

MOZART IN VIENNA

by Geo. Dallard

VIENNA is doing penance. But it is typical of the place that it finds the exercise most agreeable. Somewhere in St. Mark's churchyard in Vienna's outskirts lies the body of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. No one quite knows where, for he was given a pauper's burial. Bad weather is usually blamed for the non-attendance of any mourners. Vienna is making belated atonement. A place of honour has been found in the cemetery, and there is established an imaginary grave, complete with headstone, broken column, and flowers. A recent laurel wreath lies at the foot.

A fine statue stands in the heart of the city. A bust is central in the main foyer of the rebuilt State Opera House, and a side foyer in that building has magnificent tapestries to designs from *The Magic Flute*. There are the inevitable houses where the composer lived, and inconsequential relics of his life. There is a "Figaro House," and a "Papageno House." There must be nearly thirty places with State authorised flags and plaques, commemorating some association with the Master.

Yet for all that, I think Vienna is not much interested in the bones of its favourite composer, who was born in near-by Salzburg two hundred years ago, and died in this city less than thirty-six years later. For Mozart is still alive, in the Opera House and the concert platform, on the radio and in the singing-school. This is "Mozart Year," and Vienna is redeeming the neglect of the artist in his life by holding an "International Mozart Festival." It proclaims from every street-car and reconstruction-work hoarding, from shop windows and illustrated booklets, that Vienna leads the world in paying tribute to the Master at the bicentenary of his birth.

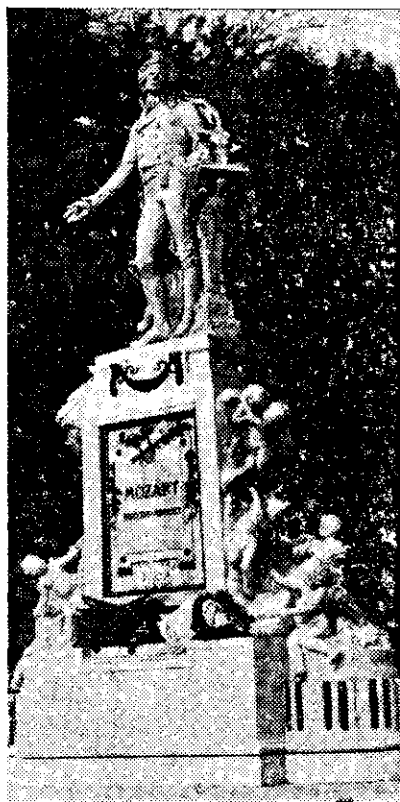
It would be an exaggeration to say that every work in the Kochel cata-

logue was being presented in June in Vienna. But there could have been few of his important works absent. The very number and variety of performances was testimony to the prolific genius of the short-lived composer. There were operas, symphonic concerts, "Mozart Serenades," organ recitals, church music, choral concerts, pianoforte recitals, chamber music, violin and piano concerts. There was even a "Homage to Mozart" choral performance at the grave one afternoon.

This is the Mozart Vienna knows, one who is still with them, and whose delights are still as fresh and charming as in the court of the Emperor—and more widely heard. Vienna is surely the ideal place for such an occasion. Battered by war, divided by occupation forces of many nations for ten years after the war ended, a united and free people again only for the past year, it has made a miraculous recovery. It has restored the grace and elegance, the splendid assurance of an age that is regrettably past in many other countries.

It is perhaps typical of the place, and a rebuke to other countries more prosperous in material things, that one of the first acts of the Government was to restore the Opera House, destroyed by bombs and fire in 1945. The reconstruction was planned from the original blue-prints, with only such modifications as would make for greater efficiency and better presentation of their beloved opera. November last year saw the re-opening of this fine building.

But whether in the magnificence of the Staatsoper, or the more intimate opulence of the Redoutensaal, once the ballroom of the Imperial Palace, and preserved in all its regal splendour; whether in the gilded and sculptured elegance of the Grand Hall of the Music



MOZART
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Society or the subdued ornateness of the Hofburg Chapel, the music is in early settings. These are the settings the music itself depicts, belongs to.

In the circumstances it was something more than a surprise to find that my first visit to the Opera House was to see, not *Don Giovanni*, as the advance programme advised, but Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, turgid, modern, demonic. After that preliminary shock I saw Mozart's *Seraglio* (substituted for the *Marriage of Figaro*). The gentle

grace and innocent elopement plot transported the beholder to a different world, remote from the stress and torment of the previous night's performance, a world none the less real, and maybe more lasting and more able to restore shattered nerves by pointing to a realm of beauty too seldom seen by 20th century man. Art should surely heal, not trouble by further disease.

There was a polished and assured performance of the "Jupiter" Symphony, Mozart at his most mature, with Krips conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. It followed in the same programme, Beethoven's G Major Piano Concerto, a masterly performance of Backhaus. The applause continued long after the orchestra had left the stage and the piano moved away. (In its celebration of a Mozart festival, Vienna is not so stupid as to forget the box-office attraction of other composers.)

The baroque fantasy of *The Magic Flute* was presented in a glorious setting. The singers were actors as well. Much of the spontaneous enthusiasm was for acting, though applause (nonchalantly interrupting the action) was reserved for the singing. The Vienna Boys' Choir, in their home setting of the Hofburg Chapel, sang with grace and ethereal beauty. The graceful "Alleluia" given by a boy with the pure devotion of immaturity, was a delight to be remembered. But these are only a few highlights of a glorious Festival, made happier by the constant attention to the visitor's needs given by Viennese people from Government department heads to tram conductors.

Mozart needs no festival to boost his music, though it is good to have as much of it at once as a festival affords. The music stands secure in its freshness, its mature youthfulness. Mozart founded no school of composition, his style is unique. Yet his work never diverges from the main stream of musical truth. His was a genius able to say lasting things, deep in spiritual discernment in simple ways.



LEFT: One of the best-preserved stretches of Hadrian's Wall — at Housesteads Northumberland

Here*, "The Roman period in our history was not a mere passing phase which ended in fire and sword, and had no lasting effect on our nation. Rather, it was the first phase in the building of our recognisable nation, a phase from which stem traditions and elements that have carried on to our own today." It must be remembered that the English conquest of Britain had no resemblance to the well-organised fieldwork of the Roman legions. Despite the existence of the Roman roads, the English advance was slow and precarious. For about 150 years after the ending of Roman control British occupation of the plain beneath the Chilterns was unbroken, except perhaps in the Luton area. In Britain alone, as distinct from the rest of Europe, the provincials fought back

as a whole, nobles and peasants; fought as Romans. Then, the Romans left behind them the concept of a single rule which, in the end, the Anglo-Saxons adopted from the British kings. In many respects the culturally-superior British, trained in Roman ways, conquered their conquerors. In art, trade, ship-building and domestic life the Roman influence remained with the Britons. They even built extensive earthworks against the invaders, inspired by the large-scale Roman constructions.

In 441 or 442, according to a 6th century writer, the provinces of Britain, "long torn by various disasters, are now subject to the Saxons." In 446, or soon after, the Britons' pro-Roman leaders sent a message to the great Gallic general Aetius asking him to bring them help, but he could not. In Britain itself there must have been conflicting claims to domination which weakened the Britons' powers of defence, although between 410-443 there was considerable prosperity still in parts of the country, notably the south-east, with a revival of crafts. However, to meet attacks from the northern Picts, the northern king Vortigern called in Saxons as mercenaries. Soon they turned on their employers and a new invasion began. The long sunset had ended.

"TRAVELLERS in Britain," says Ivor Brown in an introductory talk to R. C. Sherriff's play *The Long Sunset* (YCs next week, see page 24), "are often shown Roman remains: sometimes they are part of a city wall; sometimes the relics of a temple or a theatre; sometimes the beautifully-decorated floor of a country house. What became of their builders and their owners? Were they overwhelmed by the new invaders from Europe or did they get out safely...?" R. C. Sherriff's play—written for the theatre but first performed on the air—concerns the fate of Julian (Brewster Mason), a Roman living in Britain, and his family. The scene is Roman Kent

Decline and Fall

and the date 410 A.D. By that time the Goths had taken Rome and all Europe was the victim of their savage invasion, but news travels slowly and Roman gentlemen in Britain could be carrying on with their peaceful lives of farming and trading ignorant of disaster. This is the case with Julian and his family and the play is concerned with their reaction to the news when it did come.

Jack Lindsay, the social historian and historical novelist, comments in his recent book *The Romans Were*

**The Romans Were Here*, by Jack Lindsay; Oswald-Seely, price 25/-.