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CH41

Beethoven Oratorio from IYC



MINA FOLEY



RAMON OPIE

WHEN Beethoven's oratorio, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, was first performed it became immediately popular, although the critics of the day attacked it on the grounds that it did not sound like Bach and that it was human, not divine. This work, written at the same time as the *Eroica* symphony, and even roughed out in the same notebook, will be heard from IYC at 7.0 p.m. on Thursday, September 23, from recordings made about a year ago at a public concert by the Auckland Choral Society. The conductor was Georg Tintner and the soloists Mina

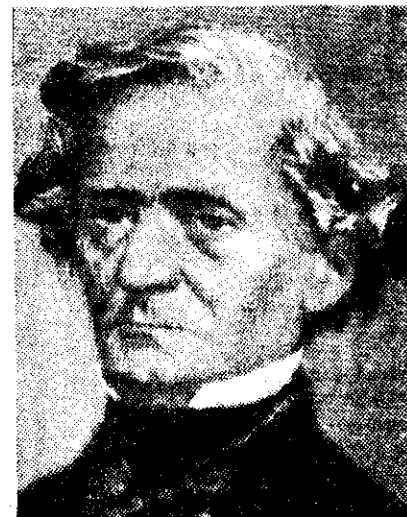
Foley (soprano), Ramon Opie (tenor) and Ashley Pollock (bass), with an orchestra led by Helen Hopkins. The libretto is by Franz Xaver Huber, although it is believed that Beethoven himself collaborated in sections of the text, which tells the story of the night before the Crucifixion. Beethoven is reported to have said that the entire work "was written in fourteen days, amid all sorts of tumult and other disagreeable and frightening circumstances."

Mr. Tintner, who joined the Australian National Opera Company as a conductor when it was in New Zealand a few months ago, is at present back in this country on a brief holiday.

"FAUST" BY BERLIOZ

"THERE is no sprite, gnome and fairy music to compare with that of Berlioz," writes J. H. Elliot in discussing the composer's dramatic legend, *The Damnation of Faust*. Sir Thomas Beecham, speaking of the same work, described it as "a bunch of the loveliest tunes in existence." At 7.0 p.m. on Sunday, September 26, a new LP recording of *The Damnation of Faust* will be broadcast from a link of the YC stations. The performance is by the Emile Passani Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Jean Fournet. The part of Marguerite is sung by Mona Laurena (mezzo-soprano); Faust is sung by Georges Jouatte (tenor); Mephistopheles by Paul Cabanel (baritone); and Brander by André Pactat (bass).

There are many fine things in this work. The Hungarian March makes a vivid blaze with which to conclude the brief first part. The second section opens impressively in the atmosphere of melancholy which Berlioz could create with unique skill. Brander's song and the burlesque "Amen" fugue based upon it are not without mordant humour. The scene on the banks of the Elbe and the "Dance of the Sylphs" have the true Berlioz magic, and Marguerite's airs, though externally simple and naive, have a ring of genuine depth and beauty. There are many other brilliant sections in the work, such as the "Minuet of the Will o' the Wisp" or the beginning of the Romance in Part IV. There are also, however, passages of dull and undistinguished music, and the finale, with its "Ride to the Abyss" and



HECTOR BERLIOZ

its "Pandemonium," has been described as ineffectual and more than a trifle absurd.

Berlioz made it clear in a foreword to the score that he was not setting Goethe's drama to music. Although he acknowledged the profound effect that reading Goethe had upon him, he reserved the right to modify the legend precisely as Goethe had done before him. Thus the first part is shifted to the plains of Hungary to permit the use of the famous Rakoczy March. Similarly the compact with the devil is kept almost till the end. But despite these liberties with the text, Berlioz kept pretty faithfully to the form and spirit of his model.

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 17, 1954.