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MUSIC NOTES FOR ENGINEERS

TOURING THE WORLD OF MUSIC

With GEORGE S. BONN, '35

“**W**E Won't Get Home Until Morning” is probably, next to “Sweet Adeline,” the most popular party song, or rather, after-the-party song we have. However, the French gave us the tune from one of their own ditties, which starts off: “To war has gone Duke Malbrough,” and doesn't make much more sense than our words. The French have given us much besides this in the way of music, but most of it is rather light and delicate—very different from German music. Then, too, a lot of the so-called modern style developed in France; it started with Debussy, who is often called the founder of the modern school of composition; Ravel, Honegger, and others have kept it going.

Claude Debussy was born in Paris in 1862, and he died there in 1918, so you see he is quite recent. Most of his music is programmatic and impressionistic; the titles suggest the musical pictures he portrays. Our University Concert Band has several of his works, such as, “The Girl with the Flaxen Hair,” “Clair de Lune,” and “Golliwogg's Cake-walk;” I don't know who or what a “Golliwogg” is or was, but the “Cake-walk” part is very evident. The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra delights in playing Debussy's two Nocturnes, “Nuages”—clouds, and “Fêtes”—festivals, as well as the “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun,” which describes in music just exactly what a faun does on an afternoon—in case you ever wondered. The radio has brought us frequently his “Goldfish,” “Gardens in the Rain,” “The Submerged Cathedral,” and “The Sea”—all of them light and descriptive, and easy to listen to.

Maurice Ravel, known most widely for his tympanistic workout, “Bolero,” was born in 1875, and is still living. His “La Valse” and “Mother Goose” are often played by our best orchestras, and are enjoyable to hear.

L'Apprenti Sorcier

Paul Dukas set to music a story, which the distinguished music critic of the New York Herald told us a couple of Sundays ago originated about 1000 A.D., called “The Sorcerer's Apprentice.” Dukas was born in 1865, and from 1928 until his death last May, he was director of the Paris Conservatory of Music. He was a close friend of Debussy, and was inspired by him in many of his works. He had written many important compositions, but his fame rests with the “Sorcerer's Apprentice,” written in 1896, and popular ever since. The

story, so well portrayed in the music, concerns a lazy apprentice who bewitched a broom to help him carry water when his master, the Sorcerer, was away. Fun started immediately, because the boy forgot how to stop the broom; he broke the broom in half, but that only brought him double-trouble. Fortunately, the Sorcerer himself came home just about this time, and stopped the whole business. The moral to the story, I suppose, is: Don't start something you can't stop. Incidentally, every time I hear the music, it reminds me of “On the Trail” from Ferde Grofé's “Grand Canyon Suite,” and vice-versa.

The greatest French opera, about a famous—or infamous—Spanish young lady, Carmen, is considered by many to be the best possible introduction to opera in general, since it, like Verdi's “Aida,” combines a good plot and action with colorful and melodic music. Count that week lost whose low descending Saturday evening sun has not heard some baritone rendition of the “Toreador Song” or some mighty prima donna's “Habanera” or “Seguidilla.” Even the screen has given us parts of this opera; the Chicago Civic Opera Company is giving the whole thing (and “Rigoletto,” too) the first week in May at Memorial Hall; go to see them if you can possibly manage it; you won't be disappointed.

Georges Bizet wrote, besides “Carmen,” many other lesser works, among the best of which is the incidental music to Daudet's “L'Arlesienne.”

Jules Massenet (1842-1912) gave us “Manon” and “Le Jongleur de Notre Dame” as his most effective operas, though “Thaïs” with its “Meditation” (shades of Anatole France and Paul Whiteman!) and “Le Cid” with its “L'Aragonaise” are fairly well known. His overture, “Phèdre,” and the beautiful “Élégie,” are often played, and always well liked.

Faust

The legend of Faust and Mephistopholes was used many times in poetry, prose, and opera, with varying results. Perhaps the most popular musical version is the one by Charles Gounod, another Parisian, of the middle 1800's. Most of you no doubt know the “Soldiers Chorus” or its Americanized version: “Oh, No We'll Never Get Drunk Any More!”

Gounod, besides many Masses, songs, and organ music, also wrote the oratorio, the “Redemption,” and

the lovely "Ave Maria," built on the "Well-tempered Clavichord" of Bach—it is generally known as Bach-Gounod's "Ave Maria" and is sung frequently.

It seems that many of the other great French composers are remembered for only one or two great works. Ambroise Thomas gave us "Mignon" with a beautiful overture, a charming Gavotte, and a melodic "Know'st Thou the Land?". "Raymond" overture—all that is left of the opera—is also one of his better known compositions. The "Barcarolle" from Jacques Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffmann" will keep its composer well known. Lily Pons will do the same for Leo Delibes and "Lakmé" through its "Bell Song"; however, the light ballets, "Coppelia," "Sylvia," and "Naila" with its waltz are also works of this same Frenchman.

Saint-Saëns who died in 1921, left "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice" from "Samson and Delilah" for contraltos to worry over, as well as "Danse Macabre"—a horribly realistic bit—and the cellist's coup de grace, "The Swan." The old "Zampa" overture made its composer, Herold, quite famous; it's the kind of music in which the musicians put their horns to their mouths, brace their feet on the chair in front of them, and blow like blazes; everybody likes it.

Patron Saint of Graduations

Stepping across the Channel into Britain we meet first the Patron Saint of Graduations—Sir Edward Elgar, whose "Pomp and Circumstance" (No. 2) has sent millions of both high school and college graduates into the cruel world. It's practically a national anthem when the words, "Land of Hope and Glory", are sung to the trio of the march. Elgar was born in Worcester in 1857, and has lived long, to write much—besides his great march.

However, to most of us England is musically represented primarily by Sir Arthur S. Sullivan, who, with W. S. Gilbert, wrote sixteen comic operas the which of what have never been equaled. "The Mikado," "Pirates of Penzance" (from which we got "Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here" from its "Policemen's Chorus,") "H. M. S. Pinafore," "Trial by Jury" and the others are well-known to us all, especially since the advent of good radio programs. Nevertheless, we should never miss a chance to see one of these comic operas, for the music as well as the action; many of you no doubt have even been in a performance or two, since so many high schools have been producing them in the past several years.

Sullivan, who died in 1900, will be remembered for many other great compositions besides these operas; chiefly, perhaps, for "Onward, Christian Soldiers" one of the greatest church marches ever written, and for "The Lost Chord," which makes every organist happy—if he can play it.

England's greatest composer, Henry Purcell, lived in London from 1658 to 1695, where he set a very definite

style in composition which most later composers followed. He was the first anywhere, to write what could be called an opera; through him England reached the highest of any country at that time in the composition of art-songs; he wrote much sacred music, and many concert pieces which are still being played and sung the world over.

There have been many other Englishmen who wrote songs and other compositions, but they are remembered mostly for a single number, such as Sir Joseph Barnby with "Sweet and Low," Sir Henry Bishop with "Home, Sweet Home" and "Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark," the Negro composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor with his Cantata "Hiawatha," and others.

Of the modern works, the "London" and "Pastoral" symphonies of Ralph Vaughn Williams stand out. Percy Grainger ("Country Gardens" and other arrangements), Cyril Scott ("Lullaby"), J. Edward German ("Shepherd's Dance" from "Henry VIII" dances), Gustav Holst ("The Planets"—very modernistic), Eugene Goossens, the conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Frederick Delius and many more have all advanced the art of music noteworthy.

English folk songs, Irish, and Scotch, too, are sung everywhere. Ireland gave us Victor Herbert, known for his many beautiful operettas, and Michael Balfe, remembered only for the "Bohemian Girl." The radio, the screen, and the concert stage are presenting many of these works; it's your own fault if you miss them.

Scandinavia

In Scandinavia, the brightest light has been Edward Grieg, who wrote, besides the familiar "Peer Gynt" suite, many other shorter pieces, such as "Ich Liebe Dich" and the "Swan." Grieg was a Norwegian, and strongly emphasized this fact in his music. As Grieg did for Norway, so Jan Sibelius is now doing for Finland. "Finlandia" accomplished this in its stirring nationalistic airs. Four symphonies, quite modernistic, "Valse Triste" and other shorter compositions have also been the work of Jan Sibelius whose seventieth birthday last December was celebrated by a national holiday in Finland, and special programs all over the musical world. No, all great composers are not dead.

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We've been all around Europe in the past six months and visited some of the most musical people there. We have become acquainted with many of the greatest names in musical literature, and some of the outstanding work of each of the composers. However, just reading about them won't do anybody a bit of good; go out and hear the things, or better still, stay at home and turn on your radio and get some of the many excellent programs which are playing just these pieces that have been discussed—and many more besides. That, you will find, is the only way to learn to appreciate music.