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Sir Charles Stanford on Music Publishing

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Correspondence.

SIR CHARLES STANFORD ON MUSIC PUBLISHING.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—If you wished your readers to form a sound judgment upon the contents of my speech of November 18, you should, in accordance with the etiquette of the best British journalism, have either printed it in full or referred them to some source where they could see its entire content. This proceeding would have made clear the fact that my speech was an appeal to the publishers, not an attack upon them; and that the note struck was not 'discordant' except in so far as it pointed out how some discords (and there exist many which are essential and even agreeable) can be best resolved. By the omission of the greater portion, which contained the mainspring of my arguments, you have produced the impression that I made a series of wholly unbusinesslike and unpractical requests. How far removed it was from 'reviling' the publishers is proved by the fact that two of their number, personally unknown to me, cordially thanked me for what I said. You challenge, not without some apparent justice, my general statement about Belaieff's catalogue. Not having it by me, I asked a friend who had it how many pages it contained, and his reply was '210.' I was not made aware that so much of it was index, although anyone would assume that an index would be included in that, as also in my four pages assigned to English work. But even allowing your elimination of sixty-four pages devoted to songs and pianoforte music (both of which were included in my general summary of absolute music), and admitting it at your own figure of twenty-four, the comparison of the publications of one Russian publisher with all the English publishers put together is in the proportion of six to one. If, then, you object to my taking Belaieff as an example, I shall quote the catalogues of Breitkopf, of Schott and of Simrock, with far worse results for England in comparison. Or I shall quote what one of the leaders of American music told me, when I asked him how the United States fared in this respect: 'The leading publishers of the U.S.A. make a point of publishing a certain amount of high-class orchestral and chamber music and paying the composers for it, if only for the sake of giving dignity and artistic weight to their catalogues.'

I did not, as you imply, ask the publishers to become dispensers of charity or pioneers of philanthropy. I pointed out that the line which all the other great nations of Europe take in a business matter such as this is not likely to be Utopian, for they are no fools in commerce, but that they take it because in the end it is a far-sighted and sound policy to do so, and they have proved their case. What I asked for was not the investment of 'an unlimited capital' in such publications, but of 'some small portion' of the profits (*i.e.*, the interest) derived from works which produce the quickest and largest returns on the capital invested in them.

You say that the remedy rests with the composers themselves and the genius and aptitude which they display. How are they to display it? In manuscript? Two of our rising men produced chamber works which delighted 400 listeners at the Broadwood Concerts last season. Where are they to be found in print? In a foreign country some publishers would have considered it their business to go and hear such works, and if they gained such success as was the case in these two instances, they would be within the reach of all music-lovers at once. Not one of the leading English publishers was in the room. I suppose that you would not deny genius and aptitude to Sir Hubert Parry: a comparison between the list of his chamber music in Grove's Dictionary (as far back as 1880) and that in any English publisher's catalogue will be instructive. Would this be possible in the case of any composer of his calibre in any other country?

Then you say that the remedy lies with the conductors. How are they to get works and repeat them when they are in manuscript? What inducement have they to purchase them when the price of those orchestral compositions which do get into print are prohibitive in comparison with those of foreign publication?

Lastly, you cite the public, who are to learn to believe that native music is worth listening to, when they can only procure a meagre fraction of it to play or to study. And you forget that your strictures upon the public for apathy as regards native music apply almost entirely to western London, and that to the rest of Great Britain and to the many circles of enthusiastic amateurs about the country they do not apply at all. But these circles can get foreign publications easily and cheaply, and the few English works which they can buy are handicapped by their price.

The main point of my contention is that the printing of a few works in England alone will not make the slightest impression. Mr. F. Simrock himself told me that works published in England alone were isolated and stillborn—'todgeschlagen.' All the foreign publishers have one foot in their own country and one elsewhere. Those who are not German have branches in Central Europe: those that are German have branches here in England, where you would have us believe that music of the type they publish does not pay. Why, then, do they come here? If English publishers do not carry out that prime necessity in the event of their building up a list of native high-class absolute music, I know perfectly well that their action would be only philanthropic and foredoomed to failure. On the lines that the publishers of other countries have followed, I cannot see why this policy should not have a success equivalent to theirs.

It was for this policy that I appealed. I 'reviled' no one. None of my unprejudiced listeners or readers will be found to support such a distortion of my attitude in the matter. The leading publishers seemed to think that the support of the leading composers of this country was necessary to the success of their championship of their rights of property. It seems, to say the least, a pity that any of them should resent and allow misrepresentation of the appeal now made to them for a little support to a side of native art which they have admittedly neglected. If the business of Messrs. Agnew (whom you cite), and of their predecessors and colleagues, had been carried on without interest in or sympathy for the pictures of modern classical masters, it is only too probable that the Tate Gallery would not have been required or built.

CHARLES V. STANFORD.

50, Holland Street, Kensington.

December 7, 1906.

WAGNER IN AUSTRALIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—In reference to the article on 'Wagner's Music in England' which appeared in your issue of September last, you will be interested to hear that the first performance of Wagner's 'Lohengrin' took place in Melbourne, Victoria, on August 18, 1877.

A local admirer of Wagner wrote to him apprising him of the performance and received an interesting letter in reply, to the effect that he was surprised that his work was given at the Antipodes so soon after the first performance in England.

Yours faithfully,

F. W. D. MOORE.

Geelong, Victoria.

M. Alphonse Mustel ably demonstrated at Bechstein Hall on December 18 the remarkable expressive capabilities of the Mustel and Mustel Celesta organs. The pieces played by him furnished full scope for the display of charming varieties of tone, no less than for many beautiful effects of *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, &c. Moreover, so responsive is the touch of these instruments that rapid passages can be played upon them with facility and certainty of clearness, which is more than can be said for the ordinary harmonium. An interesting feature of the evening's music was the exhibition of the Maestro piano, a wonderful mechanical instrument which gave forth in life-like fidelity (so to speak) some reproductions of the performances of Messrs. Paderewski, Pachmann and Busoni.