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Lion and Lamb at Lunch

DID I suggest recently that Sir Thomas Beecham had relented? He certainly conducted a Prom concert with zest and apparent enjoyment, but it was too much to expect a change of heart. About the musical ignorance of the British public he is as liverish as ever —although "volcanic" was the word applied by Mr. Neville Cardus, the music critic and cricket commentator.

Those two veterans were the lion and the lamb at a luncheon at London's Royal Festival Hall to mark the opening of a series of international celebrity concerts and recitals.

The emblem on the menu appropriately depicted the lion and lamb lying down together with a winged cherub, harp in hand, between them. The cherub certainly represented music, and who could doubt that the lion and lamb represented the two speakers, Sir Thomas Beecham (76) and Mr. Cardus (64)? For 30 years they have been amiable sparring partners.



SIR THOMAS BEECHAM
"We have all had our brains washed"

Too Much Music

"We hear about this brain-washing today, a process whereby you come out a different person afterwards. Well, we have all had our brains washed. We have no standards whatever," declared the conductor, weighing in fortissimo on British public taste.

"We are the most ignorant public in the world, and we have more music than ever, TOO MUCH MUSIC. The BBC goes on and on; the Third Programme plugs away day after day with the most awful stuff.

"Where are the ears of the present generation? They are absolutely stunned, so there is no nicety of appreciation whatever."

This eruption extinguished his smoking. Like King Lear cut by ingratitude's bitter wind, he exclaimed: "There is something WRONG with this cigar."

Plea for Stars

Welcoming the celebrity concerts, Sir Thomas lamented that there were not

a dozen conductors in Britain who knew the intentions of the great composers. They had not spent weeks and months with them discovering what they wanted.

All the composers he had known wrote operas with characters in mind, but a curious democratic fashion had arisen by which leading roles were no longer played by the most celebrated and accomplished artists.

"If the people on the stage are not rendering the parts as I know would be to the satisfaction of the composer, I walk out of the theatre. I don't care a rap if the orchestra does not play well as long as it does not play the wrong notes—and most orchestras do.

"The only orchestra I can make perfect gramophone records with is my own, the Royal Philharmonic. One community knows it, and that is the American public, which buys our records in preference to any other."

Criticising the modern producer who was "miserable unless everybody was rushing about all over the stage," Sir Thomas Beecham declared feelingly: "The greatest acting on earth is the art of standing still and doing nothing."

Critic Attacks Critics

Mr. Cardus, the critic, confined his attack to critics. Music criticism called for experience and judgment, he said, and not just personal taste. "No newspaper of responsibility should appoint a critic under the age of 36 at least."

One of the celebrities whom the lion and the lamb had introduced was the conductor Josef Krips, from Vienna.

"I see more young people at concerts here than anywhere else," he said later —and he in turn added what others are saying: "London is now the musical centre of the world."

Youth and its exuberance, even applause between movements, do not worry him. "You get that even at Vienna. Let's be honest—no performer is immune" by applause. After all, we are human."

—J. W. BOODWIN (London)



NEVILLE CARDUS

"Music criticism is not just personal taste"

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