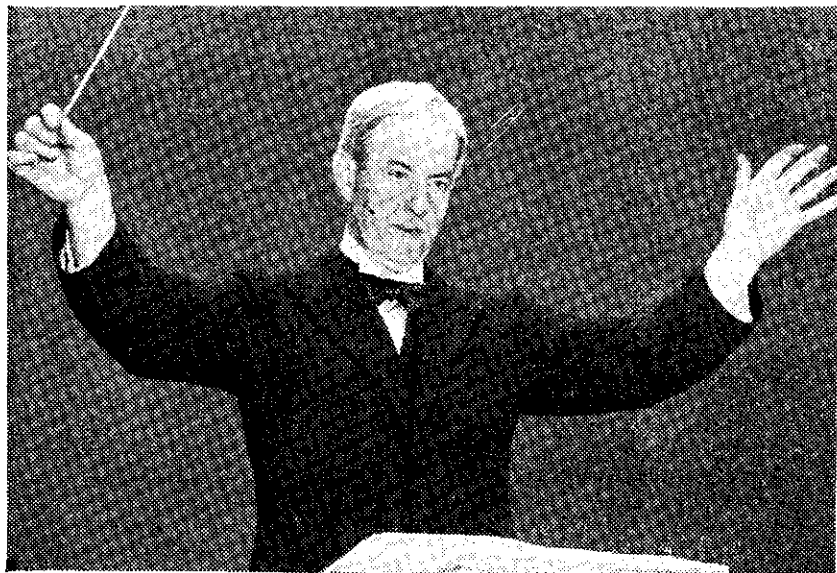


AN OUTSPOKEN IRISHMAN



Sir Hamilton Harty - Conductor, Composer, Pianist and Jazz-Hater

A JOURNALIST once asked Sir Hamilton Harty if he could give an entirely new recipe for living. This was part of Sir Hamilton's reply:

"The great thing in life is to keep a sense of proportion. One must never lose one's head over anything, however urgent and important it may seem at the time. Things are never so important as one thinks. Even with music, although I realise that it is the chief pleasure in life, it is only a pleasure, and we must not let it make us forget the things of the mind. With work, one must stick to one's job with the thought of duty always at the back of one's mind. No man can sleep well and happily unless he has done a good day's work."

There, in a paragraph, is the guiding principle of one of the most original musical thinkers of our time—a musician who is conductor, composer and pianist combined.

Sir Hamilton Harty was born on December 4, 1879, at Hillsborough, 12 miles from Belfast. He showed brilliant musical gifts as a boy, and his father gave him lessons on the piano, organ and viola. When only 12 years of age, he became a church organist, and later held similar posts in Belfast and Dublin.

In 1900 he went to London and made a name as an accompanist—in fact, he was quickly accepted as THE accompanist. This is a role he occasionally fills even to-day. During last war, Harty obtained a great deal of experience as a conductor, particularly with the London Symphony Orchestra, and in 1920 was appointed permanent conductor of the Halle Orchestra, the fine traditions of which he has well upheld.

Feat of Generalship

His magnificent feat of generalship, apart altogether from questions of musi-

anship, in leading the Halle Orchestra out of a well-nigh hopeless mess, has never been fully appreciated. He found, in 1920, a dilapidated ruin, rebuilt the entire organisation from the ground up, and within four years, created a new orchestra which astonished critics.

This was not all. For the first time in its long history, he won for the orchestra an audience representative of the whole of Manchester, instead of a section. And when prosperity seemed to have departed from the city, he performed the astounding feat, season after season, of running weekly concerts without financial loss.

His Conducting

Harty's conducting differs very greatly from that of most other "star" conductors. His mannerisms approximate nearest to those of Berlioz. He uses few gestures on the concert platform; moreover, he conducts from the score, which does not hinder him.

As a Composer

As a composer, Harty made his mark quite early in the century, and critics considered that much might be expected of him. For example, he won a prize with a trio at the *Feis Ceoil* (Dublin) in 1901, and three years later his piano quintet earned the Lewis prize of 50 guineas.

But his Celtic imagination was soon drawn to the field of orchestral music, and it is probably in these large-scale works that we can see more fully his poetic grace and exquisite workmanship. These works include such favourites as "With the Wild Geese," "The Mystic Trumpeter," his "Irish Symphony" and "Violin Concerto in D Minor."

Harty's songs, like "Sea Wrack," "Hush Song," "Dreaming," "Stranger's Grave," "Lookin' Back" and "At Sea," are unbackneyed, and they deserve to be

heard oftener. His gifts as an accompanist account, in part, for the great variety and resource shown in the accompaniments which he himself has written, and for his complete understanding of what is and what is not singable. His wife, Madame Agnes Nicholls, was chiefly instrumental in making his songs popular. His setting of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" was sung by this popular oratorio and operatic soprano with great success at the Cardiff Musical Festival in 1907. Another famous English soprano, Isobel Baillie, introduced many of Harty's songs to New Zealand listeners.

"Music Needs Courage"

Harty declares that one needs no technical knowledge of music to be able to appreciate good music. When he was a boy, he was afraid to read good books. He lacked the necessary courage to dip into them properly, and he maintains it is the same with the attitude of many grown-up people towards so-called high-brow music.

They suffer from a kind of inferiority complex, and actually refuse to listen to the work of the masters. He once said he liked people to be honest. He would rather have a hall filled with people hissing him than one crowded with insincere people who applaud because it is the thing to do.

People Are Like Sheep

Most people are like sheep, he said. They applaud everything that Bach composed because they think it the proper thing to do, not because they have enjoyed the music. "Those people I hate. People should have the courage of their convictions to say 'I don't like it!' and to depend upon their own judgment in music and in everything else."

Speaking of modern music, Sir Hamilton once said, "A large number of modern composers put in discords for effect. In many cases the lowbrow's judgment when he says 'That's awful!' is correct.

He knows a discord when he hears it and is not afraid to admit it. Remember that very little modern music has lived or will live. The greater music is universal in its appeal and because of that it will live for all time."

Jazz Makes Him Hot

Speaking of jazz music, Harty always warms up—it rouses his Irish. "We are living in a machine age of music," he says—an age of "gangs of jazz barbarians" and their "filthy desecration of classical music."

"I regard jazz music," he has said, "as bad music because it appeals to a person's primitive instinct. Very often a jazz tune is well made, but because it has no appeal whatever to the higher instincts of man, then it is bad — bad — BAD. When all is said and done one need not listen to it at all, it is just a bad influence on life, like a nasty smell is bad for one's health."

He thinks there is too much free trade in British music. England imagined that by throwing its gates wide open to the world it could provide itself with all that was best in the world's music. There was a catchword, "Art knows no boundaries," but that was not true of the English art of music. It knew too many. It was best to be honest and contrast the amount of foreign musical propaganda with the tepid welcome extended to British music in foreign countries.

It is not surprising that some people hold that Harty has been his own worst enemy. You cannot go about in his uncompromising way without causing friction. He has never cultivated diplomacy or sought advertisement, but has come to the front through sheer merit.

A "birthday" programme, featuring Sir Hamilton Harty as conductor, composer and pianist, will be broadcast by 4YA on December 5, beginning at 7.30 p.m. and continuing till 10 p.m., with a break for the Newsreel at 9 o'clock.

SHE KNOWS HER SUBJECT



Spencer Digby photograph
JUNE BENNETT

PEOPLE who compère programmes dealing with far-away parts of the world sometimes manage without actually visiting the places they describe, but June Bennett, who is conducting a "Hawaii Calling" session from Station 2ZB, was in Hawaii not long ago. She spent several months there, and not only saw all there was to see, but had an excellent chance of studying the fascinating island music and dancing.

June, who is crippled and walks with two sticks, nevertheless leads an active life, and paints, sketches, sings and plays the piano. Bishop Bennett is an uncle, and her mother, Mrs. H. D. Bennett, has done a great deal of work for the Crippled Children's Society.

June was heard from 2ZB two years ago in a session of Polynesian mythology, under the radio name of "Terangi," and it is as "Terangi" that she is again broadcasting from 2ZB.

Her session describes many of the quaint customs of the people of Hawaii, and from personal knowledge she is able to add sidelights concerning people she met there. In one session, for instance, she traced the career of the famous swimmer, Duke Kahanamoku, who became champion of Hawaii in 1921, and a few years later swept all before him at the Olympic Games. From then on he became a celebrated personality, and it was considered an honour to receive a lesson from him in his art of surfing. To-day he is head of a big school of swimming, and bears the title of Sheriff of the City of Honolulu.

As a background for this radio newsreel June uses the music which Hawaii has made famous.