

# BEECHAM IN ERUPTION

(By Airmail — Special to  
"The Listener")

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SIR THOMAS BEECHAM'S attack on the administration of Covent Garden Opera was as ill received as John Barbirolli's decision to stand by the Hallé was well received, and the fact that this sort of outburst is expected from him now in no way modified the general reaction. The *News Chronicle*, for instance, pointed out that the Covent Garden Opera Trust (backed by the Arts Council) is now doing what Beecham "never seriously attempted in his long association with opera in this country. It is establishing a permanent centre where operatic performances can be heard throughout the year."

Between the wars, Beecham gave some brilliant seasons of International Opera, supported by private patronage from wealthy people (such as Lady Cunard). "They were undeniably splendid," says the *Chronicle*, "but they did very little to bring opera into the lives of ordinary people."

Beecham's complaint is . . . but then, it is difficult to finish that sentence, because he expresses himself in such high temper that he seems to be speaking remote from the real situation. When Beecham rants about the state of music in England it is almost as unreal as the strictures of The Party that are made from time to time on Soviet composers in Moscow.

THE Covent Garden Opera Trust includes such respected persons as Sir Stanley Marchant, Sir Stuart Wilson (BBC Director of Music), Dr. William Walton, Professor E. J. Dent, and Sir Kenneth Clark. Leslie Boosey and Ralph Hawkes are both on it and its chairman is Sir John Anderson.

"What does this list suggest to you?" asked Sir Thomas, of the annual conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, where he made his attack. "The first and most noticeable feature is that there is not a single person who knows anything about opera or has had practical experience of it and whose opinion is worth a brass farthing. The second feature is the total absence of

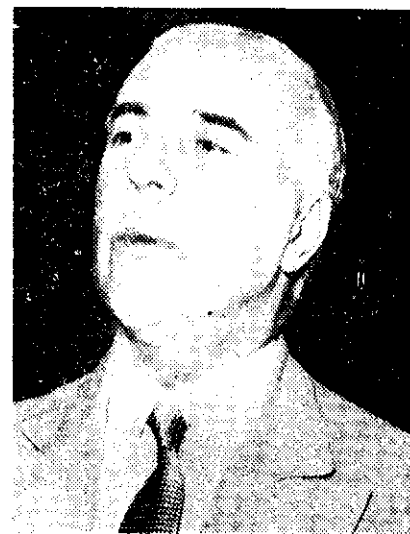
the names of any British musician ever associated with opera over a lengthy period.

"How does it come about that there are two publishers among the trustees? . . . No publisher, however eminent or respectable, should be closely allied to the management of any opera house."

He went on—and on. Of Karl Rankl, the musical director, he said: "The appointment of an alien, and especially one bearing a German name, is so incredible that I have from time to time to remind myself that it has actually happened and is not some fantastic dream."

He said he didn't think the word "racket" was out of place, and talked of the "hopeless set of ignoramuses and nitwits who conspired to bring out this disaster" (Rankl's appointment), being "under the impression that the functions of a musical director were of such an erotic, intricate, and profound nature as only the sublime intelligence of a Teuton could grasp."

Later in the same day he said that this speech was only the first shot in a campaign.



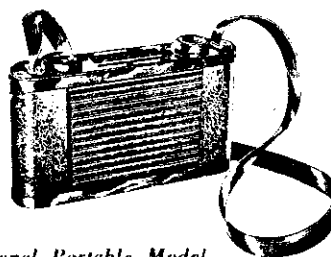
SIR THOMAS BEECHAM  
"Irresponsible and foolish"

ANSWERS, in very good nature as it would seem, have been made by Sir John Anderson and Sir Stuart Wilson.

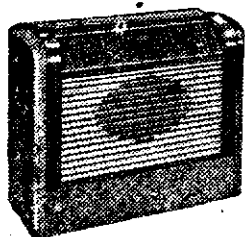
Anderson: "Eminent services to music . . . but unfortunately . . . unbridled tongue. . . I particularly deplore the attack on Messrs. Boosey and Hawkes, lessees of the Opera House. Under its agreement with the Trust the



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