

BRITAIN TO-DAY



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PRICE ONE SHILLING

THE PROVINCIAL MUSIC FESTIVALS

By DYNELEY HUSSEY

LONDON leads the way in the Festival of Britain, as befits the city which the Scottish poet Dunbar long ago described

In beawtie beryng the crone imperiall.

And there will be no denying the magnificence and multitude of the musical fare offered in the capital during the two months' Season of the Arts—and even after. For from July to October there will be symphony concerts with programmes of unusual interest and variety in the new Royal Festival Hall every Sunday and on many Wednesdays.

But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that this is a Festival of *Britain* and not a London Festival, and at the end of June the main interest is transferred from the capital to the provinces. Indeed, already during the coming month there are inducements to leave town. On June 8th, for instance, one might go to East Anglia, where at the seaside town of Aldeburgh Benjamin Britten and his collaborators are holding their annual festival. This might be called a "chamber" festival, employing small resources within the modest limits of parish church and town hall. There Handel's *Jephtha* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Britten's own *St. Nicholas* and *Albert Herring* may be heard under intimate conditions along with concerts of madrigals, of works by Mozart and music for wind instruments and for brass band. This last by the way is a form of instrumental music in which Britain excels. It is a "popular" form of art, but one to which Elgar and Holst, William Walton and Gordon Jacob have not disdained to contribute.

The visitor to Aldeburgh can proceed direct to Norwich where in mid-June the old-established Triennial Festival has been extended to a fortnight's length. The musical programmes of the Festival, which embraces also the drama and exhibitions of paintings of the great Norwich School, consist of orchestral and choral concerts conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, Dr. Heathcote Statham and Sir Malcolm Sargent.

The modern music to be played includes works by Elgar, Rubbra, Delius, Vaughan Williams, Patrick Hadley, Sibelius and Shostakovich.

To the West, the Cheltenham Festival of British Contemporary Music follows in July. Full details of this were given in my article last month, for this is one of the central events of the year, devoted as it is to the performance of new or recent works by British composers.

Westward again Wales is preparing to celebrate the Festival with poetry and song. Choral singing is the kind of music in which the Welsh excel, and great choral singing may be expected at St. David's, where in the second week of July Bach's B minor Mass and a new oratorio by Arwel Hughes will be sung in the cathedral. A Welsh Festival Choir has been formed for the occasion and will visit London during the season. Then there is the annual Eisteddfod, a grand competition festival with picturesque bardic ceremonies, at which the main interest for the visitor from outside the Principality is to hear the Welsh choirs compete with one another and the stirring sound of the immense audience joining tunefully in the singing of Welsh songs and hymns. By a happy chance the Eisteddfod takes place this year at Llanrwst in the Conway valley not far from Bettws-y-coed, and in the centre of some of the loveliest scenery in the world. This Eisteddfod is the great national festival of Wales, but there is also an international Eisteddfod at Llangollen, at which teams of folk-musicians and dancers from all parts of Europe, including Turkey, will compete, wearing their national costumes. This is an event of recent establishment and one of the most colourful in the whole calendar. A more conventional Music Festival, consisting of orchestral and choral concerts, takes place at Swansea in October and so winds up the series of provincial celebrations.

Before that comes the Edinburgh Festival at the end of August, after the London Season of the Arts the most ambitious and comprehensive of all. This year's musical programmes are planned round a series of fourteen orchestral concerts to be given by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Bruno Walter and Dimitri Mitropoulos. The American Orchestra, which last came to Great Britain

some twenty years ago, is on this occasion confining its visit to Edinburgh and will not be heard elsewhere. The programmes include, besides a number of classical works, symphonies by Mahler, Prokofieff, Bruckner and Vaughan Williams; and a number of distinguished soloists, Dame Myra Hess, Robert Casadesus, Zino Francescatti and Serkin among them, will play concertos with the orchestra. At one of his concerts Mr. Mitropoulos will himself be the soloist in Malipiero's Fourth Pianoforte Concerto. There will be two performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, prefaced by Vaughan Williams's Tallis Fantasia, under Bruno Walter's direction, the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union providing the choir.

The opening orchestral concerts of the Festival will be given by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult, who will conduct the first performance of a Symphony by William Wordsworth which won the prize offered by the Edinburgh Festival Society for a new symphony. On the last two nights of the Festival the Hallé Orchestra will play under Sir John Barbirolli, and there will also be concerts by the Scottish National Orchestra and by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain directed by Walter Susskind, and the B.B.C. Scottish Orchestra under Ian Whyte. The Boyd Neel Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, and a number of String Quartets will give the morning concerts in Freemasons' Hall, where also there will be a series of recitals illustrating the Art of Lieder, in which Irmgard Seefried, Suzanne Danco and Mack Harrell will take part.

Opera will be provided as before by Mr. John Christie's Glyndebourne Company, who will give performances of a new production of Verdi's *La Forza del Destino* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, under the artistic direction of Fritz Busch and Carl Ebert. During the first two weeks of the Festival the Sadler's Wells Ballet will appear in a varied repertory, including *Le Lac des Cygnes* (complete), Constant Lambert's new ballet *Tiresias* and Vaughan Williams's *Job*. In the last week the Yugoslav National Ballet will present two full-length ballets, *The Legend of Ohrid* and *The Ballet of Medieval Love*. There will be, too, concerts of Scottish music and of unaccompanied choral music, ancient and modern, by the Nederlands Kam-

merkoor, and the Academy Choir of Vienna. It may be said that this year Edinburgh is offering a richer and more interesting programme than ever before, and a special effort seems to have been made to represent contemporary music more adequately than heretofore in the main orchestral programmes.

New Recordings

The fine quality of the New York Orchestra, its wonderful string-tone and the lovely playing of the wood-winds, may be heard in a new recording of Dvořák's Fourth Symphony, made under the direction of Bruno Walter (Columbia). In the same list is Debussy's "La Mer" played by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Alceo Galliera. The atmosphere and tonal qualities of Debussy's score come out most vividly. That this orchestra can be precise as well as poetic may be heard in a new H.M.V. recording of Paganini's Violin Concerto in B minor with Menuhin as the brilliant soloist. For those with a taste for Paganini's showy music there is also a Decca long-playing record of the twelve "Caprices" made by Ruggiero Ricci. Another work by Dvořák, seldom played and most unjustly neglected, has been brought to our notice by Rafael Kubelik. This is the Scherzo Capriccioso, which turns out to be one of the Czech composer's most delightful and spontaneous works. It is beautifully recorded by the Philharmonia Orchestra for H.M.V.

Among the long-playing records issued by Decca is a complete recording on one disc of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, conducted by Ansermet. The power and vividness of this disc is quite remarkable, though the string-tone, which seems to present difficulties to the engineers making these slow-revolving records, has not the fullness and brilliance achieved on the best records of the older type. Another big work, which is a valuable addition to the catalogue, is Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, not one of the greatest tone-poems but an interesting work which ought to be available. Clemens Krauss with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra have made the recording, and also those of *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel* on another disc, with a full appreciation of the music's richness and sensuous rhythms.