The Munich Element in Richard Strauss
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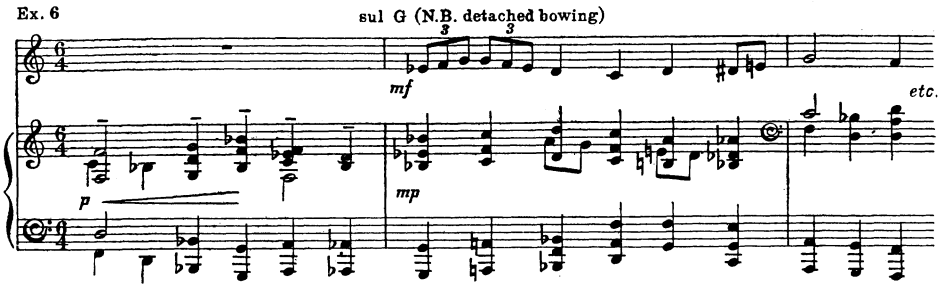
Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 76, No. 1103 (Jan., 1935), pp. 20-21
Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/949117
Accessed: 08-11-2017 01:43 UTC

Ex. 6



The charge of writing a tune for its beauty's sake and not for its capabilities in development cannot be levelled at the theme of the last movement, which is a most fortunate choice. Like some of Brahms's luckier tunes, it is useful as well as beautiful. Hence it is developed on almost classical lines, and even has a little second subject. So far from having bad joins, this third movement shows an almost Elgarian continuity and exhilaration. The final cadence even suggests Brahms.

It remains to explain the curious interpolation marked ' Slow and mysterious ' just before the last lap. It is one of those passages which have a hundred different meanings for a hundred different men. It is analogous to the sudden solemnity of the chorale, played by trombones, which occurs at a similar point in Brahms's first Symphony. Some may accept such a passage as mere caprice ; to others it may serve as a symbol of what Johnson might have called ' the solemn thoughts of futurity and destiny which rise momentarily to the surface during the most animated activities ' ; others may liken it to the slumber of a humming top before its last dither and fall, or to the candle's low burning before its final flare ; some, with a morbid turn of mind may think of a dying man taking sleep before his last relapse. But whatever we come to think of the passage, ultimately we accept its grim contrast as something which is artistically right.

Looking at the Sonata as a whole, we feel (as perhaps we do of Elgar's first Symphony) that although it is not so perfect as its successor, yet it has between its covers more of the composer's self-revelation. There is a charm of a similar nature about an English cathedral, with its nooks and chantries added at various periods regardless of changing styles —a charm which tourists do not find in the magnificent continental churches, whose wealth enabled them to be built in one style throughout. So this Sonata, a museum, or rather a garden, of Delian procedure, if not a perfect example of his craftsmanship, becomes a work which to know is to love.

(To be continued)

The Munich Element in Richard Strauss

[From the pamphlet ' Richard Strauss und seine Vaterstadt,' reproduced by kind permission of the Verlag Knorr und Hirth, Munich.]

By WILLI SCHMID*

RICHARD Strauss is a true son of Munich. His father, court musician, player of the French horn, anti-Wagnerian of the 'eighties ; his mother, a Pschorr by birth ; his first publisher, a nephew of Spitzweg—a true son of Munich, also, in the opposition of relations and friends to a young man who reads the revolutionaries from Stirner to Nietsche, and after the first classical steps in composition fashions for himself the most daring scores.

He has many of the Munich virtues, and but few of our failings. He has the independence of one who soon knows his own worth, the self-will of one who has no wish to play the misunderstood prophet in his native city. In the opera ' Feuersnot ' he settles his accounts with his critics in a charming but decisive manner. Conquering the world with the tenacity of genius, he finds a home for his work in Dresden, for his life in Vienna, and his Bavarian home in Garmisch. Then Munich claims her famous son once more, with honourable recognition ; and he returns, without complaint, without irony.

One cannot speak of the part alone : one must speak of the whole. It is impossible to speak of the Munich element without touching on the Bavarian. The Old Bavarian Strauss is of that German stock whose settlements stretch from the Bohemian Forest to the Karawanken Alps, from the Iller to Hungary. This stock has been, since the earliest days, plastic in nature and of manifold musical gifts. Gluck and Reger of the Upper Palatinate, Haydn of the Bürgenland, Mozart the

* A note on Dr. Schmid will be found on p. 55.

Salzburger, Bruckner the Austrian, Schubert the Viennese—different as are their manifestations, it is the same blood which flows in them all. The manifestation of Richard Strauss provides a remarkable breadth of variation from the basic type of the Bavarian stock. This is his peculiar gift.

The utterances of Strauss cover almost every condition and stage of the spiritual life of a Bajuwar.* The pendulum of this life swings between Munich and Vienna. So also with Richard Strauss's music. It speaks the rougher Munich dialect, the softer Viennese tone, with a clear, refreshing truth.

The intimacy of this music delights us. Where it is cheerful, light, and of a gay charm, it touches us directly; we feel the cheerful sound of our neighbour's voice, our 'Herr Nachbar,' with the emphasis at least as much on the *Herr* as on the *Nachbar*. This music reveals its own spirit, without the need to write much of it, for it is self-evident. A certain rude bashfulness of heart is rooted in the sons of Munich, a certain gentle sympathy indispensable for the Viennese. In his 'Intermezzo,' in 'The Rosenkavalier' and 'Arabella,' Strauss presents both with the universality of one who knows the soul of mankind.

He is thus a realist. He has no system, no philosophy; his purposes are not written upon his lips. He is positive, and takes life as it is. He creates his model (of painting there is but the background); he is plastic, as his stock everywhere is plastic, creative in expression. Scepticism and humour, satire of heart and intellect are the keynotes of his work. There is much joking and comfortable laughter, and at times a smile of friendship or sadness. This Bajuwar is no ethical moralist. The *bêtises* of Oscar Wilde lose their sting and their poison in the music of Strauss. The psychological extravagances of Hofmannsthal are embraced by the musician with a great kindness and straightforward superiority. This superiority is implicit in the peculiar form, the Munich type of his irony. It strikes, it unmasks, but never wounds. It has no desire to wound. And in the midst of his irony, in the 'Domestic' Symphony, in 'Don Quixote,' in the 'Intermezzo,' in 'The Rosenkavalier,' there is a glimpse of simple, charming, candid melody.

The lyric note, however—and this is most truly Munich—is not in the foreground. In general, it is found only when needed. Of a sudden, with this outwardly passionate man, tragedy is present in all its splendour. There is the touch of magnificence in the macabre relentlessness of 'Electra.' Of all the surprises which Richard Strauss prepares for us, this is perhaps the greatest.

In Strauss, Munich has triumphed over Vienna. This is a colossal triumph. The letters exchanged between Strauss and Hofmannsthal show this better than can any commentary. Masculine quiet and coolness, a clear sober judgment on the one side; and on the other, the feminine, poet's excitability—a classic instance for a contrast between Münchner and Viennese. They meet on a higher plane in the cheerful melancholy with which they each bid farewell to their century.

* The original Bavarian stock.

In this art of close formal construction, which brooks nothing provisional or sketchy, the adornment of detail is the prevalent characteristic. The fundamental idea is rich and manifold in its development, bearing blossom, tendril and branch. They clothe the naked form not as trimmings, they give this form its true character. To continue in metaphor, the park of this music and this poetry unites the severe fanciful logic of baroque Viennese pleasure-gardens with the beauty and natural artifice of our *Englischer Garten*. The fullness and complexity of Strauss's personality is perhaps the true secret of his art. And does not Munich also owe its peculiar charm to a similar versatility?

The decorative as a form of life and expression is the hall-mark of the strange richness in the new orchestration of the symphonic poems, as charming as it is stupendous. The Munich festivals of the outgoing century have been similar, if more fleeting expressions of our vivid city, in which festal dance has at length found a last, intense manifestation. As Lenbach constructed his Italian villa, so Strauss his 'Ariadne'; as Stuck constructed his Roman house, so Strauss his 'Electra.' Mastery in transformation of the spirit is common to them all. They live in the same atmosphere of world, of great manners, with the lordly Bajuwar gesture peculiar to them—except that Strauss, in the height of his artistry, is incomparably the greater genius.

As son of an old Munich citizen-family, and independent artist, Strauss has, like Lenbach and Stuck, a sound sense of the value and need of money. He knows full well that the artist should and must require something for his work, and he receives a corresponding recompense. He uses to the full his commanding position to take prudent thought for his whole profession. He stands now at the head of all German musicians. One must bear in mind this sense of the reality of things in speaking of the Munich element in Richard Strauss.

Strauss has that elegance of bearing, that courteous worldliness, the phlegmatic reserve of friendliness, the inborn conscious nonchalance, which are the great characteristics of the Old Bavarian aristocratic type. One cannot well understand such events as the splendid, simple frankness of the 'Domestic' Symphony and the 'Intermezzo,' the proud modesty of the publication of letters exchanged with Hofmannsthal, without considering this supremely independent attitude of mind.

There is a logical sequence in the development of his life. A bold venturing forth, subtle daring and calculation, great achievement, and rich harvest—these are the milestones of his way. It is a way of return to himself and to the land which bore him. *(Translated by H. E. G Tyndale)*

The second 'Florentine Musical May' will be held at Florence from April 24 to June 4. On thirty of the days within this period there will be either a concert or a performance of opera or ballet. Pizzetti's opera 'Orseolo' will be performed for the first time. There will be a Mozart week (May 21—26). The full programme will be given in a later issue.