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theoretically should be, rather than as what it really is. It is fortunate that this tolerance of the ear enables us to enjoy the performance of a full orchestra during which the intervals are rarely if ever strictly in tune. But if those limits are overstepped we become painfully conscious of the error. In the case of the orchestra we generally meekly put up with a cacophonous din that no ear in the world can analyse and we call it a magnificent climax, and in the case of the pianoforte we at once send for the tuner,—unless, indeed, we are in a young ladies' educational establishment where, the instrument being in use for many hours every day, the process has to wait for the holidays. Meantime——!

Can anything be done to alleviate the mischief wrought to ears by bad tuning? What qualifications have the 15,000 tuners in this country for their expert task and what authority has certified their competency? These are considerations we leave for another article.

(To be continued.)

NATIONAL OPERA AND ITS PROSPECTS: A REJOINDER.

By HERMANN KLEIN.

There once was a scientist who was much puzzled as to the best way of laying hold of an octopus. He first tried the head; but that would not serve, because the head and the body were one, and together they formed the portion of the octopus that was least difficult to grapple with. There remained the tentacles. He tried to grasp each in turn, but found that unless he could envelope the whole of them at once he stood no chance of getting complete hold of the octopus. He then—no, he then abandoned the attempt!

I am rather reminded of this story by the procedure and the arguments adopted by Mr. G. H. Clutsam in the article which appeared under the above heading in last month's *Musical Times*. It was on the whole a very sane and conscientious effort to deal effectively with a puzzling problem. It began with an endeavour to find the 'head and front' of the business. The discovery thereof did not save the writer the trouble of picking up the tentacles—the slippery, twisting, bothering things—and trying to master them one by one. He simply had to go through the whole process, like all who have essayed it before him.

But did Mr. Clutsam really leave us any the wiser as to what kind of system to pursue if we would evolve a live, practical scheme for the establishment of 'National Opera'? Let us see. His main idea seems to be that we must first be provided with the operas that are going to be produced. A modern, up-to-date repertory, with nothing old-fashioned or classical about it: works 'untrammelled by tradition,' wholly original, dramatic, and English: above all, works that will

appeal to the general public even at the cost of ideals dear to the composers—so long as the appeal prove successful.

In other words, if you are about to open a new department store, leave the building and the *personnel* to take care of themselves (they are sure to be all right!), and devote your chief attention to the selection and provision of the stock-in-trade. For it is with the 'goods' which you are to 'deliver' that you will catch your public. Does the simile sound a trifle commercial? Mr. Clutsam is to blame. The sacrifice of ideals, he says, 'may be bad for art, but it is an absolute necessity when National Opera is under consideration, for on the general public its establishment depends.'

So there is to be no attempt to educate, to cultivate a refined taste, but merely to amuse. The public palate has to be tickled, forsooth, because 'opera is the theatre,' and because the German opera-goer who pays for his seat 'evidently no longer desires to be educated when he seeks interest or amusement.' I am sorry to see that Mr. Clutsam's recent visit to Berlin for the production of his own opera (which won an emphatic artistic success) has left him with such a moderate opinion of present-day German eclecticism. That opinion may be perfectly just, but surely there is no need for us to take the Berlin standard as a guide when we set up National Opera over here.

Well, suppose we abandon the educational idea and give the public just what it wants; suppose our 'young' English composers get to work and try their hardest to write those operas (which are to capture the foreigners' fancy as well as our own) upon the excellent lines laid down in Mr. Clutsam's article; suppose that the 'half-a-dozen or so of these fine, entirely modern operas—text and music—are completed' (a mighty 'tall order'), I should like to know on what ground Mr. Clutsam arrives at the conclusion that then, and then only, our 'National Opera will have a proper foundation'? It will have a National repertory to start with, truly; but where will be the trained National performers, the National 'Stimmung,' and all the rest of the proper accessories for doing justice to these masterpieces?

Easier said than done. Mr. Clutsam treats the executive problem lightly. But there need be no fear. The question, Which is of the greater importance, the consideration of the repertory or the ways and means for its adequate interpretation? will never be seriously brought to the test. Should it ever be, there is no doubt in my mind that these two features are equally essential to the proper foundation of National Opera, and will therefore have to go forward together. But, I repeat, the question of their relative importance will never need to be settled—for the simple reason that the requisite quantity of 'fine, entirely modern' operas by young English composers are never likely to be forthcoming—all at once. New opera scores by the dozen may be had for the asking when production can be guaranteed. But the modern operatic *chef d'œuvre* which all Europe is to beg for, and which the Englishman's

'spirit of ambition' is to bring forth from this barren operatic soil (?)—for even one such example, I fear, we shall have to wait long.

And why? Again the reason is simple. Because throughout the length and breadth of the land we do not possess one solitary specimen of that primary essential mentioned by Mr. Clutsam—to wit, 'the first-class opera librettist.' It is very well to say that librettists must be found, that they must 'come fresh to their work,' that they must be 'informed.' Where are they?

How can Mr. Clutsam, who writes on this subject of librettists with absolute knowledge and experience, believe for a moment that we as yet have available in this country writers who will compare with the men who have made libretti for Verdi (Ghislanzoni and Boito), for Puccini (Giacosa and Illica), for Mascagni (Tozzetti and Menacci), for Wolff-Ferrari (Golisciani), or even Leoncavallo, who writes his own? I mention only these popular Italian masters because their opera-books are in many respects the best that are written; also Mr. Clutsam, after dealing sensibly with the great Wagner question, admits that these same masters (plus Strauss in Germany and Massenet in France) are the writers of opera for whom modern German and French audiences show the strongest liking.

But to talk of 'finding' librettists, as though they were to be discovered under a blackberry hedge, is surely futile. They must be created; or, rather, the 'superman' among them must be produced by some artificial method akin to that by which bees produce a queen. It must have been in some such fashion that Strauss evolved Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Assuredly there would have been no 'Elektra' or 'Salome' or 'Rosenkavalier' without this poet-author. But he did not come ready to hand. He was a poet with the genius for putting either drama or comedy into the shape required for musical and stage treatment; his *savoir faire* he owes to his association with Richard Strauss. The first thing to do, then, will be to search among our poets and dramatists for a genius of this type, and next proceed to develop him. Neither task will be easy; but it is the only way if we are ever to have a great English librettist.

In the meantime, says Mr. Clutsam, 'Schools of all sorts can be giving their students stage experience.' What in? In learning to do things they will have to unlearn? I fail to perceive wisdom in that; and yet the waste seems unavoidable if we are to begin by producing 'fine, entirely modern operas' of a type and calibre that no one can possibly foresee. I say rather let us have a single National school of operatic training for our National Opera (when it comes along), and let picked students only be admitted to it, to learn that which they will *not* have to unlearn—namely, the art of singing *anything*, acting *any* kind of part, and pronouncing their language so that everyone in the theatre can hear and understand them.

Wagner was speaking from experience when he declared again and again that his finest Bayreuth

interpreters were those who had been brought up to sing in Italian opera. If we start our National Opera (whenever that may be) with singers who have received a solid all-round training, they will be ready to do whatever they may be called upon, be it opera to amuse, opera to elevate and educate, opera of the old repertory, or opera of the new.

Only, before all this can happen, one little proviso ought to be fulfilled: Our National Opera must be a solid thing. Whether founded by individuals or supported by the State, or both, its existence must not be at the mercy of public caprice or changing tastes for a period of ten years from the date it opens.

Occasional Notes.

As recorded elsewhere in our present issue, the Musical League successfully co-operated recently with the Incorporated Society of Musicians in giving a series of concerts at Birmingham. At a small meeting of members held at Birmingham, the future of the League was discussed, and in accordance with the rules it was resolved to place the whole situation before the members, and ask them to decide whether the League is to continue to exist. It is necessary to make this explanation in order to correct statements that have been made to the effect that the League is already dissolved. The main objects of the League have been to unite amateur and professional musicians for the promotion of the best interests of the art, to organize Festivals where and when the circumstances were favourable, and in so doing to utilize local resources as much as possible.

The two men of the moment in London's musical life for the time being are Mr. Thomas Beecham and Mr. H. Balfour Gardiner, who have separately conspired to give us an exceptionally interesting Winter season, the former with his German opera and Russian Ballet at Covent Garden, and the latter with his choral and orchestral concerts at Queen's Hall. The opening of Mr. Beecham's season was announced for January 29, with the first performance in England of Strauss's 'Der Rosenkavalier,' and March 8 is to be the last night. The following is the programme of the series:

Der Rosenkavalier: January 29, February 1, 5, 8, 12, 20, and March 8 (evenings), and February 27 (afternoon).

Salome: February 18, 21, 25 (evenings), and March 6 (afternoon).

Elektra: February 7, 10 (evenings), and 13 (afternoon).

Tristan und Isolde: January 30, February 3 (evenings).

Die Meistersinger: February 22, 26, March 3, 5 (evenings).

Russian Ballet: February 4, 6, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 27, March 1, 4, 6, 7 (evenings), and February 8, 20 (afternoons).

'Die Meistersinger' is promised with a Bayreuth Festival cast, and the Russian Ballet is to introduce four new works to London. The conductors are Mr. Beecham, Herr Schilling-Ziehmsen, and Dr. Richard Strauss.

The Balfour Gardiner season is on the lines of that which took place last year. The concerts take place on Tuesday evenings, February 11, February 25, March 4, and March 11. The music will be performed by the London Choral Society under