.

Tastes and odours, as well as sounds, may become colours. I am acquainted (says an American writer) with a young man whose mouth is flooded with luminous pink whenever he tastes wintergreen. Peppermint and cloves, on the other hand, taste a dark, rough green; anise gives a beautiful black. This young man is greatly distressed when food tastes a colour different from the colour its looks. Yellow peppermints are for him an abomination, as are pink teas, also.

He too, uses his taste colours in discrimination, and is able to identify exceedingly weak solutions by the colours they arouse. But solutions giving the same colour puzzle him. Thus he is unable to distinguish between a solution of quinine and one of red pepper, because both give the same orange red taste.

Colours when seen usually surround with colours the scented object, or fill the space from which the odour proceeds. But in one peculiar case the hue of the odour was seen by the person who experienced it on his own forehead.

Pain may change into sound. We are told, for example, of a psychological toothache; one, that is, you can hear; and I have myself experienced a symphonic ear-ache, one that most considerately translated itself into orchestral terms. Touch, in turn, has its visual analogies. There are bright touches just as there are sharp whispers.

What is probably the most curious case of sense transposition on record has been reported by Professor Pierce—that of the young lady who tastes sounds. Imagine, if you can, a roast beef voice, and then a banana one. Think of being tantalised, as the young lady confesses she was, by being forced to listen to a lecture when hungry.

Theoretically, it would seem that a confusion of any two senses might occur, but as a matter of fact, not all of the possible exchanges have been reported. No case is on record of odours shifted into sound, although I have heard a little girl speak of fragrant music.

These sense transpositions usually occur in a systematic and uniform way. Yet there are many reports of a merely occasional substitution, as, for instance, my own symphonic ear-ache, which, unfortunately, was a unique experience. Although not subject to coloured hearing, I have seen on awakening from a deep sleep an early morning whistle as a dark purple streak against the window curtain. Fevers apparently may cause such substitutions of one sense by another; certain drugs also have the power of effecting such exchanges. Gautier it was who said of hashish that it enabled him to hear the noise of colours.

Seeing Sounds.

Leaving the explanation of what we may call true synesthesia to the future investigator, we may ask the relation between such experiences and the imitation of them in literature and criticism. One of the curiosities of modern criticism is, in fact, found in the tendency to transfer sense adjectives from one province to another. We hear of colour harmonies, melodic lines, frosty music, fragrant nocturnes, noisy colours.

Modulations from pigeon egg blue to Nile green, most misty and subtle modulations, dissolve before one's eye, and for a moment the sky is peppered with tiny stars in doubles, each independently tinted. Or from Swinburne, writing of Blake's early poems: "They have a fragrance of sound, a melody of colour, in a time when the best verses produced had merely the arid perfume of powder."

Modern French poetry is full of such sense confusions. Rimbaud writes the "Sonnet of the Vowels." Baudelaire sings of the correspondences of perfumes, colours and sounds. English poetry makes less use of such an effect, although Swinburne uses visual and auditory terms interchangeably. He describes "song visible" and sings of "Light heard as music, music seen as light," and of "fine honey of song notes goldener than gold."

What shall we say of such transfer of sense adjectives? Is it a sign of degeneracy of style, a straining after artificial effect? Is it a sign of a new florescence of language, a language evocative of delicate emotion effects. Or is it rooted in actual experience so that we may conclude that poets and writers of imaginative prose are more than the everyday man subject to a malady of the senses?

To attempt, first, an answer to the last question. Scientists who have investigated synesthesia have from the beginning been interested in the question whether poets and musicians are particularly subject to true synesthesia. This question they have answered in general in the negative. French poets and critics have indeed almost adopted audition colouree (coloured hearing) as a canon of art, but even so, most of them distinguished true from artistic synesthesia. The first is purely individual, random, erratic, of no significance for art, whose appeal must be universal.

Among English poets Swinburne's poetry suggests the possibility of the poet having been subject to tonal vision. Probably, however, he exchanged his terms with deliberate attempt. Shelley's use of sense comparisons is even more evidently deliberate. He often, for instance, uses odour in an odd way. He describes the pealing of hyacinth bulbs as an odour within the sense, and compares sons to homeless odours. But his comparisons are too varied, too definitely instituted, to indicate a true confusion of sound or light with odour.

Exploration of English poetry resulted in the discovery of one case of true synesthesia, one that is even attested by the poet, Poe, who frequently in his poetry speaks of the sound of the coming darkness, confesses in a footnote to "Al Aaraaf:" "I have often thought I could distinctly hear the sound of the darkness as it stole over the horizon."

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