

THE Musical Times

Review

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 49, No. 781 (Mar. 1, 1908), p. 172

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/904823>

Accessed: 04-02-2016 11:15 UTC

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Ignaz Jan Paderewski. By Edward Algernon Baughan.
[John Lane.]

This well-written monograph on the distinguished pianist is stronger on its critical than on its biographical side. From internal evidence it may be assumed that the materials of the life-story herein told have been obtained from sources other than personal contact with the subject thereof. No letters are given, and, as every biographer knows, how valuable they are in helping to fill in the picture. Still, for all that, Mr. Baughan has produced a readable book, the illustrations adding to its value. Not the least interesting feature of these pages is the account given of M. Paderewski's first visit to London, in May, 1890, with the various newspaper criticisms then passed upon his performances. One of these criticisms is from the pen of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who said: 'There is Paderewski, a man of various moods, who was alert, humorous, delightful at his first recital; sensational, empty, vulgar and violent at his second; and dignified, intelligent, almost sympathetic at his third.' As Mr. Baughan says, the 'almost sympathetic' is distinctly good. A slight misprint on p. 81, 'sonata' instead of 'concerto' (the pianist's Op. 17), should be corrected in the next edition of this recent and welcome addition to Mr. John Lane's series of 'Living masters of music.'

Elleen. Words by Charles F. Grindrod.
My true love hath my heart. Words by Sir Philip Sidney.
Music by Ivor Atkins.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

The talented organist of Worcester Cathedral shows in these songs that secular music is as well within his grasp as that of the Church. The gallantry of Mr. Grindrod's lines may be doubted, but although the particularly fascinating lady to whom they are addressed seems to be an arrant coquette, the home-truths are so gilded with graceful compliments that forgiveness may confidently be expected. The light and bantering spirit has been admirably caught by the composer, and the music trips gaily and lingers warningly in faithful attendance on the text.

Sir Philip Sidney's lines have had many settings, but methods change and even love has its fashions, so there is justification for our young composers taking up familiar poems, and if Mr. Atkins's music does not throw any new light on the inner meaning of the lines, it happily echoes the courteous sentiment so quaintly and frankly expressed.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Catalogue of Manuscript Music in the British Museum. Vol. II. Secular Vocal Music. By Augustus Hughes-Hughes. Pp. xxv. + 961; 35s. (Printed by order of the Trustees and sold at the British Museum.)

Claude Achille Debussy. Illustrated. By Mrs. Franz Liebig. Pp. 92; 2s. 6d. net. (John Lane.)

Chats on Violoncellos. By Olga Racster. With 18 illustrations. Pp. xii. + 227; 3s. 6d. net. (T. Werner Laurie.)

Les fêtes et les chants. By Julien Tiersot. Pp. xxxviii. + 323. (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie.)

Neue Entdeckungen von der Menschlichen Stimme. Von Dr. Ottmar Rutz. Pp. viii. + 158; M. 5. (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck.)

What does Richard Wagner relate concerning the origin of his musical composition of the Ring of the Nibelungs? By S. Röckl: translated by C. de C. Parrish. Pp. 27; 1s. (Breitkopf & Haertel.) For review, see p. 171.

Mr. FRANCIS HILL HARPER died, we regret to record, on February 22, aged fifty-three. The son of Mr. Edmund B. Harper, a member of the well-known musical family, Mr. F. H. Harper served his apprenticeship with Messrs. Novello & Co., and for the past twenty years held the responsible post of head of their bookbinding department.

'The Musical Directory, Annual and Almanack' for 1908 merits the usual welcome which year by year attends its publication by Messrs. Rudall, Carte & Co. The present volume is the fifty-sixth annual issue of an invaluable book of reference.

M. CLAUDE DEBUSSY.

HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN ENGLAND.

Nothing could have been heartier than the applause which greeted M. Claude Debussy as he stepped on to the platform at Queen's Hall on February 1. The warmth of the welcome which he received testified to the esteem in which he is held in this country. The occasion was a concert of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, which thereby became invested with unusual interest. That exquisite little tone-poem 'L'après-midi d'un faune' was the first piece which M. Debussy conducted. This characteristic work, which has become familiar to London and provincial concert-goers, received a delicate and impressive rendering under the baton of its composer. As a conductor M. Debussy is undemonstrative; he has nothing to do with those gesture demonstrations adopted by some wielders of the baton, yet he gets what he wants from the players who interpret his music.

The novelty of the afternoon's music was 'La mer,' three symphonic sketches for orchestra. As they were composed by M. Debussy between 1903 and 1905, they may be regarded as among his ripest productions. This trio of pieces are severally entitled:

1. De l'aube à midi sur la mer (From dawn to noon at sea).
2. Jeux de vagues (Gambols of the waves).
3. Dialogue du vent et de la mer (Dialogue between the wind and the sea).

So novel are the effects which M. Debussy obtains from his wonderful scheme of orchestral colour, so elusive is the music, so formless, and yet in a way so graphic, that it is difficult to express an opinion upon a work of this kind after a first hearing. Such atmospheric strains, so unlike what one is accustomed to, must be listened to in a passive frame of mind, perchance in a darkened room. There can be no question as to the cleverness of the music or its poetic import; the only thing is to get one's ears educated, so to speak, in order to appreciate its strange idiom. At the close of the performance the composer-conductor—who appeared in the unconventional garb of a lounge jacket, Why not?—was most enthusiastically recalled.

Herr Hugo Becker played with remarkable technical skill Volkmann's Violoncello concerto in A minor (Op. 33), a work which is of little value as music; and the concert opened with Beethoven's 'Egmont' overture and closed with Schubert's 'Unfinished' symphony in B minor—a good beginning and a pleasant ending to this eventful music-making.

The concert on February 15 was played by the Queen's Hall Orchestra entirely off their own bat, and in so doing they scored a success. Mr. Maurice Sons, the able leader of the band, interpreted with artistic insight, good tone and phrasing Bach's Introduction and Fugue from the Sonata No. 2, in A minor, for violin alone, his performance of the work being, from all points of view, commendable in a very high degree. The remainder of the more or less familiar programme does not call for detailed comment; it consisted of Weber's 'Der Freischütz,' and Smetana's 'The bartered bride' overtures, Tchaikovsky's 'Pathetic' symphony, and L'apprenti sorcier (Scherzo for orchestra) by Paul Dukas. Except the Debussy pieces, Mr. Henry J. Wood conducted both concerts with his customary thoroughness.

The Aberdeen Choral Union, in conjunction with the Scottish Orchestra, produced David Stephen's new setting of Lady Nairne's ballad 'The Laird o' Cockpen' at their fourth Subscription concert, in the Music Hall, on January 30. The composer, himself a Scotsman, has caught the spirit of the old song, with the result that its subtle humour is admirably reflected in this modern setting. The orchestration, a special feature of the work, was brought out to full advantage by Dr. Cowen's able body of players, while the choir, in entering into the spirit of the ballad, gave a good rendering of the vocal parts. The performance was conducted by the composer. The remainder of the programme, which included Dvorák's 'In der Natur' overture, Strauss's 'Tod und Verklärung,' and Liszt's Pianoforte concerto in E flat (the solo part played by Mr. Frederic Lamond), was conducted by Dr. F. H. Cowen.