

firm has been thousands of pounds out of pocket . . . disinterested public spirit. . . Highest admiration for the manner in which Dr. Rankl has carried out his task . . . audiences average nearly 90 per cent. of capacity . . . public are far from sharing Sir Thomas's dissatisfaction."

Wilson: "Irresponsible and foolish . . . a pity Sir Thomas did not take advantage of the information which would have been available to him. . . Boosey and Hawkes rescued Covent Garden from becoming a dance hall for ever . . . made an arrangement with the trustees by which any profits would be paid back; as it is they have stood a loss of many thousands of pounds. . . Government have an excellent nose for money. . . Arts Council Grant this season was £120,000, compared with £600,000 in Paris and an unconditional guarantee against loss in Vienna. . . Only four foreigners on full contract, against 25 British; six foreign guest artists against 12 British . . . By re-introducing foreign visiting artists, attendance figures have been raised to 89 per cent. of capacity."

HERE briefly is the recent history of the management of Covent Garden: The Labour Government granted a subsidy in 1930; Sir Thomas Beecham was managing director of the "Covent Garden Syndicate" from 1933 to 1939; the National Government cut the subsidy during his term of office; in 1944 Boosey and Hawkes leased the building from its owners (Covent Garden Properties Ltd.) and saved it from becoming a wartime dance-hall. Two years later they sublet to a body created for the purpose, Covent Garden Opera Trust. Its first chairman was Lord Keynes. A few months ago (as already reported in *The Listener*) a plan by Jay Pomeroy (promoter of some successful self-paying opera at another theatre) to acquire the lease when it ran out, was nipped; negotiations are still in progress between the Ministry of Works and the owners of the building. It looks as if (prompted no doubt by the Arts Council) the Government will see that the lease does not fall into the hands of private enterprise.

In the meantime, it is in the hands of the Trust, and this Trust does not, in fact, include anyone with long practical experience of operatic production. Its members are respected, and capable in their respective fields, but they may not necessarily know enough about opera production to make a success of a long term of administration. At present, however, hardly anyone but Beecham has any strong criticism to make of their work. In any case, the matter has to come under review at the end of this year when the lease runs out, and theirs is an experimental period.

There are two musical directors at Covent Garden, not to be confused. Karl Rankl conducts opera, and Warwick Braithwaite conducts the ballet, which, rather confusingly,



is not the Covent Garden Ballet, but the Sadler's Wells Ballet. The ballet is more popular than opera and almost pays for itself. The Covent Garden Opera Trust is concerned with putting opera on its feet in England, and to this end, favours opera in English.

### Bigger and Better-Paid Halle

BARBIROLI'S decision to stay with the Hallé Orchestra and not to yield to the temptation of the BBC has been received with delight in the north. The Hallé Orchestra is the finest in England at the moment, and to have lost Barbirolli would have been disastrous, because it is up against a complicated set of other problems: it has a heavy deficit; it needs a bigger hall; until a bigger hall can be built, it has to keep travelling around in order to keep earning; but even from travelling, profits are limited because of the increased costs in trains and hotels; it has been losing players because of its lower rates of pay.

Now, the committee of the Hallé Concerts Society, possibly gambling on a victory over some of these difficulties, and on a bigger Manchester City Council grant, has made three promises to Barbirolli which have influenced his decision: (a) it will raise the minimum rate of pay from £10 to £13 a week, with length-of-service increments; (b) it accepts the principle of sending the orchestra abroad at least once a year (this year, to Holland); (c) it will bring the orchestra back to its pre-war strength of 100 as soon as it gets a bigger hall.

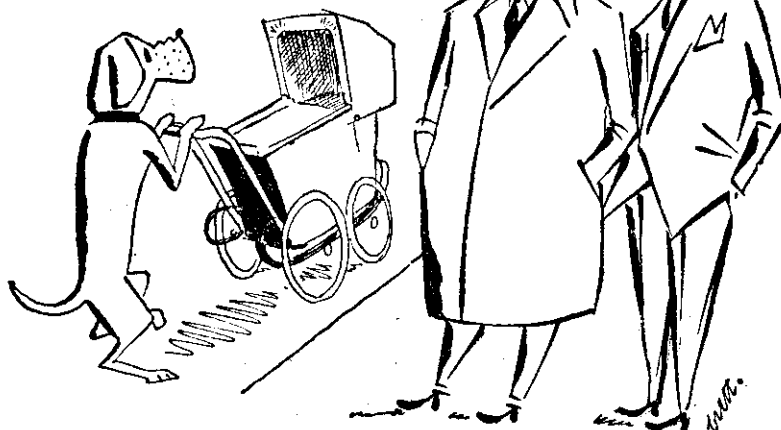
The immediate raising of pay (plus the tour) will cost between £16,000 and £19,000 a year, and the eventual increase in strength will cost about £13,000 a year.

ONE remedy would be to increase admission charges, but Barbirolli opposes this because it would "hit those people most anxious to attend the concerts" and "it is wonderful how a new public has arisen—an amazing audience composed largely of young people and members of the lower middle class."

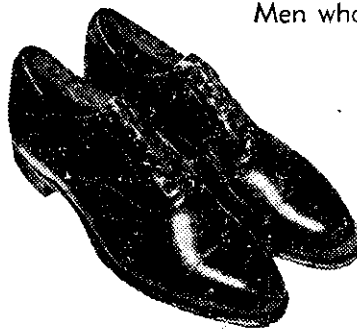
The remedy the Society and Barbirolli would obviously prefer to see is a bigger grant from the Manchester City Council. It gave a guarantee of £9,000 last year, compared with the £50,000 a year which the Yorkshire Orchestra receives.

"So far we have done you a first-rate job at less than cost price," Barbirolli told reporters at the press conference when the new arrangement was announced. Of his own decision, he said, "I shall be 50 this year and that will be more or less the last decade of my career. With all the experience I have gained, these should be the best 10 years of my life. . . I have withstood the temptation of going to London, but if the Hallé were to become less than first-class I would have no hesitation whatever about leaving. I think we shall survive—and handsomely."—A.A.

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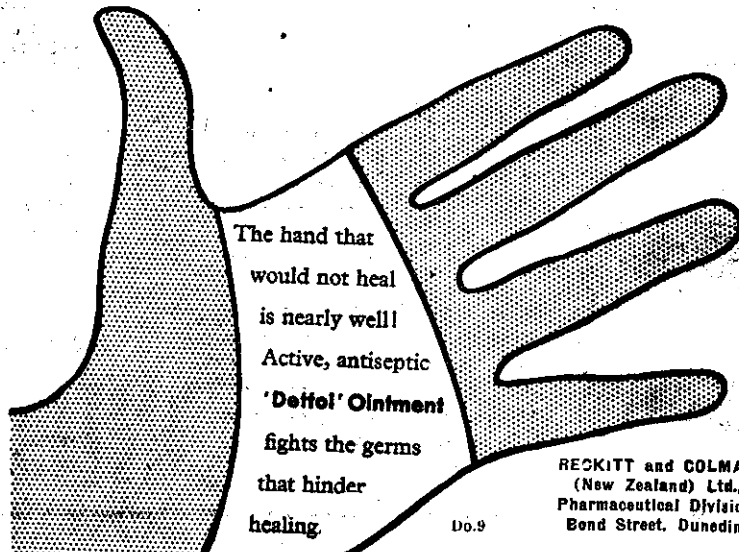
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