

# BARBIROLI AND BOULT

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IT is just possible that John Barbirolli may succeed Sir Adrian Boult as conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the near future. He has been conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester for the last five years (since his term with the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York) and Sir Adrian Boult has conducted the BBC Orchestra since 1930.

This news came out from Manchester, through the chairman of the Hallé Concerts Society (Phillip Godlee) and was denied at first by the BBC, and later admitted. Now, all is confused,\* and Mr. Barbirolli naturally is making no comment, while Sir Adrian has said, "I shall not retire until they sack me. Of course, anyone with a reference book can see that I have reached the age at which the BBC turns people out." He will be 60 next April, but he has recalled that when there was talk of his retirement some months ago the BBC said it hoped he would be with them for some years, and that orchestra plans were being drawn up for after next April.

The confusion may presumably be taken as an indication that a matter of this kind has to be approached in half-a-dozen different ways, all of them very delicate. Such a transaction might

\*As we go to press it is announced that Barbirolli has decided to remain in Manchester.

seem to be fairly simple, when it is clear to everyone that there is much to be said for changing a conductor, as there is for changing a government, before staleness sets right in. Actually the initial confusion was only momentary—the BBC denial was countermanded.

Mr. Godlee's statement seemed to contain an appeal for support so that Barbirolli could be kept in Manchester.

The invitation comes at a time when, after five years' teamwork under Mr. Barbirolli's leadership, the Hallé is recognised as one of the foremost orchestras in the country, and able to hold its own with orchestras abroad. The attractiveness of the offer is obviously not the salary. Mr. Barbirolli has frequently been offered such allurements, but has preferred to remain with the Hallé because of the opportunities afforded him for creative work, but it would be idle to deny that the BBC, with its great licence resources, can do certain things easily which we have to struggle hard to achieve. It can attract good players by offering higher scales of pay. It can maintain an orchestra at greater strength than is possible within our present resources. It can offer its players the vital stimulus of an annual tour abroad.

Nevertheless, if only Manchester, Sheffield, Bradford, and the many other towns which are at present served by the Hallé will recognise the opportunity we shall be able, with Mr. Barbirolli's help, not only to maintain and enhance the present high reputation of the orchestra, but to increase it so as to ensure it of that stable financial security which will make it an instrument second to none in the world. If our objective is less than this, obviously we have no right to expect Mr. Barbirolli or indeed any other conductor of his international standing, to remain with us on mere grounds of sentiment.

Sir Adrian Boult was in the first place (that is, in 1930) appointed *Director of Music* by the BBC. Some years later he asked to be relieved of the supervising work so that he could give all his time to conducting, and a separate post of director was created, which has since been held by Arthur Bliss, and the late Victor Hely-Hutchinson. The present director is the singer Sir Stuart Wilson. \* \* \*

WHEN Artur Rodzinski, the American conductor, fell ill recently and was unable to fulfil an engagement to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra, the promoters looked about for a big enough name to take his place on the billboards, and decided to try the Hungarian pianist Louis Kentner. He was engaged with a week to go, and the rehearsal was on a Friday (for a Sunday concert). Ten minutes before the concert itself was due to begin, the orchestra told Kentner they would not play the whole programme under him, but only the piano concerto. Ten minutes

later the audience was told that Kentner had been delayed by fog on his way from Bradford—but at that moment Kentner was putting his overcoat on again in the conductor's room, and he then went into a box to listen to part of the programme, since the concerto (Brahms in D Minor) was being played by a pupil of his.

Kentner afterwards told reporters: "We had a rehearsal on Friday, the only rehearsal, which I thought went very well, but after which I was not told anything at all. To-night, 10 minutes before I was due to begin, I was called on by three orchestra members who suggested that I let Mr. George Stratton, leader of the orchestra, conduct the two symphonies in the programme, and that I conduct only the Brahms concerto. The reason given was that I was not an experienced conductor. That was a well-known fact. They knew I was not experienced. I at once refused to conduct only the concerto. I told the deputation: 'In that case, I won't conduct at all.' They gave out that I was delayed by fog, and Mr. Stratton conducted the whole programme. I suppose they had to give out something, though."

THE great Finnish composer Jan Sibelius turned 83 on December 8. In Finland, customs officers made a dis-

pensation in favour of a package containing 78 Havana cigars that were sent from the other side of the Atlantic, and in England, the *Manchester Guardian* printed a sensitive, discerning interview and a new photograph, taken during the interview.

Both the camera portrait and the pen portrait caught him at ease, humorous and lively. Mr. Schimanski had resisted (though only just) the temptation to ask again the question that Sibelius has been playing off for years:

"No, I'd better not ask you that one," I said, "It concerns your music." Sibelius smiled and said very quietly, "No, you'd better not ask me that." Then he turned his face to one side—and his huge ears seemed to grow bigger, as if they were falling on to the jacket of his chalk striped suit—and he added, "Tell me; I need not answer you of course; but I would have liked to know what you wanted to know." And at this he laughed himself . . .

And still no one knows outside his home whether the "Eighth Symphony" is finished or unfinished, or even whether it is his last. No major work by Sibelius has come out for many years. But he is believed to be still working in the upstairs study in his house in Jarvenpää which he built 45 years ago, and will not now leave—not to go to the Edinburgh Festival (to which he was invited this year), nor even to Helsinki, which has not seen him for 10 years.

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JOHN BARBIROLI

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