

## THE MUSIC OF ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG

The gangway spread before thy feet in vain,  
 Thine ultimate displacement with a crane,  
 The throbbing screw, the awful *mal-de-mer*,  
 The cabin-boy's intolerable stare,  
 The cheerless dock with curious loafers lined,  
 The hateful stevedores pushing from behind,  
 The midnight journey through St. Martin's Lane —  
 All these are memories fraught with grief and pain.

And here thou art! The punctual curtain falls;  
 Coldly thou tak'st a brace of well-earned calls,  
 Dost off the motley and reseek'st repose,  
 Sunk in thy tank — and boredom — to the nose.  
 And I, who needs must envy aught that draws  
 The profitable public's loud guffaws,  
 Resume my humble attic, murmuring, 'Zounds!  
 Yon beast's insured for twice five thousand pounds!  
 No such precaution flattering guards  
 The paltry lives of mirth-provoking bards,  
 Who, when they pass beyond terrestrial ken,  
 Are soon replaced by other funny men.'

## THE MUSIC OF ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG

BY EDWARD J. DENT

From *The Nation and the Athenæum*, May 14  
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HAD the war not cut us off from German and Austrian music, Schönberg would, no doubt, have become as familiar a name as Scriabin in our concert programmes. In 1914 his own inner circle of admirers believed that England was one of the few countries which appreciated his greatness. In Germany and Austria there had been violent demonstrations of hostility to his works; in this country the leaders of music are more ready to welcome what is new, and the herd more willing to accept whatever is offered. So far from refusing pearls, it crunches and digests them in

complete indifference. The war diverted attention from Schönberg and his group to the French, the Russians, and latterly to the younger Italians, whom we credited with having evolved a number of new ideas which, in reality, they owed largely to Schönberg. By the irony of fate Schönberg has now abandoned composition owing to the nervous strain of military service during the war, and most of the important works of his which are still unknown to us demand so large an orchestra and such elaborate rehearsal that there is very little likelihood of their being heard here.

The Chamber Symphony, played at Mr. Edward Clark's concert last week for the first time in London, was composed in 1906. It is later than the 'Sextette,' which can be regarded as a now popular work, and earlier than the five orchestral pieces which Sir Henry Wood played at the Promenades in 1912. It is a pity that it was not played here in its proper chronological place, for it is the work which definitely bridges the gulf between the composer's first style and his second. To ears that have become accustomed to Stravinsky and Malipiero it must have sounded almost as old-fashioned as Richard Strauss, for, in spite of whole-tone scales and chords based on a succession of fourths, it sticks clearly to the classical key-system. Its form is original, but classical in principle, and remarkable for its extreme lucidity. It stood out in curious contrast to the rest of the programme — Busoni's courtly and elegant Concertino for Clarinet, Delius's languorous landscapes, Arthur Bliss's vivacious exuberance.

Schönberg's symphony was grim and tense, passionately serious, almost self-consciously ugly, especially in its orchestral coloring. That quality which we English are inclined to call ugliness or brutality is characteristic of most modern German music, and most modern German art of all kinds. A juster name for it would be asceticism, but we are apt to limit the word 'asceticism' to the renunciation that has an outspokenly religious basis, as in the music of Vincent d'Indy, and, perhaps, of Hans Pfitzner. With most German artists their puritanism is definitely anti-religious. It comes from a rigorous determination to pursue truth and truth only. To call it savagery or megalomania is to misunderstand it completely. Certainly there has been a strong element of savagery, and megalomania too, in certain phases of German life,

but it has never been the inspiration of the real artistic leaders.

What we English people call ugliness in German art is simply the furious reaction against what Germans call *süßes Kitsch*, the art of the picture postcard, and of what corresponds to the royalty ballad. It has for years been their constant reproach against us that England is the great country of *Kitsch*. Many years ago a German who loved England only too well said to me, 'I like your English word *plain*; it is a word for which we have no equivalent in German, because *all* German women are *plain*.' He might well have balanced it by saying that English has no equivalent for the word *Kitsch*. The English reader will, no doubt, be horrified to hear that the English eighteenth-century portraits which were once exhibited by order of the Emperor William II at the Royal Academy in Berlin were at once classified by the modern painters — since grown to be classics themselves — in the same category.

The passion for large forms and monstrous orchestras is also due largely to a moral principle. Every German composer hopes that he may some day come to succeed Beethoven and Wagner, to be regarded as a symbol of the whole country, perhaps of the whole world. It is the reaction against the over-cultured dilettantism of an aristocratic few. If Schönberg is appreciated in England it is only by a select circle, hardly as numerous as the chorus and orchestra which would be required to perform his 'Gurre-Lieder.'

The extreme elaboration of the modern orchestra in German music has been further fostered by the influence of Mahler. Mahler was for the art of conducting what Liszt was for the piano-forte and Paganini for the violin. Since his death he has become a legendary figure, especially at Vienna. Schönberg was one of his intimate friends.

Here in England it is impossible to give orchestra concerts on the Mahler scale, and still more impossible to provide for adequate rehearsals. In Austria and Germany, where everything is on the brink of ruin, opera houses are still kept going and orchestral concerts still flourish. No wonder many of our patriots take this as a sign that they still possess enormous wealth. The aggregate wealth of England would indeed have to be colossal if so much music could be performed on that percentage of the aggregate which England is disposed to spend upon it.

It is to Schreker and Schönberg that Vienna owes most of its acquaintance with modern non-German music. Schreker's Philharmonic Choir even produced such exotic composers — the epithet is that of a Viennese writer — as Elgar, Delius, and Cyril Scott. Schönberg in 1918 founded the 'Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen,' a society which subscribes for weekly music meetings at which modern chamber and orchestral works are both rehearsed and performed. There were ten rehearsals of Schönberg's own Chamber Symphony, and some other works received as many as twenty. These meetings arose out of Schönberg's activities as a teacher of composition; their object was to make modern music more accessible to the public, and to train up the public to the right appreciation of it. Evidently Vienna has not lost that characteristic which gave its life so much charm — the principle that everybody always had plenty of time for anything he might want to do. There are very few people in London who could manage to go to weekly meetings to hear a work rehearsed twenty times, and those whose principal occupation is concert-going would seldom go to more than one rehearsal, if that.

It is natural enough that most people

should find Schönberg's music pedantic and doctrinaire as well as repellent in sound. He represents a reaction against romanticism that derives its peculiar force from the fact that to him as to all Germans romanticism is bred in the bone.

A modern German critic has pointed out that romantic music, from the early days of Wagner, and even from the days of Weber, depended largely on the symbolic acceptance of chords. With the classical composers chords, whether consonant or dissonant, occur just as they happen to be wanted; the romantic composers would pick out some one particular chord and set it up by itself as a dominating symbol. Thus in Weber the diminished seventh always stands for horror; in Mozart or Spohr it has no such invariable significance. The symbolic chord may quite well be a concord; in 'Lohengrin' it is the chord of A major, in 'Meistersinger' the chord of C. Still more conspicuous is the E flat chord of 'Rheingold.' Other obvious examples from Wagner are the Ring, Tarnhelm and Curse motives of the 'Ring.'

And with the romantic impulse came also the cultivation of chords that were ambiguous and could be used to destroy the sense of key. The first and most obvious was the diminished seventh, made by superposing minor thirds. Other superpositions of thirds produced the sevenths and ninths common both to Wagner and Debussy. A more mechanical construction produced the superposed major thirds and superposed fourths.

The chief theme of Schönberg's Chamber Symphony is a succession of fourths which naturally leads straight away from the original key. The second theme is built mainly on the whole-tone scale; but its rhythms are those of Wagner and Strauss.

It is rhythm more than anything

else which differentiates Schönberg from his contemporaries in other countries; German music seems curiously reluctant to get away from either a vigorous four-beats to a bar, or, in a lower station of the art, the familiar three-beats of the waltz. Schönberg is trying to build up a deliberately intellectual construction out of romantic material. His music aims, one may say, simul-

taneously at clarity and at obscurity, an aim which the English reader may well be tempted to think curiously characteristic of the German philosophical mind. It is after all the criticism which English listeners have passed on all German music from the days of Dr. Burney. None the less, German music has survived it, even for the public of England.

## THE TRUE MACHIAVELLI

BY H. M.

[The following article is apropos of a study of Machiavelli by François Franzoni, just published under the title, *La Pensée de Nicolas Machiavel*.]

From *Journal de Genève*, May 17.  
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FEW writers are more often quoted than Machiavelli. Is he better known for that reason? How many of those who condemn him or praise him, who appeal to him with admiration or consign him to public obloquy, have read through a single one of his works or know more about him than a few isolated quotations from his writings, or anecdotes about him, or merely his name? . . .

To be just to a man, we should interpret him, not only by his epoch, but also by his environment; that is, by the intellectual atmosphere by which he was surrounded. If we try to convert Machiavelli violently into a moralist, — if we judge him by the standards of Christian ethics, or even by those of an idealist, — we cannot be too severe in our condemnation, in spite of the fact that he could feel deeply the moral greatness of a St. Francis or a

St. Dominic. But if we bear in mind that the author of *The Prince* never pretended to write a work on morals but only on politics, — things very different both in his day and our own, — and if we add that his ideals were not drawn from Christianity, with its command of sacrifice, humility, and love, but from the antique conception of 'virtue,' from the Roman ideal that not only the citizen's body but also his morals must be sacrificed to the state in case of need, we shall see that Machiavelli was not a cynic, but only a man uttering the political thought of his time, and trying to relate it with the civic standards of the Romans of the ancient republic, with their conception of public weal and of what constituted the true greatness of the state and of the individual.

These are ideas which may be odious to men of our generation. The doc-