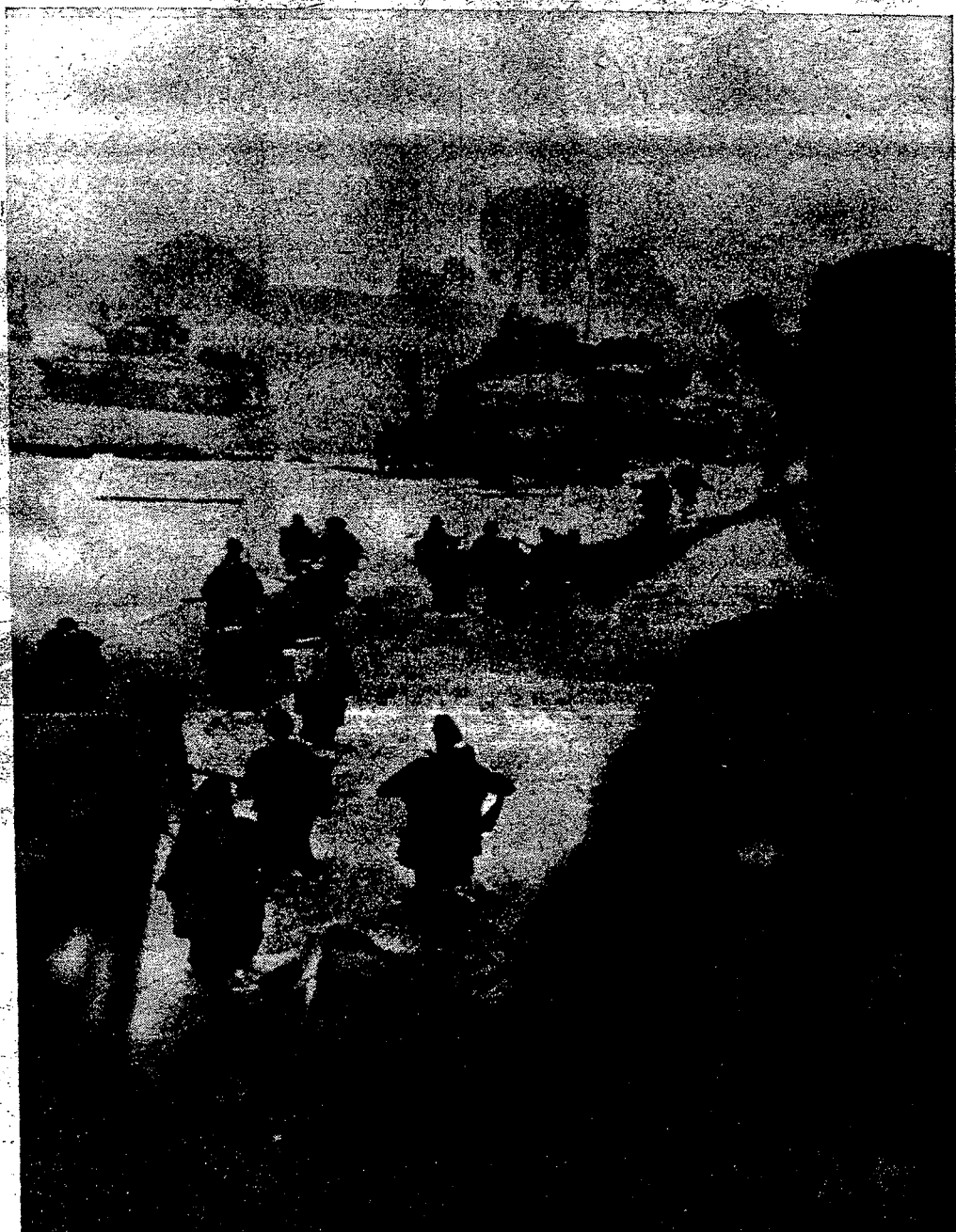


# The Listener

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British soldiers landing on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, 1944. June 6 is the tenth anniversary of D-Day

In this number:

Asia's Leaders in World Politics (Cyril Philips)

Morocco: The End of a Civilisation (Raymond Mortimer)

Gustav Holst: A Great Composer (R. Vaughan Williams, O.M.)

# The Listener

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## The Heart of the Indo-China Problem

By RICHARD SCOTT

**T**HE heart of the Indo-China problem is of course how to put an end to the fighting. One might think this does not sound a difficult problem to settle, provided that both sides, in fact, want a cease-fire. And I think we have to assume that both sides do want it. But the problem is pretty complicated.

In the Indo-China war you cannot agree to have an armistice, fix the time, blow a bugle, and the fighting stops. At least you cannot simply have a cease-fire, and nothing more, because in the Indo-China fighting there is no single front between the two sides. The cease-fire will have to be accompanied by an agreement covering other arrangements.

During early private sessions of the conference, the question of procedure, which largely meant in what order to discuss the various aspects of the problem, was considered. The communists cannot honestly be said to have been particularly intransigent during this procedural discussion, or to have done anything deliberately designed to delay discussion of the substance of the matter. Nevertheless, progress was slow, and the main issue could not, in fact, be settled, and had to be tacitly left aside for the moment. But because this issue is of far more than merely procedural importance, I think it might be as well to outline it briefly. It is inevitably going to crop up again and again throughout the negotiations unless it can finally be settled. The problem is this. The communists, that is the Soviet, Chinese, and Viet-Minh delegations, insist that Indo-China must be treated as a single unity, and that any arrangements agreed on the means of bringing the fighting to an end, and for later bringing about a political settlement, must be applied both as to substance and timing to each of the three Associated States which comprise Indo-China—Laos, Cambodia, and Viet-Nam.

This is fundamentally unacceptable to France, and she is fully supported by the other non-communist delegations here. The French accept that the fighting in Viet-Nam amounts to civil war; they recognise that Ho Chi-minh and his Viet-Minh forces control a large area of the country and enjoy the support of a large section of the population. The situation in the other two states, Laos and Cambodia, is different. Here it is simply a question of straightforward invasion, invasion by the Viet-Minh forces from Viet-Nam, aided by a few

irregular troops, derived largely from small Viet-Minh minorities who have lived in both Laos and Cambodia for quite a long time.

There is no serious pretension by the resistance movements in the two states to govern any part of the two countries though, certainly as far as Laos is concerned, where vast jungle areas are sparsely populated, the legal governments cannot claim to exercise effective control over anything like their whole territories. As far as Laos and Cambodia are concerned, the non-communist delegations are insisting that the only question to discuss is the arrangements for the withdrawal of the Viet-Minh invading forces and the disarming of the irregulars. They demand, therefore, that the question of restoring the peace in Laos and Cambodia must be discussed separately, and on a different basis from the Viet-Nam problem.

At the meeting on May 24 the Ministers agreed on the various other arrangements to accompany a cease-fire on which it would be necessary to reach agreement. Apart from the cease-fire itself, there were six other points. These included the means of ensuring the fulfilment of the armistice terms, international guarantees of the arrangement reached, exchange of prisoners, etc., but the main vital point was on the regrouping of the forces of the two sides into what are called assembly areas or zones of concentration. This regrouping was considered necessary by both sides, because of the absence of any definite front line. There are large areas of Viet-Nam in which it is difficult to say whose authority runs, that of Viet-Minh, or the French and Viet-Name. Sometimes these are fairly effectively controlled by the French Union Forces during daylight hours, and by the Viet-Minh during the hours of darkness. The French also hold the Red River Delta in the north of the country like some great enclave into enemy-held territory, and similarly the Viet-Minh have for long controlled quite a sizable area of rich, rice-growing land in the south, which is completely surrounded by French-controlled territory.

So the French put forward the idea that after the cease-fire the forces of each side should concentrate in defined areas. They should remain there until a political settlement could be put into effect, which would not only restore peace to the country, but also unity. The

# CRITIC ON THE HEARTH

Weekly comments on B.B.C. programmes by independent contributors

## Television Broadcasting

### DOCUMENTARY

#### Sense and Sentiment.

MODERN MAN has the heart of a sentimentalist and the head of a cynic. Inevitably, he is committed to some of the actions of a fool. He invents new forms of devastating explosion and; at the same time, new kinds of aspirin to relieve the resulting headaches. Having set television in motion beyond recall, he is bedevilled by worries about its effects. So we get 'Men Seeking God', the interview with the successful evangelist, the



Father Andrew, a Franciscan friar, reading from the scriptures in the fifth of the series 'Men Seeking God', on May 24

new visual demonstration of Wilfred Pickles' national mateyness, and the heavenly-choir singing that has become a 'must' of even the frivolous of television variety shows.

There is point in mentioning in passing that guilt feelings have not yet pervaded every department of television activity. It was noted here the other day that the business brains of the radio industry were protesting against continuing adverse press comment on the programmes. The radio critic of a well-known provincial newspaper writes to tell me that the leading local dealer accuses him of damaging turnover to the extent of 'hundreds of pounds a year' by telling the truth about the programmes as he sees it. As my correspondent justly observes, the remedy lies elsewhere. He adds: 'Much as one admires the B.B.C., there are times when the television programmes fill one with despair'.

He may have been enheartened, as I was, by the bolder definition of some of last week's programmes. Several soared above the mediocrity that has lately been the prevailing level. The memory of one, a film called 'Back of Beyond', remains in the mind as an unusual television experience, the more so because it was not primarily designed for tele-

vision purposes. 'Back of Beyond' was made by the Shell Film Unit; sponsored, that is to say, and none the worse for it. Put on for Empire Day, it describes a journey into the Australian outback. High-tension emergency and nightmarish monotony are composed into sixty-five minutes of unremitting pictorial excitement. Often frightening, the film is also deeply moving in its expression of courage, endurance, and far-flung neighbourliness. False notes occur, mostly in the re-enacted drama of the two little girls who vanished, utterly, in the sand. The final effect is of a wholly faithful search for truth and much skill in presenting it. The weird, dream quality persists, haunting the memory with pictures of brontosaurus bones rising from the ruthless desert, of trails of skulls, of the golden eyes of the great snake glinting in the headlights of the mail-carrying lorry, of the ghastly timelessness of a lost-world territory through which letters and supplies are carried to the infinitesimal communities of the Birdsville Track. A vividly fascinating film which sheds a forbidding light on Australian realities and darkens one's suspicions of the universe. The lorry driver, wearing his invisible halo of dependability, is a heroic figure. Documentary film has rarely been less self-conscious or more enthralling.

Billy Graham, the preacher, was interviewed for television by the editor of *Punch*: quaint reflection of the dichotomy referred to above. Like the documentary television critic of *THE LISTENER*, Malcolm Muggeridge is not intimidated by the equation of crowd sizes with religious endeavour. He had seen the big Harringay gathering and his subsequent handling of the central figure there was a yardstick for future television interviewing. He asked precisely the questions that any intelligent onlooker would wish to ask in the circumstances and glossed the encounter with a firm civility conceding nothing to emotionalism. Compared with it, the interviews of Christopher Mayhew in the 'Men Seeking God' series were seen to be superficially competent.

That series, now done, promised more weight than it carried. One of its chief effects was to endorse a philosopher's view that it is less important for religion to convince the reason than to capture the imagination. The clearest statements of belief came from the senior Jewish chaplain to the forces and from Father Andrew, speaking for the Franciscans. But the intellectual depth of the various devotees was never sounded by Mayhew, who may believe with them that there is a wisdom not of the mind.

Redolent of good intentions, the Wilfred Pickles programme rested entirely on his inex-

tinguishable geniality, subdued though it seemed at first to be by this new contact with the lenses and the lights. With the arrival of Mabel, his wife, summoned, we were told, by the wish of letter-writing viewers, he bloomed and beamed as of old, making the screen a shrine at which a few million admirers could lay the tribute of their delighted gaze. Sporting the Savage Club tie—a curious anomaly in a club famous for its emphasis on personality—he exuded the very air of friendliness in a characteristic compilation of sentiment and sense. My viewing of the programme was interrupted by dissident cries. We were diners-out at a country house and the attraction of the azalea masses round the lawns was subversive to the Pickles way of life.

'Jewels and History' added to the charms of 'It's a Small World', that delightful series. The dental hypnosis demonstration was a startling television novelty, as every newspaper reader learned the next morning. Dilys Powell, talking about a new film, gave what one hopes was an infectious display of mental poise and verbal felicity. We were given two chances of seeing the tele-recording of part of the Britain v. Hungary football match. Kenneth Wolstenholme's commentary ably reinforced the opportunity to indulge one's masochistic impulses.

REGINALD POUND

### DRAMA

#### Deep Are the Roots

'*Quel dentiste*', exclaimed A. B. Walkley of *Ibsen*, adding 'il n'y a que lui'. Hypnotised like half the nation by the fun of 'Panorama's' painless extraction, followed by Miss Dilys Powell serving up the most thrilling bits of 'The Wages of Fear', I might be forgiven for forgetting two earlier triumphs in the week. These were a neat left and right. Left, and no doubt also discarded in some homes, was Menotti's television opera, 'The Old Maid and the Thief', all about the queer reception of a bad hat at the house of an American lady who somewhat resembled Margaret Rutherford as Miss Prism. The right, dead centre, was a strong *reprise* of a historical invention about the B.B.C.'s favourite historical family, to wit, the Stuarts—but of old pretenders, more later.

I have heard Menotti's opera called sweet and also puerile. His is, I think, an intensely serious nature and this kind of jape, as also the frivolities of Benjamin Britten in such operas as 'Albert Herring', can be thought uncomfortable at close range if you do not happen to find them amusing. More than one colleague has spoken of embarrassment: but this is to be expected.

Our nation, which once led the world in song, is now bitterly ashamed of song, the hall-mark of the drunkard. 'Switch her off quick' and 'Blimey, if he starts to sing again, I'll . . .', followed by a nameless threat, are the usual reactions to human song.

Yet the idea of ballad opera persists and a 'musical', provided it is of American origin with the love lyrics sung in something safely transatlantic, is still one of the surest draws at the box office. Well, here the setting at least was American; and the silly little story of the old maid's infatuation, and the young



As seen by the viewer: dental hypnosis in 'Panorama' on May 26—three taps and the patient is asleep, and (right) the patient talking to Max Robertson after awakening

Photographs: John Cura



Scene from 'The Old Maid and the Thief', an opera by Gian-Carlo Menotti, on May 24, with (left to right) Gwen Catley as Lactitia, Marie Powers as Miss Todd, and Laurie Payne as Bob

maid's song while she ironed the tramp's trousers (or 'pressed the bum's pants' if we ought to have it in American) was all homely, even folksy. Besides, the incursions of the neighbour, a spectacled owl of a matron out of a drawing by the late Helen Hokenson, were clearly unpretentious and kept the piece anchored to drawing-room farce. But Menotti's touch is less light here than in 'The Telephone', and the quasi-Puccinian *parlante* style, in English, sounds oddly as if it had been translated. Everybody who knows Puccini in English knows those dragging, overweighted, oddly stressed gobblets of conversation: sample, 'Get along with you, now, you laz-ybones!' We seemed to be hearing a lot of that. However Gwen Catley, Marie Powers, Elena Danieli and Laurie Payne (who might have strayed in from 'Oklahoma') did it all enthusiastically; Stanford Robinson had the music well in hand and reasonably light in hand; and Christian Simpson—if I make exception for the filmed sequences which did not blend—provided as continuously interesting a picture as circumstances allowed.

For 'Count Albany', the historical invention about 'Prince Charles Edward' in exile, a really hard-hitting cast had been assembled. When you get in conjunction three such good actors as Sonia Dresdel, Paul Rogers, and Stephen Murray—and, of course, a playwright who knows his business—the result can remove all doubts about television as a dramatic medium. We are moved, quite deeply, at last. Donald Carswell's piece has been televised before and the knowledge that there is a potential success there naturally brings out the best. Rudolph Cartier's production was admirable. Surely, history might always be treated on this level—or must we go on with games like 'You Were There'? 'Count Albany' made amends for those scenes at Fotheringay last week.

And so from Stuart back to Montrose and Buchan's lowlands of 1645 with 'Witch Wood'

and the righteous smiting the supposedly ungodly hip and thigh, putting their babes to the sword, or better still, tying up old women by the thumbs and burning their feet till they confessed to consorting with the devil. Not a flattering picture of the Kirk militant, except for the staunch Rev. David Sempill who stressed the importance of mercy, not sacrifice; and not a consoling experience for those who know that witch hunting still has its outbreaks. Deep are the roots, indeed. And not only in 'Witch Wood'! This adaptation of the Buchan novel by Donald Wilson (who introduced it himself) was a pleasant change after so many

and no doubt left her mark on the acting, which was admirable: beside Mr. Fleming, especially Moultrie Kelsall, John Laurie, and Alastair Hunter. If only the climax between Sempill and Caird could have been a fraction better timed: on Thursday it perhaps will be.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

## Sound Broadcasting

### DRAMA

#### Alive and Dead

AND NOW WE MUST have the private life of Stephen Shewin. I can hardly wait for it. Henry Reed, who has discovered these curious people—clearly they have been hovering, in a lather of excitement, to come to the microphone—has just reached the story of Hilda Tablet. A very fine story it is. When it appears in print, if poor Herbert Reeve is still alive, it will run into twelve volumes—though that, as Reeve murmured in the plaintive, melancholy-desperate tones of Hugh Burden, must be years and years ahead. Years and years.

You must forgive me. I may be talking to myself, and you may not have met these people. I hope you have. It is eight months since Henry

Reed, in the Third, had his joke at the expense of the conscientious, burrowing biographer. The resolute Reeve looked for the facts beneath the work of the poets' novelist, Richard Shewin, and, in the course of his researches, he met the most extraordinary bevy of personages on and around the comic literary fringe. At the time I liked the 'composers', Hilda Tablet. Now Herbert, even fainter than before, but still pursuing, has saddled himself with another assignment.

The title, 'The Private Life of Hilda Tablet' (Third Programme), says just what has happened. In seeking Shewin, poor Reeve has found Hilda coiling herself furiously about his neck. He is hers for ever, and it is going to be a ticklish journey. As someone observes, it needs tact to write the biography of a living subject. And Hilda is living. Undeniably. Her all-women opera, 'Emily Butter', 'embraces the whole of music'; she has written a quintet for eight instruments ('a lot of instruments for a quintet, I freely



'Count Albany' on May 25, with (left to right) Walter Gotell as a 'Strange Gentleman', James Sutherland as Father Mackintosh, Sonia Dresdel as Clementina Walkinshaw, Paul Rogers as Cardinal York, and Stephen Murray as Prince Charles Edward

thin plays: it had character, feeling, bite, and in Tom Fleming a protagonist who carried complete conviction as far as this viewer was concerned. It is a long time since I saw an allegedly 'historical' character who really looked like one and not merely like an actor in a wig. Up to and including the torture of the old Bessie Todd, and the appearance of the plague, the adaptation kept a steady pressure of excitement. Then, probably because there was need to make haste—since the nation had still to be put to bed with a guitar recital and a sermon—the rhythm broke up jerkily and one felt events were telescoped and tidied up with unnatural speed. A 'romance' which had never quite been in place stuck out as conventional. Apart from some over-swift cutting, the handling of the material was fine. Dennis Vance produced and to him presumably we owe the continuously interesting visual composition. Chloë Gibson directed



Tom Fleming as the Rev. David Sempill (left) and Moultrie Kelsall as the Rev. Mungo Muirhead in 'Witch Wood', on May 30



grant you'); and she seems to have a passion for adding to her works: at least, to works about her. The idea is simple when it begins: 'A couple of fellows called Faber and Faber are, after my life—only 350 pages, by this autumn'. But, a few months on, she has resolved, and Herbert has agreed—could he have done otherwise?—that the biography shall be in twelve volumes. It is to have Epic Scope (no doubt Cinemascope as well, if things go much further).

Once more Mr. Reed has written with the sharpest, wittiest point. Some of his people are old friends; I plead—see first sentence—for a third instalment devoted to Stephen Shewin, who still lives, with his wife, in the cat-filled house, shooting his phrases (thanks to Carleton Hobbs) like poison-tipped arrows. But there are new pleasures also. We meet the Librettist, who finds Hilda a trifle vexing. Has she not changed the original story of 'Emily Butter', set in the sixteenth century on a boat anchored off Rimini, to something about the bargain basement of a department store? Then there is the vicar of Mull Extrinseca ('We rub along, you know'), who is delighted that Hilda's embalmed feet are to be preserved in the church—in due course. There is the Duchess who begins every sentence with 'One wonders', and who can wonder to surprising effect. There is the Viennese singer who has not yet said 'Goodnight, Vienna', though all her attempts to get home are thwarted.

And there is always, and massively, our old acquaintance Hilda herself (Mary O'Farrell), to explain that 'Music fell for me; I was flirting with architecture at the time', or else that she is neither the marrying sort of girl nor a girl who is easily offended. Please don't mind my saying it, she begins briskly, and at once a storm-cone is hoisted. Mr. Burden is a dolorous joy: then, most of this effort is a joy, though I think Hilda's speech-to-her old school goes on too long at the end. We know her reasonably well by then, and some of her effects are expected.

Still the 'Life', which was produced by Douglas Cleverdon, is a cheerful find for what Mr. Reeve-Burden calls 'the ever-admirable Third Programme'. Now let us have a few more poisoned arrows from Stephen Shewin. And his wife, I am sure, can be helpfully elaborated.

I confess that I laughed more at Hilda and Herbert than at 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' (ever-admirable Third), though the cast—under Raymond Raikes—fought hard to be 'right pithy, pleasant, and merry'. It was gallant of the Third to do this, one of the earliest comedies in the language. I cannot feel that 'Mr. S., Master of Arts' was really a radio-dramatist; but the man would have been delighted, I dare say, to mark the vigour with which the cast spoke his rude couplets.

It is all slapstick in word and deed, and Bernard Miles' Diccon, 'the Bedlam', was a good flagon of ale with a head on it. Vivienne Chatterton discovered the proper notes for the Gammer's anguish. We are glad to have had the curio dusted. Now 'Mr. S.' can nestle back on his shelf, a happy man. He may not be disturbed much more.

In what I have heard so far of the duologue-serial, 'These Quickening Years' (Light), Gladys Young and Laidman Browne are extricating themselves with dignity from a thicket of clichés. Norman Ginsbury's 'The Queen's Necklace' (Home) was a most dexterously managed drama from pre-Revolution Versailles (Peggy Thorpe-Bates gave a redoubtable performance here); but, having allowed Miss Tablet too much elbow-room, I must return to France (and to the Irish-accented 'King Oedipus') next week.

J. C. TREWIN

## THE SPOKEN WORD

### The Good Teacher

THE FIRST REQUIREMENT in a teacher is that he shall catch and hold the interest of his pupils, and the more forbidding his theme the more enticement he must offer. A case in point last week was a Third Programme talk called 'Language and Logic', by G. J. Warnock. It was prompted by a new book by P. F. Strawson called *An Introduction to Logical Theory*. My approach to this talk followed a curiously zigzag course. The title attracted me. It seemed possible, for instance, that it might show the very different steps by which English, Arab, and Eskimo debaters arrive at an identical conclusion. Then I read the note under the title and the mention of 'logical theory' put me abruptly into reverse, because nowadays I have neither time nor desire to dabble—and it could only be dabbling—in logical theory. But when Mr. Warnock began to talk, his leisurely speech and wonderful lucidity at once caught my interest: but, alas, the first mention of 'symbolic logic' drove me away again. But there is an irresistible fascination in listening to a skilful talker expounding an abstruse theme in terms which can be grasped by the uninitiated, and soon I was totally absorbed not only in the way Mr. Warnock was talking but in what he was talking about. If I were half the age I am, I would probably have lost no time in securing Mr. Strawson's book.

At the opposite pole to this talk was the first in the new series called 'Experimental Psychology', on 'Motivation', by Antony Deutsch. There was nothing abstruse about this. Mr. Deutsch spoke about some of the current views on 'instinctive' behaviour and various experiments by which these views have been tested. Now I was all agog to be interested in this; yet I found it almost impossible to follow the talk because of the total absence of enticement in its presentation. What we were offered, in fact, was information in its most arid form, as in Bradshaw's Railway Guide, and this, unless I am already well up in the subject, is for me unassimilable. Mr. Deutsch might justly reply to such a criticism that he was talking to specialists and not to the likes of me, to which I could only reply that what I look for in a talk is not only the words spoken but the art of the spoken word.

Last week, in the second talk of this series—'Perception'—Alan Watson distinguished between the psychological and philosophical consideration of perception and then described experiments which seemed to point to the influence of learning or experience on perception as opposed to the Gestalt theories. He was much kinder than his predecessor to his unprofessional listeners, but when he finally declared that we know no more than before the experiments were made, I was left with the feeling that I had put a penny in the slot and got nothing in return.

To criticise 'The Critics' is always, I feel, a somewhat ticklish job, because I suspect that sometimes a failure to appreciate their performance is as much my fault as theirs. When listening I can usually adapt myself to the occasion, but I have my less elastic moods when to hear a pack of people setting up (some of them with minds no better than mine, to put it generously) as arbiters of the elegancies rouses me to a regrettable intolerance. And there have been occasions when the fault has lain entirely with the team. I have approached them in a bland, receptive mood and come away bored. More than once in the past months 'The Critics' have seemed to me below par. But last week I struck a first-rate team (minds highly superior to mine) at the top of their form. They showed that quality I mentioned just now of the good teacher. And teachers they were, in my case, since they discussed themes not one of which I had read,

seen, or heard, and they kept my interest alive from first to last. More, they offered a stimulating diversity of opinion which was far more illuminating than the tepid agreement which tells the listener little or nothing. Rose Macaulay and Freda Bruce Lockhart, each with her sharp intelligence and views uncompromisingly her own, make a lively contrast, and they and Alan Pryce-Jones, Colin MacInnes, and Eric Keown instructed and entertained me lavishly. Sir Gerald Barry, who presided, has all the virtues of the good bus conductor: he exerts his authority so tactfully that he seems to be one of the passengers rather than the official in charge, and this greatly adds to the pleasure of the journey.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG

## MUSIC

### The State of Denmark

IN SPITE of air travel, radio, and the interchange of musicians between the countries of Europe, there are still occasional blind-spots in our experience. One of these has until the last year or two been Denmark. The impact of Carl Nielsen's Fifth Symphony when it was played at Edinburgh under Erik Tuxen, suddenly awoke the realisation that a composer of considerable stature had lived a full span of life and died twenty years before the musical public in this country became aware of his mere existence. The recent broadcast of that remarkable symphony with its prophetic vision of a world-wide convulsion, which makes it comparable with Vaughan Williams' Fourth, revived one's interest and admiration for the composer. Composing it at a time when Stravinsky was the dominating influence in Europe, Nielsen seems to have worked out his own way of liberating rhythm. Indeed in this work he instructs the drummer at times to improvise and 'interrupt' the flow of the music, like a dance-band player. Impressive as this symphony is, however, the comparison with Vaughan Williams' Fourth makes it appear a work of lesser stature.

Nielsen's own Fourth Symphony, entitled 'The Inextinguishable', which I heard last week in the beautiful concert-hall of the Danish Broadcasting House in Copenhagen—it may have reached some listeners in this country—is a better composition. Written during the war of 1914-18 it was inspired by a conviction of man's unquenchable spirit, and the victory over adversity is proclaimed in a remarkable peroration in which two sets of timpani placed on either side of the hall answer one another. This is an effect which can, perhaps, only be fully realised in a 'live' performance; at least it has never made the same impression in the broadcast or recorded performances I have heard. Apart from this it was good to hear the magnificent Danish State Radio Orchestra in its own hall, and to be able to appreciate to the full the firm string-tone and the excellence of the wood-winds, who also distinguished themselves in Nielsen's Wind Quintet which I heard at another concert.

In our own B.B.C. programme, Nielsen's Fifth Symphony was preceded by his First, composed in 1892, and the Flute Concerto which belongs to his last years. The First Symphony is a most original work, when its date is taken into account. Written seven years before Sibelius' first essay in symphony, it shows, despite indebtedness to Brahms, a more distinct individuality, though in that respect the Finn overtook the Dane when he composed his Second Symphony.

The Concerto offered a different aspect of Nielsen's character—his fantastic humour and love of absurdity or 'nonsense' in the sense understood by Lear and Lewis Carroll. This trait in his music seems to be characteristically Danish, if one may judge from the delightful

figures with which they decorate some of their pottery and china, or from the gay inventions of the Tivoli Gardens.

Nielsen's influence upon the present generation of Danish composers, which is rich in talent, is evident in the music of Vagn Holmboe, whose melodious Second Quartet I heard in Copenhagen and whose Third Quartet appears in the current week's programmes. His rhythmic invention has borne new fruit in Herman Koppel's 'Three Psalms of David', which was sung by the Danish State Radio Choir with the Symphony Orchestra at the concert broadcast from

Copenhagen. This is a powerful and original work, comparable in theme but in no other way with Stravinsky's 'Symphony of Psalms'. The Psalms, Nos. 13, 23, and 150, are set (in Latin) for tenor solo, chorus (with boys' voices added at the climaxes of the first and third), and full orchestra. The second Psalm ('The Lord is my shepherd') is set as a tenor solo, restrained and impersonal in feeling and in the euphonious style of Nielsen's characteristic melodies.

I think Herman Koppel's name has appeared in our programmes, though I fear I have missed the performances. The 'Psalms' and his Second

String Quartet, which was played by the Koppel Quartet during last week's Festival, suggest that he is a composer who should be more fully explored. The 'Psalms', composed five years ago and inspired by thankfulness for deliverance from the German occupation, are his Opus 48; so there is plenty to explore. From all I saw and heard, including some pianoforte music and a highly successful ballet by Niels Viggo Bentzen and a gay little opera by Svend Erik Tarp, it appears that the musical state of Denmark is remarkably healthy.

DANIEL HUSSEY

## Berlioz and the French Revolution

By J. H. ELLIOT

The 'Symphonie funebre et triomphale' will be broadcast at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday, June 12 (Third)

**B**ERLIOZ was a child of the French Revolution—literally, because he was born in the month *frimaire* of the year 12 (that is to say, December, 1803) and spiritually, because he was young enough to come under its almost direct influence during impressionable years. No doubt the deepest impress made on the composer's work was the result of the aftermath, the reaction, in which upheaval, violence, and nightmare were, so to say, translated into the world of ideas, to emerge as typical French romanticism.

But the Revolution had other, if more superficial, effects on Berlioz—among them his leaning towards the cult of the colossal and his occasional urge to experiment with *musique populaire*. Latter-day Berlioz criticism, correctly and correctly, has tended to put the emphasis on his essential fastidiousness and classical restraint, and to point out the miracles of delicacy in his music. To the end, however, he was haunted by visions of the fabulous, derived almost certainly from the enormous festivals of the Revolution and the years that followed. In such works as the Requiem, the Te Deum, and the Funeral and Triumphant Symphony, the effects are plain to see, irrespective of the composer's explicit design—never realised, of course—for an ideal festival body consisting of 360 singers and 467 instrumentalists. The obsession also took other and less obvious forms. There may have been absurdity in the special score of the accompaniment of the song, 'The Captive', for a large double festival orchestra, but the impulse was sometimes curiously sublimated, as in the episode of the wooden horse in 'The Trojans'. Moreover, even with restricted means and restraint of style, Berlioz often conveyed an impression of enormous space. There are subtle implications of size in numerous pages of the Requiem during which the big battalions are in fact held in reserve.

The Revolution left an extraordinary legacy. Its legislators, following a not unfamiliar political pattern, were zealous in the organisation of vast patriotic demonstrations in which music played a prominent part. The composers of the day were called upon—not only the young men but also such older and more responsible hands as Gossec and Dalayrac and mature artists of the calibre of Méhul. There were outdoor celebrations with great assemblies of wind instruments, percussion, and sometimes cannon. Special songs were written to commemorate the fall of the Bastille, to laud agriculture, and to extol reason—and of course liberty, equality, and fraternity. Even the gentle Grétry became Citizen Grétry, composer of national hymns and eventually a superintendent of the Conservatoire, founded by the National Convention. But he shrank from the horrors of the revolution itself and, as far as its music was concerned, commented drily upon the

ever-increasing size of his colleagues' conceptions.

A kind of artistic madness was afoot—in part, perhaps, the artists' own protection against lurking tragedy and stalking fear. Méhul and Gossec in particular became intoxicated by dreams of the gargantuan. The realities were grotesque enough. Gossec's *Tuba mirum*, with its multiple orchestras, was highly popular; for a Te Deum he demanded fifty serpents and battalions of side-drums. Méhul's celebration of the momentous July 14 called for two orchestras and three choruses. Robespierre himself set the seal on it all with his Festival of the Supreme Being. All Paris was ordered to participate, and for the prompting of the 100,000 singers, composers and other musicians went out to the people in their own streets evening after evening.

Nor did the passing of the Revolution see the end of it. During Easter 1802, Notre Dame was the scene of a service to commemorate the restoration of national religious observance. There were two orchestras, conducted by Méhul and Cherubini, and the arrival of the consuls was hailed by shimmering fanfares from a military band stationed in the choir. Lesueur, favourite of Napoleon, introduced the augmented orchestra into French church music. Lesueur was a teacher of Berlioz. So was Prague-born Anton Reicha, who, though he once said that he had 'never been interested in writing for popular demand', planned vast out-door works of festival character—among them wind music for bands divided into separate ensembles. Reicha visited Paris for a year or two at the close of the eighteenth century and settled there for good in 1808. He was a startling theorist, and he too had his ideal orchestra of 200, including twelve kettledrums on which chords were to be played (an effect actually employed by him in a choral work). Berlioz paid tribute to this remarkable man, but omitted to mention the kettledrum hint or otherwise to acknowledge the full extent of his indebtedness.

Berlioz, however, sifted the components of his inheritance and methodically sorted them into order. His superior musician's instinct guided him to find reasonable proportions and effective instrumental blends. It was not sufficient, he realised, merely to augment; nor was it the sole function of a vast ensemble to create a tremendous sound. The band or orchestra, however huge, must be carefully assembled and its parts sensitively balanced. Granting these conditions, there would be not only an awe-inspiring crescendo 'like a tremendous conflagration', but the 'repose' of the great ensemble would be 'majestic as the slumber of the mighty seas'.

Moreover, even this monumental music was meant only for the enclosed arena, with adequate reverberators. There is no such thing, said Berlioz, as outdoor music. None the less, he accepted a few commissions for works of the

kind, the most important of which resulted in the 'Symphonie funebre et triomphale'. As for artistic scruples, there was no one better qualified than Berlioz to make the best of a bad job, and incidentally the inclusive fee of 10,000 francs offered by the Minister of the Interior was a godsend to a composer still, in 1840, struggling for a secure foothold. The occasion was the reinterment of patriots of the 1830 revolution in a tomb below the column erected to their memory in the Place de la Bastille.

Berlioz composed a triptych consisting of a solemn march for the procession, a funeral oration to be played during the actual burial, and an 'apotheosis' as a hymn of praise. The composer selected a wind band as most suitable for his purpose and scored for over 100 woodwind and brass, with a heavy array of percussion. There are *ad libitum* string parts in the first and last movements and a choir is called upon in the 'Apotheosis'. Instinctively Berlioz aimed at breadth and simplicity of style and a homophonic texture. The first movement has its deliberate tread; the oration, with its declamation for solo trombone, rhetorical impressiveness; and the finale, after an opening fanfare, a strong and steady swing. There is no actual quick movement, and Jacques Barzun has done well to deprecate the modern practice of treating the 'Apotheosis' too smartly. Berlioz' direction is *allegro non troppo e pomposo*, and the true character of the music is lost if the tempo is over-brisk.

The Symphony has been given short shrift by numerous modern critics. But it must be remembered that it is, by design, *musique populaire*. It should not be judged by the standards of the classical concert symphony, or indeed the Berliozian romantic symphony. If it has little subtlety or philosophical depth; it has a reverent solemnity appropriate to a popular celebration of grave character. This aspect of the music, perhaps a little misunderstood today, impressed itself on distinguished observers in 1840. Berlioz, foreseeing all too accurately a fiasco on the actual occasion, arranged a general rehearsal in the Salle Vivienne, and issued special invitations to notabilities then in Paris—among them Chopin and Wagner. Wagner, in his despatch to the German paper of which he was a correspondent, wrote of Berlioz' gift for 'popular writing of the best kind', and said that every urchin in a red bonnet and a blue blouse would understand the music. Adolphe Adam praised the symphony because, after much bewilderment over Berlioz' previous works, he understood it himself!

Many composers of the nineteenth century were able, as some of our own contemporaries are not, to keep in touch with ordinary cultivated taste. Berlioz could go further when the spirit moved him, and without loss of dignity make himself intelligible to the lay masses. It was no contemptible gift.