



BRITISH MUSIC OVER 800 YEARS

EIGHT centuries of British music—from the Plantagenet Kings to the beginning of the Edwardian era of this century—are covered in *A History of British Music*, 13 half-hour programmes from the BBC which start this week (May 5) from 4YC and later will be heard from other stations.

Recently research has uncovered a great deal of early music which was hitherto unknown, and in the first of two programmes on the Plantagenets, for instance, it is taken from such varied sources as fly-leaves formerly hidden in mediaeval buildings, manuscripts kept at Worcester, Oxford and Cambridge, and even from the back of a legal document in the Public Record Office in London. The first programme, covering the years to the end of the 14th Century and including examples of popular, art,

and church music, is played by the Pro Musica Antiqua Ensemble on viols, recorders, a lute and a minstrel's harp.

The 15th Century in Britain is often thought of as a solemn, sober age, yet its music can be joyful, fresh and charming. A variety of styles from this period is heard in the second programme, to be broadcast at 8.30 p.m. on May 12. In this the first great British composer, John Dunstable, is represented by his motet, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and there is also some sacred music by Byttering and John Cooke, a love song, a drinking song, and the famous *Agincourt Song*. The singers are Alfred Deller (counter-tenor), Eric Barnes (tenor), Wilfred Brown (tenor) and the Ambrosian Singers.

The Court of Henry VIII was renowned for its splendour and its en-

couragement of the arts, and the King himself contributes to the programme of early Tudor music as composer of a brilliant fantasia on the old Dutch tune *Tandernaken*. The rest of the 16th Century is covered in two programmes about the music of the Elizabethans. This was a time when musicians were more widely known as persons, while their predecessors had mostly been shadowy, anonymous figures, and the second Elizabethan programme introduces the names of such notables as Byrd, Tallis, Bull, Weelkes and Morley.

Recently discovered gems from the musical treasure-house of the Jacobean composers to be heard in the first of two programmes on this period include a suite for violin, gamba and harpsichord by John Cooper, a pavan by Daniel Farrant, and a masque tune by Robert Johnson, entitled *The Witty Wanton*. Masques are illustrated at greater length in a second programme on the 17th Century.

Purcell and Handel have evenings to themselves, another is devoted to the post-Handelians—the Georgians of the 18th and 19th Centuries. There are two programmes on the 19th Century, and the series ends with a survey of the English renaissance of the 20th Century—a programme that conveys something of the musical glow that illumined the final years of the old century and the first decade of the new.

A History of British Music was planned and directed by Denis Stevens, a member of the BBC Musical Division and an expert on early British music, and written and narrated by Alec Robertson, author of numerous books on music and formerly in charge of music talks on the Home Service and Third Programme of the BBC.



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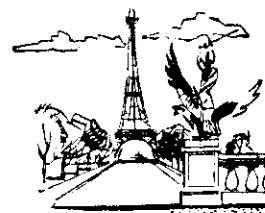
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