“Men And Music”

by Dr. Erik Chisholm

Lectures given at University of Cape Town Summer School,
February 1964

Published by The Erik Chisholm Trust
June 2014

www.erikchisholm.com
Copyright Notice

The material contained herein is attributed to The Erik Chisholm Trust and may not be copied or reproduced without the prior permission of the Trust.

All enquiries regarding copyright should be sent to the Trust at info@erikchisholm.com

© 2014 The Erik Chisholm Trust
Dr. Erik Chisholm (1904—1965)
Credits

Fonts: Text - Calibri  Headings - Segro Script

Compiled in Microsoft Publisher 2013
In 1964 Chisholm gave a series of lectures on Men and Music, illustrated with music and slides, at the UCT Summer School. In his own words Men and Music wasn’t “going to be a serious business. It will consist mainly of light hearted reminiscences about some important figures in 20th Century music, from which it will be possible to gain insight into their characters and personalities.”

Many distinguished composers came to Glasgow in the 1930’s to give concerts of their works for the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music (a bit of a mouthful, known colloquially as The Active Society).

The 18 composers he talks about are William Walton, Cyril Scott, Percy Grainger, Eugene Goossens, Bela Bartok, Donald Tovey, Florent Schmitt, John Ireland, Yvonne Arnaud, Frederick Lamond, Adolph Busch, Alfredo Casella, Arnold Bax, Paul Hindemith, Dmitri Shostakovich (Chisholm cheated here- Shostakovich didn’t actually appear but they were friends and the Active Society “played quite a lot of his music”), Kai-koshru Sorabji, Bernard van Dieren and Medtner.

It is clear Chisholm planned to publish the lectures but he ran out of time, out of life.

They are fun to read; several serious musicians have found them hard to put down once started, and have read them into the small hours of the night.

What follows is a modern presentation of those lectures given by Dr, Erik Chisholm at the University of Cape Town Summer School, where he was the Resident Professor of Music in February 1964, just over a year before he died.

I have taken a few minor liberties with the text but it is basically just as he presented it, some of the original slides are now lost so I have substituted other images where appropriate. Whilst researching this material I came across some previously un-seen pictures and I have used this opportunity to include a few that are relevant to the text, such as the one on the next page. For obvious reasons I have not been able to include the music Erik played in the lectures but I have preserved their presence in the text by marking them in green, with a description where possible.
On the Erik Chisholm Trust’s website [www.erikchisholm.com/menandmusic](http://www.erikchisholm.com/menandmusic) there is an HTML version of these lectures which includes the music Erik used in these lectures. On the website you will find a wealth of other material relating to Erik, his life and his music.

Next year (2015) is the 50th anniversary of Erik’s death and the Trust are planning some special events to mark the occasion. Please see the website for further announcements. Finally, if you were present at the original lectures the Trust would like to hear from you, please contact them via the website.

**Tony Hudson**

Shorwell, Isle of Wight

July 2014

*College of Music - undated but certainly from the early 1960's, Erik is seated in the centre first row.*

(restored Image)
CONTENTS

Portrait of Erik Chisholm .................................. Page 3
Introduction by the Editor................................. Page 5
Lecture Introduction ...................................... Page 8
William Walton ............................................. Page 13
Cyril Scott ..................................................... Page 22
Eugene Goosens ............................................ Page 28
Bela Bartok .................................................... Page 30
Karol Szymanowski ....................................... Page 45
Donald F Tovey .............................................. Page 49
Florent Schmitt ............................................. Page 55
John Ireland ................................................... Page 59
Adolf Busch ................................................... Page 65
Yvonne Arnaud ............................................. Page 68
Tatiana Makushina ........................................ Page 71
Frederic Lamond ............................................ Page 73
Egon Petri ..................................................... Page 74
Alfredo Casella ............................................. Page 75
Arnold Bax .................................................... Page 82
Paul Hindemith ............................................. Page 92
Kaikhosru Sorabji .......................................... Page 103
Bernard van Dieren ....................................... Page 115
Dmitri Shostakovich ...................................... Page 119
Nikolai Medtner ............................................ Page 123
Additional Pictures ...................................... Page 132
INTRODUCTION

You mustn’t think that this course "Men and Music" is going to be a serious business. It will consist mainly of light-hearted reminiscences about some important figures in 20th century music, from which it is possible you may gain an insight into their characters and personalities. You will, moreover, hear many interesting examples of their music, in most instances played by the composers themselves: this is always revealing. If the creators of music are also competent performers, then it should follow that their interpretations of their own music must be authentic. Whereas painters, sculptors and writers (except playwrights) create their works of art once and for all, (and who dare meddle with them is a villain, and does so at his peril,) musicians on the other hand depend on others to perform, to recreate the music, a set of circumstances, which is, at one and the same time, the attraction and despair of the art. Until only very recently, it was accepted as quite normal that any composer could take up the work of another composer and re-work and re-write the "Mona Lisa" the way he would like it to be done-resolving the famous enigmatic smile into, say, a direct leer at the Beatles or if Somerset Maugham re-wrote Shakespeare sonnets in Bow-bells cockney with some Joyceian comments of his own. Among performing musicians there is a growing sense of responsibility towards the great masters: a desire to make their performances as authentic and as near the original as possible. There is, too, such a gulf between serialism and electronic music and the classics, that to combine the two in a single composition is really unthinkable. I am told that anyone offering a programme, nowadays to the B.B.C. which includes transcriptions will find they are now no longer acceptable. Anyway, if the future of music lies in electronics, this will kill not only the transcriber, but also eliminate the performer.

At this year’s summer school I will give a series of talks on noted composers who gave concerts of their works at the Glasgow Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, it might be just as well to tell you, at the start, how the Society came into existence, something about the people who ran it, how it came about that some of the greatest composers of our time were patrons, and gave performances to the Society, in a relatively insignificant town like Glasgow (insignificant, artistically speaking).

In 1928 I settled again in Scotland, after two years in Canada, and was appointed organist and choirmaster of a Presbyterian Church in the centre of Glasgow. In the church there was a very fine 3-manual organ, and on it I gave a number of organ recitals: respectable works like Bach Preludes & Fugues and Choral Preludes, Karg-Elert’s big Op. 66, (which occupied three evenings) and transcriptions I had made (for I knew no better!) of Stravinsky’s, "Sacre du Printemps", Strauss’ "Don Quixote", Elgar’s “Falstaff” and other orchestral works which had not yet found a place in the programmes of the Scottish Orchestra. I got a bright young student friend of mine, Patrick Shannon, to assist me in these orchestral transcriptions, to
the extent of placing himself inside the organ case, and banging cymbals, side drums, triangles, castanets and so on, at appropriate places in the score. Of course, nobody knew he was there, and I didn’t fail to make a flowery gesture with hand or foot to show the audience it was all my own work. The music-loving Glaswegians (it would be an exaggeration ever to call them music-lovers) began to sit up and take notice at Chisholm and his unique orchestral organ. The upshot was that Pat Shannon and I became confirmed partners in musical crime, and one extravagance led to another.

Pat was a gifted and versatile young musician, playing piano for a sketchy living (in bioscope, cafe, pub and music hall): he was also a fine organist, played all percussion instruments, and - given a week’s notice - was prepared to tackle any string, wood-wind or brass instrument ever invented. He had administrative ability, could write good press copy: also “elecute” or recite with no mean ability. He lived with his sister and widowed mother at 116, Nithsdale Road, Pollokshields, and his mother adored her brilliant, harum-scarum and altogether lovable son. Mrs Shannon was a kindly little Irish woman with a warm enchanting brogue, who played both violin and viola, and later became a most valuable member of our various Active Society ensembles. Pat and I were inseparable buddies. What fun we had together. We next launched a series of what we called “National Musical Recitals” - again in the Kirk - roping in some singer friends of ours, using the church choir and gradually building up a performing unit of keen, talented and adventurous young musicians. With Pat playing the orchestral parts on the organ, and I the solo piano parts, we performed the Delius concerto "Nights in a Garden in Spain", Medtner’s second concerto, Bartok’s first, the Franck’s "Symphonic Variations" and ‘Les Djinns’. To keep up the reputation of the organ itself we had, of course, to find a new recruit to play percussion in the organ case.

All that I remember about this new chap is that his face was covered with pimples, and he had a lisp: more to the point - he couldn’t count rests properly. There was a revealing incident when Miller, or whatever his name was, crashed his cymbals fortissimo in a quiet bit in a slow movement: after which disaster, Pat and I decided it was safer to let the organ look after its own reputation, and dispense with uncontrollable extra-musical effects.

We got the choir to sing a difficult work like Kodaly’s "Psalmus Hungaricus“ with one of our own boys, Logan Annand doing the sole tenor part. Annand was an ambitious singer, whose intonation could be distressing, and he had a habit of cupping his right ear in his hand as though trying to sell coal in the Cowcaddens. His enthusiasm and eagerness to learn new works amply compensated for these little foibles. One of his most accurate performances was in the difficult "Sonata Vocalise" of Medtner where the voice is used as a solo wind instrument -without words; it requires, however a voice of beauty and great purity of tone to bring it off successfully, and our Logan’s voice was more noted for quantity than quality.

I invited Ian White, a rising young Scot musician, private music master to Lord Glentanar of Aboyn, to give a full recital of his compositions. Whyte’s vital - if dour, musical - if uninspired, self assured - if slightly condescending, personality was a new and exciting experience for us, and we saw at once the possibiliti-
ties of having guest artists. If we could get some really Big Shots to play for us, it should be possible to in-
crease the range of our concerts and thus attract a wider public. The big problem was finance, for none of
us had more than two beans to rub together, and the silver collection we had taken at the church, just
about paid for the printing of the programme.

We got around this difficulty by inviting the Glasgow music-liking public to subscribe in advance to our
proposed series of concerts. We moved to the Stevenson Hall, in the old Athenaeum School of Music
which was licensed for concerts. A few of the bigger concerts were given in the St. Andrews (Berkeley)
Hall. At no time did we have more than 200 people in the audience - which I thought pretty skimpy at
the time – although a member of the Schonberg group later told me that 200 was for them a maximum
audience for their Vienna Contemporary Music Concerts.

The first foreign composer to accept my invitation to give a concert of his own works was Kaikhosru So-
rabji, a Parsi musician residing in London about whom I will have more to say. Sorabji was very charming,
very gracious, very friendly and even appeared a little hurt when I offered to pay his out-of-pocket ex-
penses. This was all right with Pat and me - two ambitious young men with nothing in their pockets who
desperately wanted to promote contemporary music. Let me say right now that apart from Sorabji (who
had pots of money anyway - his Dad was a millionaire) we gave all our distinguished visitors as large a fee
as we could afford in addition to paying their travelling expenses and hotel bills (if for some reason or oth-
er private hospitality was not available). On the other hand, in the ten years of its existence, none of our
local performers ever got a penny for their services - there just wasn't any money left over.

We wrote to a number of top musicians all over the world telling them what we proposed doing, and
asking them if they would become office-bearers of our Society. Nobody refused; so here is a list of our
office-bearers: (follows on next page).

We announced our first series of 12 concerts at an all-in subscription of 21/-. I cannot now remember
all the composers we invited to perform at our 1930/31 series, but the other day, I came across a list of
those we asked - for our second series, 1933/32: their number included:

Manuel de Falla,
Paul Hindemith,
Maurice Ravel,
Ernst Krenek
Igor Stravinsky
Bela Bartok,
Percy Grainger,
Arthur Honagge
Ildebrando Pissett
Alban Berg and half a dozen English composers.
President:          Her Grace the Duchess of Atholl - Katharine Murray

Vice Presidents:  Sir R S Rait, Principal of Glasgow University

Sir D M Stevenson, Bart. - A millionaire bod, who tossed a tenner to us once, but only once.

Dr. W G Whittaker, Professor of Music at Glasgow University

Hon President:    Myself

Hon Vice President: Francis George Scott

Hon Secretary:    Patrick Shannon

Hon Treasurer:    A M Chisholm (My brother)

Hon Vice Presidents:  Bela Bartok (Budapest)

Sir Arnold Bax (London)

Sir Arthur Bliss (London)

Alfredo Casella (Rome)

Professor E J Dent (Cambridge)

Frederick Delius (Grez-sur-Loing, Fontainebleau, France)

Bernard van Dieren (London)

Edwin Evans (London)

Cecil Gray (London)

Paul Hindemith (Berlin)

Jean Sibelius (Helsinki)

Kaikhosru Sorabji (London)

Karl Szymanowski (Warsaw)

Ernest Toch (Berlin)

Sir Donald Tovey (Edinburgh)

Sir William Walton (London)

The Active Society For The Propagation Of Contemporary Music

63 Berkeley Street Glasgow C 3

Tel: Langside 1671
As you will see from the summer school prospectus quite a number of these famous composers did accept our invitations and it is about them and their music that I shall be talking to you during the next two weeks.

It is 24 years since the Active Society became Inactive, and you might like to know what has happened in the meantime to some of our bright boys:

**One earned fame as a novelist, another is a Musical Director of the BBC, a third a noted pianist and fourth a Professor of Music.**

One of our committee members turned out to be a German spy, and just escaped the chopper by fleeing to America: our cellist edited a volume of the Penguin *Great Crimes of the Century* and finished up in jail himself, and the boy who played the cymbals inside the organ, Patrick Shannon, turned religious and is now... hold it!... the Bishop of Aberdeen.

---

**The letterhead of the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music**

*The Hon Secretary is shown as Diana Brodie, Erik’s first wife, instead of Patrick Shannon*
When I presented myself at the Reid Music School, Park Place, Edinburgh, one cold spring morning in 1934, I felt none of the usual feelings of excitement which was my wont when attending one of Sir Donald Tovey’s inspiring lectures on some aspect or other of musical history: quite the contrary, in fact, and for a very good reason. I was about to face a final oral examination for my D.Mus. Degree. I had been warned by a successful D.Mus. candidate, Dr March, that it could be, and generally was a really gruelling affair; "They keep pummelling question after question at you, all morning, after lunch and maybe right into the evening. There is no telling what they may ask you: like as not quizzing you about Guillaume de Machet for a couple of hours: or finding out what you know about the Haydn String Quartets" : this sort of thing: "Mr Chisholm, will you please tell the dis-honourable Board of Examiners the essential, aesthetic, technical, basic, structural, emotional, physical and historical differences - if any - between the Bagpipe Minuet Op. 3 No.3 and the Bagpipe Minuet, Op. 20, No.2. Do you consider these basic differences - if any - larger or smaller, or not at all, as the case may be, between.... well, let us say .... the Hornpipe Op.64 No.5 and the Hexen Minuet Op. 76 No.2., or don't you? You know what Tovey is; he thinks everyone a fool who doesn’t know as much as he does, and well, you know, Tovey knows everything!" This put the wind up me all right, and for the past year I had been all but living among the dust, webs, advanced mouldiness, dodeca-phonic decay of the Glasgow University prison, misnamed "a library"; mopping up, memorising, swallowing whole, swotting - swotting - swotting - everything I could lay my greedy eyes on. And here I was now, knees atremble, heart in boots, about to enter the Portals of Hell, with Haydn Quartets sprouting from my ears, Masses of Palestrina Motets dripping from my nostrils, a clutch of Bach cantatas, a gross of concerti grosse; syphilitic symphonies, Confucian concertos, quarrelsome quartets, tiresome trios, dubious duos and soggy sonatas jogging and twisting one another in my hair, and I had a modicum of hair, if nothing else in my upper storey that morning. Well, I plucks up courage and in I goes, and there in the torture Chamber is the Infernal Examiner, (Sir Hugh P. Allen, professor of Music at Oxford University and principal of the Royal College of Music) and the Dean, with all his faculties (one assumes). I am offered a cigarette; I shakily light the cigarette: I brace myself for the worst! The "worst" wasn’t really so bad, for I quickly twigged that the examiners had already agreed to pass me out as "Herr Doctor" and the oral examination was little more than a formality. One of the questions Sir Hugh Allen asked was: "What is your opinion of the music of the present English School: Bax, Ireland, Delius, and Walton to go on with?" At this time, I was particularly interested in the music of William Walton, as I had conducted his entertain-
"Facade" and performed other works of his at Active Society concerts; so after giving the examiners un-profound views on the composers mentioned, I said: "Sir Hugh, I believe that in 1918, Walton was an undergraduate in your department. I have often wondered how you handled him, what you taught him, and how a young genius reacted to the basic University disciplines – harmony, counterpoint, and so on". "A very interesting question, Chisholm.” When Walton was ten, his father sent him from Oldham (where he was born) to Oxford, and enrolled him as a choir boy and pupil at Christ Church Cathedral and School; the organist was my good friend, Dr. Henry Ley, and finding Walton busily scribbling away on music paper big motets for double choir and that sort of thing, he soon recognised that this new boy had outstanding talent.

The Dean of Christ Church, Thomas Strong - who happens to be a Doctor of Music as well as a Doctor of Divinity - brought Walton along to me. We tested his ear, gave him a theme to extemporise on, made him jump through the usual hoops, all of which tests he came through with flying colours. When he was 16, he matriculated at Christ Church, and I got the Faculty Board to agree to let him enter my department as an undergraduate". “Thank you, Sir Hugh; now will you please tell me what you taught him?” "I did the only thing I possibly could do with such a talented student - I left him alone; I let him go his own way, giving him some guidance when necessary. Of course, like the other students, he had tutorials in harmony and counterpoint for the B.Mus. examination, but I never attempted to give him any lessons in composition. I used to play some modern scores for him on the organ, and he spent much time in the Ellis Library in the Radcliffe Camera, which had the newest scores of Stravinsky, Ravel, Debussy and others; but as for composition lessons - no. I felt, and still do that the only way to treat a budding genius is to let him find his own feet, and not to attempt to mould him or burden him with outdated ideas of my own."

Although this conversation with Sir Hugh occurred 30 years age, as you see, I still remember it vividly. Since then, Oxford University has conferred an honorary D.Mus. degree on Walton and King George VI, nine years later, was pleased to dub him knight. Walton occupies an honoured, if reserved place in 20th century British music, standing just under our leading English composer, Benjamin Britten. He now lives on the Island of Ischia, off the Gulfe di Napoli, married to a young and beautiful and very wealthy wife. Sir Thomas Armstrong told me, when he was here a few weeks ago, that Walton is disappointed that his Chaucer opera, "Troilus & Cressida" has made so little headway in the world’s opera houses.

Walton retains a great liking for such unfashionable composers as Brahms and Sibelius, considers Shostakovich as perhaps the greatest living composer performed, and equally deplores the unholy, destructive powers of many European music critics; considers that composers who earn their bread and butter by writing diatonic film music, so that they may have leisure to write ultramodern serialistic music they like, are above and beyond, He himself composed a glorious viola concerto, two exuberant symphonies which have enjoyed great (if now a waning) success. It is however, of none of these works that I am going to speak about to-day. Instead, I want to tell you something of that piquant, amusing, delightful and unusu-
al entertainment known as “Facade”, written when the composer was, and bound up with his Oxford
days. While he was at Oxford, Walton became friendly with Sachavare Sitwell, the youngest of that Eng-
lish literary trio, the Sitwell’s, and author of three volumes on European art and history, and of poetry
more technically intellectual and more traditional than that of his famous sister, Edith. On leaving Oxford,
Walton took up his residence with the Sitwell’s. Edith Sitwell is described in A.C. Ward’s book "The Nin-
teen Twenties" as being strikingly different from the average, poet;
(a) in seeking to communicate sensation, more than to describe it;
(b) in avoidance of worn out traditional imagery and metaphor;
(c) in adapting poetry to modern musical (mainly dance) rhythms, and
(d), in her own words "studying the effect that texture has on rhythm, and the effect that varying and
elaborate patterns of rhythm and of assonances and dissonances have upon rhythm."

I remember Tovey's opinion of the Sitwell's:

"Three Don Quixotes, fighting imaginary literary battles, and tilting at meta-physical windmills"; possi-
bly the trio were too flamboyant, too intellectually self conscious for Tovey's liking. So living in the house
as one of the family of this much discussed literary trio, William Walton and Edith Sitwell worked in close
literary – musical co-operation, the outcome of which was "Facade". I quote from an article I wrote on
"Facade" in the Glasgow Evening News of 25th September, 1930.

You might be interested in hearing their voices:

i) A few sentences from Sacheverell Sitwell, from his book on Spain

ii) Edith Sitwell's fruity voice reading from her "A Poet's Notebook"

iii) Lastly, Sir Osbert Sitwell reading from his autobiography "Left hand, right hand"

Sir Osbert inherited the title on the death of his father, and Edith is a Dame in her own right.
WILLIAM WALTON'S "FACADE."

After some private performances in 1922/3 it was given a public performance in London's Aeolian Hall, June 1923. The result was sensational; behind a curtain drawn across the stage were placed the six instruments (flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, cello and percussion) and the narrator; in the centre of the curtain was painted a mask by Gino Severini to which was fixed to megaphone through which the reciter spoke. Walton says that originally there were close to 40 numbers in "Facade" with the music being scored for a quartet (clarinet, trumpet, cello and percussion) and the number of items has varied from performance to performance. The writer in Grove speaks of 16 pieces in the original "Facade", later increased to 26 for the 1926 production in the new Chenil Galleries. On this point, let me read you some letters Walton sent to me in 1930.

2, Carlisle Square,
Chelsea,
London SW3

Dear Mr. Chisholm,

"I shall be delighted to come down and direct Façade" - that is, if I can rake up enough money for the fare, though how certain that is I hardly like to commit myself. But if I can come, and I will let you know as soon as possible. I shall be delighted to become an honorary member of such a progressive society."

Later, he writes:

"I shall be able to come to Glasgow and should arrive on Saturday, and shall be staying with C.B. Cochrane at 15, Woodlands Terrace. (C.B. Cochrane, was the biggest name in British Show Business for 25 years). The programme should really consist of 18 poems, but I see in your programme magazine that there are 24. The last six I should like cut out, as they aren't particularly good specimens, and are only there to lengthen the programme if it is being done alone - the 18 last about 45 minutes, which is more than enough."

Another brilliantly gifted young English musician of that period was Constant Lambert. Lambert who was founder conductor of the Sadlers-Wells Ballet, himself a gifted composer and writer, was an exceptionally big, warm-hearted, generous young man, who did much to advance the interests of Walton and other struggling young composers. It was over "Facade" that Walton met Constant Lambert, who told
him that he could recite the poems better than anyone else, and, - says Walton, in an interview with Murray Schaffer - "he was right". The two narrators in the early performances of "Façade" were Edith Sitwell and Constant Lambert, and you will shortly hear both of them. Constant Lambert also conducted the first performances of a number of my own works in London and Amsterdam, and on one of these occasions, I asked him why Walton wished to suppress so many of the original 40 items in "Facade". Lambert replied, very shortly and to the point - "Because it was I and not Walton who wrote most of these".

"Façade" in its original form is a gorgeous burlesque. I hope you all have the sheets with 5 Sitwell poems on them: if you will look at them now I will play you six numbers from Façade.”

Constant Lambert narrates the Polka, Foxtrot and Tango.

And Edith Sitwell Black Mrs Behemoth, and Yodelling Song.

Edith Sitwell's Poems are best regarded as refined, very intellectualised, nonsense poems; what the Belgian poet Emile Cammaerts calls "poetry run mad, poetry on the verge of becoming music"

1  Polka-based on the old music hall song:
   see me dance the Polka
   see me clear the ground

2  Fox-trot- as a piece of Jazz-which reminds me that about this time Walton did the scoring for a famous jazz-band “The Savoy Orpheus”

3  Tango-Pasadouble introduces a pop tune of the period:
   “I do like to be beside the sea side” and a swinging South American tango tune

4  Black Mrs Behemoth

5  Swiss Yodelling Song: consisting of a sentimental tune, a heavy Laudler rhythm, overtones from a German Beer Garden, and a quote from “William Tell” Overture

6  "Scotch Rhapsody" - Frank Howes says the suggestion is of a Highland reel – a Highland reel has even groups of quavers, whereas Walton's tune jerks about in a dotted rhythm, and is, in fact, a speeded up Strathspey.

For the two Glasgow performances, we hired the special curtain from Oxford University Press. (I will presently show you a slide of it). On this were two clowns - one on each side of the centre piece - a Façade-y looking building: one clown is holding a guitar and reciting, the other holding a pipe and playing on it, representing the two elements in “Façade”, speech and music. Our first performance was on Tuesday 28th October, 1930. Walton arrived in Glasgow on the previous Saturday, but had stated he had to be in London by Thursday, October 30, and could not wait for the repeat in Edinburgh. To be on the safe side, I myself had taken several rehearsals with the six musicians, and Parry Gunn, the narrator. Mr. Gunn was a
very experienced reciter and producer, but no musician, and found it extremely hard to fit the Sitwell words to Walton's rhythms, and harder still to know when to come in after rests. Walton had little practical experience of conducting, and indeed, even now has never been an integrated performing musician as Britten, Hindemith and Bartok, and the other composer-performers we brought to Glasgow.

Walton was tentative, quiet and shy, and even at the final rehearsal made practically no comments to the players: he seemed quite happy at the way they played his music, and although obviously he could hear that Parry Gunn was rather shaky in his entries, was invariably polite, friendly and appreciative. Before the performance, however, he seemed a little nervous. The synchronisation of the orchestra and narrator was on the whole satisfactory, until we came to the fourth group - three rather elusive pieces - "By the Lake" "A man from a far Countree" and "Country Dance" when Mr. Gunn seemed to backfire on himself and got hopelessly out in the rhythms. Walton turned a little pale, looked faint, and made a feeble gesture in my direction which I interpreted as a wish that I should take over the stick from him. We were, of course, all hidden behind the screen so no one in the audience was aware that conductors had changed mid-stream. Oddly enough, in a letter from Walton which I received only last November, he refers to this incident "I well recall the "Facade" performance, but how or why it ended with the baton in your hand, I cannot remember."

The Active Society concert which followed “Façade” six week later was to be the first appearance in Scotland of the German composer and viola virtuoso, Paul Hindemith.

A year earlier, Hindemith had played the solo part in the first performance of Walton's viola concerto, 3rd October, 1929. Just before coming north, Walton had heard Hindemith playing his own new Viola Concerto: after the "Facade" performance (which in spite of what I have said about conductors changing mid-stream was a great public success) Walton thanked me for the performance, etc., adding "When you see, Paul, do give him my very best regards. I enjoyed his new viola concerto but tell him he should cut it - it's far too long!"

I met Walton again in 1933, when his exciting "Balshazzar's Feast" for mixed choir, baritone and orchestra was performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra at the Amsterdam I.S.C.M. Festival. I was at the festival playing the piano part in my own Dance Suite, and both works were conducted by our mutual friend, Constant Lambert.
This is Walton as he is—more or less—to-day

Here is the interior of Christ Church Cathedral where Walton sang as a boy. The tower arches are 12th Century, the vaulting 16th Century, while the building of the east end of the Cathedral is late 19th Century.

A photograph of the famous Sitwell family. Standing at the left is Sacheverell, Edith centre and Osbert far right.

A sample of Walton’s writing—I read you this letter.
Another letter from Walton, interesting because of his comments on the supposed number of items in Façade 16? 18? 24? 40?

I have inserted this letter from Walton to allow you to compare his writing—separated from the two previous letters by 33 years. You will note that it is now smaller and neater, and that the down no longer have the youthful dash of former times. Apparently, for all his alleged wealth, Walton prefers to answer his own letters.

Here is the curtain we used for our performances. The slide was made from a newspaper illustration and is not very clear: the original curtain was painted in bright colours.

The cover of the general programme of the I.S.C.M. Amsterdam Music Festival.
Sir John Barbirolli, another musician in my life told us that it was he who suggested to Walton that he should group some of the more extended numbers of "Facade" into a suite and score them for symphony orchestra. Walton took his advice, and the first "Facade" suite appeared in 1926. This proved highly successful, and 12 years later, the composer assembled a second suite. Using music from both suites, Frederick Ashton constructed a ballet round them, its gaiety, wit and satire, making it one of the most popular items in the Sadlers Wells repertoire. Before our own U.C.T. Ballet restricted itself to performing big, commercial successes, and was creatively active, Dulcie Howes made an amusing ballet “La Famille” from the Facade music. Walton even turned three of the numbers into songs.
Now we turn to a very different sort of musician, one whose small piano pieces and songs were much in fashion in Britain in the early days of the century, and until perhaps the last decade or two: a man who is not only a composer — and in many ways a pioneer composer at that — but poet, philosopher and author of sensational medical tracts "Victory over Cancer", "Cider Vinegar as a Cure for Obesity," and "Crude Molasses as a cure for everything"! He is one of only six names mentioned as representative British composers whose works are often performed in the USSR, according to a pamphlet "Music and Musicians in the U.S.S.R." recently published in Russia. Percy Grainger believed the piano sonata by this composer — written in the summer of 1908 — which has no key signature and uses irregular bar lines merely to indicate the main divisions in long and free melodic lines (5/8, 3/8, 7/8, 2/8, 10/8, etc.) may very well have influenced Igor Stravinsky to think along similar lines: Debussy called him "one of the rarest artists of the present generation". I refer to Cyril Scott, who gave a concert of his own music at our society in the first half of 1933. He brought with him from London a very fine English pianist and a devotee of his music and way of life, Esther Fischer; with whom he played three of his own Bach transcriptions for two pianos (the F major two part Invention, Sarabande from the A minor English Suite and Gigue from the G major French Suite.) The additions and developments supplied by Scott were all sufficiently in touch with Bach, and the result in the case of the Invention and the Gigue was a fuller - toned and extended jollity. As a two-piano team they also played a set of variations on the Volga Boatmen's Song, written in 1885 by Ivan Knorr, with whom Cyril Scott studied composition at Frankfurt-am-Main. It is interesting to note that no less a person than Brahms recommended Knorr’s appointment as professor of composition at the Frankfurt-am-Main conservatoire. Knorr was brought up in Russia, and was probably the first serious musician to see the possibilities and latent "pop" qualities in the now famous Volga Boat Song. I cannot account for the fact that Cyril Scott's music seems to be well known in the Soviet Union: in the 1890's it was fashionable for talented young musicians to study on the continent rather than in England, and, along with Cyril Scott in Frankfurt were Percy Grainger, (who became a lifelong friend of Scott) Roger Quilter and Norman O’Neill. Scott also became a close friend of the great German poet, Stetan Georg, a fact which to some extent, may account for the frequent mention of Scott’s name in German periodicals and newspapers. Finally Miss Fischer and Mr. Scott played a set of variations on an original theme by Scott. Grove dates this composition from 1947, which is a flaming lie as it was played at our Glasgow Concert in 1933. Scott composed and published more than 100 songs, several of them like "The Blackbird’s Song"
and "Lullaby" were sung everywhere, and our singer on this occasion, Amy Samuels sang them in a group along with others of course, sensitively accompanied by the composer.

As a boy, I admired and played many of Scott’s piano works, and when I was 15 or 16, gave the first and probably the only Scottish performance of his big piano sonata which I have already mentioned in connection with Grainger’s claim for its influence on Stravinsky. I also publicly performed his two “Pierrot” pieces (Pierrot triste, Pierrot gai), "The Jungle Book" (after Kipling) and some of the “Poems” where the unusual and delicate harmonic colouring of the chords, the abandoning of tonality, the bell tones, striking rhythms, oriental effects and other original features of his music held great fascination for me.

"Cyril Scott", wrote Percy Grainger, "composes rather as a bird sings, with a full positive soul behind him, drawing greater inspiration from the mere physical charm of natural sound, than from any impetus from philosophical preconceptions or from the dramatic emotion of objective life".

"His music unfolds itself somewhat after the manner of those Japanese Rhapsodies which are the outcome of imagination displaying itself in innumerable arabesques", wrote Debussy, "and the incessantly changing aspects of the inner melody which are an intoxication for the ear, are, in fact irresistible". Eugene Goosens, another admirer of Scott, claims that he was almost the first composer in Britain to assimilate the characteristics of the French style and shape them to his own devices. In spite of such high praise from such men, the larger works of Scott are seldom, if ever performed now-a-days, nor even at the time they were written. His two orchestral Passacaglias both use dance measures as grounds and are too definite and square to make suitable - and subtle basses for sets of variations. The first Passacaglia seems to me to be an imitation of Grainger’s famous jiggy piece “Shepherd Hey.”

Grove lists two operas, "The Saint of the Mountains” and “The Shrine” which have not yet reached the stage, and I believe there are others. Listen now to two favourite Cyril Scott piano pieces "Locust Land" with its exotic and beautiful sounds, and - a novelty at the time - glissandos on the black keys - composed in 1905: followed by the sparkling “Danse Negre” written three years later.

PLAY RECORD

When I knew Cyril Scott he was 54, of average height, rather fragile, sensitive, delicate and aesthetic looking, with finely cut features and deep set hypnotic eyes: he wore either a bow tie or a cravat, anyway not the usual affair, he had a watch chain around his waistcoat and a gold ring on the little finger of one of his hands. He stayed with my wife and I, becoming immediately friendly, in a quiet, intimate sort of fashion and once he found he was in sympathetic company relaxed still further and was soon chatting away gaily to my wife to whom he seemed to take a fancy. He asked her if she would take him round any interesting shops in Glasgow, as he loved to go window shopping. After dinner - for him a vegetarian and fruit meal, supplemented by nuts and honey - he told us something of his extra-musical activities: his belief that a cure for cancer had been found, that a diet of cider and vinegar would help to keep one slim,
more important, he told us of his own oriental studies and his conviction that Yoga was the most exalted of all known sciences, and contained the greatest accumulation of wisdom ever attained by man. Scott’s book “The Philosophy of Modernism” was well known to me, so that I was able to discuss this and other kindred matters with him. He said something about previous Cyril Scott reincarnations, accounting for Egyptian and other oriental qualities in his work. I had read about and admired, the philosophy and practice of Yoga: likewise some of the great religious books of the east, such as “The Bhagarad Gita”, the Ramayana, and the Brahma hymns. Although I have lived in India, Burma and Malaya while Scott had never been in any part of the East, I have never been able to believe in this theory of reincarnation. If one thing is certain it is that there is no lack of the stuff of which life is made, so why any necessity to bring back life onto the physical-psycho plane, life which has already lived, fulfilled itself and died? Why God should have to re-hash old worn-out material when there is an infinite supply of new stuff lying around? Incidentally the practice of Yoga is by no means a rarity among Europeans these days- at least two members of our Music College staff derive great mental and spiritual benefits from the practice of Hatha Yoga.

Cyril Scott spoke also of his personal colour reaction to pitch - I forget now what all the associations were, middle C made him see blood red, C# Bible black, D grassy green and so on. He was perfectly sincere, although it may be just as well to remember that there is no limit to the extent the human race is prepared to delude itself! Scott said once that the music Beethoven gave him an unpleasant sense of childishness and that Beethoven was no harmonist. Debussy who said once “There have only been two great composers - Beethoven and myself” - could hardly be expected to approve of this! He liked Bizet better, but Wagner was the most satisfying of all composers; Brahms apart from some songs was dull; Stravinsky and Scriabin brilliant and evocative. Cyril Scott has been called both a crank and a poseur, and I daresay there is some truth in both assertions. But he is an interesting fellow sincere in his convictions (as are all fanatics-including you and me) and what was more important to me at that time a very fine pianist and distinguished composer of many songs and piano pieces. The few big works of his I have seen lack spontaneity, are angular and contrived, wanting the charm and exotic flavour which make his smaller works so attractive and acceptable. I don't think that Scott has the necessary technique to write convincing large scale works; the public assessment of him as a composer of original short piano pieces and songs is a correct one.

Cyril Scott has written several volumes of poems. Here is a list of their very high falutin titles.

i) The Shadows of Silence and the Songs of Yesterday.


iii) The Valies of Unity.

iv) The Celestial Aftermath, A Springtide of the Heart and “Far-away Songs” all very flowery stuff making little impact I am afraid on the world of poetry.
Let me quote from the poem "A Dead Poet"; the theme is that men who enjoy the fruits of the artist's creativeness still criticize him for the imperfections of his character. Instead of weighing the good which a genuine artist gives to the world by his genius, and balancing this against the weakness of his character (which often hurt nobody but himself) people are often too prone to forget this, and in return for all the beauty and Joy he gives them, forgive him nothing. Cyril Scott might be writing about Robert Burns.

He is his songs and not his earth-seen life

Of love and living, peacefulness or passion's strife;

For what he lived was only flesh but what he sang was soul,

His life the shadowy half, his songs the whole.

Not what this flesh enacts of fulsome deeds,

Nor how oft netherwards it falls nor yet succeeds;

But how divinely high to soul-sublimity it yearns

That is the truth-crowned symbol that discerns.

As a poet, Scott thinks too much, and is often too moral by far: he over partial to chromatic decoration - the pollen clings too tightly the legs of the bee. Take for instance, these lines:

And dews of ancient weeping's waft

Their bitterness absterged sweetness,

And love descends in Heaven is completeness,

To take my heart in joyful haft.

I'd Seen the Suns of glory set,

I'd seen both dawning and decaying;

And, what in Springtime wandered maying,

Sink into Autumn' oubliette

I don't know how the literary world rates Scott's poetry but I imagine it cannot be very high: probably as high, however, as the oils of Schonberg and Churchill are assessed by art critics.

When I was working in Oxford music library last year, I saw a large bound volume of about 50 of Scott’s piano pieces. Collectively these pieces add up to something really important and fully justify the praise that has been showered on their composer by Debussy, Grainger, Goosens and others.
It seems appropriate at this stage to say a little more about that bright and breezy, happy and open, generous "original", the Australian pianist and composer Percy Grainger; fellow pupil of Cyril Scott, and his life-long buddy. In many ways, the two friends could hardly be more different - Grainger a hearty, open-air specimen of an extrovert, Scott a brooding philosophical introvert; obviously the attraction of opposites. I wrote asking Grainger to perform for us in Glasgow. His concert commitments, however, would not allow this at that time. I met Percy Grainger again in Chicago, 1954, after a concert when he played the Grieg Concerto and the Franck Variations, as irrepressible brilliant, exuberant and breezy at 71 as he been at any time in his life. What a sweet, boisterous, friendly, entirely lovable fellow Grainger was; with his generous stock of tousy flair, his brilliant smile, his bright humorous enquiring eyes. He remembered a previous meeting or two with me in London and regretted that, although flying from pole to pole he had never got round to visiting South Africa. He introduced me to his wife, Ella. Ella, like Percy, was a hearty outdoor type. Their wedding in 1926 created a nation-wide sensation, for after Percy had conducted a new composition of his, a Bridal Song, a minister mounted the platform, and proceeded, before a gaping audience of 30,000 people in the Hollywood Bowl, to marry Percy and his bride, Ella Strong after which Percy took up his baton again and joyfully conducted another new work of his "To a Nordic Princess". Mrs. Grainger came from Sweden. He is best known by what he calls his "jigging" pieces - "Country Gardens", "Mock Morris", "Shepherd's Hey", "Molly on the Shore" "Londonderry Air" and "Handel in the Strand"; miniatures using English folk tunes, gaily dressed in bright harmonies and brilliant orchestral colouring. His lifelong friend, Cyril Scott, at 85, is still very much alive; but time has passed him by - he is no longer in fashion. He still keeps turning out one work after another without any hope or desire to have it performed. What the world thinks of him and his music now or in future is a matter to him of no concern for it is written in the 55th verse of the second chapter of the Bhagarad Gita - that "He who is not perturbed by adversity, who does not long for happiness, who is free from attachment, fear and anger, who is cast off completely from the desires of the mind is called a man of steady Wisdom".

Here are some slides
Cyril Scott as he looked about 1922

This is the photo Cyril Scott sent me in 1933 (for our programme and press purposes). He was 54 then. It is a very intelligent and artistic face: note the deep-set, hypnotic eyes, indicative of deep thinking and deep concentration.

This picture was taken in 1958 when Percy Grainger last visited Britain. Grainger is on the left, Cyril Scott on the right and Eugene Goosens in the middle. Scott is 79. All three were friends for more than half a century.

This is the back page of a booklet by Scott on Cider vinegar
EUGENE GOOSENS

The centre figure in that picture is Sir Eugene Goosens, perhaps the most brilliant member of that brilliant Belgian family. I first met Gene at the Oxford I.S.C.M. Festival in 1931.

He conducted a series of symphony concerts in Johannesburg in the 1950’s, and insisted upon including a South African composition in every programme, an example of his magnificent generosity towards other composer which might well be followed by other visiting and resident conductors in South Africa. He flew down to Cape Town specially to see me, and stayed at our house in York Road. I took him to Milnerton to meet his old friend and colleague, Albert Coates.

I loved Gene Goosens. The first opera that I ever saw in my life, about 1916, was conducted by him when he was Beecham’s blue-eyed boy. I used to play and still like his “Kaleidoscope”, “Four Conceits”, “Nature Poems” and other witty and exciting piano works: they were original, different and great fun to play. Later in his life, his music became smothered in merely decorative matter overloaded with harmonic perfume, turgid like a stagnant pool. He complained to me that his propaganda work on behalf of British Composers in Cincinnati and elsewhere in the U.S.A. was entirely ignored and unrecognised in Britain. I wholeheartedly agreed with him, and after he had left South Africa I wrote privately to the British Home Secretary pointing this out, and suggesting it was time they did something about Goosens. Whether my letter had any effect or not, I have no means of knowing, but the following year Gene received a knighthood.
To finish our morning’s session listen to Percy Grainger playing his jolly “Country Gardens” recorded in 1957 when on a tour of Denmark.

This photo of the irrepressible Percy Grainger was given by Grainger to Colin Taylor in 1915. The stave of music in Grainger’s handwriting is the main theme of his “Colonial Song”.

Never had a mother a more loving son than Mrs. John H. Grainger: this photograph is from a book Percy made of 54 photographs of his mother with notes on her life in her own hand-writing reproduced in facsimile. His mother is 60, Percy 39 and it taken on the porch of their White Plains home in New York.
BELA BARTOK

Hugh MacDiarmid, the Scottish poet, said the other day relative to the output of certain contemporary artists - "The only true criterion is quality - quantity doesn't matter a damn." The great baroque, classical and romantic composers combined quality with quantity - think of the outputs of Handel, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Wagner and Strauss. On the other hand, in modern times, take the extreme case of Anton Webern whose entire life output plays for a little over two hours, that is about half the duration of one opera by Strauss or Wagner; and in spite of this, Webern is acknowledged to be a major musical influence in the second half of this century.

Judged by 17th, 18th and 19th century standards, Bela Bartok’s output is by no means large; 6 string quartets, 6 concertos, 3 one-act stage works, 4 sonatas, 3 suites and other orchestral pieces and a large number of small piano pieces, each occupying only a few leaves of music paper, and mostly based on Hungarian and other folk songs; one cantata, 20 odd songs and a big number of folk song arrangements. He, however, wrote no symphonies nor a full length opera or ballet. Yet, from being merely Hungary’s outstanding modern composer (no great claim), Bela Bartok is fully entrenched in world opinion today as one of the half-dozen truly great composers of our time; and this for one reason only, because of the high quality and originality of his music.

During his lifetime, Bartok visited Scotland twice; to give a concert of his own music on 29th February, 1932, and a piano recital on 2nd November, 1933 - both Active Society concerts. I knew Bartok, therefore, when he was between 51 and 52, that is before he had written great works like the concerto for orchestra, the third piano concerto, his fifth and sixth quartets, the concerto for two pianos and percussion, and the music for strings, percussion and celeste; works which greatly added to his fame and helped establish his position in musical history.

On both of these visits to Glasgow, he stayed at my house. On the second occasion, November 1933, he had with him in his music case the full score of his second piano concerto. I asked Bartok if I might look at it. It was written in the composer’s own precise, cleanly pointed and highly characteristic pen work on transparent draughtsman’s paper (Sympax is the trade name we give it): I asked him why he didn’t write on ordinary manuscript paper; he replied that these transfers served as photographic negatives and allowed his larger works, which would be very costly affairs to engrave, to be printed at a very moderate cost. Universal Edition, Vienna, later published the score of this concerto in facsimile. I do not possess a copy of this first edition, but you have already seen a slide of Bartok’s manuscript, the opening of his Cantata Profana, composed about the same time. Bartok knew I had played the solo part of his first piano
concerto and asked me how I thought the piano writing compared in the two concerti. Turning over the pages Bartok was sitting on the edge of his bed, I on the armchair - I saw that No.2 did not seem so rhythmically complex as No.1, and that there were some uncomfortably big stretches -chords consisting of two piled-up perfect fifths in each hand: later a whole string of rapid semiquavers in block chords. Bartok said that he himself had not particularly large hands, and yet managed to play these passages without undue difficulty. I knew from the previous year's concert that he had wrists of steel, and was a virtuoso pianist of a high order. The opening of the second movement struck me as a typical Bartok slow movement: a quasi-chorale theme clothed in dissonant, acid, arid harmonies: less relentless, perhaps, than the adagios in the piano sonata and the first concerto, where the augmented octave interval seemed to have replaced the common octave. I passed over some pages until I reached the Presto section of this two-sided movement which combines slow movement and scherzo, and raised my eyebrows enquiringly at my first sight of tone-clusters. He smiled, then replied in that soft, almost inaudible voice of his: "Not my invention, I'm afraid: I got the idea from a young American composer, Henry Cowell." Bartok was a very quiet, shy, calm and thoroughly collected person and disliked being made a fuss of. It was said that when gushing admirers addressed him as "Master" or "Maestro" he would reply, with barely concealed irritation, "My name is Mr. Bartok". So I did not press him for any further information about Henry Cowell. Many years later, when I was in Boston in 1954, I met Henry Cowell quite by chance when I was visiting Nicholas Slonimsky, musicologist and author of “Music since in 1900 in Latin America.” By that time I was, of course, well acquainted with Cowell’s work experiments in extending the tone colour of the piano; continuous rows of keys struck by the open palm, clenched fists or the entire forearm, plucked strings and strings rubbed by the fingers, and so on. I found Cowell a most likeable and fascinating fellow, and like Bartok himself, fanatical about folk music. He told me, that when he was in London in 1923, Bartok accidentally overheard him playing some of his own music which employed tone clusters. He was extremely interested in this new technique, and later wrote asking if he might be permitted to use similar tone clusters in his own compositions. Cowell said that his chance encounter with Bartok was one of the most exciting episodes of his life, as Bartok invited him to come to Paris and demonstrate his revolutionary technical devices to some of Bartok’s friends, including Ravel, Roussel and Manuel de Falla. Our own Ronald Stevenson has incorporated several of the Cowell pianistic devices in his magnificent Passacaglia which he played at a Hiddingh Hall concert only a few weeks ago. It will not be inappropriate if I let you hear Mr. Cowell speaking about his own music and after that, play you some of’ his most interesting experiments.

(1) COWELL small record as marked
(2) COWELL big record Band 3.

Listen now to some of the first movement of Bartok's 2nd piano concerto, a work which has still to reach Cape Town. The orchestra for the opening movement consists of full wind and brass but no strings. The opening piano theme reminds me of the Russian Peasant dance in "Petrushka" You'll easily recognise the
2nd subject - piano solo with 3 perfect 5th cords arpeggioed-each hand in a different direction and try and spot the tone clusters.

PLAY RECORD - with EDITH FARDANDI

Bartok had also in his music case, the manuscript of his 44 violin duets, or at least some of them. These, he said had their origin in folk-song material which he had adapted for educational purposes: the violinistic counterpart to his earlier collection of easy teaching pieces—the “For the children” volumes and similar works.

The composer had given a highly successful performance of his second concerto on 23rd June 1933, in Frankfurt, and was to play it again in London with Sir Henry Wood a week after his Glasgow recital. It may be of interest to read you some Bartok letters which led up to his second Active Society concert.

New address  Budapest 11 Csalan ut.27 Aug 13 1933

Dear Mr. Chisholm

I am very glad to hear from you again. Now, I have a B.B.C. engagement (Queens-Hall) for 8. Nov. 1933., so it would be possible for me to come to Glasgow after that day. There are only 2 questions to be settled: 1) What kind of programme?? Could you not engage the Hungarian violinist ZOLTAN SZKELY (living in Nijmegen, Kroakenbergweg, 275, Holland) ? Of course you know his name? We could play my 2 violin sonatas both. 2) As for the fee, could it be fixed 15 £ for me? Or is perhaps any possibility in Edinburgh? Expecting your answer, I am
Yours sincerely, signed Bela Bartok.

Note that Bartok asked only for a fee of £15 (was, indeed, glad to come us for that modest sum) and wanted also to play in Edinburgh. The Hungarian violinist, he mentions, Zoltan Szekely, has been twice in Cape Town in recent years leading the Hungarian Quartet.

Letter of 29th August

Dear Mr. Chisholm

I got your letter of Aug.21. Now, 9. Nov. would be too early, 10 or 11 Nov. would be the best date. If you want a mixed programme,, that will go: there could be included some of my own transcriptions of old cembalo music (Purcell,Ita1ians) and Some of Kodaly’s piano pieces. I will ask Mr. Szekely, maybe he is at that time in England; what is the maximum you could offer him? The only obstacle is now that the B.B.C. business is not yet quite definitive: they offered my only one engagement, that for 8. Nov. and I must have - as usually - another in their studio. They are - as usually - so very negligent in there correspondence: I cannot get their answer and decision about the latter engagement.

Yours very sincerely, Bela Bartok
Dear Mr. Chisholm,

I have just posted my last postcard, when your letter of 6. Sept. arrived. It is quite possible for me to play in Glasgow the 3rd or 4th. Nov. - The only difficulty is to know the exact date of my studio engagement at B.B.C., or to know, when will be the first orchestra rehearsal. If you want to know it as early as possible, perhaps you may write directly to B.B.C. and ask them. In any case: the Glasgow concert has to be two days before I am obliged to be in London.

Waiting news from you, I am,
Yours sincerely, Bela Bartok.

But, to return to our conversation in the bedroom. Bartok spoke also about another educational project he had in hand, the collection he called "Mikrokosmos"... "Beg pardon" I said, the word being new to me. "Mikrokosmos" he repeated and spelled it out for me. He started working on this opus as long ago as 1926, and did not complete its 153 items until 1937. These pieces were intended to introduce young pianists to traditional and contemporary, compositional and pianistic techniques, beginning with six very easy unison melodies, then combined hands, introducing dotted notes, repetition, syncopation, change of position, imitation and inversion, canon at the octave and so on - a kind of Gradus ad Parnassum, a cross between a piano tutor and an Album for the Young. Each group of pieces increases in difficulty. In the quiet earnest manner in which Bartok spoke about this novel piano “tutor”, it was clear to me he was extremely interested in the project, and that it was one very much after his own heart. As a matter of fact he had a very personal interest in this collection, as he intended it primarily for the musical education of his 9 year old son, Peter and, indeed, dedicated the first two volumes to Peter. Peter later said that while he could cope with the earlier volumes, and struggle through the middle volumes, the last two books were quite beyond him. Peter Bartok is now 40 years old, possesses a major financial interest in Bartok Recording Studio, New York, and assuredly is making more per month from sales of his Dad’s music on records than the old man ever coined in during his entire lifetime. You will be interested to hear Bartok himself playing the “Stoccato” and Ostinato from his ‘Mikrokosmos” recorded in the 1933’s. I remember that Bartok carried a stop watch with him, and at rehearsal in the Berkley Hall, placed the watch at the side of the piano and timed each piece to a split second. If the timing was not precisely as expected he would shake his head in gentle reproof. In fact, it is a fetish of his that he supplies the most accurate timing for all his smaller pieces. Bartok began his Glasgow recital with four of his own transcriptions of early keyboard music. I will read you the programme notes supplied by Bartok himself as the notes have never been reprinted. The transcriptions published by Fischer of New York have received scanty notice from Bartok biographers: Halsey Stevens, however, in his book "The Life and Music of Bela Bartok” states that Bartok was occupied in 1926-27 with the transcription of 17th and 18th century Italian keyboard music, and that this interest had a direct bearing on the style and character of his own "Out of Doors" suite,
written in 1926. After he had played through these pieces, on the morning of his concert, Bartok turned to me saying: "You know, Mr. Chisholm, that whenever I play these transcriptions, the critics always complain that I have made considerable modifications in the originals. As a matter of fact, I have not altered a single note." Although I didn't say so at the time, I could see why this mistake had been made, for Bartok played this music in his own dynamic, rhythmically arresting fashion, so that, even if all the notes were the same, the music sounded as though Bartok had altered it.

For his second group Bartok had chosen pieces by his friend and colleague, Zoltan Kodaly. The Bartok-Kodaly axis is now, of course, musical history: both composers were engaged separately in the study and collection of Hungarian folk music which was genuine peasant music: they joined forces in 1906, and remained devoted friends and artistic partners for the rest of Bartok's life. The Kodaly pieces Bartok played were his Op. 11 Nos. 2, 7 and 4 (Chanson Populaire, Szekely, Rubato and Epitaphe) followed by Op. 3 Nos. 4 and 5 (Allegretto scherzando and Quos ego.) For the remainder of the programme Bartok played his own music beginning with the sonata in B.

I have never heard anything to equal the rhythmic intensity, the sheer percussive vitality, the dash and abandon, the actual physical reality (some critics called it brutality) of the sound content in Bartok's playing of the first and last movements. The only pianist of today who approaches Bartok in this respect is the Hungarian and unofficial pupil of Bartok, Andor Foldes. When he played, the legs of the piano seemed to be twitching in an effort to join in this animalistic, choreographic, Pan-worship rite. The Sonata was followed by the well known three Rondos on folk tunes, two Elegies from Op. 8 and Ballade and Dance Songs from Hungarian Peasant Songs. Let hear Bartok play some of these pieces himself. First the Bagatelle op. 6 No. 2. and the 1st of the 3 Rondos on folk-tunes.

The Bagatelle dates from 1908 and is one of his earliest examples of unresolved dissonances and ecclesiastical modes. Melodically and harmonically it suggests a dissonant development of the familiar Chopsticks technique, starting with 2 notes close together and gradually spreading the intervals. The Rondo, dated 1916, is naturally far simpler, adhering to the original melodic line, one of which is an almost conventional scale sequence, to which the adapter has given an extra touch of piquancy.

PLAY REMINGTON RECORD - Side 1 at beginning i.e. Band one.

Now you will hear 3 numbers from the "Mikrokosmos" the composer has made 2 piano arrangements and here he plays them with his wife at the 2nd piano.

The pieces are: Chord and Trill study, New Hungarian Folk-song and Chromatic Invention

Play Remington RECORD - Side 2 at beginning

The Allegro barbaco from 1911 is one of his most popular piano pieces. There is strong rhythmical drive, an original scale structure, and a certain degree of primitivism which make this piece one of the most characteristic of the period.
PLAY FOLDES RECORDING OF ALLEGRO BARBAO RECORD 4 - side 2.

You might be curious to know what audience and press reactions were to Bartok’s recital. First let me read from the Glasgow Evening Times of November 3, 1933. The writer is a Mr. D.C. Parker, by no means the nonentity which is the normal classification for provincial music critics. Mr. Parker has to his credit the discovery of the lost Bizet Symphony, and only a few months back, I read in the Glasgow Herald that he was hotly in pursuit of the lost Grieg Symphony. Here’s what Mr. Parker has to say -

READ PAGE 90 from mark.

Percy Gordon, B.Mus. the only full-time music critic in the city, writing in the Glasgow Herald: "The Kodaly pieces were played with rare sympathy and understanding by Mr. Bartok, who found ample use for his notable command of tone gradation, expressive rubato and precise pedalling." On Bartok’s music, Mr. Gordon was non-committal, although he spares us the hoary excuse "It is impossible to be thrilled by Edgar Wallace - I mean. It is impossible to judge a new work at its first hearing."

Bartok had first played for us on 28th February 1932: it is clear from the letters I had from him that at that time he was moving about Europe pretty fast; in Budapest, December 1931; London, February 2nd, 1932; back to Budapest, February 10th; in Paris, February 18th; in Holland February 22-26, then direct from Holland to Glasgow, February 28th. Here is his letter to me of 10th February-


I will go straight to 63, Berkeley Street from the train on 28th evening.

_Dear Mr. Chisholm, When I came back from England, I found here your letter of 22 Jan. It seems I made some mistakes about the programme in my letter of 2. Feb (written in London), have I not forgotten to mention the village scenes? In any case, the programme sent to you from Budapest in Dec. is the right one. I am afraid I can't arrive in Glasgow at 6.15 p.m. being the 28th & a Sunday, and therefore only Sunday trains. So I will arrive at 8.35 p.m. (taking a train which leaves London at 11.30 a.m. Euston line) Immediately after my arrival we may rehearse with the singer and the violinist too. I am leaving Budapest the 17. Feb. for Paris, but I will be in Holland from 22 to 26. If you have something to tell me, you may write on this address._

c/o Mr. ZOLTAN SZEKELY 275, Krvakkenbergweg, NIJMEGEN, Holland.

Yours very sincerely, Bela Bartok.

Here now is the amusing account of the first meeting between Bela Bartok and the Active Society. It was written by my first wife, who for a time as Diana Brodie was Hon-secretary of the Active Society.

“When we knew Bela Bartok was coming to Glasgow to stay with us, the first thing which worried us was - language difficulty. None of us, of course, could speak one word of Hungarian: would our famous guest
be any better with English? I immediately bought an "English-cum-Hungarian" dictionary, (by the time I left Scotland I had entertained so many continental composers, musicians, and singers, that I had a very comprehensive collection of "English-Cum"): I pictured myself standing on the station platform anxiously scanning the face of every male, who, in my opinion, looked "foreign", and gesticulating wildly with the dictionary. However, I was rescued (or thought I was) from this predicament by the Hungarian Consul in Glasgow, Sir W. (William, I think) Burrell, who telephoned me the day before Mr. Bartok's arrival to say that he also would like to come to the station to receive this distinguished visitor from Hungary. "Luck", I thought, "this let's me out"; so you can imagine my disappointment, when, on meeting Sir. William Burrell a few minutes before the train was due to arrive (8.35 p.m. on 28th Feb. 1932), he said he hoped that either my husband or I could speak Hungarian because he couldn't. "Well", I said laughingly, "you're the official representative so you can get on with it." But we need not have worried. When the "Flying Scotsman" arrived and the passengers alighted from the train it was quite simple to recognise him. There was only one Bela Bartok! A small white-haired man, wearing a black Homburg hat, thick black coat with a heavy Astrakhan collar and armed with a music case in one hand and an umbrella in the other. Who I wondered had forewarned him about Glasgow' s weather?

Sir William went forward at once to greet him, and I swear I saw a look of relief flit across the consul's face when Bartok said in a softly spoken, broken English accent, "Bartok is my name". After that all went smoothly. Later in the day, my husband and I admitted to each other that we had both felt ashamed that not one of the party who came to receive him could reply to him in his language, least of all the Consul. Bartok was of a very shy nature. Where music was concerned he would and could talk at length, but apart from the fact that he told us he had a wife and son, he spoke very little about himself. He made a great fuss of our baby daughter Morag and seemed to be extremely fond of children, yet I felt he had built an invisible barrier of defence for himself against the outside world. We do know that he was really badly off financially, and that apart from his heavy overcoat, which was beautifully warm and looked new, his suits though well-tailored and well pressed were equally well-worn, his shirts too were frayed at the cuffs and collars; altogether he gave one the impression of "putting a face' on things generally, and being harassed by some secret worry. The face of a pathetic little man - but an intensely proud one who was also a musical genius. His stay was a very pleasant one for us. He was almost fanatical in his passionate love for folk-music; not just Hungarian or Slav, but the folk music of all countries. He told us something of his experience in searching for and collecting the folk songs of his own country. Normally his face looked rather stern and taut, but his whole face lit up and his eyes became pools of liquid fire when recounting what was obviously the most vital of his life. At first he did make one feel he was unapproachable and distant, but when he found that he could relax, and was in no danger of being 'lionised' (the soul-searing penalty the celebrity pays for being a celebrity) and that he was among friendly, sympathetic people, his whole personality seemed to change, to become electrified. Then, it was one became aware of the terrifically
forceful personality of this seemingly quiet, shy, self-effacing musician. Here was someone with dynamic strength of will to achieve what he had set out to do with his life. My husband asked him if he had ever come across the folk music of Scotland, and in particular, if he had heard any of our ancient piobaireachd (Pibroch) music. Bartok confessed that this was one branch of folk-music he had had no opportunity to study. In fact, I think he had not quite realised just what scope there was in it. To many continentals Scotland just seems to be the top-part of England with no particular characteristics of its own. How wrong they are! If they travel to the North of Scotland and make contact with the Gaelic speaking population, see our tartans, Celtic Crosses, and hear our piobaireachd music, they may realise that we have certain Asiatic qualities which are not shared by the Sassenach.

Now, Scottish folk music, and especially Piobaireachd happened to be my husband’s pet subject and particular study at that time. For years he had been doing considerable research in this line, so of course, he brought out various collections of folk-music and gramophone records, and Bartok listened and studied these for hours. The result of this conversation was, that the very next day Bartok went to a well-known shop in town which supplied all Highland requisites, and came home with a tartan rug, a chanter, all the piobaireachd music he could lay his hands on, and told us that the manager of the firm had arranged with one of our most noted Pipe-Majors to come next day to the Grand Hotel to play the bag-pipes to him (this was one thing my husband hadn’t been able to do.) Bartok was enchanted. It is a moot point whether his studies of the Asiatic piobaireachd had any influence on his subsequent works. In the first movement of his Third Piano Concerto there appears to be some Scottish melodic influence, but then again, the similarity between much of the Hungarian and Scottish Folk music which Bartok himself seized on, is such as to make a definite claim on this matter rather rash.

He spoke about his compositions with detachment and could criticise them almost as though someone else had written them. He said that his greatest failure was his ballet “The Wondrous Mandarin” The story he said with a sly smile was considered immoral by some theatre managers, and consequently has only had a few performances. We asked him how many. “Oh” he replied “not more than 100 performances”. [EC comment. The Wondrous Mandarin, op.19 (written before 1918 and 1919) received its 1st performance in Cologne 1925, and was not performed in Budapest in the composer’s life time. It was played in Prague and after its 2nd Cologne performance was proscribed and the composer taken to task by the City Council. Bartok was 51 when we first met him and there had been a move to give the work in Budapest a year earlier to honour his 50th birthday, but was officially banned after the dress rehearsal. Clergy raised objections to it when another attempt — ten years later — was made to stage it; so it is a little difficult to see how anything like 100 performances by 1932 could be accounted for.

I well remember Bartok saying “about 100 performances” and didn’t think at the time he was joking—although he might have been having a joke with us and himself. He may of course have counted in perfor-
mannances of the suite he made from the unsuccessful ballet around 1918-for the music is one of the most thrilling and original scores ever penned.]

Listen to a few minutes of it a] at the beginning and b] 1/2 inch from the end

The ferociously violent opening pages not only set the mood for the lurid happenings on the stage but also are meant to invoke the hurly-burly of street life in a modern metropolis. The music of the chase is an overwhelming kinetic fury matched only by Stravinsky in “The Rite of Spring”

One amusing incident took place in the concert. Bartok asked my husband if he would turn the pages for him both at the rehearsal and at the concert. Just before the rehearsal Bartok pointed out a particularly difficult passage in the score and asked my husband if he would play the notes in the bass for him. Somewhat surprised but anxious to please Bartok he agreed to do this. When it came to the actual playing of the part at the concert, Bartok gave my husband a flashing impish grin, and, of course, played the whole passage brilliantly.”

I recall his disappointment on learning that no authoritative or basic collection of Scottish folk music existed in print; (since then the Edinburgh School of Scottish Studies have largely supplied this deficiency). He tapped out several subtle and elusive rhythms which he had heard sung by so-called inferior races in Eastern Europe (who, by the way, like so many of our own African natives, are completely ignorant of the difficulties their - to them, natural rhythmic patterns give to musical experts of so-called superior races!) Bartok asked me if I would write them down. I had to confess myself completely stumped - rhythms like alternating 7 and 1/8, with 6 and 5/8. His own Six dances on Bulgarian rhythms are stylised examples of these.

I started to ask him the question "Why do you write ... " and was going on to say "so many small compositions for piano", when he interrupted me ... “the kind of music I do? Well . . I suppose I've just got into a habit - bad or good I don't quite know which: anyway, it's far too late to think of getting out of it. I began composing in the Brahms tradition, then moved over to Liszt; became interested in the peasant music of my own country, and somehow this led me almost imperceptibly into what I have come to believe is my true path. Well, there it is. I cannot help it if people don't like my music - I do."

Finally a few trivialia about Bartok. Psychologists say that even such a trivial action as the way a man turns his head reveals certain facets of his personality.

We served him a typical Scottish High Tea - a plate of meat or fish supported with cake, scones, butter, jam and tea. I asked him if he would like gooseberry or strawberry jam. He said "No thank you," then as an afterthought - "Is it manufactured or home made?" I said it was home made. "Then I'll have some" he replied: "Home-made jam has character and taste, bought jam neither."

On another occasion he lunched at the home of my friend, Ernest Boden. He hardly spoke at all during the meal, but once expressed interest in the fish course which happened to be halibut. Apparently he had neither heard of or tasted halibut before.
Many years later when Bartok was in Los Angeles he tasted for the first time avocado pear. The Spanish word abogado means advocate but avocado is a corruption of their word aguate. Writing to a friend, Bartok said “In Los Angeles I ate an advocate (avocado). This is a fruit somewhat like a cucumber in size and colour, but quite buttery in texture, so it can be spread on bread. Its flavour is something like an almond but not so sweet. It has a place in this celebrated fruit salad which consists of green salad + apple + celery + pineapple + raw tomato + mayonnaise”.

Another little story. In 1928, Bartok and Alfredo Casella, [another in Man and Music in my Life, with whom I shall deal later in this series] were numbered among the competitors for a $6000 prize for a string quartet, offered by a musical society in Philadelphia. The judges decided the first place must be divided between Bartok and Casella. The Budapest papers got the story muddled and reported that the entire award went to Bartok. “You can hardly imagine the sensation this caused in Budapest” said Bartok $6000!! From the beginning I told everyone that the amount would not be so great, but of course in vain; so the public still believe that I won a fortune of $6000.”

Paul Sacher, founder and director of the Swiss Basler Kammer orchestra - a life long friend of Bartok and promoter of many of his works-left this personal note about the great Hungarian composer.

“Whoever met Bartok, thinking of the rhythmic strength of his work, were surprised by his slight, delicate figure. He had the outward appearance of a fine nervous scholar. Possessed of fanatical will and pitiless severity, and propelled by an ardent spirit, he affected inaccessibility and was reservedly polite. His being breathed light and brightness; his eyes burned with a noble fire. In the flash of his searching glance no falseness nor obscurity could endure. If, in performance, an exceptionally hazardous and refractory passage came off well, he laughed with boyish glee, and when he was pleased with the successful solution of a problem, he actually beamed. That meant more than fulsome compliments, which I never heard from his lips.”

I never saw Bartok after 1933. Shortly afterwards, Hungary was moving politically nearer to Germany. 1933 was a fateful year for Europe with the rising Nazi party beginning to assert its belligerent national policies. Bartok was much perturbed, and after Hitler annexed Austria, he began to see that he could no longer live and work in Hungary. He felt reluctant to abandon his Mother in her advancing years. He wrote: “What I have written so far relates to Hungary: where, alas, the "civilised" Christian people are almost entirely devoted to the Nazi system; I am heartily ashamed I come from this class.” Bartok was sent a questionnaire about his ancestry and allegiance, asking "Are you of German blood, related race or non-Aryan?" He made a bitter joke about this: "Aryan means Indo-European (so I learn from my Lexicon); we Magyars are, however, Finno-Ungrics, yes, and what is more, perhaps originally Northern Turks; consequently not at all Indo-European, and therefore Non-Aryan." Bartok catalogued his manuscripts and sent them to a friend in Switzerland for safe keeping. Then his beloved mother died, a severe loss to him. He made a farewell appearance in Budapest and 1940 found him in America. He wrote to Fritz Reiner in
1942: "I hope that in October at the latest, I may return to a free Hungary." His stay in America is a story in itself, and it is anything but a happy story. "The trouble with Bartok" wrote Paul Hindemith to me "is that he refuses to believe that the old order has passed away in his own country possibly never to return. He kept living in the belief that he would waken up one day and find everything in Hungary as he had known it in past years." In his will, Bartok stated that "My burial is to be as simple as possible. If after my death they want to name a street after me, or to erect a memorial tablet to me in any public place, then my desire is this: as long as streets in Budapest remain named after Hitler or Mussolini, then neither square nor street nor public building in Hungary is to be named for me, and no memorial tablet is to be erected in a public place."

The last record I shall play you is perhaps the most popular of all Bartok's short works, the set of Seven Rumanian dances, written so long ago as 1915: here they are in the popular violin transcription of Zoltan Szekely played by the great Soviet violinist, David Oistrakh. I can count Oistrakh as another Music Man in my Life, as I met him in Moscow in 1957. He told me that he plays on a wonderful Strad. violin owned by the State; that everyone knows he has a talented violinist in his son Igor, "But", said David, "it is my youngest son who is the real violinistic (sic) genius in our family."

PLAY 10’ L.P. - Ezert     Band One
Dear Mr. Cziker,

I am very glad to hear from you again. Now, I have an E.D.C. engagement (Green Head) for 8. Nov. 1933, so it would be possible for me to come to Glasgow with that day. There are only 2 questions to be settled: 1) what kind of programme? Could you not engage the Hungarian violinist Zoltán Székely (living in Nijmegen, 35a Keppelweg, 3105, Holland)? of course you know his name? We both could play my 2 violin concertos. 2) as for the fees, could it be fixed 15 £ for me? Or is perhaps any possibility in Edinburgh?
Bela Viktor Janos Bartok, with his second wife
Ditta Pasztory-Bartok
When I was across in Glasgow a few years back, I bumped into D.C. Parker, the one-time critic of the "Evening Times" in Buchanan Street: we hadn't seen one another for thirty years: I couldn't resist the opportunity of saying "Do you remember the nasty things you wrote about Bartok's music? You weren't much of a prophet then, now were you, old boy?" To which he replied stiffly: "Sorry - Chisholm, but I still feel the same about Bartok as I did in 1932!"

"So we'll leave it at that'. So we live but don't learn'.

And that's enough for this morning.
The Mazurka is a Polish country dance originating in folk song. The music consists of two parts of eight bars, each part repeated and there is a strong accent on the second or third beat of the bar. Characteristic mazurka rhythms’ are:

Chopin took over the national material as a basis for his piano Mazurkas, extended their original forms, using popular turns of phrase and creating around them original compositions of his own. He has a middle part in a slower or faster tempo than the main subject; listen to one of the most popular of these - Op. 68 No. 2 in A minor. The basic rhythm of both parts is and it is in square 4 bar phrases throughout.

Chopin PLAY

The Mazurka is capable of covering many varied moods and shades of feeling, as anyone turning the pages of Chopin’s 51 examples can see for himself.

Other Polish composers followed Chopin’s example - Moniuszko (composer of "Halka" a national Polish opera) and Wieniaswki.

Karol Szymanowski, probably the most distinguished Polish composer since Chopin, uses actual folk-tunes in his Mazurak: but they are so disguised with the accompanying part written in his own harmonic idiom, that one would think the whole piece a unity in one creative conception. He may subdivide the square 16-bar sentence into irregular periods say 5 : 4 : 5 : 2 : they are A.B.A. ternary movements, and middle sections, as in Chopin, are in contrasted tempo.

Szymanowski wrote 20 Mazurkas for piano and here now is Rubenstein playing the first 2 Mazurkas from his Op. 50 and dedicated to Rubenstein by the composer.

PLAY Movements 1 and 2.

Szymanowski’s early works were written under the influence of Chopin and Scriabin: then later his admiration for heavy romantic composers like Wagner and Strauss turned him in another direction. Later came Impressionism and Stravinsky; but his last piano works, Op.36, 50 and 62 are Polish dances, and his big ballet-pantomime “Harnasie” is highly sophisticated and polished Polish national music. As indulging in reminiscences is one of the main features of the present course, I might mention that I started on a reduction of the huge score of the "Harnasie" ballet for a proposed production by the Anglo-Polish Ballet, at the instigation of two famous Polish dancers, Halma and Kornarski. Unfortunately, it proved to be too ambitious for the limited resources of our company, and the project was abandoned.
Szymanowski finally concluded that his musical destiny lay in combining individual invention and folk art: in his own words: "The law has worked itself out in me according to which every man must go back to the earth from which he derives. Today, I have developed into a national composer, not only subconsciously, but with a thorough conviction using the melodic treasures of Polish art."

Listen now to a portion of his violin concerto, composed a decade earlier than the "Mazurka". This concerto is a one movement rhapsody: it opens with bustling, busy, exotic sounds like those of a tropical forest in the heat of a midday sun. It is an exciting background of physical/animal/insect sounds to the human soul element which the solo violin supplies when it enters with its oriental colouring: the process is repeated, with more elaborations and decorations on the solo violin:

This is very beautiful music; opulent and ornate: the soloist does not stand out in relief against the massed orchestral tones, as is conventional basis to the classical concerto form: rather it is an exceptionally beautiful flower in a garden full of beautiful flowers. Unfortunately, too, although the general sound effects are luxurious there are no notable themes which one can identify and remember. In writing this concerto, the composer had the invaluable help of the noted Polish violinist Paul Kochanski, who, indeed, wrote the cadenza; and Szymanowski’s most popular violin works, the three Myths, were also written for Kochanski. A particular favourite Szymanowski piece is the first of the three Myths, "The Fountain of Arethusa" which I'm sure has been heard in Cape Town. Along with "Narcisse" (the second of these three Myths.) Kochanski’s arrangement of The Chanson Polonaise and the Berceuse, Op. 50, it made an effective close to Miss Bessie Spence's second group of violin solos at our Szymanowski concert on 31st October, 1931. This all Szymanowski programme began with his early violin sonata in D minor (1904) and ended with the composer himself playing the Mazurka you have just heard.

Some of Szymanowski's most appealing and characteristic music is in his songs, his setting of Persian poetry of Hafiz, in particular, and one of our best Scottish singers, Dorothy Pugh, sang the Hafiz song-cycle beautifully. I was responsible for performing the major work on the programme, the second piano sonata, Op.21.

A few days prior to our concert I had heard Szymanowski on the radio, playing with the B.B.C. Orchestra, the solo part of his own "Symphonie Concertante", Op. 60 - one of his greatest works. So on his arrival in Glasgow I said something like this to him:-

"Excuse me, Mr. Szymanowski, but after hearing your brilliant performance in that wonderful concerto of yours last night, I feel it is a bit of a cheek for me to be playing your big piano sonata, when I am sure you can do it so much better yourself". "On the contrary" he replied, "I couldn’t play at all. I never was very talented as a pianist, and it is only since I gave up the Directorship of the Warsaw State Conservatoire and started to earn my living by giving concerts, that I took up piano playing seriously. I’ll let you into a secret:
I now write piano music for myself to play: music which is fairly easy but sounds difficult: my Symphonie Concertante you heard last night is in that class”.

One of the things I treasure most is a letter Szymanowski sent to me after the concert, complimenting me on my interpretation of his second piano sonata.

I am afraid I don’t now remember much about Szymanowski’s visit: he had a sinister little cough which occasionally went into spasms, and we know that little more than two years later, he went into a sanatorium at Lausanne where Tuberculosis utterly destroyed his lungs. Paderewski was the first to lay a wreath on his grave. The other day I came across a copy of the speech I made at the commencement of his Glasgow concert, but on second thoughts I’ll spare you this, and instead play you Szymanowski’s “Fountains of Arethusa” played by David Oistrakh. Incidentally, I got this record when last I was in Prague, and it is not obtainable in the West, so cherish the sound:

At the beginning the piano represents the physical play of the fountain—the violin its soul—you will notice that it opens exactly like the violin concerto: later on the violin also has water music. This is impressionistic music of a high order—it is mood painting: although it is— or was—very popular with violinists, like the violin concerto it fails in not having a theme one can remember—all atmosphere, sweet sounding subtle harmony, but no distinctive tune. Anyway judge this, the "Fountains of Arethusa" for yourself.

PLAY “Fountains of Arethusa"

SLIDE 1

Karl Szymanowski, about 1930. He looks the aristocrat that he was: that is, he was born on a country estate and his mother was a Baroness. If I may for the 100th time interrupt this narrative with a personal note: a cousin of mine Morag McLeod, married a Count Wolevsky—second in succession to the Polish throne and lived in a similar [possibly larger] estate to the Szymanowski one. She told me that until the German and then Russian invasions 25 years or so ago—they lived pure Feudal System: the peasants literally lived on the crumbs which fell from the tables of the rich worked on the big estates depending on the bountiful charity of the aristocrats
This music is a page from one of Szymanowski’s best works - the song cycle - “Songs of the Love-sick Mu-
ezzin” Op. 42. I’ve chosen it because it is an out-
standing example of the influence of Oriental music 
on his work: the voice part might well be the song of 
a Mohammedan priest from the tower, calling the 
faithful to prayer

An original bit of polytonal writing: the first violin 
part has the key signature of A major - 3 sharps: the 
second violin 6 sharps-key of F sharp major. The viola 
3 flats, E flat major and the cello is in C major: this is 
the last movement, Scherzando alla Burlescas of Szy-
manowski’s String Quartet, Op. 37: in C major. Of 
course the ear can’t move in 4 keys simultaneously 
and keep track of them: you note that the bottom 
voice of the structure (cello part) is in C major - so 
that this allows the basic key of the Quartet C major 
to easily dominate the structure: in fact the whole 
movement sounds - as it is intended to sound - like 
an enhanced or ornamented key of C major
Dr. W. Gillies Whittaker was the newly appointed music professor at Glasgow University, and we thought it only right, as a matter of policy, to open our first season with a programme of his music. Whittaker - a noted Bach scholar - was really no great shakes as a composer and he resented our band of young musical hooligans leading the musical life of Glasgow under his nose. On more than one occasion he threw a spanner in our works, and so, though lip service was paid to the incumbent of the Gardiner Chair of Music, there was no love lost between us. South Africa owes him a grudge, too, for it was he who told me of a vacancy at Cape Town University, and urged me to apply for it - I see now, to get me well out of his operational territory.

We turn now to his opposite partner in the Glasgow-Edinburgh Axis; Donald Tovey was at Edinburgh University, and the honorary president of our society, so having done our duty by Dr. Whittaker and Glasgow University, the second series of concerts opened with a programme of Tovey works.

Tovey, without doubt the most distinguished musical scholar of his generation, was an exceedingly busy man, and we appreciated his travelling 80 miles to attend some of our more important concerts. He also came to most of our opera performances (all the Berlioz operas and “Idomineo”) and altogether took a friendly and encouraging interest in our musical goings-on, the reverse of his colleague, Whittaker’s “sour grapes” attitude. Tovey’s only rival in the musical field was Professor E.J. Dent of Cambridge, although a near rival was Ernest Newman.

At the Glasgow performance of “Les Troyens” both Tovey and Dent dined at my house: it wasn’t our most successful party for although the two great musical scholars were civilised enough to hide their - I suppose you would call it - rivalry, an undercurrent of gentle hostility could be felt. The pre-dinner conversation centred round the recitatives in “Figaro” and “The Don” to use harpsichord or piano?- to play plain chords or to embellish? (as Tovey did so beautifully in his piano playing;) to have or have not appoggiaturas? to add extra bars to accommodate the action ? and so on. Tovey and Dent could only bring themselves to half agree with the other. After a wining and dining of some consequence, Tovey asked me if I would show him where - as the saying is - he could wash his hands. As I led him away he said "You know, Chisholm, Dent is really very knowledgeable on Mozart but I get the feeling, however, that he doesn’t like me very much" Half an hour later, Dent also asked me to take him “a place”, "You know, Chisholm, Tovey is certainly a very fine musical scholar: we get on all right but I get the feeling he doesn’t like me very much".
‘As a lecturer and writer about music, Tovey was certainly without a rival’ - wrote R.C. Trevelyan, and it has been said by the Professors of English Literature, of Classical Culture and Pure Mathematics at Edinburgh University that Tovey could have taken over their chairs at a moment’s notice, and no questions asked. He probably knew more about the creative labours of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms than these composers ever knew themselves: I have heard him keep his end up discussing topics so outlandish as the orbits of Jupiter's satellites with Dr. Sampson the Scottish Astronomer Royal. He read everything, and remembered everything he read. Yet he could unbend and it is not the first time I have seen him off at Glasgow Queen Street Station with a bundle of what he called his "il-literature", books like “The Beano,” “The Magnet” [Billy Bunter], "Boys' Own Paper", "The Gem" [Tom Merry & Co] and the like, picked up at random from the station bookstall.

Tovey is best remembered to-day by his six volumes of analytical essays and the reprints of his Encyclopaedia Britannica articles - all of them classics of their kind. These essays began their life as programme notes for Tovey's own Reid Orchestral Concerts, and were dictated to his secretary by Tovey from memory, in between lectures. Tovey was a born lecturer - at his best when speaking ex tempore. His lectures to his students were altogether far too meaty affairs to be absorbed at one hearing: it is a great loss to English musical literature that none of the students (including myself) who came week after week to sit at the feet of the Oracle had the common sense to bring a tape recorder into the class, which would have preserved these indescribably brilliant outpourings of our learned and well-beloved Professor. With eyes roving up to the ceiling, pacing up and down like some restless caged animal, heching and peching, Tovey would hold forth explaining, demonstrating, digressing, digressing from his digressions, ramming home his arguments with endless musical examples [ne’re a book opened]; no let-up until the full cycle of a brilliant rhetorical discourse had finalised and completed itself.

Tovey was the kind of professor who lectured all the time; even his conversations were in modo lecturo. For years I travelled most Tuesdays to Edinburgh to attend his lectures and rehearsal practices with the Reid Orchestra. These latter were unique in the history of musical education in Britain. Ever so often Tovey would interrupt his rehearsals to draw the attention to his student audience, armed with a miniature score of the work being rehearsed, to various points of interest in the instrumentation - and repeat the passage for our benefit. His orchestral rehearsals and concerts could be very curious affairs; he would find out that say- the scherzo of Schubert's second symphony had never quite been interpreted according to the requirements of the composer: he would then proceed to spend 9/10th of all rehearsal time on this one movement, leaving the rest of the symphony and the programme to take care of itself at the performance. After the rehearsals he would walk me across Nicholson Street ("The only exercise I get, do you mind?") to Lower High Street, passed John Knox's house, on to Holyrood Palace and with our feet treading on heavenly grass across the Braids, until we reached the noted example of Georgian architecture, the semi-circular Royal Terrace, where Tovey lived at No 39. All the time we walked, he never ceased talking.
discouraging at Encyclopaedia Britannica level, (the 12th edition edited by another Dr. Chisholm). Lunch included a glass or two of wine, after which we would go to the music room with its two concert-grand pianos, an Emmanuel Moore double keyboard piano and miles of shelves lined with definitive editions of the classics. Tovey would look at some of my work-compositions of mine - which only served as a peg for the Professor to hang another lecture on. Its not the first time that under the soporific effect of the wine, I have dozed off, to awaken even three quarters of an hour later, and find the unsuspecting Tovey talking happily away to himself.

Tovey was every inch the absent-minded Professor. On one occasion, after waiting impatiently for the best part of an hour for the arrival of his wife so we could begin lunch, Tovey finally pressed a button and summoned the maid, saying ‘Do tell Lady Tovey we are waiting for her’. "Lady Tovey?” exclaimed the maid looking blank "Yes, Lady Tovey" replied Tovey with some irritation. ‘I have to be back at the school at 3, you know. “But Sir” exclaimed the astonished maid "Have you forgotten that Lady Tovey went to visit her sister three weeks ago?” With ‘Ohs, Ahs and Ers” spluttering from Tovey we sat down to a two-some lunch.

Tovey was the protégé of a quite extraordinary character, a Miss Weisse, who took charge of his musical and general education when he was a child of four, and was his guardian angel - and the opposite throughout his life. ‘Both my parents” wrote Tovey 50 years later, were and remained completely unmusical. Miss Weisse developed my musical capacity in the face of constant opposition. I remember my first piano lessons from her, comprising some ‘This little piggy went to market” finger exercises which eventually turned out to be fundamental composition in Deppe’s 5 Pianoforte Method which, in its turn, was the foundation (by coincidence or influence) of Tobias Matthay’s method, now the Athanasian Creed of British Pianists. Until I was about 12, Miss Weisse had to deal with some scepticism as to whether I was really musical, some doubt as to whether I was ‘all there’ and strenuous opposition to every step she took in my education.”

I met Miss Weisse on only one occasion; at a party at Tovey’s house. She certainly was a highly charged, domineering and very possessive old dragon who obviously adored her famous pupil but whose crass tactlessness and general bossiness on more than one occasion nearly ruined Tovey’s professional career; to everyone else but him she was a pain in the neck. Tovey’s second "wife" was a Miss Clara Wallace; Tovey had known her from childhood, for they had both been pupils at Miss Weisse’s private school. “Imagine my horror”, Miss Weisse confided to me, (and to how many more besides?) ‘Imagine my horror, Dr. Chisholm, when I heard that my most brilliant pupil, Donald Tovey, was about to marry Clara Wallace, my very worst pupil.’

Tovey was a stupendous pianist, with a large following of admirers. What he may have lacked in delicacy and subtlety of nuance, was amply compensated by great intelligence and breadth of conception. I remember being in London in the late 20’s, when he announced a series of ten historical recitals at the
Wigmore Hall. When I went along leisurely to Keith Prowse to buy a season ticket, I found the whole series had been sold out in 24 hours.

I was present on the memorable occasion when Tovey lectured on, and then performed, The Diabelli Variations (which play for 50 minutes) at a meeting of the Incorporated Society of Musicians. The audience - mostly professional music teachers - were most enthusiastic about the brilliant, erudite and amusing lecture they had been listening to; and later became even more so about Tovey’s playing. There was thunderous applause which went on and on, until at last the lady president approached Tovey saying to him sweetly “Won’t you please play something more for us?” "With pleasure" replied the Professor and sitting down at the piano repeated the whole Diabelli Variations, including repeats. Fifty minutes later, the applause was enthusiastic but guarded.

I find that some German musicians object to Tovey’s irrepressible sense of humour getting, they say, in the way of brilliant analytical writings, but after Tovey’s death, Arthur Schnabel sent me a letter in which he said "They just don’t make musician of Tovey’s calibre any more."

In her biography of Tovey, Dr. Mary Grierson who was his senior lecturer at Edinburgh for many years is given to gloss over some of the less ennobling episodes of her hero’s life. One of these episodes was when Pablo Casals, the world’s greatest male cellist, and Donald Tovey came to blows over Julian-mina Suggia, the world’s greatest female cellist and Casal’s young and very beautiful wife. Casals and Suggia possessed more than their fair share of temperament, and Tovey had as hot a temper as the Spaniard. Apparently Suggia flirted outrageously with Tovey who responded as best he could. Catching them together, Casals, in a blazing moment of bull-fighting rage, tore into Tovey who put up his mitts and retaliated. It was all most distressing and would have been a calamity if the estrangement had become permanent. All this happened before the First World war the outcome of the matter was that someone whispered to Casals that his friend was not really interested in his wife, nor in any woman at all, for that matter [Tovey’s first marriage was annulled] and the Englishman and the Spaniard each had a big laugh and became the closest of friends again. Tovey’s last work, his cello concerto, is dedicated to Casals, who gave it its first and subsequent performances, and Tovey’s picture still hangs above the famous cellist’s desk in Prades, where he has been a voluntary political exile since the Spanish Civil War. "He was the greatest musician we had" says Casals, with tears standing in his eyes.

Tovey was an exceptionally kind, gentle and sympathetic person, he had endless patience with his students, some of whom commenced working for their music degree with only the scantiest of musical backgrounds. His examination questions were not always orthodox however. Take this one for example:

Set the following as a three-part round for equal voices:

There was a young lady of Rio
Who tried to play Hummel’s Grand Trio
But her pace was so scanty
She took it Andante

Instead of Allegro con brio

As an outstanding personality, and a multi-gifted musician, it was Tovey's misfortune, - if misfortune is the right word - to be surrounded by groups of loyal and devoted but quite uncritical admirers: a fate which overtook, among others, Busoni, Schnabel and Casals, in our time. This hero worship of a great man can have a nauseating effect and create antagonism in those who are not of 'the clique,' and perhaps it is as well that, from time to time, some good, honest debunking of the "Holier-than-Thou" should occur. As long ago as 1907, an article called "The Most Holy Kingdom of Tovey" appeared in "Vanity Fair", beginning:

Mr. Donald Tovey (he was then 32) notwithstanding his comparative youth, is undoubtedly one of the most learned musicians in Europe. But to the writer he is interesting primarily as a symbol: for there have gathered around him a band of the elect, few in number, but not devoid of social importance, who have formed a sort of monastic order, holding themselves haughtily aloof from the rest of the musical world, despising their enemies and praying for them with about equal earnestness. These reactionary purists have enthroned Mr. Tovey as their King, and their Pope. His authority remains unquestioned. His infallibility is established by divine right of the Joachim succession. Now the Capital of this State is, of course, at Oxford, where else possible? - but from time to time we heretical barbarians in London receive missions to convince us by personal example of the hopeless levity of our ways. At the present time, there is a nunciature extraordinary established at the Chelsea Town Hall, where every Wednesday, the Great Man himself instructs us how to play Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart. After all, London might reform Oxford, Oxford has reformed us so often!' The article is anonymous, but had it appeared in 1927 and not 1907, its author might well have been Constant Lambert, who always became frightfully bad-tempered whenever he thought or spoke or wrote about Tovey.
Casals and Tovey in Barcelona, in the same year. Casals had created an orchestra of his own there, and invited Tovey to conduct his Cello Concerto with Casals as soloist. At a second concert, Tovey played the Beethoven G major concerto with Casals conducting. Later Tovey's hands became severely crippled with arthritis, and he found the effort of piano playing very painful. I remember he used to present a tentative finger in place of a hand-shake.

On the left is Albert Schweitzer; Donald Tovey on the right, and Casals centre - 1934. Schweitzer was in Edinburgh delivering the Gifford lectures in theology, Casals to play Tovey's Cello Concerto. Both Schweitzer and Casals had previously received D Mus. degrees in absentia, from Edinburgh: this is the first time they had assembled and Tovey took the opportunity of dressing them up in what he described as their "spangles and tights" to have this photograph taken.
The name of Florent Schmitt is little known in South Africa: yet many of his compositions were highly successful; his dramatic ballet, "La Tragedie de Salomes,” a symphonie concertante for piano, and, in particular his quintet for piano and strings which in many ways, is probably his masterpiece. This quintet is conceived on an enormous scale, lasts about an hour, and occupied the composer for eight years. It was the central piece in the programme of Schmitt’s works we gave in Glasgow, 14th March 1933.

Schmitt was born in 1870, and died 88 years later in France: he began as a disciple of Berlioz, and later was bracketed, along with Roger Ducass, Paul Ladmirault, Paul Duka and Charles Koechim in the French Conservative group; which perhaps bears more affinity to German solidity than French Impressionism. Schmitt was a French impressionist composer, with his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground. When our usual reception committee met Schmitt at the station on his arrival for our Glasgow concert, we found he spoke no English. We slowly perambulated down the platform with our two French speakers - Guy McCrone and H.K. Wood - trying their best to keep up a running commentary with an anything but benign looking Frenchman. Out of the tail of our eye, we became aware that a very plain, dowdy-looking Frenchwoman was trailing after us: she looked like a cross between a prison warden and a female Maigret: somehow we sensed there was a connection between the mysterious female and our new arrival. Looking from the rear window of our taxi, I saw the Grand Hotel and as he didn’t appear to need either us or our company, beyond the portals of the hotel, we made arrangements with him for tomorrow’s rehearsals and said our polite “au revoirs” but not, however, before we had duly noted the arrival and reception of Madame Maigret - with Mr. Schmitt looking everywhere except at the unprepossessing lady, whom we now suspected had travelled with him, perhaps to ease the strain and tension of an unpredictable professional engagement. The following morning, we assembled at the house of H.K. Wood - 116 Pitt Street, Glasgow - for rehearsal: “we” included members of the string quartet which individually and collectively were to cover the whole Schmitt programme with Schmitt, of course, as pianist. The leader, Edward Dennis, possessed remarkable finger dexterity on his instrument, which allowed him to play almost anything written for the violin; as a duo-team we had previously performed really tough sonatas like Bartok (there are still few violin sonatas more difficult than Bartok No. 1), Hindemith and Bloch. Unfortunately, his tone was small, inclined to be sugary, and being a one-time leader of movie orchestras, allowed his pronounced inferiority complex to ruffle him somewhat, when involved in performances of upper-crust chamber music; in short he was a very touchy customer.
We introduced the four players to Schmitt, who seemed none too pleased at the sight; he shrugged his shoulders and followed Mr. Dennis and his boys rather sulkily into the music room. The first work to be rehearsed was his Sonate Libre en Deux Parties Enchaines.

At a first rehearsal, particularly between a noted guest-artist and our local players, we had found the best policy was to leave them to get acquainted with each other - personally and musically without what might prove - remembering the van Dieren fiasco - the embarrassment of an audience, however small. Straining our ears through the closed door, we could hear the opening strains of the Schmitt sonata, which - after a couple of bars or so - came to a sudden halt: the composer saying something we couldn’t catch, then playing the opening bars on the piano, obviously showing his partner the correct tempo. The music started again and went on - so far as one could judge - for several pages. We heaved a sigh of relief - Mr. Dennis was behaving himself. The first part of this sonata, as I remember it - for I haven’t seen a copy for 25 years - is rhapsodic in style, with many tempo changes and calling for much rubato playing and subtle co-operation from the performers. Suddenly the music broke off; and we could hear the tone, if not the words of Schmitt’s voice, speaking heatedly to his partner: he sounded anything but amiable.

Dennis replied in his conceited, staccato voice - a moment's silence, and Schmitt burst excitedly through the door - "Ah! mon Dieu." he squeaked - "Quel violiniste!" Guy McCrone, our spokesman, tried to smooth him down - the work was somewhat strange to Mr. Dennis: if the Master would only have a little patience, he would find him - we could assure the maestro - a very experienced player. Schmitt looked sceptical, but agreed to return to the music room and the music commenced again. Five minutes later, Dennis stormed out to us: “This damned Frenchman is impossible. He insults me. Why should I stay here to be insulted? It’s a lousy sonata anyway, and he can’t even play his own music. I’m off home” and he started to pack his fiddle. With persuasion, flattery and a whole string of lies, we eventually persuaded Dennis to return to the now red-hot music room; and again the rehearsal began. Some really beautiful music sailed through the closed door for the next ten minutes or so; we relaxed and smiled at one another happily. Thank heavens that temperamental crisis was over. Suddenly, there was an unpleasant crash; the sound of the piano lid being banged shut; and there was Schmitt in our midst, his face purple with rage, fuming and spluttering wildly ‘Ce’est impossible de jouer avec un idiot comme ça! Vous m’insultez en demandant que je joue avec ce violoniste. Quel imbécile! Quel idiot! Je refuse.' in his Gallic excitement, he even grabbed one of our committee, Ernest Boden by the coat collar and waded into him good and proper for having the impertinence to provide him with such an incompetent, block-head of a violinist. He would not play.’ There would be no concert! He was going home !!!

Not being able to follow Schmitt's explosive outburst in a foreign language, it was only later I discovered he had mistaken Boden for me, hence the attack. I got Guy McCrone the only one of our committee who knew what Schmitt was talking about (though it wasn't difficult to guess!) to say that Dennis and I had rehearsed Schmitt's violin sonata together, and as we understood one another, and had played many
times as a duo, we would not involve the Maestro in this particular performance, but would give it ourselves. He calmed down a bit at that, and after giving him tea, slyly laced by me with a tot of cognac, he perked up sufficiently to agree to play the piano in the other two works.

The first rehearsal of the quintet went comparatively smoothly, with only an occasional outburst from the composer, and it was noticeable, that after two further rehearsals, Schmitt lost something of his glum looks and became almost human. When it came to the actual performance, however, he kept up an almost uninterrupted running commentary of disapproving grunts including a few “Allez vite” exclamations. This vocal counterpoint may have reached me (who was turning pages for him) more forcefully than it did the alas small audience, which received the performance with great enthusiasm. The irrepressible D.C. Parker wrote that "Rarely, if ever, had he heard a piano made to sound so loudly for such long stretches!" Obviously Mr. Parker has never heard Ronald Stevenson playing his Passacaglia!

Later that year, with the same string players and myself at the piano, we repeated the quintet, a work which, in my opinion, would be placed among the first six piano quintets ever written; but mind you, there aren’t so very many. The piano part is real concerto stuff, and it is difficult to get string players with sufficiently strong tone to hold their own. There is behind the work, even in the lyrical passages, a feeling of inescapable vitality.

The Schmitt concert was repeated the following evening in the University Music Class Room, Edinburgh. The Scotsman critic wrote of the composer’s characteristic impetuosity (we could answer for this.) and the concert as an unusual one for Edinburgh, but very interesting one, and which provided much material for thought! (whatever that may mean). At both concerts, Mr. Schmitt asked the management if he could have a complimentary ticket for a friend: said "friend" was never introduced to any of us by Schmitt, nor did he ever betray that he was even aware of her existence, except once: just as the London train was about to pull out of Waverley Station, Schmitt leaned out of the window and in a confidential whisper to Guy McCrone said "Monsieur Crone, when you come to Paris to see me, please do not mention to my wife anything about my English girl friend".
ACTIVE SOCIETY CONCERT.—M. Florent Schmitt (centre), the famous French composer, who is leading in the concert of his Piano Quinter by the Active Society in Glasgow, to-morrow night. The member
The first composer I ever met in my life was John Ireland, and that was because my father made an appointment for him to see me and hear some youthful compositions of mine. Ireland was then living at 14A, Gunters Grove, Chelsea. I would be about 15 or 16, so this would be around the years 1919-20. My early masterpieces included a piano suite on Browning's "Pippa Passes" about which I was crazy at the time (I mean about Browning, not my Suite), a lyric movement for string quartet, and my chef d'Oeuvre, a Chaconne (35 variations on a ground bass) triple fugue and epilogue for large orchestra. I can still remember the subjects of the fugues. As it was never my way to do things by half it so happened that I was in love with three girls at the time, and each subject was supposed to sum up the charms of my fair enslavers. The first fugue was for strings only, the second fugue for wind only, and the third for brass only; so the first time you heard the full orchestra was when all three subjects were combined - rather a clever idea don't you think? The three girls were

1) My String girl: - Gretchen Walton, daughter of the Glasgow Cathedral organist, Herbert Walton. The words I wrote to the first fugue subject went something like this:

"O Gretchen dear, you're a beautiful, beautiful girl,
Although you use a powder puff;
Blue eyes and curly hair
I love you, but not enough!"

2) My woodwind girl was Effie Ross, daughter of the owner of famous Ross's Dairies of Glasgow. Her words and tune went

"Oh, Effie, I love you always,
0, yes I do.
Come here, come here; come here, come over here;
And I'll do something really nice to you."

3) My brass girl, Phemie Lang was the daughter of the general manager of Weir's Engineering Works. It was coincidence I hope, that they were all classy girls whose fathers had substantial incomes. I forget the words of my Brass girl, but as brass doesn't move like the speed of strings or winds, my Phemie was assuredly a girl of few words.

Well, when this work was finished, I was mightily pleased with it, and I remember wondering who would be the lucky conductor to be allowed to give it its first performance. Sir Landon Ronald? - too old fashioned - unlikely at his age (he was 47) to understand the out-pouring of an ardent (albeit contrapuntal)
played by the Society's cellist, Luigi Gasparini. Ireland's early Phantasie Trio opened the programme, and ended with the familiar second violin sonata which all-in-all is his most satisfying work - tuneful, virile and with a wide range of expression. I have a recording not of Ireland's second but of his first violin sonata - not so good a work but at least you will have the chance to hear the composer himself playing the piano part. Here is the Finale, a gay and tuneful rondo.

John Ireland was always a little standoffish, not really belonging to the Establishment; he had an old-world courtesy about him, and seldom unbent. "Nobody plays my music" was his steady complaint, which may be true enough nowadays, but certainly was not so in the 1920's, when he was at the height of his fame. One of his pupils Richard Arnell has this story to tell about him.

After the familiar complaint one of his friends was forced to exclaim: "But John, why do you say your piano concerto is neglected, when it was played at the Proms this week, and has just had a broadcast; and isn't there a performance abroad?" After a short silence, Ireland replied 'Oh, so they are playing it to death, are they?"

The best known and the best of all Ireland's songs is his setting of John Masefield's "Sea Fever". It is rare in English music that words and music are so happily wedded as they are here. The whole atmosphere of the poem, physical and personal, has been perfectly realised. This song, inevitably included in his Glasgow recital, was the final number in a group of five songs which included his fine setting of Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" and "Spring Sorrow". I am sure you would like to hear "Sea Fever".

Ireland tells how someone induced Rachmaninoff to attend a meeting of the British Music Society at which Ireland's "Chelsea Reach" and the song you have just heard were performed. The pianist played "Chelsea Reach" as though it was a dirge, but the performance of "Sea Fever" went much better. At the end of the performance, Rachmaninoff turned to Ireland saying "Yes zat "Sea Fever" is good, but really, Mr. Ireland, you do not zink much of zat Chelsea Reach, do you?"

Ireland numbered among his pupils some of the most prominent of English composers - Alan Bush, Benjamin Britten, Humphrey Searle and E.J. Moeran, the latter sometimes referred to as the "Irish Ireland." When in Glasgow, Ireland did unbend to tell a few stories, the best being about his encounter with Gershwin, famous composer of "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Porgy and Bess". "I hear, Mr. Ireland that you too have written a rhapsody. May I ask you how many performances you get of it in a year?" "Two or Three" Ireland replied. "Two or three" exclaimed Gershwin horrified, "why my Rhapsody gets about ten performances a day." This ties up with another story about Gershwin when he approached Strawinsky for lessons in composition. "How much do you make out of your music in a year?" Strawinsky asked him: "Oh,
about 50,000 dollars” Gershwin replied. "50,000 dollars!" exclaimed Strawinsky "Look here, Gershwin, do you mind giving me some lessons?"

Slide 1

This is how John Ireland looked in 1921 when he was 42. He was born in 1879 a year which also saw the birth of two other noted English composers, Cyril Scott and Frank Bridge (perhaps best remembered today as the teacher of Benjamin Britten)

Slide 2

Cover of the programme of his Glasgow concert. These programmes (never less than 8 pages) were supplied to us free by an advertising agent who touted for ads and kept the money: it suited us admirably
The first of 2 irrelevant slides. Dame Ethel Smyth - a horsey woman who has written some darned good operas "The Boatswain's Mate", "The Wreckers" "Fete Galante": also some real punchy books. I met her through Tovey when she came to Edinburgh to conduct the first performance of her choral work - "The Prison". She said very little to the players at the first rehearsal - but when the orchestra arrived for a subsequent rehearsal - most members found on their desks a postcard with some such remark as - "Please Mr. First Bassoon play B flat on the second quaver of bar 278 not B sharp: or Dear Mr. 3rd Horn, be so kind as to raise the bell of your instrument for the fanfare in the 3rd movement. Thank you!

Ireland on his 80th birthday
The first Ireland picture, the one of Ethel Smyth you have just seen and now this one of Gustav Holst, are all photographs from the collection of Herbert Lambert. Holst’s best work is the remarkable Suite "The Planets": I still remember the thrill of that relentless 5/4 rhythm in "Mars - the bringer of War" when first I heard it 35 years ago. Holst seized on the dramatic, astrological possibilities of "The Planets" - Saturn - Old age, Jupiter - Jollity, Venus - Peace and so on. At this time I was writing a series of short pieces from the Astronomical point of view - one was called "A jewel from the Siderial casket-Beta Cygnus" the idea of a dead star revolving around a live one: another "A total eclipse of the Sun". I recall an interesting conversation I had with Holst on this rather unusual question of composing music with an astrological or astronomical background. I also recall a series of lectures Holst gave on orchestration: and how disappointed I was that the brilliant orchestrator of "The Planets" had nothing interesting or original to say.
young heart. Sir Henry Wood? - better, certainly, but too slap-dash, and tied up with old fashioned fogies like Strauss and Scriabin. Sir Hamilton Harty? - not bad; a little too Irish - leprecormy, perhaps, but we'll keep his name on the list meantime. The upshot of all this was that Dad thought it was high time to get a top opinion on my compositions, and so he hauled me down to London and to John Ireland. Ireland led us down the garden to a large, dark-looking studio; I remember his piano was covered with dust and cigarette ash. Ireland scanned through my scores with a rather bored look, but perked up a bit when he came to my marvellous triple fugue. He said he would be prepared to give me composition lessons if I would come down and live in London. My father said this was not the idea at all; he wanted to know if Mr. Ireland would give his son lessons by post. Ireland said this was impossible, so my Dad: rushed me across London to Muswell Hill for a second opinion - this time from Hubert Bath, composer of the popular "Cornish Rhapsody" (said by some, to be more corny than Rhapsy;) nothing doing again, but finally my Dad did settle for correspondence lessons from Dr. A. Eaglefield, Hull. But that is another story.

During the next ten years or so, I occasionally saw Ireland at a London concert; we nodded to one another and sometimes exchanged a few words. He wasn't what you would call a very chummy soul. A certain conscious seriousness about some of his works appeared to me to make them rather stuffy: this was at a time when the highest praise some critics considered they could bestow on any composer was to call him a 'serious composer' and I felt that Ireland rather played up to this idea. I enjoy spontaneity and freshness more than thoughtful, solemn and serious qualities in modern music which latter appear to me little different from the artificial, the manufactured and the contrived. Nonetheless, I joined in the chorus of praise which greeted Ireland's second violin and piano sonata, when it first appeared around 1920 and had played his "Island Spell", "Ragamuffin" "Rhapsody" and even got up his awkwardly difficult piano sonata for a concert. "Rugged" was the fashionable term to describe Ireland's music. Anyway, I had no qualms in asking him to give a concert of his works at the Active Society, and this he did on April 12 1932.

In the car which drove him from the station to Moore's Hotel, our favourite place to house distinguished guests (if for some reason or another it was not policy to offer them private hospitality), I said how much I admired his celebrated second violin sonata "Truly" I said, "one of the finest examples of recent British Chamber Music." "No, no" he replied testily, "it isn't all that good, believe me; and please don't say flowery things about my music to me, for I am sure you don't believe them, and neither do I." He had a pretty bad cold all the time he was in Glasgow, which, if it affected his temper, had no ill effect on his playing. Both his compositions and piano playing made a deep impression on the unusually large audience which attended his concert: the increased attendance may be accounted for by the pressure exerted by local piano teachers on pupils who had come to hear how the composer would play their favourite Ireland pieces. He certainly gave beautiful performances of the "Holy Boy", "Chelsea Reach "Ragamuffin" and the impressionistic "Island Spell" pieces still used avidly by loyal British piano teachers and despite a slight soiling at the edges, still with a definite modern appeal. The novelty was the unfamiliar Cello Sonata.
One of the most talented German families of musicians born in the last decade of the 19th century was the Busch's of Westphalia: Fritz Busch, founder conductor of the Glyndebourne Opera; Adolf Busch, noted violinist, leader of the famous string quartet which bore his name, and composer of concertos, symphonies and much chamber music; and Hermann Busch, a very fine cellist. All three of them were friends of Sir Donald Tovey who, in 1934 nominated Fritz and Adolf for honorary D.Mus. degrees at Edinburgh University. As soon as I heard of this plan, I wrote to Adolf Busch in Switzerland, asking him if there was a possibility of him giving us a concert. He replied by telegram; I have it here - it reads:

Chisholm, Active Society, 221 West George Street Glasgow In this moment I finished my new trio for piano violin and cello stop Programme would be sonate for piano and violin secondly sonata piano solo thirdly the new trio stop Propose in communication (he meant co-operation) with Edinburgh 11 or 14 December Greetings your Adolf Hitler - I mean Adolf Busch.

Some of the older members of my audience may remember the Busch Quartet, considered by many eminent authorities to be the most distinguished and classically integrated exponents of chamber music since the time of Joachim (although only the other day I read an eye-witness account - or rather an ear-witness account - of Joachim's leadership of his celebrated quartet: that in his latter days - Joachim - the friend of Brahms and editor of Brahms' solo violin parts - used to play just that little bit under the pitch). Adolf Busch was a tall, robust, hearty, open-air, energetic, slap-you-on-the-back sort of fellow, much more like a prosperous farmer than a sensitive concert violinist. He played with tremendous vigour, which, when required, could give way to great sensitiveness and subtlety. On the night prior to our Glasgow concert, the violin and cellist brothers, with Fritz conducting if my memory serves me right (though it could have been Tovey) had given a magnificent performance of the Brahms Double at one of Tovey's Reid Orchestral concerts in Edinburgh's Usher Hall. The Glasgow concert was entirely Busch's own compositions; the most recent of the three novelties being the new piano trio of which this was the first performance. Adolf and Max Reger had been close friends and associates since about 1907, and undoubtedly the earlier compositions of Busch were influenced by Reger's close contrapuntal texture and great compression of detail, although he later developed individual characteristics of his own. Perhaps, too, there was a touch of Busoni in the violin sonata Op. 21. Re-reading the notice of this concert in the Glasgow Evening Times, written by Stewart Dees (one-time music professor at Cape Town) I find that Dees thought
the contrary; that the new trio showed a tightening up of the structure as compared to the earlier sonatas, "which", wrote Dees "had a certain luxuriousness which gave them a charm of their own". The piano sonata is a very powerful work, and even thirty years afterwards, I still recall the great impression it made on me. After a strong first movement came an andante and variations, at first of a quiet meditative nature, and later, brilliant and lively. The finale is a gigantic fugue, which was played by Rudolf Serken, with most striking effect. Rudolf Serkin was the pianist associated with Adolf, and was in fact, his son-in-law, and for, the last quarter of the century has been known as one of the most brilliant and intellectual pianists in America. Our Busch concert and the honouring of Fritz and Adolf by Edinburgh University (an honour which, by the way, include a civic reception) occurred in December 1934, a year after Adolf had made a voluntary renunciation of his German citizenship, and a year before he acquired Swiss citizenship. I don't think the Busch's were Jewish, although Serkin, his son-in-law is, and Adolf's voluntary exile from Germany was a protest against the ominous path along which the other Adolf was leading Germany.

I doubt very much if many Busch works have been performed anywhere in the past decade or so. This is not to say he was a bad composer; but that his music, like that of Tovey, Joachim, Rontjen, Busoni, van Dieren and a thousand others, is not just good enough to stay in the world repertoire. It is said that only about 1% of music written in any century is likely to live into the next century; and as time goes on, and more and more music is being created, 1% promises to be too high a figure. But, if you are a composer, don't worry too much about that - the signs are that in their own good time, all composers, all music, all art, everybody and everything will be flattened out and forgotten. It's all a question of time and relativity!

To return to the Busch's - the two brothers and Serkin were in high spirits after the concert and the next morning at the station, when we saw them off to London, they got so absorbed in playing with an automatic penny-in-the-slot football game on the station platform, that they all but missed the 10a.m. Flying Scot to London. The last I saw of these simple, kindly, jolly chaps who were such magnificent musicians, was Hermann lugging his wooden cello case clumsily up the platform, with Adolf and Serkin egging him on from behind, all laughing boisterously, and the three of them jumping into about the last carriage as the train drew out of the platform.


I am sure many of you have records of Mozart operas made at Glyndebourne and conducted by Fritz Busch. Many people, including myself, consider they are unsurpassed by later recordings despite the advances made in recording technique. Tovey introduced me to Fritz Busch in Edinburgh, at the time I was preparing Mozart's "Idomeneo" for performances with the Glasgow Grand - an opera that Fritz was never allowed to do in Glyndebourne, though he had conducted it at Stuttgart and Dresden. We discussed some
aspects of the work both regretting that Mozart was never given the occasion to produce it later in his life and allow him to re-write the tenor part for a baritone, as it would certainly have improved the tone colour of many ensembles, particularly the quartet which is for three sopranos and tenor: The celebrated Italian tenor Verbasco was an aging man, and very short of breath, when Mozart wrote the name part of Idomeneo for him; the composer breaks up the melismata passages every now and then to allow Verbasco to draw breath, but who can doubt that Mozart could have improved on his original, if the opportunity had arisen for him to rewrite the part Of Idomeneo for a healthy lusty baritone? Tovey had shown Fritz Busch an essay I had just written on this and other problems of “Idomeneo”, and he asked me if I could send him a copy.

For the rest of this morning’s session, we will speak of lesser mortals than composers: performers - Egon Petri, Tatiana Mackushina and actress-pianist Yvonne Arnaud: beginning with Yvonne Arnaud. I will read you an excerpt from an article on this vivacious and versatile woman who enjoyed great popularity as a French actress in English plays like “French without Tears” after she had achieved considerable success as a concert pianist. This article was written by the Hon. secretary of the Active Society, Diana Brodie who was my first wife.
One of the most interesting persons I ever met was Yvonne Arnaud. A brilliant comedienne, possessed of a pair of the most alluring eyes and eyelashes it has been my wont to meet, and a fascinating foreign accent, Yvonne Arnaud, for twenty years, has been without rival in the realm of light comedy. She is a first-rate actress with a charm and a fascination all her own.

But, of course, it was not as an actress that she appeared at our concerts. Yvonne Arnaud is also a brilliant pianist and had already a considerable reputation as a sensitive and delightful performer long before she took up acting professionally. A child prodigy, she had played all over Europe under such conductors as Nikisch, Mongelberg, Mahler and Siloti.

Among our guests at the inevitable party was Sir John (then plain Mr.) Barbirolli who was a close friend and admirer of Madame Arnaud. He told me that although she was French she was trained in the thorough German School of piano playing, and dutifully did her eight hours a day of scales, arpeggios and studies, in the good old-fashioned way, until her success in the stage made this impossible. It was apparent at her concert, and at a subsequent appearance in a Mozart Concerto, with Barbirolli conducting the Scottish Orchestra, that she could still hold her own in Concerto and Recital with the best women pianists of the day. As a matter of fact she had only taken up acting for the amusement of her friends. It was after one of these impromptu performances that it was suggested to her that she should take up acting more seriously, and following on this advice, she almost overnight became one of the leading French actresses.

When she came to Glasgow she brought her husband, Hugh McLellan, with her, who was a don at one of our English universities; anyone less like the expected husband of the vivacious Yvonne would be difficult to imagine: he was of the “hunin’, shootin’ and fishin’ variety of husbands. It was obvious to all that they adored one another. I think it was the day before the concert that she celebrated her birthday. I won't give her years away (Grove puts a ? at her age) but I remember thinking that I hoped I’d look as young, fresh, and gay, if and when, I celebrated a similar number of years.

At the birthday party which we gave for her, we had invited not only musicians, actors and critics, but a number of really hard-headed business men. Although we invited the latter for her husband, I have to admit that, along with the others they went down like nine-pins before her. It’s amazing how business men, out of office hours cave in so completely, when they come up against “oomph” The critics too were there. Critics I find for the main part, are a dour set of males. They seem frightened to unbend in case you misunderstand and that they must give you a good criticism, they raise a barrier between you and them which they are most reluctant to lower. Oh yes! They are delighted when the opportunity occurs to meet celebrities. After all most of them are on the staff of newspapers, and it's part of their job to get ‘copy’ It
is always a surprise to me when I read the glowing accounts they sometimes give of interviews and meetings with these celebrities. From their manner you'll certainly would never have guessed that such enthusiasm had been there at the time of the interview. At this particular party, Yvonne Arnaud, was, of course, the guest of honour. A small dark vivacious woman, over-flowing with humour and mischievousness, heady as champagne, simply bubbling over with “joie de vivre”, she set out to entertain us with the wit, and brilliance of her conversation. She flirted outrageously with all the males but once, during the meal when the men got into a debate about something or other, and left the women for a few moments to their own resources, she said to me: “Mrs. Cheesum, me I do not need to make my eyes go so”-flutter, flutter, flutter, went her eyelashes “but the pets, they do love it and Hugh (looking lovingly at her husband) he does not worry, so why should I disappoint them?” I noticed that one or two of the wives looked a trifle disapproving, and were not too pleased with the success and effect she was having. I admit that the thought flashed through my own mind that in some ways it was a good thing she was not stopping in town very long. I, too, have a husband, and I did not possess the art of eye-flapping. “Oh well! All men are so susceptible.

That was the personal, possibly even the theatrical side of Madame Arnaud. On the night of the concert she was an entirely different personality: modest, sincere, artistic and studious. Not only was she keen on, and knowledgeable about contemporary music, but she had co-operated many times in actual performances with the International String Quartet, at that time one of the leading English groups presenting chamber music concerts of works by Bartok, Schonberg, Alban Berg, Szymanowski and other moderns. The main item on this programme was the Sonata for Violin and Piano, by the Rumanian composer and violinist, George Enesco. Enesco is also a noted teacher, one of his pupils being Yehudi Menuhin. Strangely enough, Yvonne Arnaud’s recital coincided with Yehudi Menuhin’s debut in Glasgow. Bessie Spence, her violinist in the Enesco, was most anxious to hear Yehudi, so I agreed to slip away with her after she had played the sonata and hear what she could of Menuhin’s debut. We reached the hall just in time for the interval. Bessie wanted to go round to the artists room and meet Yehudi. Nothing loath I went with her. When we reached the room it was, of course, filled with admiring people, and it was difficult to get a chance to speak to this little boy, dressed in short trousers, who looked only a baby from the front of the house, but one who had complete mastery of his art and himself. We spoke (or at least Bessie did) to Yehudi’s father. There had been no student concession tickets for this concert, a fact that had caused considerable annoyance among teachers and students alike, so Bessie thought she would put in a word for a future occasion. She first of all apologised for not being able to attend the whole concert because of the Yvonne A’s, and secondly asked rather tentatively why there had been no concession given. She had hardly got the words out of her mouth, when Mr Menuhin completely "went off the deep end." "What who dares to give another concert in Glasgow when my son is playing! When Yehudi comes to your town in future he is to be the only artist preforming that night. I will see that all other concerts are cancelled. Con-
cessions?, Concessions? what concessions?" Here Miss Spence explained what she meant, how difficult it was for students to pay so much for tickets, and how it was a general practice for all great artists to make specially priced tickets for students. Mr. Menuhin looked as if he would explode. "The Great Gods! There are no concession tickets when Menuhin plays, Madame, if you wish to hear him, you pay." I wonder what he would have said if he had known we had not paid! Just then young Menuhin came up looking rather shame-faced. I think even then it was obvious to all that he did not share his father’s arrogance. This by the way, was proved to be true when Menuhin visited S.A. a few years ago. Not only were there concession tickets on that occasion, but once he knew that the matinee programme was not only for children up to twelve years of age as he had thought, he, by special request played the first movement of Bartok’s unaccompanied Violin concerto, remarking to the younger children, that even if it was beyond their understanding now they would come to love it later.

The following day Yvonne went back to London. Glasgow seems particularly dull and grey for quite a time afterwards.

I can let you hear Miss Arnaud playing two short pieces, the “Waltz Caprice” of Saint-Saint, and the finale of Haydn’s D Major concerto, both with string orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli.

PLAY

Yvonne Arnaud as she was in 1912
As different from night to day was Tatiana Makushina, the Russian singer, who came to Glasgow in the same year. Makushina was a woman of middle age, almost black eyes and a dark complexion, giving the impression of a dark and sombre nature, and all the expected gifts of a dramatic soprano. She belonged to the Russia of pre-Soviet days, called herself a “White Russian”, and spoke longingly of her country as it was before the Revolution. She would talk for hours of her “dear Czar and Czarina” and it seemed to all who listened to her that her heart had been left there behind, but still that nothing would induce her to go back.

Makushina was somewhat heavily built, very matronly looking and nondescript in her daily dress. One felt she would be much more at home with a baking board than on the concert platform - but that was only until she came on to the platform. From the moment she began to get dressed for the concert a change came over her. Gone was the almost slow lumbering, sleepily moving figure, and in its place came a quick, vital, fussy, temperamental woman. Nervously toying with the music of her songs, doing her hair and at the same time singing scales, humming the difficult passages over and over again, muttering in Russian exclamations of irritation (it sounded most satisfying) whenever anything did not please her, and at last telling me she was now ready to go. Her face had lost the sad frustrated look, and in its place was a bright expectant look of anticipation and her dark eyes glistened like black luminous paint. When we arrived at the concert and were waiting in the artists room she kept asking me if she had plenty of time to get ready. Assuming that all she had to do was slip off her fur jacket, I said that there was no need for her to fuss. That’s all I knew about it. The item before her had finished and the player was taking a re-call. I told her she was next and opened the door to allow the previous artist to come through. I waited a minute then opened it again to let her pass to the stage. I stood with the door open. I stood! First of all she took off one scarf from her head, then another scarf around her neck, then another under that, then her fur jacket, then a cardigan, then another cardigan, and still yet another. For someone born and brought up in Russia she seemed to feel it amazingly cold in Scotland. She did not slip them off quickly, but slowly and deliberately, laying them down systematically in the rotation in which she would replace them, quite oblivious to the fact that this disrobing process took quite five minutes. Quite satisfied that her hair and dress were both now in order she sailed forth into the hall with the air of a conquering battleship. After singing a generous group of contemporary songs, literally bringing the house down, she was brought back again and again. We hopefully waited for an encore. I must confess I rather hoped she would sing something ‘un-contemporary’, and almost as if she read my thoughts she announced that she ‘Would sing a song in
English, a little simple song called "O Dear what can the matter be". It was the most delightful rendering of a nursery song that I (and I think the audience too), had ever listened to. She sang, she acted, she was love-sick, she was forlorn that Johnny didn’t come back with the ribbons. I think I am right in saying that it was my special request that she repeated it when she sang with the Scottish Orchestra the following evening.
Frederic Lamond, the Glasgow pianist, who lived for many years in Germany was regarded by the Germans as being their outstanding Beethoven interpreter - no mean achievement for a Scot or, indeed, for any non-German.

When the Active Society became inactive, I revived the defunct Dunedin Association (founded in 1911 for the promotion and development of Scottish music) and at one of it’s earliest concerts, Frederic Lamond played his own piano trio. Lamond made a goodly number of records: the later ones of poor quality, overpedalled, and muddled, so I am not going to play any of these. Lamond was a pupil of Liszt, around 1882, along with another Glasgow born pianist and composer - actually a much greater figure than Lamond - Eugene d’Albert, composer of the popular opera "Tiefland" and twenty others. D’Albert was undistinguished for stability in wedlock - he was married six times and according to Lamond, his great friend and admirer, was the greatest pianist of his generation, until about the age of 30 when he became bored with concert work and was rather forced into finding greater financial pursuits, if only to pay off alimony to five ex-wives! Lamond said that every time d’Albert met a really pretty woman he wanted to marry her, there was no question of having an affair with her - he must go through the long, dreary, painful, expensive legal process to get a divorce - make adequate provision for ex Madame d’Albert 1, 2, or 3, 4 - as the case might be and then embrace his new bride in holy wedlock! He probably made a lot of money out of "Tiefland" which for playing the D minor Brahms Concerto in Glasgow. He was a tiny little man, with a wild stock of then white - it had been carrot-red hair; his playing was up to professional standard, nothing more, and he looked bored. You can judge him both as composer and pianist, for here he is playing his Scherzo in F sharp minor, Op. 16 no. 2. This record was made in the early years of the century.

PLAY

D’Albert’s father was a French dancing master and composer of such one-time favourites as “Sweethearts’ Waltz”, “Sultan’s Polka” and the “Edinburgh Quadrilles”. When I was registering the birth of my eldest daughter at Prospecthill Road Registry Office, Glasgow, in 1933, the clerk handed me a form to fill in, one query being "Father’s occupation?” I wrote “Professional musician” and handed it back to the clerk, who looked at it a trifle suspiciously "Whit kin’ o’ musician would ye be, anyway, mister?” he asked me “Ye dinna, look as if ye played a cornet in the streets” “Indeed no” I replied laughingly, “I teach and play the piano - but leave it at Professional musician.” “Weel”, said the clerk, "Ye’re nothing like no particular as a wee red-heeded fella who kept comin’ back here; he had a kinda queer name- whit was it noo? Albert something? Dalbert, that’s it Dalbert – You-gene Dalbert. He was a pee-anist, too, and every
time he wis playing in Glesca he came up here tae see if we would change his birth certificate so that his fether’s profession was-ny jest “Dancin-” but “Maitre de Ballet.”

EGON PETRI

Egon Petri was a Dutch pianist, well out of the run of popular pianists although he was that too who gave us a recital of the works of Busoni on 11th November 1931. It is one of my great regrets that I was in bed with flu at the time, and had to miss hearing this remarkable Busoni programme. I had heard Egon Petri play in Moscow at a Max Mossel concert, and many times on the radio; I was tremendously impressed with him, particularly with the six recitals he gave of music by Charles Allkan. Alkan was a well-known virtuoso pianist by the time he was 17, and belonged to the artistic circle in Paris which included Victor Hugo and Chopin. Liszt frequently visited him and it was said that Alkan was the only musician in the world, in front of whom Liszt felt nervous. His masterpiece is the two sets of piano studies in major and minor keys. Some of the movements are linked together forming a Concerto and a symphony. I myself transcribed the piano symphony for a string orchestra.

Petri was a Busoni piano pupil who acquired much of his master’s brilliant technical equipment and intellectual interpretive ability: moreover, like most of Busoni’s pupils, he became infected with the inevitable Busoni virus, firmly believing in the greatness of Busoni the composer, and all his life did what he could to advance Busoni’s compositions. This is why he played for us for a fifteen pound fee instead of his usual 100 guineas one. It was disappointing that the Petri-Busoni recital drew only a half house. D.C. Par-ker, the Glasgow Evening Times critic, wrote: “Busoni, the creator, as we saw him in a representative se-lection of his works, was an eager, restless, profound, meditative and speculative spirit. He had an affinity with the older classics, and enthusiasm for, and an insight into Bach, Mozart and Liszt. The subject of counterpoint absorbed much of his time. He looked for new horizons and fresh methods. Characteristic of him is the remark that the classics had been “killed with respect” In his original compositions, he showed himself an expert craftsman, gifted with imagination of the purely intellectual order. The prevailing dryness and lack of emotional warmth cannot be overlooked.”

Now, Percy Gordon, writing in the "Glasgow Herald":

“The most impressive work of the evening was the Fantasia Contrappuntistica. This is music made by a fine mind, working brilliantly. As an example of his piano writing it is always admirable and its craftsman-ship is wonderful. Mr. Petri’s playing cannot be praised too highly. The beauty and range of his tone quali-ty, the artistry of his playing and the ease with which the many pianistic problems were solved were alike
remarkable, but not more so than the perfect clarity with which he presented the intricacies of the Fantasia.”

Among the lighter pieces on the all Busoni programme was the "Fantasia on themes from Carmen.”

Here now, to finish this session is the Busoni-Bizet “Carmen Fantasia”, played by Egon Petri.

PLAY

ALFREDO CASELLA

Cinematography has always been one of my pet hobbies. It was my father’s dearest wish to keep his three sons "off the street" by which phrase, I suppose, he meant to keep them from playing in the streets for I imagine that children at such a tender age as 6, 10 and 12 were unlikely to get into more serious trouble - though of course you never know. Playing Kick the Can, ringing door bells or tying opposite door nobs together, pushing younger and weaker lads into beds of stinging nettles were some of my favourite games, when I was at Junior School. Anyway, father did his best for us, adding an extra storey on the top of our semi-detached house at 28 Corrour Road, Newlands, Glasgow, which would accommodate a full-size billiard table (incidentally, burning down the whole house and that of our next door neighbour in the process!) He bought us a 35 mm. projector, complete with arc lamp, slide attachment, a selection of cowboy films and news reels, but no motor. There were none in those days, so that every time we had a cinema show, which was usually every Friday or Saturday night, my eldest brother, Jack, had to "caw the haun’le" (turn the handle) of the projector to make it go - a pretty strenuous task - for a 1,000 ft. reel lasted 15 minutes, and it was no joke to keep turning without a break for a quarter of an hour or more. Turning handles was all the fashion before the first world war: and my brother Jack came in for more than his fair share of turning the handle of the ice-cream freezer, packed around with ice, which became harder and harder to push as the ice embedded itself closer into the freezer. My Mother's ice cream - made from real cream and fresh strawberries - was marvellous (nothing like it, nowadays, with their massed produced, slick, sleek, tasteless, synthetic, characterless, professional manufactured stuff, mis-called "Ice cream") and worth every bit of energy which my brother Jack put into turning the handle for anything up to two hours. Then, when we got a motor car (no self-starters in those days) Jack had to learn how to jerk the starting handle, which could backfire and bite you pretty nastily, until you became its master. I was the weak member of our family, and this suited me all right for my "weak chest" -mainly imaginary-was a very useful thing; for one thing it would not allow me to strain myself in any way, and so brother Jack had to do all the turning which had to be done in our family. Before we owned a car, our family had a powerful Harley-Davison motor bike fitted with a double side-car attachment: I rode pil-
lion, Mother sat in front, holding Baby Archie on her knee, Dad in the back seat, and Jack, of course, was

driving. This time he had no turning to do - to start the bike you simply kicked hard on a pedal.

To return to the cinematograph, or bioscope, our proud family record in this field goes back before
even the invention of the movie camera. In 1903, or thereabouts, my Uncle James blew himself through
the ceiling when an acetylene contraption he was adjusting went wrong on him: if I close my eyes right
now, I can see the hole in the ceiling where he went through. Another early memory of the movies was
the gorgeous time when Father took us all for a holiday to the Island of Millport, and we stayed on the
top storey of a block of flats above the post office, and directly opposite Leslie Lynn’s Open Air Entertain-
ments. Three or four times a week as soon as it was dark, there was an open-air film show, and from our
sitting-room windows we could watch the whole show free in the comfort of our own home. The projec-
tor and operator were incarcerated in a small tin shed: every now and then the operator would come up
for air - poke his head out of the window, - all but shake the fingers off his hand to relieve the cramp of an
uninterrupted half an hours turning. It wasn’t always easy to read the captions through our windows, but
the thrilling climax, when the Mounties stormed in to release the captured garrison and hacked to bits the
treachery Indians always made fine viewing especially when accompanied by the strains of the
"William Tell" Overture, played on a museum piece, all-but upright piano, by a doing - his - best - so - don’t-
shoot-me - S bob - an-hour movie pianist. When I got older, my Dad bought me a Pathe-Baby Cine Camera
with stand and my brother Archie and I started up a Glasgow Cine Club for making our own movies. One
of the pictures we shot on 9.5mm stock, was called "The Gas Trap," a thriller with camera work by the
Chisholm's which made that of Clair, Einstein, Fritz Lang and D.W. Griffiths look just plain silly. Anyway, I
took my cine-camera along with me to the Oxford I.S.C.M. Festival, Summer, 1931, and photographed a
number of musical celebrities who were there, including Dr. Herzog, (always referred to as “Jehova”)
founder of Universal Edition, Vienna: Professor E.J. Dent, the tall, drink-of-water founder president of the
I.S.C.M, the handsome, suave, English composer and conductor Eugene Goosens, tubby, heavily bearded,
Bolshie-looking and sloppy - lipped Edwin Evans (England’s No.1 modern music critic and propagandist);
and the Italian pianist, composer and writer, Alfredo Casella. Casella was tall, thin and military looking,
went white trousers and sports canvas shoes and had sunken sleeky, southern sexy eyes. He came to
Glasgow in 1931 to give a concert of his works for us on 23rd February, and intending to repeat the pro-
gramme three days later in Dundee. When he arrived in Glasgow a telegram awaited him with news that
his mother was gravely ill. So he felt compelled after the Glasgow concert, to rush off to Northern Italy
which left me to find substitutes for the missing items.

Casella composed sunny, gay, tuneful, attractive quasi - Neapolitan music: diatonic stuff with a modern
slant. In 1916, he wrote Five Puppet Pieces (March, Berceuse, Serenade, Nocturne and Polka) which exist
in two versions - orchestral and for piano duet, and which were and for all I know, may still be, popular.
Casella played primo, I secondo at the Glasgow concert; it was all great fun. He was much taller and
broader than I (in those days I was very thin, indeed my Mother used to say you could blow peas through Erik's ribs) and I had to hold my head high and generally assert myself on the music stool not to be pushed off it by Casella’s leonine but militaristic bulk. I remember that while rehearsing the Serenade movement (where in the middle the left hand of the top player has to play a passage below the right hand of the bottom player) we had to stop and rewind; the accompanying pattern at the beginning of the nocturne required my right hand to nip right smartly away and out at the end of each quaver chord, to avoid lacerations from Casella's pinky nail. After the performance he clapped me chummily on the back and was very matey.

At the rehearsal of his concerto for string quartet, Casella conducted the players, but of course, left them to their own resources at the the concert. I asked him what the narrow strip of red ribbon in his button - hole of his jacket signified; he replied that he was a member of the Italian Fascist party, as I suppose most of the Italian national intellectuals were in 1931. Casella held himself very erect and had a keen military look about him. Before conducting his delightful Serenata for clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, violin and cello, he clicked his heels together as though on the parade ground. Composed in 1927, this is possibly Casella's most popular piece, and it won first prize in a Philadelphia Competition in the 1920's. I still have the score and parts we used in 1931, and we have performed it Hiddingh Hall concerts. I can let you hear the jolly, romping Tarantella - a brilliant alla-Neapolitan piece with the five instruments vying with each other for dazzling virtuosity.

PLAY TARANTELLA

Casella was staying with us; the morning after the concert, I had all three morning papers on the breakfast table, and asked him if he would like to read the press notices on his concert. "No, thank you" he replied "I never read my press reports. If they write good things about me I become conceited, if bad, depressed; and in both cases it's pretty sure to be nonsense." "Don’t you think there is any value in Press criticisms?" I asked. "A critic with a good memory" he replied "hearing Mr A’s performance say, the Apassionata Sonata, may compare it with the performance of Messrs. X. Y. Z., and offer a reasonably balanced judgment on Mr. A’s performance. But on hearing a new piece of music, particularly music in an idiom unfamiliar to him, the critic, who is a good journalist - and most music critics are just that - may write a convincing and positive criticism damning or praising the work, according to his own personal taste which, in fact, has little or no bearing on the music itself. Emotional reaction is all too frequently the deciding factor in a criticism of a new work.

Ernest Newman, shall we say, likes the work and easily finds lots of good reasons for doing so: Eric Blom; on the other hand, may loathe it and, being a clever and resourceful journalist, can find equally good reasons for disliking it. But what on earth have their "reasons" to do with the work itself. Nothing at all, so far as I can see. Logically speaking, music should only be criticised in the language of musical sounds, or at least in writings supported by musical sounds."
"You mention Ernest Newman", I interjected; "what is your opinion of his criticisms?" "Ah, Newman." replied Casella: "Newman is not just another music critic, he is a great scholar - probably the greatest Wagner scholar. As a critic, Newman is in a class by himself". These are not the actual words Casella used - for he spoke in short rapid sentences, interspersed with Italian ohs and ahs as though fired from the muzzle of a sub-machine gun situated somewhere mid-drift inside him - but they carry the substance of a conversation I remember with particular clarity.

While on the matter of critics, Arnold Bax tells of his first meeting with Elgar, who was still sore over the "Gerontius" fiasco at Birmingham in the previous autumn. "The fact is," said Elgar, "that neither the choir nor Richter knew the score." "But I thought the critics said..." Bax started to interpose - "Critics" snapped Elgar with ferocity, "My dear boy, what do the critics know about anything?"

The kind of sophisticated jesting you heard in the Tarantella was Casella's strongest suit: his wit and natural gaiety belong to the exciting days of the Diaghileff Ballet Russe, of Stravinsky and Prokofieff in the happy, jesting, ragtime 1920's. Ravel and Casella collaborated in a little known but piquant series of piano pieces "a la maniere de"... "in the style of"- brilliant parodies on Brahms, Borodin, Chabrier, Strauss, Debussy, Ravel and others. Leonard Hall has played some of them at the Hiddingh Hall.

One may expect in this kind of work a technical and perhaps spiritual mastery of the styles of other men. A similar suite of parodies, but with composers unnamed, is the '5 pieces for string quartet' dating from 1920: I will play you 2 of them: first "The Valse ridicule"- bottom-heavy straussian waltz rhythms: and "Foxtrot" where Casella exaggerates into absurdity the stylization of the syncopation - his observations can be very funny. Technically he carries poly-tonality over into atonality, at times interrupts harmonic sequence with downright facetious dissonances. The instrumentation is highly interesting, the harmony free and imaginative, the colour varied and vivid. These pieces, written 2 years before "Facade", may well have influenced Walton's work: which reminds me that Strawinsky (also a musical jester in the 20's) calls "Facade" -"Sir Walton's best piece."

PLAY Valse and Foxtrot

Casella was born in Turin in 1883, studied in Paris, where he made a name for himself as a pianist, and acted as assistant piano teacher to Cortot. In 1915, he was appointed piano professor at the Santa Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome, and until his death, 17 years ago, was active in a great many ways in his own country; as composer, pianist, conductor, founder and director of the Italian I.S.C.M. and editor of the magazine "Ars Nova." When he was with us in Glasgow, he had with him a score of his comic opera "La Donna Serpente" (based on a Gossi tale) later to be produced in Rome's Theatre Reale; it was in this theatre (the La Scala of Rome) where in the late 40's, I saw a performance of Casella's ballet "La Giara". His editions of Beethoven's Sonatas and Bach's 48 are first-rate, for he himself had a profound insight into the piano classics and his editing is masterly.
I have no recording of Casella playing any of his own music, but you can now hear him as the pianist in this ensemble playing in the Bloch Quintet.

Towards the end of the last war, when British and American forces occupied Italy as far north as Ravenna, I called on Casella at his house in Rome, near the banks of the Tiber. His wife opened the door and told me she was doubtful if her husband could see me as he had been ill, on and off, for the past two years. While waiting in the music room which was all but filled by two concert grand pianos, I noticed on one of them a large photograph of Mussolini signed by the Ducé with the inscription "To my dear, devoted and loyal friend, Alfredo Casella"; on the other piano was an equally large photograph of Roosevelt (signed by the President) and inscribed "To my dear, devoted and loyal friend, Alfredo Casella". Casella was propped up in bed, looking very pale and thin. He spoke in a low, almost inaudible voice, of his illness, of the terrible war, of his work. On a table near the bed were some volumes of classical piano music (I forget what composers) - music which he had been editing. He still had that slight air of stiffness about him - but Casella's days of heel-clicking were over - he never left his bed. I took a sad leave of him, and as his wife showed me to the door, she told me something of the great difficulties they were having in getting decent food. "Everything can be had on the Black Market, but we just can't afford it. Perhaps, Mr. Chisholm, you-through E.N.S.A. might be able to do something?" Under E.N.S.A.'s auspices, I was conducting the Anglo Polish Ballet at Rome's Argentinia Theatre so with a little influence I did manage to make up some food parcels from E.N.S.A. stores and sent them to the Casella's.

Now to show you some slides.

Slide 1

Casella about 1913—when he was around 40

Left: The London music publishers Chester made a feature in the 1920s, of brightening up their music pages with a jazzy quasi-Picasso cover or frontispiece - Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. Derived from the decor of this, is the frontispiece design by M. Lariorow for the 5 pieces for marionettes by Casella called Pupzaaetti
Another photo of Casella: note his smart, keen, military bearing-handkerchief just so, tie neatly tied, just the right amount of shirt showing: this is how he looked at the time of his Glasgow concert.

An I.S.C.M. jury: Casella sitting at the piano - Adrian Boult just to his right: Alban Berg leaning on the piano. E.J. Dent (the founder President of the ~I.S.C.M.) to his right, sitting at the table.
I still possess that roll of 9.5mm film I took at the Oxford I.S.C.M. Festival 33 years ago and sometimes, when in sentimental mood, I will take out the little Pathe-Baby projector from its stained and dusty brown box, rig up the tiny Pathe-Baby screen and as I turn the little twisted handle which sets the mechanism in action, I see - promenading across the screen - the ghosts of Dr Jehovah Hertzog, Professor E.J.Dent, Eugene Goossen and Alfredo Casella - all of them dead, dead, dead!

Casella also wrote pieces for children: it would, however, take a pretty precocious child to play this Carillon: where the right hand plays bell tones on the black keys and the left a tune on the white keys.

Lastly a picture in Venice - Casella left, Manuel de Falla centre, and Francesco Malipiero right
I suppose I was on more friendly terms with the Irish composer, Arnold Bax, than with any other English composer - with the exception of Donald Tovey, though the relationship with Tovey was that of master and pupil. At any rate Bax and I called one another by our first names, we exchanged letters and I visited him a few times at his house in St. Johns Wood. We had much in common. To begin with, we were both famous sight readers of full scores: put any score in front of Arnold Bax and he would play it at the piano like nobody's business; put any score in front of Erik Chisholm, and he would play it like billy-o. I could grind out a Mahler or Bruckner symphony from a full score, and so could Arnold, if he wanted to, but never did (as he didn't like Mahler or Bruckner.) Pretty few English musicians did in the 20's and 30's. “Frightful stuff”, growled Eugene Goosens when he saw a score of Mahler's sixth symphony on my piano desk in Cape Town a few years ago. Eccentric, long-winded, muddle-headed, inteminate Landler” are some of Bax's pithy comments on Mahler.

If you think I'm boasting about my powers of instantaneous condensation of a 60 stave orchestral score to a 2-hand piano arrangement, look me up in the index of Tovey's essays; as Bax pointed out, however, there is nothing much in this to make a song about - it is merely a natural gift like thin hair or strong teeth.

In his charming, witty, revealing and altogether delightful autobiography "Farewell my Youth", Arnold Bax tells us that he was officially born in Streatham, Surrey, and not on an island in the middle of a bog-lake in County Mayo, which seems far more likely. He first went to Ireland when he was 19: he tells us how the poetic genius of Yeats, the "Aran Islands" and plays of Synge, the legend of Tir na-n'Og, everything which is summed up by the words Celtic Twilight, Celtic Wonderland, seeped into his soul. Bax's first visit to Ireland was to him like a great religious conversion - a deep spiritual experience which turned his musical leanings away from Wagner and Strauss, towards writing in a limpid, transparent, leisurely, decorative Celtic idiom; it is this Irish element in him which is perhaps the principal characteristic of his music.

By degrees, he developed, in his own words "a second personality,” he steeped himself in Irish history, songs, folk-tales, even learned to speak the Irish language, and wrote books under the name of Dermot O'Byrne, which were published in Dublin. Bax states that the poetry of Yeats meant more to him than all the music of the centuries. When staying with us for his Glasgow concerts, he spoke of Ireland as Bartok spoke of folk music - with deep-lying emotion, with the all absorbing enthusiasm of a fanatic. He spoke of the magical effect the scenery had on him - of the dramatic atmosphere and meteorological effects witnessed on the Donegal coast - where there is no land till you reach the Polar ice: of the dim-veiled but
wondrous spectrum of a lunar rainbow he had once seen in Clencolumboille and of "the strange and wond-
rous sights to be seen in that wonderful country of the Wee Folks, of the Fairies."

In 1910, Bax had a passionate but brief love affair with Loubya, a Russian emigre, straight out of Dosto-
ievsky, whom he followed to Moscow, Kief and St. Petersburg, and accounts for such works as his
"Gopak", "May Night in the Ukraine", "In a Vodka Ship", piano pieces which I used to play in my youth. His
Irish works include the Four Orchestral Pieces, Festival Overture, "Moy Mell", "In the Fairy Hills" and "The
Garden of Fand": the Celtic idiom became a permanent - if subconscious - feature of his later works, even
in his apparent abstract chamber music.

The major works of Bax are, of course, the seven symphonies, as many symphonic poems - "The Garden
of Fand", "Tintagel", "November Woods", "The Tale the Pine Tree Knew" and an impressive quantity of
chamber music. Bax confessed himself “a brazen romantic - by which I mean my music is the expression
of emotional states. I have no interest whatever in sound for its own sake, or in a modernist isms or fac-
tions.”

The first example of Bax's music you will hear is the opening of his one-movement Elegaic Trio for harp,
viola and flute, written in 1916. It begins with harp arpeggios, and the theme that follows on viola - then
flute - has a Celtic lilt and curve about it. It is typical Bax of the period - leisurely music with easy flowing
melodic lines, in modo romantica. The second subject has some Slavonic twists - probably harking back to
Bax's ratee affaire, Russia 1910.

PLAY Elegiac Trio

Here is how Bax's early orchestra sounded - lush, alla Wagner and Strauss; an early recording of
"Tintagel"

PLAY

No one has done more to advance his music than Harriet Cohen, the pianist. She was to Sir Arnold (he
was knighted in 1947) what Peter Pears is to Benjamin Britten - an artistic partner and devoted friend - his
alter ego: Bax dedicated many of his works to Harriet, who performed them publicly whenever she could.
At his first Active Society concert, three sonatas were played - for viola and piano (dedicated to Lionel Ter-
tis) - No.1 for violin and piano and the cello sonata. I played piano in the violin sonata, Bax in the other
two. I don't know if Bax was ever recorded as a pianist; although a very fine player, he was very diffident
about his performing talents Here is the second movement of the viola sonata - composed in 1921 -
played by William Primrose, one of the great violists of today (born in Glasgow; of course) and Harriet Co-
hen.

PLAY 2nd Movement Viola Sonata

I have a note about this particular movement: "Grotesque and fantastic ideas appear and dissolve in this
Satanic scherzo as it sweeps along its restless course with terrifying momentum".
My wife, at that time, was Hon. secretary of the Active Society and she has some personal comments to make about Bax, who stayed with us which may interest you. She described him "as a man of moderate height, with deep set eyes, rather ruddy complexion, dark straight hair, with a lock of it falling over his forehead. He certainly did not resemble in any way my preconceived idea of a musician, rather the reverse; more like a 'gentleman Farmer' - an ambiguous term which sort of suggested a farmer who was not prepared to do his own dirty work on the farm but strolled around like a chieftain among his potato patches while hired helpers (often from the local 'looney-bin') toiled the ground. By the time he had had a wash and clean up, I found that Bax had not worn a dress suit for ten years; he asked me anxiously if I could smell the moth balls, and was his suit very shabby? He told me he loathed getting into evening dress, and that the thought of doing so the following night filled him with horror: that he had not accepted a 'social date' since he had last worn his 'tails'.

The supper was a great success. At the end of the meal he asked me if I had made the soup myself, because if I had, would I please, if it was not too much trouble, make it every day for lunch and supper, while he was staying with us.

After supper, my husband and Arnold (I had, by this time, been promoted to calling him by his first name) sat discussing music, musicians and books. I realised then that Clifford Bax, the playwright and author was his brother. He told us that when he really wished to concentrate he went up to a little village in the West Coast of Scotland because, there, he felt in touch with life mystical, with faeries, good and bad, and with all things that have made the fairy folk-lore of Scotland so famous.

Was it possible that this man honestly believed in faeries? Or had I misunderstood? Had Bax really seen Faeries? 'Yes' in Ireland. No doubt about it, he had definitely seen 'The Faeries'. I quote 'The Faeries' because I noticed in subsequent conversations, people initiated in such matters always say "The Faeries". According to an old Scottish proverb, there are only three words which are entitled to the prefix "THE" - "The Pope, The De'il, and The Chisholm". The proverb was out of date... "The Faeries" had it too.

Arnold Bax was no uneducated country yokel with a deeply ingrained superstitious mind, but a man of culture and intellect swearing to a firm conviction of the supernatural. It is true that once, as a child, I thought I had seen a faery, and even today I am not prepared to say it was a figment of my imagination. She came dancing out of my mother's pet aspidistra. A lovely little person, like a Dresden china doll, with wings marked with a glittering phosphorescent substance, the colour of the rainbow, with flaxen hair, and skin like velvet. Rather hesitantly I told Arnold of my experience - at the same time waiting for the derisive hoots of laughter from my spouse. By this time he was so intrigued by Arnold's stories, that he was quite prepared to accept even an Aspidistra faery to keep the family end up.

Arnold Bax did not laugh either or merely politely accept my story as though I were trying to go 'one better'. Quite the reverse. He asked me for all the details, and said I was very lucky indeed to be blest with the power to 'see', as it was seldom that a town dweller was privileged to meet any of the little people.
People, in the city, he said, had long since lost the art of seeing the Faery-folk, although he assured me they were there, if only we had the eyes to see. By this time, it was well past mid-night and being conscious that fairies and ghosts generally choose that hour to start wandering around, and feeling not a little uneasy about the whole conversation, I made some tea for us (and took a couple of aspirins on the sly) and went to bed. But, once in bed, I suddenly remembered an old song my father used to sing to us when we were children. He would come into our bedroom at night to tuck us up and put out the light, and sometimes he would stand at the foot of the bed, with a lighted cigarette in his hand, making a circular movement with it and sing these words

"I'm the son of John James Benjamin Binns:
And I was caught by Death in the midst of my sins;
When the clock strikes 12, I'm let out for an hour or so,
When the Cock begins to crow, Farewell Benjamin Binns"

Bax's second concert was also given in 1932, and consisted of his second violin sonata, Legend for viola and piano in which Arnold mated (musically speaking) with the brilliantly frivolous Margaret Ludwig, his 3rd violin sonata (Edward Dennis and myself) and some songs by Mona Benson, a serious young Edinburgh singer who affected earphone montage on her hair; she was in very bad form but Bax seemed unperturbed. Indeed, Bax was always very pleasant about our Active Society's work although, he said, it wasn't the only society of its type and told us of the London Musical Club, presided over by Alfred Kalisch, critic of the Star, which flourished around 1908. Kalisch was a lovable little man; in person - with his barrel-like trunk, thick colourless skin, squat features and habitual cigar, suggesting the gentleman constructed entirely of motor tyres who used, at one time, to figure in Mr. Michelin's advertisements. The Club members were mostly elderly and notable for wealthy paunchiness and stertorous breathing. Bulging pinkish bosoms straining at expensive décolletages, and mountainous backs were generally displayed by the ladies, whilst among the men ruddy double-chins, over-flowing their collars at the back of the necks, and boiled eyes were rife.

The club decided to invite eminent foreign composers as their guests, and to glut them with copious food, strong wines and selections from their own works. The first of these was Debussy. The great composer, an inordinately shy man, was planted in a chair in the exact centre of the platform facing the audience. He was clearly utterly non-plussed, did not understand a single word of English, and could only attempt to solve his problem by rising and making a stiff little bow whenever he recognised his own name amid Kalish's guttural mumblings - intended to be a welcoming speech. This part of his ordeal over, he was permitted to shuffle dazedly to the rear of the hall, where he confided to Edwin Evans that he would rather write a symphony to order than go through such an experience again. After the concert of Debussy's works, at which Bax accompanied some American singer in "Ariettes Oubliees", Debussy
thanked him for his share in the evening’s music. "I never shall forget” wrote Bax in his biography "the impression made upon me by that thick-set clumsy figure, the hugh greenish, almost Moorish face beneath the dense thicket of black hair, and the obscure dreaming eyes that seemed to be peering through me at some object behind my back. As he lumbered vaguely forward, extending a cushioned hand, he looked like some Triton arising from the glaucous caverns of old Ocean." Recalling that morbidly sallow complexion of his, Bax conjectured that even so early, the malignant foe, destined to be his death in his early fifties, was already prowling within his body.

Another victim of the Music Club was Sibelius. "He looked" said Bax, "as though he had never laughed in his life and never could. That strong taut frame, those cold steely-blue eyes and hard-lipped mouth, were those of a Viking raider, insensible to scruple, tenderness, or humour of any sort. An arresting, formidable-looking fellow, Sibelius is the composer of seven great symphonies and a dozen other big orchestral works; but he also wrote hundreds of banal characterless piano pieces and songs which hardly seem to come from the same pen; and they never change as the composer ages: the works written in 1930 might well have been dated 1890, and vice versa. As the Concert Club could only aspire to performance of these undistinguished pieces, they constituted the entire Sibelius programme; it was thought that this lamentable affair was a serious setback to the acceptance in England of Sibelius' best work. The composer sat the entire evening, looking glum and seemed to suffer even more than Debussy."

The fourth and last concert of this pre-Active Society entertained Schonberg who, possibly to advertise his indifference to and contempt for the sentimentalities of his youth (only very early works were played at this concert) kept the company waiting three quarters of an hour for his arrival. I make no apology for giving you Bax's impressions of Debussy, Sibelius and Schonberg, for both Schonberg and Sibelius were honorary vice-presidents of the Active Society. Incidentally, I once invited Schonberg to give us a concert in Glasgow. He wrote back "Sure. any time you like. My fee will be a thousand per concert" - which is one way of saying “No”.

I cannot leave Bax's delightful biography without quoting a few characteristic Baxian phrases: He speaks of "out-moded British works from the back shelves of Messrs. Novello's stores - composers whose mildness might well be described as 'sheep in sheep's clothing'. Of the habitual London concert goer “No longer a churchgoer, he salves his conscience by going instead to Bach, and seeks to do his duty by his God in undergoing four Brandenburg concertos in succession without an anaesthetic. And when the final pedal-point mercifully arrives, he experiences the same smug self-complacency and sense of thankful deliverance his father felt when the Scottish divine pronounced "And now, my brethren, seventhly and lastly” On a lesson with Tobias Matthay "I, for one, could never play anything approaching my best at my lessons with him. It nearly always happened that just as I would begin to forget my self-conscientiousness and play something like freely, "Toby" would bump my forearm from beneath and say excitedly "What's this? Key-bedding? To the sound, not further, remember’. Again now! Don’t think of yourself.' Think of the
music.' Beethoven'. (and he would assume an expression and attitude of Sublimity) "Beethoven's messenger!! (in a thrilling voice) That's you.!' " and he would poke a long forefinger hard into one's midriff. Another trick he had was to charge one off the piano-stool, like a heavy-weight footballer, and play the passage quite unintelligible himself"

During his ill-fated amorous excursion into Russia in 1910, Bax attended a performance of "Prince Igor" at the Bolshoi Theatre - an occasion honoured by the presence of the Czar himself. "Lead by Chaliapin, everyone in the house rose to join in the majestic Czarist national anthem - the management had "papered" the stalls beneath the royal box, with the royal initials N.R. picked out in bald heads."

Although Bax spoke with great admiration of the music of Elgar, and confessed himself one of the composer's most enslaved admirers, nevertheless I thought I detected a touch of malice when he told me that Elgar was unable to proceed with his third symphony, commissioned by the BBC and paid for in advance. From 1941 until his death in 1953, Bax was Master of the King's Music, composing "Fanfares for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh", "A Morning Song" dedicated to Princess Elizabeth, and a Coronation March.

He confessed that the later music of Schönberg was beyond his comprehension (just as Debussy was unintelligible to his one time composition teacher, Frederick Corder.) "Wozzeck", "Pierrot Lunaire" were to him "manifestations of neurosis, surpassing the most liverish and kidney-racking scenes in "Salome" and "Electra" “We are all alike,” he wrote ‘In the vanity and arrogance of youth, we boast that no new development in our art could ever perplex us, and sincerely believe it. But after about the 35th year, myopia sets in, and we are apt to make ourselves as ridiculous in the opinion of the next generation as our fathers and grandfathers seemed to us. Atonalism appears to be a cul-de-sac, cluttered up with morbid growths, emanating from the brains, rather than from the imaginations, of a few decadent Central European Jews. It is true that this idiom is now nearly 30 years old (this was in 1943) and has never found favour with any but the actual personal disciples of its prophet; but who shall say with any certainty that the thing is worthless?"

Bax was interested in an opera of mine that I was writing at the time, called "The Feast of Samhein" for I had adapted my libretto from a book of James Stephens "In the Land of Youth." Stephens was one of Bax's Irish friends, after Bax had married and settled in Dublin, just before the first world war. Stephens became famous almost overnight with the publication of his "Crock of Gold", to be followed by the delightful fantasies "The Demi-Gods", "Irish Fairy Tales", "Deirdre" and several volumes of enchanting poetry. It was A.E. (George Russell) another of Bax's friends in Dublin, who once said of Stephens: "I think Stephens is a little too free with Gawd. His attitude is rather like that of an African heathen towards his joss. When things are not going well with our friend, he bangs God about and pitches him into the corner amongst the rubbish. And then an hour later, feeling some compunction at the forlorn appearance of the old fellow, he sets God up again, and seeks to propitiate him with libation and sacrifice." A.E. - alleged to
be clairvoyant - initiated Bax into the dubious realities of the Irish Fairy-Host. On one occasion, while the two friends were quietly reading one evening, Bax became suddenly aware of strange sounds around him the like of which he had never heard before. He described them as a kind of mingling of rippling water and tiny bells tinkling and yet sufficiently clear in pitch that he could have written them out in musical notation. On another occasion he saw "dancing shafts of flame (the wee folk?)" and a white sword in a quivering circle of deep red" (The Druid Sword of Manantann, the sea-god of the ancient Irish?)

Looking back on these and similar airy-fairy, eerie experiences’, Bax would confide, if he were in an expansive mood, that he really did believe in the physical reality of Irish fairies. W.B. Yeats and Padric Colum were leaders in the Irish Literary Renaissance, and both intimate friends of Bax. "Colum was editor of the "Irish Review" a monthly magazine devoted more to literary works than to politics, and printed a short play of Bax called 'On the Hill" and a wild and semi-humorous tale of Donegal tinkers. Later Bax published a full length book "Children of the Hill" and divided his labours almost equally between music and writing and became a recognised literary figure in the city. "Colum, ever alert as a robin-redbreast, was interested in everything: as someone remarked on him "Colum absorbs knowledge, not only through his ears and brain, but through every pore of his skin." You might like to hear the voices of these talented literary friends of Bax. First the voice of Ireland’s greatest poet, W. B. Yeats: - Yeats, by the way, was tone deaf, like another great poet, the Scot Hugh MacDiarmid.

PLAY Caedmon Side 2 beginning

Now James Stephen, author of the Crock of Gold" who is all but singing in his deep fruity voice. and lastly, Padric Colum, a poet and editor with a noble profile and a tiny body.

PLAY

Slide 1
Programme cover of one of Bax's Active Society concerts.
The opening page of his E flat Symphony: look at the extreme left where the names of the instruments are listed: and read from the top downwards:

4 flutes + Bass flute and piccolo
4 oboes - or rather 2 oboes, an alto and a bass
4 clarinets
2 bassoons and a contrabass-sarrusphone

No wonder the Cape Town Orchestra doesn’t perform it. The score - like nearly all Bax’s works - is published by a piano firm, Murdock, Murdock and Co. Bax’s major works remained in manuscript for years, until a series of articles on them by Earnest Newman forced attention on them - and this piano firm Murdock, Murdock and Co. who had never published a page of music before or since, shouldered the responsibility of publishing the lot - a very noble gesture from a quarter not known for noble gestures. The symphony is dedicated to John Ireland.
A sample of Bax’s handwriting - a bit like Bartok’s don’t you think?

A photograph of Bax in the twenties: looking dreamy and Irishy mystical!

Last week someone sent me a copy of this play of Bax - written under the name of Dermot O’Byrne - and here is a page of it. It is full of the gloriously extravagant language which is the chief attraction of “Playboy of the Western World” and other Synge plays. Bax so completely identified himself with the literary and political aspirations of Ireland that a volume of poetry he wrote was actually banned by the English censors.
In later life, Bax made his home at a Sussex inn and a part of the day was always set aside for working crossword puzzles. I remember him seizing on our Glasgow newspapers - not to read a notice about himself - but to tackle the crossword puzzle, at which he was a considerable expert.
Paul Hindemith, the great German composer, and one-time world-famed virtuoso violist, died last year in Frankfurt, West Germany on the 29th December. The last time I spoke with him was after his Royal Festival Hall concert in London, Autumn, 1962. A few days prior to this I discussed by telephone with Hindemith and his devoted wife, Gertrude (who looked after much of his affairs both artistic and financial) the question of Hindemith coming to South Africa to conduct some concerts of his own music.

As a matter of fact, I had been trying to persuade him to do this ever since I came to this country. At one time, when he was still Professor of Composition at Yale University - that is, up until 1950 - he did seriously consider coming here. Here is a relevant excerpt from a letter sent to me on January 19th, 1948:

"Your last remark is quite alluring. A tour through South Africa is by no means beyond our reach. I am leaving for Europe in July, by way of Iceland and England. As I have a Sabbatical, I shall stay over there till February or even the summer of 1949. If you are interested, I could send you reports of my activities as a conductor, teacher and lecturer last year, all over Europe. I do not play the viola any more, except for my own pleasure. I do not know when your concert season is, but I could arrange to come down in January. Distance does not mean much, but the mere travel expenses for Mrs. Hindemith and myself seem to be awfully high. Perhaps you have some funds for cases of that kind. The plan may be nothing but a strange dream. If so, I would be glad to hear the rattling of the alarm clock in your next letter."

Unfortunately, we could not have Hindemith here during our summer vacation, nor was it possible for him to come in our second University term, as, by that time, he had to return to the States. I wrote to Hindemith on subsequent occasions, but he was more and more in demand all over Europe and America, and in any case, he had indicated pretty clearly by this time that he would not come here just for his expenses.

In the conversations that I had with the Hindemith's in England, October 1962, his wife Gertrude raised another difficulty. They refused to travel by air, and the minimum round trip of four weeks, by ship, occupied more time than they could spare. I then broached the matter of his latest opera, a setting of Tennessee William's bitter-sweet, time-telescoped play, "The Long Christmas Dinner", composed in 1960 and published in 1961. The opera had just had a highly successful premiere in the Mannheim Opera House, Germany, 17th December, 1962, conducted by the composer. Mrs. Hindemith told me the press were enthusiastic and compared its simplicity, tunefulness and charm to that of a Mozart opera. The composer was particularly fond of it, and Hindemith had reserved for himself, the rights of conducting the opera. Hindemith said he was prepared to conduct performances in London with our Cape Town Opera Company, if a suitable time could be arranged. He said he knew of our successful launching of Bela Bartok’s
"Duke Bluebeard's Castle" in England, 1957, and had no fussy artistic qualms about associating himself with a mainly amateur University Opera Company of this calibre and enterprise. He looked up his diary - in February he was conducting the Berlin Philharmonic, in March he had to be in Vienna, and so on.

Assuming that a convenient date could be arranged, another problem was to find a companion piece to go along with "The Long Christmas Dinner", in one act and playing for only an hour. I was about to suggest his own "Sancta Susanna" but quickly remembered that even in Europe the work is, on religious grounds, seldom performed. "Hin und Zuruck" which we did here in 1962, was obviously too short. Hindemith said it was his intention to write a companion piece to "The Long Christmas Dinner", but had been unable to find a suitable libretto - Had I any suggestions? "Why not use one of the shorter Eugene Ionesco plays?" I replied. "Rhinoceros" is marvellous but too long -- some of the others would make a first-rate libretto."

"The trouble is", he replied drily, "they are too good, too original". He doubted if he could write equally good music, and besides, the Ionesco plays were entirely complete in themselves and didn't call for the addition of music.

Remembering that we had a practically unknown one-act Cherubini opera, "The Portuguese Inn-keeper" recently added to our repertoire (June 1962) I hazarded "Why not something by Cherubini?" and mentioned this opera. He immediately pricked up his ears, saying he had a very great respect for Cherubini, who had been very much maligned (owing to Berlioz's catty remarks about him in his Autobiography) and said that he himself had conducted some of his little known Masses: further, that whether or not we were associated in some future London performances, he would very much like to see a score of "The Portuguese Innkeeper" for its own sake, with a view to performing it elsewhere. Was it an original work or a pastiche? I assured him it was an original opera alright, first performed in 1797, revived in Magdeburg 1917, but that we were having some difficulty in locating the score.

At Hindemith's Royal Festival Hall concert the following evening (arranged, incidentally, by one of our old students, Ernest Fleischman, now employed in steering the destiny of the London Symphony Orchestra into adventurous paths, conditioned, he boasts, by his avant-garde Cape Town musical education), the second part of the programme consisted of his "Requiem for those we love" based on Walt Whitman's poem "When Lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed." This is not one of my favourite Hindemith works, although it has many unmistakable Hindemith characteristics. The composer gives the work a Baroque aura by introducing Bach-like rhythmic units in unbroken pattern sequences: for example, in the aria "Sing on there in the swamp." (a Scotch snap), the duet "Sing on! sing on gray-brown bird" - (a pattern of six semiquavers and three quavers) and indeed the entire requiem is pervaded with the formalism of a Bach Cantata, but in my opinion, lacking Bach's inspiration. There are some magnificent and impressive passages in a work, written - I suppose - as a sop to American culture at the time Hindemith took out American citizenship. In the first half of the programme we heard a fine clean-cut, silhouette-like performance of a Bruchner Mass, beautifully sung and played under Hindemith's enthusiastic and masterly direction. The
warm sincerity, deep humanity, modesty and scrupulous artistic honesty, characteristics of Hindemith's personality, came across, as always, to the large and enthusiastic audience. They were aware of being in the presence of a great modern master of composition who, at the same time, was an enthusiastic propagandist of neglected great musicians of earlier epochs. Although I talked to Hindemith for only a few minutes after the concert, being one of a long queue of old and new admirers waiting in the artist's room to congratulate and pay their respects to a great, lovable, genial, German musician: and although he had not seen me for nearly 30 years - our intercourse, in the interval had been entirely by correspondence - he recognised me at once "Ah, there you are, Mr. Chisholm! How is smoky old Glasgow getting along? You really should get us out to South African sunshine, away from these tiresome London fogs. glad to see you again, and do keep in touch."

Before turning to Hindemith's connection with the Active Society I think you might be interested to hear excerpts from a letter he sent me in January 1948, in reply to one of mine asking for his advice about new staff for the S.A. College of Music, You will see how ready, indeed anxious Hindemith was to help us, and how precise, shrewd and honest were his judgments. He was directly responsible for Lili Kraus coming here as senior lecturer in piano.

READ LETTER

No composer of this century will be more missed than Hindemith. Operas, cantatas, choral works, symphonies, overtures and other orchestral works, concertos for practically every instrument, chamber music for every possible combination; piano and organ sonatas; a new "48" for piano, songs and song-cycles; just about every known type of composition appeared in profusion from his untiring pen. No composer of this century had a greater personal compositional technique than Hindemith. Ernest Newman once said he played the viola in order to keep his hand from writing more music. On the death of George V, in 1936, he wrote a new "In Memoriam" concerto for viola and orchestra in three days.

No composer of this century wrote a greater variety of music than Hindemith: his Op. 42 is called "Felix the Cat" for mechanical organ; his big work for 1951 is a huge philosophical opera on the life of Kepler called "Harmony of the World". Hindemith also wrote elementary and advanced music textbooks, his personal musical credo - "Composer's World", many newspaper articles and some of his own opera libretti. No composer of this century has a greater overall world prestige than Hindemith. He was an outstanding but not a great teacher: his own musical personality and technique were so strongly individual, so settled, so allied to a particular contrapuntal technique, that his conscientious pupils - always turned into just imitators of their master.

Let us now consider the Hindemith of 1930 when he played at an Active Society concert. He had just written what for him was clearly the most trifling of exercises - probably just a light afternoon’s work - a game - for children "We build a Town" for children's voices and three instruments - for any three instruments. It is a typical example of the Hindemith-Weill (egged on by Bertold Brecht) Gebrauchsmusik -
"Music for All" - "Utility Music" - "Music for Everyday Use", music written in a very familiar idiom, unpretentious, tuneful, unambitious; the reverse of the elevated, dedicated Holier-than-thou "Art-for-Art’s-Sake" kind of music.

I got hold of a score, gave it to Agnes Duncan, who rehearsed it with her Junior Orpheus Choir, and on the night, her children gave a word and note perfect performance which delighted and amused the 35 year old composer. A year or two earlier some of these children had performed a group of Children's Songs by Strawinsky and sung them in Russian too - one of them the "Teal-im-Bom" which Olga Slobadskaya sings so enchantingly,

Til-em-bom, Til-em-bom: Za ga rerl sha, cause ee dom.

Be-ish yet koo-re-val a

Hindemith played three sonatas: for viola alone, Op. 25 No.3; for viola and piano, Op. 11 No.4: and for viola d’amore and piano Op. 25 No.2. Hindemith must be one of the very few 20th Century composers who is prolific enough to group several sonatas under the same opus number.

I was the pianist, and, although I played a great deal in those days, I certainly had qualms about being a competent partner for such a world-famous composer and virtuoso player. Hindemith had an international reputation from 1921 onwards, and I see that our local music critics (by no means au fait with the then futuristic music) however much they may have been puzzled by his music, all referred to him as the "famous" Hindemith. One such critic described the viola sonata as representing a rare buoyancy of spirit, perhaps better described as a kind of powerful restlessness. With the assistance of a local viola player (Mrs Shannon - our Pat’s mother) I had been practising the piano part for several weeks prior to the concert. Hindemith was kindness itself at the rehearsals: he seemed pleased that I was quick on the uptake, immediately caught on to his tempi, and was not afraid to give him plenty of support.

Don’t think me immodest if I read you this "Glasgow Herald" account of my part in the proceedings:-

"Mr. Erik Chisholm, his partner, performed an exacting task with great success. There is a spontaneous quality in his playing which makes him always interesting, and his power of response to the music includes a genuine sensitiveness on appropriate occasions, but there were a few places in this exciting work last night when a too heavy and inelastic treatment of the keyboard robbed his playing of some of its intended vitality and brilliance", which I may say is high praise, for neither then - nor now - in Britain, Canada, India or Malaya was I ever personally on friendly terms - usually the opposite - with local press critics. I remember that in a certain passage in the viola d’amore sonata, Hindemith said: "Would it not be better if you played it this way - with such and such a finger? And do use more downward wrist movement for a cantabile touch". I quickly slipped off the piano stool and he gave me a convincing demonstration. It was fun, too, to hear and accompany a viola d’amore; this was, indeed, the first time I had ever heard the instrument. It is similar in size to the ordinary viola, but had 6 or 7 gut strings, tuned in 3rd and 4th, and a sec-
 ordinary set of fine steel strings lying close to the belly, which in Hindemith's instrument was decorated
with a circular rose and a blindfolded Cupid on the head - I believe this ornamentation is original.

Hindemith played with great gusto, sweeping the bow powerfully across the strings in the many arpeg-
gio-ed 6 note chords.

All his life, Hindemith divided his energies between composing and performing. Born in 1895, while
still in his teens, he earned his living as violinist, violist, pianist and trap-drummer: playing in a cafe or-
chestra, dance orchestra, movie orchestra, jazz band, military band and for operettas. Later, when he
graduated from "Pop" commercial music, he became leading violinist and concert master at the Frankfurt
-am-Main opera House. During the eight years that followed (1915-1922), he joined the Amar Quartet as
their violist, and with Simon Goldberg and Enmanuel Feuerman formed a string trio which gained interna-
tional renown.

It is time to play you some music, and here is the scherzo for viola and cello from Hindemith’s 2nd
string trio, played by the composer (viola) and Emanuel Feuerman (cello).

Cape Town audiences have heard a fair amount of Hindemith's music in the past, notably when the
Kreitzer Quartet performed the complete cycle of his string quartets in the College of Music, 1953. Again,
many of his sonatas for single wind instruments and piano have been heard at the Hiddingh Hall; also
“The Four Temperaments”, the piano sonatas and songs and Hindemith's version of the "Well-tempered
Klavier", a collection of preludes and fugues which he calls "Lodus Tonalis", played brilliantly by Adolf Hal-
lis.

I would like you now to listen to the first two movements of his concerto for orchestra Op. 38, a work
which has not been heard here. Any concerto for orchestra, living up to the name, must pay allegiance to
the 17th Century concerto grosso - where small combinations of solo instruments alternate and contrast
with the full orchestra - or otherwise, why call it a concerto? In the short first movement of this concerto,
oboe, viola and bassoon - as a concertante group - contrast their own thematic material with a broad de-
clamatory passage on the orchestra; we find the same modus operandi in the Brandenburg Concertos.
The scherzo follows without pause, illustrating the composer’s fondness for a massed layered orchestra-
tion; note particularly the whirling vortex arabesque writing for the strings. Hindemith’s orchestration, as
a rule, is not of the brilliance and multi-spectrum colours of Stravinsky being more restrained and appear-
ing to be more concerned with the moving texture of the music itself than for developing colour possibili-
ties and devising varied instrumental presentations of the material, music texture first, colouring matter
afterwards.

Hindemith conducts the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

PLAY RECORD concerto for Orchestra, first two movements
The day following the Glasgow concert, Hindemith travelled with me to Edinburgh to renew his acquaintance with Donald Tovey. I don't know how close was the friendship between them, but in conversation they called each other by their first names. Hindemith was the sort of modern composer whom Tovey could respect and understand up to a point, and did indeed very much admire. Tovey was, however, too much steeped in the classical traditions to wholeheartedly approve of modern composers who deviated from the straight and narrow path of classical tonality. When a student in our composition class once asked Tovey what was his opinion of Schoenberg's theory of tone rows, our Professor very heatedly replied: "Bunk. I just plain bunk!" I had some work to do in the library that morning and left the two great men together. A couple of hours later, Tovey called me into the class room, asking me if I had brought with me the score of Sorabji's second piano concerto, as I had promised. I had, and opening it at the first page, Tovey shouted across to Hindemith, who had been examining the console of our organ in the Reid School of Music: "Come and have a look at this score, Paul, and tell me how you would conduct the opening bar." More about Sorabji: suffice just now to state he is a Parsi composer who moves in a world of superlatives: he writes enormously long, enormously complex, enormously difficult, enormously unpractical works, which nobody wants to play, nobody has ever played, and nobody is allowed to play; yet, contrariwise, everything he writes has about it the air of a master. Hindemith pored over the score, attempting to grapple with the technical problems of conducting the first bar of this Sorabji piano concerto, (incidentally, dedicated to Cortot). The opening bar has eleven quavers in it, and you can comfortably beat out the first seven quavers - 60 to the minute - when you reach quaver 8, however, the conductor is required simultaneously to (a) beat four further quavers to control the clarinet syncopations (b) beat three for the violin triples (c) beat two for the two groups of quintuplets on the flute. As these facts registered on him Hindemith became noticeably paler: "how does a conductor, with only two hands, do a job which requires at least three?" He moved on to the next bar - in common time, with a triplet lying across the 3rd and 4th quavers: shakily turned a page - a 5/4 bar with still further rhythmical complexities "Ach," exclaimed the bewildered German master, "there is only one solution to this problem - the composer himself must conduct his concerto." "But, Paul", replied Tovey, gently, "Sorabji is the only pianist in the world who can play the solo piano part. You can hardly expect him to play - and conduct - now can you?"

Hindemith died ten weeks ago. Time, in its own good time, will assess and fix his position in musical history; a position - in the nature of things - bound to be as fluid and fickle as with Cherubini, Bruchner, Berlioz and others, whom this generous-hearted and genial man did his best to bring more favourably into public honour.

Here now are now some slides
A letter in Hindemith's hand writing - discusses the difficulty he has in arranging a further concert in Glasgow
Here you see Mde. Armhold with Hindemith, after the Menz performance. Strawinsky is also in the picture.

Hindemith sometimes made his own Christmas cards: here is one he sent me in 1952: on a background of a million notes he has written - Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and then pasted twisted bits of paper each with a word - Paul - Gertrude - Hindemith - 1952 - 1953: typical of his tireless energy, passion for detail and boisterous fun.
This is the message he wrote on the other side of the card

Hindemith conducting a rehearsal in the summer of 1947 - Left picture "Now who made that mistake? Centre picture - "It was you, wasn’t it?" Right picture - "That's better?"
An example of Hindemith’s manuscript, the first page of his string quartet in E flat composed in 1943 and written for the Budapest Quartet

A page from the third movement - a set of variations

The last picture is of Hindemith rehearsing his opera "The Harmony of the World" at the 1957 Munich Festival. He wrote both words and music
To close this session I will play you a movement from Hindemith's "Symphonic Metamorphosis on themes by Carl Maria Von Weber." The best of these is the Scherzo, where a theme from Weber's "Turandot" is melodically brought up-to-date, repeated over and over again as it is tossed from one instrument to another, and built up into a long and thrilling crescendo: in the second part of the movement it is jazed up.

PLAY RECORD Second Movement.

Tomorrow morning we deal with two musical aristocrats - Kaikhosru Shapurgi Sorabji and Bernard van Dieren.
This morning I am going to talk to you about a very strange person, whether you regard him as a man or as a musician. His name, on his birth certificate, is Dudley Sorabji, but he changed it to Kaikhosru Shapurgi Sorabji, and under that name has published 15 compositions and two books of musical essays, has written musical criticisms for the English Weekly and the New Age, and has sent, I don't know how many, hundreds of letters-to-the-editors to newspapers like the London Times, Catholic Herald, Radio Times, etc. on every subject under the sun.

His manuscript works far outnumber the published ones: he has written long and complex works which would occupy an entire evening's programme, if they were ever performed, that is of two to three hours duration and when I saw him last in 1962, he showed me his latest manuscript - pieces one bar in length: ipso facto - Sorabji is a creature of extremes. Since 1917, Sorabji has never ceased to compose, yet has steadfastly refused to allow any one to play his music and even turned down a recent request from a pianist of the order of John Ogden, who had worked for several years on a major Sorabji work - his Opus Clavicembalisticum - and wished to perform it. Sorabji is himself a pianist with a formidable technique who perhaps only eight times in his life (he is now in his early 70's) has given performances of his own music and three of these were at our Active Society concerts.

He was born in London, 1892, and has lived there or at Corfé Castle, Dorset all his life. His father (a Parsi) was a wealthy engineer in Bombay; his mother Spanish and a one time opera-singer - a most unusual marriage resulting in the birth of a most unusual son.

Probably the quickest way to give you an insight into the character of Sorabji is to read you a few of his recent letters to editors. They reveal him as a person holding the strongest possible opinions on every conceivable subject, expressing these opinions pungently, fearlessly, with biting wit, in a series of knock-out, sledge-hammer blows which admit the existence or no other point of view: no contradiction, no compromise, no possible argument can be held against his. Everyone is a fool, except himself, and a few - a very few - of the elite, naturally enough his friends. Sorabji believes that he is right - always right - absolutely right - that the huge majority of people are hopelessly wrong - or alternatively fools, or down-right crooks. History has tossed up more than a few geniuses with similar omnipotent beliefs - Richard Wagner, for one, George Bernard Shaw for another, and quite often these strong-headed characters have been right!

NOW READ LETTERS TO EDITOR

I think you will agree that the writer of these letters is a person of quite exceptional strength of character, of overpowering dynamic personality, a man who is vitally interested in all aspects of modern life and
thought, who has weighed the evidence, arrived at a verdict, and expresses his Pontifical point or view in rich, opulent, forceful and rhetorical language, guaranteed to infuriate anyone who holds a different point of view, and to irritate anyone who does. You will note that none of these letters indicate that the writer is a composer or even a musician. The reader of his two books of music essays will find that Sorabji holds equally uncompromising views on matters musical. This is revealed often in the mere titles of some of the essays:

**READ CHAPTER HEADINGS FROM ‘M’**

- When is a concerto not a concerto?
- Music and Muddleheadednes
- The Amateurs, or thick skins and thicker heads.
- Portmanteau words: or those ‘British’ composers.
- Cant and the Classics.
- Beer and British music.
- Open letter to a Conductor.
- The Physiognomy of Musicians: or, composers out of countenance.

I would like to read you excerpts from his essay on the Scottish song writer - Francis George Scott: firstly, Francis George Scott is a composer I have to deal with at a later session, and you are unlikely to know much about him and secondly, because the article reveals more about its author than its subject. He calls Francis George Scott one of the major song writers of Europe today, and continues:

"Francis George Scott, or "F.G " as he is known to his friends, has in abounding measure that dynamism, that personal brio and gusto, that vitality, qualities that in those parts (meaning England) go - as they rarely do down here - with the close-fibred sinewy Scottish intelligence, a thing that makes it so far more satisfying to play to a Scottish audience, even though they may care actually less for music than those posturing capons, the music lovers of London. As a sheer musical scholar F.G. is of immense power and distinction; but in spite of the fact that he is connected in a teaching capacity with an educational institution (Scott was lecturer in music at a Glasgow Teachers Training college) and for all the deadening intellectually paralysing and demoralising effect any association direct or indirect with the stultifying process called "education" (that is to say, as the poet Gray well said, "The drawing of fools from their obscurity") can have upon a fine mind and creative artist - influences that would have utterly corrupted and ruined any lesser man - Francis George Scott has preserved his artistic and spiritual integrity inviolate, and is blessedly free from the enlightened (!) pedagogical pedantry of a Donald Francis Tovey, or the stilted, donnish professorially of an Edward J Dent.

Specimens of the ineptitudes into which Tovey’s pedantry could lead him are his comment upon the Second Liszt piano concerto as “the world’s worst piano concerto", and the pompous pretention of his observation upon Busoni's "Fantasia Contrapuntistica". What volumes it speaks for contemporary stand-
ards that, "this great sponge swollen with the ideas of others" should have the standing in the minds of musicians in these islands that he has:-

"The bookful blockhead ignorantly read,
with loads of learned lumber in his head,
and Francis George Scott be more or less unknown."

Thus, having sabre-slashed the music loving public of England (which, recently, he denies as existing at all) bull-dozed the entire machinery of everything educational, reduced to ashes the acknowledged two greatest musical scholars that England has produced in a century, Sorabji now proceeds to trounce the I.S.C.M., the B.B.C., boost up another of his bosom friends (Professor Saurat) and tick off such insignificant song-writers as Schubert and Schuman.

"Although it had been my privilege to know Scott the composer for years, and to have had the pleasure of reviewing various volumes of his songs as they appeared, I had not, until comparatively recently, the opportunity of hearing his work in anything like the bulk of a one-man show. And to whom was the opportunity to do so in London due? To those centrally-European controlled organisations for the promotion of the more fatuous of "new" music, consisting principally of hoary clichés dressed in the "height" of fashion" (and looking like a dress-maker's trotter in a Chanel model); to the B.B..C. with its infallible instinct for the third rate? To none of these but to the artistic perception and enthusiasm of the great French litterateur, critic and man of letters, supreme ornament of the Institut Francais of which he is the head, Professor Denis Saurat.

A one-man show is a gruelling test, more especially when the programme is confined to songs. It is a test which few composers can stand, not even many of those great masters of the "Lied", of whom it is the custom to inflict upon audiences wads of the insipid amorous sentiment of that glucose and tacky texture to which Schubert and Schumann have accustomed - but by no means inured - all of us.

I have on more than one occasion given it as my considered opinion that in no country in Europe - least of all in England, at the present time - are songs being written remotely comparable in quality with those of Francis George Scott. The only other living composer whose work has the concentrated "meatiness" and sinewousness of Scott's work - namely Sibelius - is very far indeed - being the outstanding figure as a song-writer that he is as a symphonist.

And how different, how blessedly, thrice blessedly different is Scott's treatment of the "love" lyric, or rather how different are his points-de-depar from those "Frauenliebe und Leben", "Schone Mullerin", and all the rest of the stock-in-trade and clap-trap of Germanic musical sentimentality. Scott is either mocking-ly Rabelaisian as in a Burns' `My Wife is a wanton wee thing" or his expression of the "tender" passion is white hot, like molten steel, in the concentrated almost vitriolic intensity of Hugh MacDiarmid's "Milkwort and Bog-cotton." All of Scott's poetical texts are chosen from Scottish poets, from Dunbar to Hugh MacDiarmid, that extraordinary genius whom Professor Saurat has called the greatest living poet. The
prodigious audacity and technical virtuosity of Hugh MacDiarmid's versification makes any convincing setting of his lines an achievement almost as great as that of the lines themselves. This Scott accomplishes with such mastery, such complete fusion of melodic line with poetic line, that the whole seems to have sprung from one mind rather than two."

"In this connection it was significant that in the recital of Scott's songs organised at the Institut Français in the summer of 1943 he had to bring with him two singers from Scotland adequately to present his magnificent songs before a London audience. Here where the very air breathed by singers (and if there are still any left, which I am sometimes tempted to doubt, they are all middle-aged or more) is poisoned by the B.B.C. bleat, wobble and whoop, and where such a thing as a homogeneously and consistently sung phrase is almost become a solecism, it would have proved wholly impossible to find singers able or willing, or both, to cope satisfactorily and effectively with Scott's songs."

"I do not want to sound discouraging indeed if I know anything of "F.G." I don't think he will find this discouraging - but I see no future at all for work as fine, bold, and powerful as his in the etiolated, debilitated, chlorotic musical atmosphere of England, which in matters of music is now the paradise on earth, the happy hunting ground of spiritual jelly-fish." We look at the people whom they dishonour with their suffrages - if such people could be dishonoured by anything - and indeed we have reason to render thanks to all our Gods that we are not such as they'. But Scotland, in spite of the fact that her people have intelligence that begins a few light years beyond that of the English (remember what Shaw says about the English vis-a'-vis the Welsh, Irish and Scots by whom they have the good fortune to be 'surrounded') is, I fear, sufficiently doped and corrupted by contemporary mis-education to demand of her prophets that they be recognised "over the hills and far away", before the Scots themselves will accord them their yea-saying."

Sorabji lived with his mother in London, seeing his father only on the latter's periodic visits from Bombay. Sorabji says he was privately educated, although Sam Rutland of Cape Town says he remembers Sorabji as a fellow-student at the London College of Music (not to be confused with the Royal College of Music.). Sorabji Sr. appears to have been a very wealthy man, and Sorabji Jr. has never earned a penny in his life. This freedom from economic problems has provided him with the necessary leisure for composition; at the same time it has cut him off from practical musical life, from mixing with performing musicians, from any necessity to consider public demand. Sorabji is an extreme case of an anti-social composer; in his affluence, entrenched in his ivory tower, he writes just what he wants to write, he writes for himself alone, utterly indifferent to performers, public appreciation or publishers: his creative work is his own private affair. Here now is Sorabji's own credo: for the year 1962.

' I am not a "modern" composer, in the inverted commas sense of the word. I utterly and indignantly repudiate that epithet as being in THAT sort of way applicable to me. I write very long, very elaborate works that are entirely alien to and anti-pathetic to the fashionable tendencies promoted, published and plugged by the various "establishments" revolving round this or that modish composer. Why do I neither
seek nor encourage public performances of my work? Because they are neither intended for nor suitable for it under present, or indeed any foreseeable conditions.” This is Sorabji’s attitude now and has been for the past 25 years; but it was not this when I first knew him; otherwise, of course, he would never have published 15 works or performed some of them publicly. Nor do I believe, in spite of what he says, that he is entirely indifferent to the opinion others hold about his music; if so, why would he reprint at his own expense praiseful articles about his compositions and his playing by Clinton Grey-Fisk and Frank Holliday?

Now that I come to think of it, it seems odd that the very first composer I should invite to perform at the Active Society concerts, should be the most remote, the most un-get-at-able of all my contemporaries. I like to think that this choice was determined by my audacious courage, unheard-of enterprise; the fact is, however, that Sorabji was "news" around 1927. He had sent some of his manuscripts to the great English critic, Ernest Newman, who had returned them with a printed card which stated that "Mr. Newman does not review musical manuscripts." Sorabji argued that music was music, whether published or not, starting a controversy which roped in many noted musicians resulting in heated arguments on both sides. I seem to remember that Philip Heseltine (better known as Peter Warlock) came out strongly in Sorabji’s favour in Curwen’s monthly, “The Sackbut”. In the same musical journal Sorabji wrote on modern piano writing in the works of Rachmaninoff and Busoni and in the Godovsky transcriptions. I had followed the Newman Sorabji controversy with interest and read the articles with the result that I wrote a letter to Sorabji, via “The Sackbut” asking if he would consider coming to Glasgow and play one of his works. Contrary to my expectations I received a reply - a very courteous and charming letter saying he would be delighted to do so and suggested playing his new Fourth piano sonata. This was in 1928. He came again in 1930 to play his famous or notorious (whichever word you like to use) "Opus Clavicembalisticum" - and in 1936 performed the nine movements of his second Toccata. We became good friends, and I visited him at his London flat and spent some holidays with him, in Bournemouth and at Corfé Castle. By this time I had become extremely interested in his music, and wrote a brochure on him published by the Oxford University Press.

The first example of Sorabji’s music you are going to hear is called "Gulistan"; it belongs to a class of Sorabji compositions which have their roots in French Impressionism; others are "In the Hothouse" and "The Perfumed Garden" - the latter, performed by the composer in Sorabji’s one and only broadcast, drew high praise from no less a person than Delius who heard it and wrote to him from France..........

"Gulistan - The Rose Garden" is an exotic impressionistic nocturne. Frank Holliday describes it thus: "It is as if in a flowing panorama of dream-like beauty, we behold and are thoroughly immersed in all the exotic magic of Iran: the Shah Mosque of Isfahan, the poetry, the incredibly lovely works in porcelain silver and gold, its exquisitely carved works of ivory and wood, and, of course, the scented loveliness of the roses of Shiraz. This work evokes in a masterly fashion, delicious and at times almost overpowering whiffs of Iran’s"sweet rose-haunted walks" to use a phrase of Hafiz."
PLAY TAPE OF "Gulistan"

At a first impression, without access to a score, this music may seem to be formless, to have no memorable themes, to be without direction, dreamily vague; an unending stream of beautiful sounds. Following the music with a score will correct this mis-impression for then one can see the composer's intentions; I am afraid, too, one is forced to conclude that for all his finger dexterity and considered in to-to, these intentions are beyond the performer's ability to convey convincingly to his listeners.

When Sorabji played his works in Glasgow, he spent many months practising them; even then, his performance fell far short of his own interpretative demands on paper - I know, because I turned the pages for him. On this point he used to say; "I am not a pianist and all I can hope to do is to give you a general impression of my work." In the interval of 26 years between his last public appearance and the making of this record you have just heard, Sorabji had all but given up piano practising and piano playing. "Why should I spend months practising one of my pieces" he explained, "when I can spend the time more profitably by writing other works? I know how my music should sound, so beg your pardon - why should I worry if other people don't?"

"Gulistan" the piece of which you have just heard was written in 1940. Nearly 20 years earlier Sorabji had formed his individual contra-puntal style which became crystallised in his "Opus Clavicembalisticum": a style - formally at least - based on Busoni's "Fantasia Contrapuncticus".

Perhaps you would like to hear Sorabji play some more - say, a bit from his chamber concerto for piano: here is a light-hearted account of the first and only public performance of "Opus Clavicembalisticum" - "On the night of the concert Sorabji came dressed in a typical Parsi suit of deep purple silk (it may have been satin). The unusual oriental style made him look somewhat like a Chinese Mandarin, to those as ignorant of Eastern modes of dress as were myself and the majority of the audience. Writing later, in the Glasgow University Student Magazine an irrepressible critic said he thought Sorabji had come out in his pyjamas.

But don't misunderstand me! This amazing little man had all the majesty, dignity and presence of his proud and honoured race and if some of us found his style of dress rather peculiar for a concert platform, no one would have dreamt of saying that he was other than outstanding in character and manner, with a powerful (indeed over-powerful) and dynamic personality.

Our President, Dr. Chisholm, as usual at these concerts, was turning the pages. I knew he was rather anxious about the turning this time because of the terrific speed with which Sorabji skipped over the keyboard, and the almost illegible MSS. he had to follow. Sorabji had arranged with him to give a nod of his head when he was nearly ready to have the pages turned, in case of accidents. The first ten minutes of that recital was a nerve-racking experience for our President (he told me after) before he realised that Sorabji was entirely oblivious of the fact that he was nodding his head practically all the time, sometimes
with such ferocity that I thought he would crack his skull on the piano keyboard. Chisholm was jumping up and down in his seat like a Jack-in-the-box, Yes, he was to turn, No: he shouldn't but somehow or other always managing to get the page over at the psychological moment.

The music, so unlike anything I had ever heard before was literally terrifying. Busoni’s Fantasia Contrapuntistica - played at an earlier concert by the great Dutch pianist Egon Petri - in Busoni idiom was the nearest approach I could think of to this fantastic Opus, though believe me the Busoni piece would have been as sweet in my ears as Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" if I had heard it that night. Floods of notes, cascades of arpeggios, fugal subjects a mile long, yet all conjuring up the most fantastic pictures in my mind, but there was nothing I could understand.

After about ten minutes of this, I found myself sitting twisting my fingers in sheer misery, hoping against hope that each crescendo was the final one so that I could get out of the hall for a breath of air. But it went on and on. The whole audience was spell-bound. Never have I known such absorbed listening. I really believe that, if the work had continued for 15 hours no one would have dared to leave the hall before the end. Sorabji had his audience mesmerised. At last the first part came to an end, but if some of the audience, myself included, were showing signs of strain it appeared that the composer was just beginning to get into his stride. I, along with other members of the audience, who still had sufficient strength to walk, had just reached the door, when an announcement was made that the composer did not wish an interval at this point, as it would upset the continuity of the work. Little did we know that a similar announcement was to be made at the end of the second part and there was to be no interval at all. With a dejected air I retraced my steps back to my seat.

The second part seemed to be a complete repetition of the first! My musical friends however assured me afterwards that I was quite wrong. "Well" I said, exasperated "I bet there were a lot of other people in the hall who couldn’t tell the difference either." By the time the performance had been in progress for two hours and five minutes (never have I looked at my watch so assiduously) even Sorabji was beginning to show signs of wear and tear. By now, I was beyond showing any reaction, whatever, except an occasional wistful look at the door, and praying that I would soon be at the other side of it: The old proverb ‘It is always darkest before the dawn' was definitely proved to me on that memorable evening. The last ten minutes were almost unbearable; the perspiration was pouring down Sorabji’s face. It was pouring down mine too if he had but known it, only in some mysterious way I seemed to be crying at the same time, filled with a strange sense of fear and frustration; in some ways I think it must have been the same sensation you would expect to feel if a snake had you hypnotised and you were completely unable to break the spell. Up and down with tremendous crescendos, down and up with beautiful diminuendos (I did like the diminuendos) each crescendo raising my hopes, each following diminuendo flattening them till at last with one mighty cataclysmic sweep Sorabji finished playing his first and only performance of "Opus Clavicernbalisticum", which by the way, in simple language means `a piece for the piano'.
There was an utter stillness in the hall and then a tremendous applause broke out. Whatever one thought of the music one could not fail to admire the virtuosity of the performance.

Slowly, so very slowly, Sorabji took out his pocket handkerchief and wiped his face. Slowly inch by inch he lifted himself out of the piano stool and holding on to the piano lid supported himself to give an enfeebled bow and left the platform to return many times.

Slowly, so very, very slowly I managed (without the aid of anything) to get out of my chair - I stood up, and at my feet fell a veritable bag of confetti! Unconsciously during the performance I had been tearing my programme into little bits!

Finally here is Sorabji himself reading one of his explosive tirades against all and sundry:

PLAY TAPE

SLIDES

Slide 1

Sorabji as a young man - in his thirties

Slide 2

Sorabji, age 70: Corfè Castle in the background
My daughter Fiona with Sorabji in the middle - myself at right: also at Corfé Castle, 1959, near to Sorabji’s house which he calls THE EYE.

The first page of the second piano concerto - and scored for an average symphony orchestra: this was the page that Hindemith and Tovey pondered over in Edinburgh (I spoke about the incident yesterday morning) trying to figure out how the opening bar should be conducted. They couldn’t find a solution: perhaps you will be more successful!

Transposing is dispensed with for wind and brass: the piano has elaborate figuration against a unison figure in all but the full orchestra.
While this music for organ is exceedingly difficult it is not unplayable, and shows a full knowledge of the resources of the instrument, even if chord tremolos are not fashionable on the manuals, and few (if any) organ pedals go up to top G! It is intended to be the sole work of any programme. Some Reger organ works are just about as difficult: Pat Shannon and I rehearsed it as an organ duo but never performed it.

This is how the opening MSS page of Sorabji’s most famous composition—the “Opus Clavicembalisticum”. The work is published at 5 guineas on hand made paper and at 2 guineas on less swanky paper. Although it opens with a tone-row of 10 notes, Sorabji disclaims any admiration for serial music.
Two hundred and fifty-one pages later you come up against this: note that Sorabji spreads himself over 5 crammed staves. Can you read the inscription in the right-hand corner? "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, 1.50 p.m. this fifth month of June A.D.N.S. 1930. K.S. finished this work.”

Dedication of the work - Can you read it?
One of the three songs to words from the "Gulistan" of Saadi, in French translations of Franz Tous-saint for baritone and piano: he dedicated the cycle to me.

Here it is - if you can read it
BERNARD VAN DIEREN

Bernard van Dieren was a Hollander who lived the greater part of his life in London, where he acted as English correspondent for Dutch papers. He wrote six string quartets and other chamber music works, mainly songs, an opera "The Tailor", a Chinese symphony, and other pieces. He is also the author of a provoking series of essays, collected under the title of “Down among the Dead Men”, where he stakes claims for the consideration of Bellini, Meyerbeer and Busoni as great composers. Van Dieren is totally unknown in his own country: his works are all but never performed anywhere, his opera "The Tailor" still awaits its first performance, his Chinese Symphony has been played once: moreover, although I arranged for him to conduct in Glasgow at one of our concerts, he backed out at the last minute and the concert was cancelled. You might well ask me then, why bother to discuss such a person in this series of lectures? Van Dieren has always had a highly intelligent - if small - group of admirers; among them Hubert Foss, musical director of O.U.P. who published many of his compositions: Cecil Gray, noted English critic, who classed van Dieren along with Bartok, Schonberg, Sibelius and Hindemith, in his selection of 20th century composers destined for immortality: Sorabji who holds a similar belief: Constant Lambert who conducted the Chinese Symphony, Op. 11 and who told me he believed it to be in the first half-dozen great orchestral works of this century; Philip Heseltine who wrote enthusiastic articles on van Dieren in "The Sackbut" and elsewhere; and Sir William Walton, who only last year said "The works of Bernard van Dieren deserve to be resurrected. He developed a style of free dissonance altogether his own, contemporary with Schonberg’s early works. I have only heard his Chinese Symphony once, and it struck me as being very rich and profound."

Cape Town has heard two performances of "The King’s scene" from the opera "The Tailor", Gregorio Fiasconaro singing with the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra, myself conducting; Richard Lilienfield, the blind baritone, has sung a good number of his songs. Colin Taylor was a friend and admirer, at least to some extent, of van Dieren’s music. In our music library at the College, I found a score of the Sixth String Quartet, inscribed by the composer to Taylor; a Christmas gift in 1932. On the other hand, Taylor has written this sour comment on the inner cover of van Dieren’s sonatina, “Tyroica” for violin and piano - "Arid, academic stuff, without even the redeeming feature of being pianistic or violinistic!" The work in question was intended to be a parody on academic composers of the old Durham D.Mus. type, and I think Colin Taylor missed the whole point of the burlesque.

Van Dieren was married to Frieda Kindler, a very fine pianist, and one of Busoni’s favourite pupils, whose brother, Hans Kindler, was a famous cellist, and, who, later, in America, made a reputation for himself as a conductor.
Unfortunately for van Dieren, he had never quite broken through that peculiar trait and barrier the English sometimes unexpectedly raise towards Continentals, and which never really allows them to ‘become one of the gang’. Whether so proud, sensitive, cultured and artistic a personality would have allowed himself to be adopted is quite another matter. In Holland, he is apparently never entirely forgiven for leaving his country and settling in ‘enemy’ territory.

Van Dieren also wrote an authoritative book of Epstein, and on more than one occasion acted as Epstein’s model: for instance, many years ago when van Dieren was lying ill, on what his friends considered his death-bed, Epstein came and modelled his hands which he later used for one of his best works “Christ”.

There is a curiously elusive quality about van Dieren’s music which makes a good performance unusually difficult, and possibly more than any other contemporary composer he has suffered from bad performances. Much of his music is without bar lines, and a characteristic ‘prosey’ quality makes it yield up its secrets only after prolonged and intensive study. This, and the fact that he was suffering from an incurable illness which never left him free from pain, were the main reasons for which I can only describe as his shocking behaviour in Glasgow.

We were going to give a performance of ‘The King’s Scene’ from the second act of the opera "The Tailor". Van Dieren had promised to conduct and John Goss, the noted English baritone who had made a particular study of van Dieren’s vocal works, was coming up from London to sing the role of the King. The rest of the programme was to consist of songs and piano pieces - the latter to be played by his wife, Frieda Kindler, the authoritative interpreter of his piano works, and one of the really few inspiring teachers in England.

Bernard van Dieren and his wife came up a few days before the concert was scheduled to allow him to take the last few rehearsals of our chamber orchestra. John Goss was coming by a later train due to arrive in time for the final rehearsal. The news that we were giving this concert had received considerable publicity throughout the country, and we had received letters from newspaper critics and admirers of van Dieren so far afield as London, asking us to reserve seats for the performance, as they intended making a special journey to Glasgow for the event.

Our chamber orchestra, of about 22 players, consisted of the best available musicians we could get from Glasgow and Edinburgh. They had worked very hard at the opera, and were, in their opinion and ours, quite up to standard, only awaiting the final polish which is the privilege of the composer to give at the last rehearsals. This group of players was practically the same as we used on previous occasions when a small orchestra had been necessary, for instance, when William Walton, a few weeks earlier, had conducted his “Facade” for us. The leader of the orchestra, although a fine fiddler, was a rather bumptious little man, whose conceited attitude often got up the backs of the other players, and was a constant source of irritation to us all.
The van Dierens arrived on the Saturday morning. A rehearsal had been called for the following Sunday afternoon.

Lunch with the van Dierens on the Sunday was an enjoyable affair over which he enthused about such less accepted musical gods as Meyerbeer, Busoni, Alkan and Berlioz: he complimented us highly on the pioneering work of the Active Society and it was in a particularly happy frame of mind that I escorted them along to the rehearsal. But beware of vanity ... it is a snare and a illusion. We had been told that van Dieren was a very difficult man to deal with, and, although up to that moment we had no reason to believe this, nevertheless, I felt that the orchestra was more nervous of him than it had been of any of our previous guest conductors.

After a polite little speech expressing pleasure at the opportunity of being with us, van Dieren got down to business. He looked at the orchestra, awkwardly lifted his arms and started waving them around: the orchestra looked at him expectantly - what was he doing? Once more he repeated the same gestures and this time one brave member of the orchestra scratched on his fiddle. Van Dieren began to look peeved, and rattled his baton for attention: again he gesticulated wildly with his arms in mid-air, but not a squeak came out of the players. Van Dieren glared balefully at the orchestra, who were now beginning to look puzzled and not a little scared. The fact was that van Dieren had failed to give them the necessary preliminary up-beat. Eventually they did come in and the rehearsal proceeded. Right from the start it was painfully obvious that van Dieren didn't think much of our band. Over and over again he stopped them, seldom letting them even finish a phrase. He kept up a steady running commentary, which passing over the heads of most of the players, had something in its very timbre that filled them with uneasiness.

The interval came at long last. The players were looking either sulky or downright mutinous. Van Dieren stalked off madly into the artist's room and slammed the door. I followed after him to try and soothe his ruffled feathers, but was told to get out. In about ten minutes time he flung open the door, stampeding into the room, for all the world like a raging bull. His face was scarlet, his eyes flashing, his lips set in a grim angry line. Heaven help anyone who made a mistake this time!

We learned afterwards that he had taken a dose of cocaine - to ease his mental and physical agony: but if the injection alleviated the pain, it certainly did not improve his temper. The orchestral part of the opera is, in the main, very simply scored, with the exception of one or two absolutely fiendishly difficult and almost unplayable passages, of which one was for the bassoon. If van Dieren made our bassoonist play it over once, he made him do it twenty times, until the poor man was in such a state of the `jitters' that he couldn't play at all. Then turning on me he rasped out "Why the blazes couldn't you get me a decent orchestra?" "Why didn't you get me a bassoonist who can play" "Can't the damn orchestra read music?" He stamped, raged, almost foaming at the mouth, and finally with a furious gesture flung his baton down and said the rehearsal was over.
He said that he would go back to London that night: wire John Goss to stop him coming North. "Could’t we understand plain English THE CONCERT WAS CANCELLED." For an hour or so we tried to persuade him to change his mind: he was adamant - there would be no concert! So, the van Dierens took the night Scot to London (after wheedling out of me cash to buy first-class train tickets - they had neither tickets nor money). Arriving in London van Dieren rushed off to see Peter Warlock one of our vice-presidents and a great friend and supporter of van Dieren. What transpired at the meeting between the two composers will never be known nor whether van Dieren's recital of his unhappy visit to Glasgow added to Warlock's already mental sufferings - anyway, van Dieren was the last person to see him alive for Warlock successfully gassed himself that night!

Cecil Gray told me later that I should never have invited van Dieren to conduct: that van Dieren knew nothing at all about the physical side of conducting, that he had heard so many bad performances of his music that he was afraid of adding to their number: also, that he suffered from an incurable kidney disease which kept him constantly in pain. Sir Barry Jackson interested himself in van Dieren’s opera with a view to a London production; the composer made such a nuisance of himself that Sir Barry told him where to put his score and washed his hands of the whole affair. After the Glasgow cancellation there was some nasty "letters-to-the-editor" stuff from us and van Dieren - even the threat of a law-suit. It looked as though we had fallen out for good; but, when I was about to conduct the Berlios operas, he sent me a very friendly and congratulatory letter. Owing to illness he was unable to attend any of the performances, and he died shortly afterwards at the age of 52. It is worth looking into this composer’s music: and well nigh time that Holland should sit up and take notice of probably the only composer of international status they have produced in a century - if they only knew it!
By this time you may be forgiven, if you imagine that we were merely bit pot-hunters in the musical world and our main concern to make personal contact with as many big-shot composers as we could inveigle up to Glasgow. As a matter of fact, some of the most interesting Active Society concerts were given by my friends and myself, relying entirely on our own resources. For example; we gave scenes from the four Busoni operas, performed Debussy's "Boîte a Jou joux" presenting the story by means of lantern slides; we performed scenes from "Boris Godunov" in the original orchestration and for the first time in Britain. Did you ever hear of an Austrian composer with the resounding name Alexander Spitzmuller-Hamersbach? No? Well, we did his Prelude and Double Fugue, Op. 7, and some songs in April 1936. He is a pianist as well as a composer, although never having heard him play, I can't say whether Mr. Spitzmuller-Hamers-Bach or not! Have you heard of Paul A. Pisk? or Ernest Kanitz? or Paul Ladmirauld? Or Wilhelm Maler? or Nicolai Lopatnikoff? or Vera Vinogradova? No?? or Robert Oboussier, or P Humberto, or Roman Masiejewski? We performed music by all these persons so that when we became the In-Active Society, we could boast - if that's the right word - of nearly 200 first performances!

I want to say something about the Soviet top composer, Dmitri Shostakovich, for although he never appeared personally at our concerts, we played quite a lot of his music: in October 1935, I gave the first performance of his 24 piano preludes; three months later, we gave an all Shostakovich programme. A very fine cellist, pupil of Casals, daughter of the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, now lecturer in music at Manitoba University, called Peggy Sampson, partnered me in Shostakovich's cello Sonata Op. 35, and I also played the solo part in his concerto for trumpet and strings and conducted Act 11 of his opera, "Lady Macbeth of Mzensk". This is the opera which had been playing successfully at the Bolshoi Theatre, until Stalin attended a performance, didn't like it and banned it. There was a great uproar about this, particularly in the West, and European states which do damn all for their own composers, held up their hands in horror at this gross indecency, this unholy interference by Stalin and Co. with the work of a Soviet composer: tacitly assuming that ignoring them altogether, and allowing two of the greatest (Bartok and Berg) to all but starve to death was infinitely to be preferred to such presumptuous intrusion into the creative practises of their artists could possibly be. Very few people, I'm afraid, bothered to find out if there are any cogent reasons why the performances of Lady Macbeth should be discontinued.

This opera was one of a projected series of four by Shostakovich, presenting Russian conditions politically and socially as they were a century ago under Czarist rule, before they had the light of Marxism-Leninism to shine on them. Katarina Ismalova, the heroine of the opera (the Lady Macbeth part in the title
is used ironically) poisons her husband, who knouts her lover, who tortures his mistress, whose father-in-law tries to seduce his daughter-in-law, who pushes her lover over a bridge, whose mistress commits suicide. Bela-Bartok's "The Wondrous Mandarin" which is about pimps and prostitutes is banned from the stage of most European capitals: Paul Hindemith's opera "Sancta Susanna" is about a madly infatuated nun who gives herself physically to a statue of Christ still awaits its first performance. Dmitri Shostakovich’s “Lady MacBeth” is so foul a story it would certainly be on the banned list of all Catholic countries. In the extreme improbability of it ever reaching a South African stage it would be condemned on the spot as emanating from a boiling vat of moral evil - an-ante-chamber of hell. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading our not usually prudish Glasgow singers to sing the rich and fruity words of the libretto. A revised version of the opera has been made by the composer and given at Covent Garden last December - I expect considerably toned down from the original. The music is harsher than the Russians were prepared to take at that time, but now that the last émigré composer, Stravinsky has been welcomed back into the fold, and his music honoured and regularly performed in the Soviet Union, we can confidently expect this wonderful example of non-Italian Verismo to take its place in the repertoire of Soviet Opera houses.

I don't propose to tell you anything about this great Soviet composer which you cannot read for yourselves in any musical encyclopaedia, but only a few of the impressions of my own, after meeting him in Moscow in 1957 and again in Edinburgh, 1962. Nor that two composers in the same age could be so utterly dissimilar as Sorabji and Shostakovich: Kaikohsru composing for himself alone, enthroned in his lofty tower, Dmitri writing music for the people, the official musical spokesman of the Russian proletariat!

When I was in Moscow in 1952 at the invitation of the Soviet Government to conduct some concerts with the U.S.S.R. State Orchestra, I was asked if I would serve on an International Jury and help to adjudicate about 200 new compositions submitted in connection with one of these World Festivals of Youth which float around the world, mostly in Socialist countries. The Chairman of the Jury of 13 musicians (from 13 different countries) was Dimitri Shostakovich; one of the jury and deputy-chairman was Hans Eisler from East Berlin, composer of a huge Deutsche Symphony, a Faustian opera and many popular socialist songs, and the gentleman who just escaped the clutches of McCarthyism, and, incidentally, quite innocently involved Charlie Chaplin in being hauled before the Committee for the un-American Activities for supporting Eisler’s escape.

Some of you may remember we played an atonal piano sonata at the Hiddingh Hall a year or so ago by another member of the jury, the Swedish composer, Erik Sven Johanson, for it became the centre of a newspaper controversy.

Most of the 200 compositions submitted for the competition were on tapes or records, and scores were available for the jury. To hear about 200 compositions, including sonatas and concertos with several movements in each, takes an awfully long time: on the other hand, one gained experience in listening and assessing the relative value of the new works (their idiom was not all that new) and it seemed unneces-
sary to have to listen to, say, the entire four movements of a concerto before fixing a mark to it. So Hans Eisler and I - both the impatient type - got together during recess, and decided to ask our chairman to put it to the vote if we could hear only part of each work instead of the whole. Shostakovich agreed to this, and we gained a majority vote, the only person voting against the motion being our distinguished Chairman.

Shostakovich is a very highly-strung, very shy, simple, timid and exceedingly nervous person, who smokes an endless chain of cigarettes, and is constantly fidgeting. He enjoys enormous prestige and popularity in the Soviet Union. (and in the whole world, for that matter) and his symphonies are played everywhere. He is favoured with a campaign of publicity which might well turn anyone’s head: one of his symphonies (I think it was the twelfth) was premiered by 50 different orchestras in the Soviet Union.

I met him again at the 1962 Edinburgh Festival which was practically given over to his music: at a press conference he was asked: “What do you think of your own music, Mr. Shostakovich?” He replied: "We have a saying in Russia that of all his children the father loves best his sick son. So excuse me if I say that - I love every note of music I have ever written.” I have only spoken to Shostakovich through an interpreter - he could speak no English and I no Russian.

Shostakovich is a very fine pianist and perhaps some of you have the Parlophone recording of him playing 6 Preludes and fugues from his collection of 24, Op. 87.

I have here a record of one of his lighter pieces which I brought back from Moscow - a concertina for two pianos, Op.110 - played by Shostakovich and his son.

PLAY Record

The 13-man International Jury for the musical Competition. Hans Eisler in centre front - with braces. Immediately above him to the left looking like one of the three Musketeers, is the Swede - Eric Sven Johannsen. In the front row, extreme right is Kim-OK-Sen from Korea; and above his head is the greatest of us all Dmitri Shostakovich
This looks as though Shostakovich and I were having a conversation - it wasn’t very profound though, as neither of us spoke the same language.
In order to sell these concerts of contemporary music of ours to a by no means burningly interested public, on occasion we resorted to shock tactics. Here is a circular letter we wrote and distributed to hoped-for subscribers, announcing Sorabji's first appearance at our concerts. Of course this is very vulgar, in worst style Americana, extravagant and altogether in deplorable taste but it did stimulate interest in an entirely unknown musical personality whom we were about to sponsor. Also, the letter itself revealed exuberance, enthusiasm, youthful vigour, mad-cap tactics and disinterested artistic altruism on the part of its authors (Thank you) and did galvanise into ticket-buying action, a hundred or so thrawn Glaswegians. One would, however, hardly expect the more conservative and responsible residents in a town by no means noted for its progressive tendencies, to approve of such a mountebank publicity stunt, particularly in the sacred cause at Art - with a capital A. One such person, a Mr. A.M. Henderson, wrote me, what was clearly intended to be a fatherly sort of letter, gently pointing out the error of my ways - that real gentlemen, that decent people, however honourable and high minded their motives did not really go in for this sort of thing. “Such publicity” wrote Mr. Henderson, "may well do more harm than good to the cause, and it cheapens both the promoters and the artists concerned." Of course, Mr. Henderson was quite right, but the tone of his letter, which was pious and condescending infuriated me. It is a weakness of mine that I do not take kindly to criticism of a personal nature, neither then nor now - so by return of post Mr. Henderson received a nitro-glycerine letter from me which, I was told later, knocked the kindly well-meaning old gentleman out for six. So Mr. Henderson’s name was added to the growing list of my enemies.

As the visit of Medtner to Scotland was conditioned by the affair, Henderson-Chisholm, let me tell you a little more about Mr. Henderson. When I was 13, and a pupil of Queens Park Secondary School our music mistress was a Miss Polly White who during a rehearsal by Class 1A of which I was a rebellious pupil of “A hundred pipers and a’ and a’” said to me “Erik do please stop singing you are dragging the whole class out of tune.” Frequently to be seen waiting outside Polly White’s classroom, was a soft spoken, kindly, condescending, artistic-looking gent, wearing a crop of professional pianist’s hair, who I found out, was organist at a swanky West End church-his name Mr Henderson. Because Mr. Henderson had studied piano with such renowned masters as Scharwenka, Cortot, Busoni and Rachmaninoff, and had not exactly withheld the fact, one was somewhat surprised to note that his own pianistic performances, which never reached full recital strength, were limited to early English keyboard music, and easier pieces by 19th century Russian composers. Likewise, his organ performances although out of Widor, Vierne and Dupre, never went
beyond the St. Anne’s Fugue and selected movements (very selected movements) from the easier Widor, Franck and Boellmann. His main interest lay in pre-soviet Russian music, and he edited five volumes of piano music by Balakireff, Cui, Tchaikowsky, Mussourgsky (“Une Larme”) and others. It is undeniable that Mr. Henderson was well out of the run of the average church organist. It is equally true that he was a poseur, precious, condescending, conceited and refined. When organist of Westbourne Church his choir became of sufficient note to interest the Columbia Gramophone Co. Here is part of an unaccompanied anthem by Tchaikovsky, sung by the Westbourne Choir. Mr Henderson and his choir specialised in Russian church music - as you know, organs were not used in the Russian Orthodox Churches, all their singing being sung a capella. The title of this anthem is "O Blest are we" and it is characteristic of Mr. Henderson to announce it on the label as being the work of Henderson assisted by Tchaikovsky.

Play Record

Editors note: Despite an extensive search I have been unable to trace this music. A book was published by Henderson containing choral works - O blest are they. Anthem ... The words from the Koinonikon (communio) of the Greek Liturgy for the Faithful departed (Russian Church Service). Edited ... words by A. M. Henderson (Choral). From this it may be conjectured that Henderson wrote or translated the words from the Russian. The only recording I can find of the Westbourne Choir, Glasgow is an hymn which I have included for the historical interest. If you have a copy of the actual piece on an 78 RPM or 80 RPM disc please contact the trust.

Nicholas Medtner gave his first piano recital in Scotland at one of our Active Society Concerts, on Thursday, 5th November, 1931 - in fact, so far as I am aware, Medtner gave only two recitals in Scotland; this one on 5th February 1931, and what was intended to be a repeat at St. Andrews a day or two later. He was born in Moscow 1880: at 12 was a pupil at the Conservatoire; at 21 toured Europe as a concert pianist: taught at the Moscow Conservatoire from 1914-1919, and again after the revolution - at a Moscow School. A contemporary (Alfred Jarosy) gives this account of Medtner in 1920:

"Firing was going on in the suburbs of Moscow; no-one dared leave the house after nightfall. Cold and hungry, the People of Yesterday sat at their ruined homes waiting for worse to come. They went foraging in the morning for the provisions that were becoming ever rare; they heated their stoves with broken-up furniture and books. It was the winter of 1920. I was invited (writes Mr. Jarosy) to hear new songs of Medtner. He sat at the piano looking like Schubert, or at times like Beethoven; he played his newest composition: "Country Dances". While death and destruction rioted outside, while an empire collapsed in ruins and a new state was arising from the blood fertilised soil, Medtner wrote "pastorals and fairy tales". A year earlier, the great Rachmaninoff was pleading the cause of Medtner in the USA: "America must learn more about the works of this truly great composer", he wrote "Russia is beginning to realise that he has already taken a place among our immortals." Medtner left Russia in 1921, stayed about three years in Germany, toured the USA as pianist and composer, and was living in France when I first contacted him. Russian friends tried to persuade him to return to his native country, and while staying there in 1927 staged a demonstration in his honour. When at the first recital, the moment arrived for him to come to the platform he was astonished to see, not an empty stage with just a piano, but, to his confusion, for he was never at home when receiving homage, the whole stage crowded with the most distinguished figures in Moscow's musical life. The explanation, as he soon learned, was the ardent desire at Moscow's musical elite, to pay him special honour. The address, which was read, and afterwards presented to him, was signed by a hundred and eleven musicians. This was a very flowery affair, concluding "You have brought
us new exquisite gifts from the inexhaustible treasure house of your musical genius... New masterpieces of your art will delight with their matchless beauty your attentively listening audience... Accept then our dear, long expected guest, our warmest welcome, and put off as long as possible, our new parting.” Give the Russians their due, they knew how to butter up a chap; and when I was in Moscow September/October 1962, Stravinsky was being handed out the same old oil. But Medtner never returned to the Soviet Union: he settled in London, where he lived the rest of his life.

At the time of our correspondence with Medtner, he was living at 6, rue des Basseron Montmorency (Seine et Oise). The contents of his letter were in English written in a watery blue ink, and signed by Medtner in pea green ink, for at this time he knew no English. I first invited him to become a honorary vice-president of the Active Society (which he accepted) and then asked him to give us a concert of his own works when next he visited England. He replied that he would gladly do this, provided other concerts could be arranged for him - he particularly hoped that he could play his second piano concerto with the Scottish Orchestra. I organised a second concert for him in St. Andrews, Fife and Medtner played his magnificent second piano concerto on Tuesday, 3rd February 1931, in St. Andrews Hall, Glasgow.

I was informed of the time his train would arrive in Glasgow, and our usual reception committee went along to the Central Station to meet him. It was very easy to sort him out in the crowd; he wore a winter coat with fur collar, galoshes and an umbrella. His wife accompanied him, and was carefully wrapping a heavy scarf round his neck to prevent him from catching cold in our bleak wintry Scottish weather. I went forward to meet him, and had just got as far as. "My name is Chisholm welcome to our city, Mr and Mrs... when I became aware that someone had nipped in before me, was already greeting the Medtner’s like old friends, and talking away to them in German thirteenth to the dozen". A glance was sufficient to identify the intruder – Mr A.M. Henderson!

Now this language difficulty has always been a handicap to me; the nearest I ever got to a respectable language like English, was Scots; and I was never even on nodding terms with German, Spanish or Italian though I have a wee bitty French – "Parlez vous Frencaise? Oui, oui,un peu."

Mr. Henderson made no move to introduce either myself or any of our reception committee to the Medtner’s; the best I could do in the circumstances was to repeat my name and shake his hand vaguely. Medtner smiled shyly, and Mrs. Medtner who could speak English, (I suspected rightly that she wrote Medtner’s English letters for him) was warm and friendly, although her primary duty of seeing that her famous husband would not catch a Glasgow cold, absorbed most of her immediate attentions. I asked Mrs. Medtner where they were staying in Glasgow (need I say with the Hendersons!) and when her husband would like to try the piano in the Stevenson Hall. By this time we had walked the length of the platform and were approaching the taxi rank. Mr. Henderson answered for her “Mr Medtner is very tired after the long train journey, and does not want to be bothered with any business arrangements just now. He is a very sensitive person and leaves all such mundane matters to his manager. I am managing Mr Medtner while he is in Scotland, so please, should you have any communication to make to him, contact me. You will find my number in the telephone book Goodnight” Mr Medtner also said "Bon Soir" to us - looking at me - rather slyly, I thought and his wife bundled him into the taxi and put more scarves around his neck. We all felt very much deflated.

We buzzed Mr Henderson’s telephone quite a lot during the next few days, but we could not speak to Mr Medtner, "he was resting. . . he was in his bath...he was at dinner." "Yes, he is indeed rehearsing with the Scottish Orchestra at three this afternoon but he has given the strictest instructions that no one but
myself must be allowed into the rehearsal. "No! I am afraid you cannot call here tonight; we are holding a big reception for him" which was a bit thick, for dar'n it all, it we were boys of the Active Society who were the persons responsible for bringing Medtner to Scotland. Never mind - Medtner was a great artist - so we all went along to cheer him at St. Andrews Halls. I had played his second concerto myself in Glasgow in 1929, and naturally was anxious to hear how Medtner played it. His playing was characterised by great vitality and intensity, and a warm romanticism. He had little use for graceful platform manners. I think it was Ernest Newman who called him the least fussy of all great pianists; he saw a piano, went for it, played it, then hurried off. Certainly Medtner was of a very retiring nature, and heartily disliked modern publicity methods. On the concert platform, he was a shy, almost uncomfortable figure, for no one appeared to enjoy public performances less than he. His piano concertos, as products of a typical Russian conservatism, have brilliance and rhythmic vitality, but lack that uplift, that surge of melody which have won for concertos like Rachmaninoff's two and three, Tchaikovsky one, and the Grieg, permanent seats of fame. But judge for yourself - for here is a recording of the C minor Concerto, with Medtner as soloist - made 11 years after the Glasgow performance.

Medtner has often been called the "Russian Brahms" which means that both composers have a certain gravity of musical demeanour, and take themselves and their art with great seriousness. There is more in it than that, though; for example, take the first movement of this piano concerto - Romanza: its opening sentences might easily be taken for a typical Brahms intermezzo.

Owing to the Henderson blockade, I have to rely mainly on others for impressions of Medtner's personality. The Russian singer, Tatiana Makushina sang a group of his songs at a later Active Society concert, (April 12th, 1934) and she had this to say of her own experiences when working with Medtner. "His accompaniments were a revelation to me. How he played: How delicate were his nuances, how rich and varied his tone. Deep tragedy, mysticism, glimpses of another world, and sometimes expression of tender, youthful love were all to be found in his music." Mrs. Medtner, herself an accomplished musician, knew all her husband's songs by heart, and all her life and strength were devoted to his work. Sometimes she would break into song and join me during a rehearsal and Medtner himself would begin to sing too - then he would have a fit of coughing and would run into the next room to smoke his half cigarette. (It was his habit to smoke only half of one.) Then he would return to the piano. Tatiana Makushina sang her first concert of 20 Medtner songs with the composer as pianist, February 1928, and here she is singing his "Spanish Romance" and "Butterfly" accompanied by the composer.

ESPANCKEE (SPANSH ROMANCE) Op.52 No 5 words by Pushkin

Before a Spanish noblewoman two knights stand;
Both bold and free, gaze at her direct,
Striking are they both of mien, both with heart aflame;
Each with manly grip leans lightly on his sword.
Than life to them is she dearer, and akin to glory her esteem,
But one by her favoured. Who (will) have (her) heart's reward?
“Who, decide, is loved by thee?” Both of the lady ask
And with expectancy of youth they gaze awaiting her reply.

Play Recording

BABOTCHKA (THE BUTTERFLY) Op. 28, No. 3. Words by Fet

Thou are right: with a single airy wheeling I am so graceful.
All radiance mine, with (its) dazzling flutter is just a pair of wings
Do not enquire, whence I come, whither I hasten;
Here on a flower I lightly tarry and there I breathe.
How long aimlessly, (and) skilfully to live do I wish?
There, at once, you see with a whirl, I spread my wings and fly away!

In the evening of his Glasgow concert, Mr. and Mrs. Medtner were smuggled into the artists’ room by their friends the Henderson’s. During the two intervals, Mrs. Medtner smothered her husband in shawls and scarfs the minute he came of the platform and fed him with hot coffee from a flask. Never had any composer a more devoted wife; never was any wife more apprehensive of the possible ill effects of the Scottish climate on the lungs and chest of her husband! Medtner lit a cigarette, placed it in a long cigarette holder, puffed away till the first half was consumed and then charged on to the platform to continue with his programme. The chief item was his "Sonata Romantica" written a year earlier and still in manuscript and this was to be its first public performance. Medtner composed fourteen sonatas: it has been said of him that whatever he started to write somehow he turned into a sonata in the end: for he really belonged to the Beethoven-Brahms epoch and its obsession with sonata-form.

For his final group, Medtner played a selection of his famous "Fairy Tales": he is best remembered by pianists today for these attractive, fanciful, epigrammatic and romantic piano pieces (of which he wrote 33). Eric Blom points out that the Russian word is Skazka: though as fantastic as Western fairy tales, they are more rustic and earthy, and animals with human attributes play a larger part in them. Blom suggests that "Folk Tales" would be better titles for Medtner’s pieces of that class. Mrs. Medtner, on the other hand told me that her husband called than just plain "Tales" at the beginning, and that the "Fairy" bit was added on by an enterprising musical publisher. Ivan Ilyin puts forward a narrative for the Fairy Tale Op.26 No.3 inscribed "narrante a piacere" which I am going to play to you. "A Sensitive creature tells from the depths of its simple and sorrowful soul, of some strange and fearful life’s encounter which has left a deep wound in his heart". (It looks as if Mr. Ilyin had been reading Cyril Scott’s poetry:) The experience was so shattering, so overpowering, that the gentle son breaks off, as though unable to find words. There is no way out of the pain and the sorrow, it is all a tangle of gentle suffering, and the song ends on a note of quiet and humble complaint." Here is how Medtner plays this piece;

Play Recording

The Six Tales of Op. 51 are dedicated to Cinderella and Ivan the fool, (from which it would seem that Medtner has now decided to write real fairy tales). Of the first of these Op.51, Ilyin writes: "The fairy of this tale is a mysterious princess, full of naive charm, grace and beauty, a lovely and gentle vision." Here it is as Medtner played it in Glasgow 1931, 3 years after it was written:

Play Recording

Our Active Society friends in St. Andrews was sponsoring a repeat concert for Medtner and, as things
stood, I thought it best to leave Mr. Henderson to deliver the Medtner's safely into their hands. A Steinway Concert grand piano was coming by road from Edinburgh: the van was delayed, and only arrived in the afternoon of the concert. When Medtner heard this he flatly refused to give concert at all, saying that the piano had not time to "settle down properly" after 50 miles jigging in a removal van. After pleadings, persuasions, threats, and more pleading, he reluctantly agreed to play part of his recital, omitting the new Sonata Romantica - the major attraction of the programme. This was a bit of a shock to my friends fearing reaction from canny Scots to get their money's worth. But worse was to come; The Convocation Hall of St. Andrews University in which Medtner was to play, was lavishly decorated with portraits of members of the royal family, past Lord Rectors, past principals of the University. The highly sensitive Medtner felt embarrassed he said in the midst of such portraittal opulence; he couldn't concentrate; they disturbed his nerves: either they took the lot down from the walls for the evening and locked them up somewhere out of his sight, or there would be no concert! One can imagine what the sedate conservative dodderly old university authorities at St. Andrews thought of this insult to their personal art gallery. They pleaded, cajoled - but the Maestro was adamant: so with gnashing of teeth and with unmentionable mutterings under their academic breaths, the portraits were grudgingly - oh, so grudgingly - removed from the walls and put in cold storage for the night. When I heard about this later, I realised that the little manikin on my shoulder had been looking after me all the time and had arranged it all so that Mr. Henderson and not I had to take the rap!

I heard no more from the Medtner's until the first week in September 1931, when I received the following letter: At once I suspected sabotage from the hidden Henderson hand. I am not so sure now. In his book "The Muse and the Fashion", Medtner writes "The music of the extreme modernists is like "The Comedy of Errors" - and their theory is like a theory of errors. Errors of theory (and of practice.) have been observed before, but no Theories of error have been known to exist in former times" "Modernism", he says, "The fashion for fashion." His friend, colleague and admirer, Rachmaninoff, held similar views: "The Futurists clamour for "colour" and "atmosphere", and by dint of ignoring every rule of musical construction, they secure efforts as formless as fog, and hardly more enduring". But history has already proved these two great Russian masters of composition and others, like Sibelius and Elgar, wrong in their prophecies, for the futurists of that time were Debussy and Ravel, Bartok and Stravinsky, Schonberg and Berg, major names in the history of music in the second half of this century. Mrs Lewtonowa is the person in the U.S.S.R. State Music Publishers who looks after my interests and has herself made Russian translations of the first volume of my Celtic Song Book. When I was in her office in Oct 1962, she said to me "There is someone here in Moscow who is anxious to meet you. Won't you let me take you round to her flat?" "Is it someone I know?" I asked. "It is a person you met in Glasgow 31 years ago" she replied. "She is a very old lady, and you will be doing her a pleasant little service if you would come with me right now and talk with her for a little." I agreed, if only because I was curious to see inside a private house in Russia and this was the first time I had ever been invited. Mrs Lewtanowa took me in her car to one of those large blocks of flats which are springing up all round Moscow. We went up in an elevator to the third floor, I think it was, walked along a rather dark corridor and rang the bell. The door was opened by a plumpish little woman, who looked at me with lively twinkling eyes before extending her hand, saying "Welcome to Moscow, Mr. Chisholm. We meet again after so long a time". Thirty-one years had made surprising little change in Mrs Medtner. She told me she had come to Moscow to edit a definitive edition of her husband's works. "The two previous editors both died before finishing the task and they asked me to complete the editing before I died," she said, with a pout and a smile. I asked her how she remembered me and the Glasgow concert
after all this time, when she must have accompanied her husband on hundreds of other concerts and she laughed gaily. "Yes indeed, but there was something rather special about that concert." she looked at me warily . . . I caught her eye, and we both burst out laughing "Ah, that Mr. Henderson", she said, "he was so jealous of you, so very jealous, he just would not let you come near my poor dear husband. We saw through it all, of course, but well (a Russian shrug of her shoulder) Mr. Henderson had been very kind to Mr. Medtner in London, and he did not wish to offend him." She laughed again, "My: but it was funny the way he kept hedging you off! My husband and I have often laughed over that - what you say - pompous Mr. Henderson. Nevertheless, my husband was touched by his kindness to him, and allowed Mr. Henderson to persuade him to dedicate his Sonata Romantica to him, the one played for the first time at your Active Society Concert." And there we left it.

Medtner’s programme in Glasgow, 1931

Medtner’s letter resigning as an Hon. Vice-president of the Active Society
Medtner’s recital in Moscow in 1927; the one hundred and eleven musicians who welcomed him have by now left the platform

Medtner in 1932, as I knew him

In a H.M.V. recording studio, 1947. Note that he has smoked more than his usual half cigarette - unless of course, he started this one at the other end
Medtner in 1948

This photo was taken in the garden of his Golder’s Green, London, house in 1948. Mrs. Medtner is holding in her arms their pet Persian cat: this is the garden that Mrs. Medtner longs for - so she told me - in spite of the kindness of everyone to her in Moscow.

The last photograph taken of Medtner: in his garden and again the pet Persian. This was in 1950.
Diana Chisholm, Erik’s first wife and Hon Secretary of the Society

One of the last pictures of Erik taken in May 1965

Erik with his second wife, Lillias Scott, taken in Trafalgar Square, London. Un-dated but probably late 1950’s. (Restored Image)
Patrick Shannon "confirmed partner in musical crime" along with Erik. Pictured when he was Provost of Aberdeen 1955-65. He died in 1995