



Mahler's Mighty Symphony and Jazz

By THE MUSIC EDITOR

BOSTON devotes most of a huge page in the Saturday Transcript to what the head-lines call Mahler's Manifold and Mighty Symphony of Life, Death and Resurrection; or in other words, Man, Mind, Moods and Medium fused into Music at White Heat. This is by way of announcing that the Mahler work would be given on the following Tuesday by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It seems the super-orchestra was used for the occasion. In addition to the usual string body, which must be as large as possible and must possess double-basses with the deep C-string, Mahler demands four flutes, all of which have to play piccolo at one time and another; four oboes, two of which exchange with English horns; two small E-flat clarinets; three ordinary clarinets; a bass clarinet; four bassoons, two of which have to keep a double-bassoon warm between them; six horns in the orchestra and four behind the stage; six trumpets in the orchestra and four behind the stage, two of whom, however, may save money to their employer by a willing use of shoe-leather; four trombones; a tuba of the deepest-dyed bass-ness; two sets of kettledrums, with as many drummers; bass drum; cymbals; high tam-tam; deep tam-tam; triangle; military drum, if possible reinforced by several others; little bells; three large bells; ruthe (a bundle of light rods swished over a drum-head); bass drum, kettle-drum, and triangle behind the stage; and organ.

Lucky Boston—to be all there after it was done.

Strauss is not the only super-dynamic modern composer. Such an orchestra was devised by a man who knew what he wanted; "a personality in life," says the writer, "unbelievably dynamic. I saw him in Rome in the spring of 1910, when he was conducting a few symphony concerts. The orchestra was far from adequate to Mahler's exacting standards of interpretation; but under his vigorous and compelling leadership it played several degrees better than its real best. By the second concert, however, under the provocation of remarks which they could not relish—I believe Mahler celebrated a particularly bad rehearsal by calling them a lot of bootblacks—they plucked up enough courage to conspire against him, and brought a number to grief."

What of the symphony? Prodigious as may be imagined. Reviewers have wrangled over it, as to whether his treatment of the symbolism of resurrection should be regarded as Catholic, Protestant, Judaic, early Pagan, neo-Darwinian, materialistic, spiritualistic, pantheistic, nihilistic, ideal, literal, hyperbolic, diabolic, satiric, lyric, angelic or commercially strategic.

Mahler is dead now. He was a Bohemian Jew who spent most of his musical life in Vienna, and in later years became conductor of the Philharmonic in New York, where he died in 1911 from an extensive combination of diseases caused by such things as his second symphony.

NOW, what in the name of ragtime and razoo is Jazz music? A long spiel from the New York Sun on this subject says in the headline, **JAZZ MUSIC A WEIRD MEDLEY.**

Whatever it is, New York seems to have it. No fear. Spanish dancers are not necessarily the latest.

Jazz music, wherever it was, in a rathskeller or up on a roof garden or at Carnegie Hall—no, not there, neither at the Metropolitan—seems to have sent the Sun man, F. T. Vreeland, off into a day-dream. Here is what he succeeds in getting out of his system, and this brief extract will give an average Canadian reader a foretaste of what may be coming over here some day if we keep on opening imitation cabarets:

The young man with a face that seems to have grown florid from blowing his cornet to the point of apoplexy looks around at his handful of fellow players commandingly and begins thumping earnestly with his fashionably shod foot and instantly the whole pack is in full cry. The musical riot that breaks forth from clarinet, trombone, cornet, piano, drum and variants of tin pan instruments resembles nothing so much as a chorus of hunting hounds on the scent, with an occasional explosion in the sub-way thrown in for good measure.

It is all done in correct time—there is no fault to be found with the rhythm of it. Even though the cornetist is constantly throwing in flourishes of his own and every once in a while the trombonist gets excited about something and takes it out on the instrument, their tapping feet never miss step. The notes may blat and collide with a jar, but their pulses blend perfectly. In fact, they frequently inject beats of their own between the main thumps just to make it harder for themselves, yet they're always on time to the dot when the moment arrives for the emphatic crash of notes.

On the dancing floor of the restaurant the couples gyrate with every sign of satisfaction, though there is no evidence that they have cotton in their ears. They

smile happily as they dip and sway, holding each other after the most approved jiu-jitsu principles. Fox trots and one-steps are the dances they are supposed to be executing, but fired by the liberties that the players take with the old masters of ragtime the dancers improvise squiggings and shruggings of their own that are not in the original one-step text books. Some of them seem to progress backward simply by a method of wriggling the ankles.

Now the clarinet is yelping like a dog that hasn't fetcherized a bone sufficiently. This inspires the cornetist to frenzy and he hands a tin box on the end of the horn. The ensuing noise is something like the buzzing rattle of a machine gun, only not so musical.

Not to be outdone, the trombonist inserts the end of the instrument into a large tin can, producing similar sawmill sounds. The violinists saw away in a paroxysm, throwing their bows in the air and catching them; the pianist beats the baby grand into insensibility; the drummer vents his spleen on the cymbals, throws his sticks into the air, and celebrates his feat of catching them on the wing by welting the kettle drum and the bass drum simultaneously, and the selection expires in a grand final cataclysm.

At the Concert

RESERVE is a good thing in music—sometimes. Many soloists and a number of choruses and orchestras we have heard go right to pieces the moment they throw off their reserve. Abandon is not possible to all artists. A chorus often does wonders on soft music and shows terrible weakness on a fortissimo. Only the greatest organizations in the world can cover the entire range of expression equally well.

This is by way of intimating that the National Chorus concert recently given in Toronto with Margaret Keyes as soloist was one of the most evenly delightful pro-

grammes of the sort ever put on in that connection. For quality of tone the chorus hold its own, which is a good deal. Thanks to a bad seat near the tenor end the writer heard mostly tenor and soprano with a muffled background of bass and contralto. But the quality was always fine. The unaccompanied work was suave and gracious. There was of course no orchestra, and that hampered the choir's range of work. The unaccom-

panied numbers were of a great variety, sentimental, descriptive, and heroic and patriotic. There were no thrills anywhere. The chorus spoke in well-modulated terms to music. It was an essentially polite performance, replete with all sorts of fine musical suggestions. It is merely a matter of taste, perhaps, that one should now and then prefer a cold creep at the roots of the hair. Dr. Ham prefers not to indulge it. He knows what he is after; a sane, cool-headed interpretation of as much British stuff as possible, devoid of hysterics or big moments. Of such a programme he is a master.

His augmented choir of boys spent half an hour very agreeably on the cantata *The Walrus and the Carpenter*; a tuneful, agreeable thing that never rose above the level of pleasantness and peace. Dr. Ham is an authority on boys' voices. He gets effects that are quite characteristic; far different from those obtained by Father Finn as described in a former issue. The boys sang with a natural tone and with fine uniformity. But here again they never lifted anybody.

Miss Margaret Keyes gave a very finished performance. She is described as a contralto. Evidently she is a mezzo. When she first sang with the National Chorus about ten years ago, then a pupil of Dr. Ham, she was a mezzo soprano. Time has deepened her voice and experience has given her a matured sense of artistry that never offends. She is a Canadian singer who has done and is still doing her share to uphold Canada's prestige abroad as a land of potential music.

ERNEST SEITZ gave his second recital for this season a few days ago. His programme was a skilful presentation of some of the best styles in which he is becoming a master. Two years ago he

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The Concert Gown's Conge

OF all singers who had reason to appear in short skirts Trilby was the chief. Here she is, or as she was when impersonated two seasons ago by Phyllis Neilson-Terry, who reappeared in Canada week before last in a new English play "Maggie." She was the finest Trilby ever known, because she can sing. Trilby had as much reason to be proud of her feet as a danseuse. Yet she persisted in a long train capable of concealing a hundred feet. The concert-stage train is long out of date now. Some of our soloists now are coming out in street-length skirts. And some of them, alas! have no Trilbies to exhibit. Such is art.

