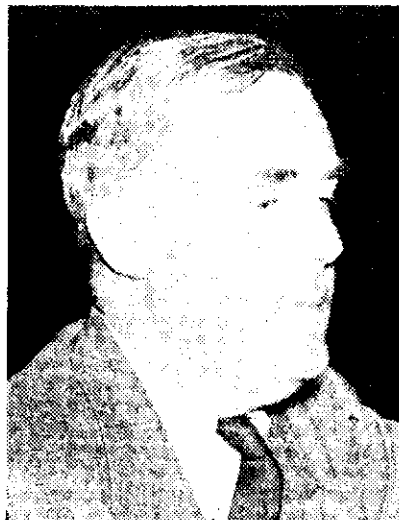


The Musician from Baker Street

And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich and a cup of coffee, and then off to violin land, where all is sweetness and melody, and harmony, and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums.

The Red-Headed League.

BAKER STREET Irregulars living in New Zealand will be familiar with that scholarly monograph, *Sherlock Holmes and Music*, written by Guy Warrack, lately conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra and Chairman of the



GUY WARRACK
"No polyphonic motets?"

Composers' Guild of Great Britain, and at present examiner in New Zealand for the Royal Schools of Music. *The Listener*, having a more than nodding acquaintance with the Great Detective since his mysterious visit to Wellington a few years ago, decided to interview Mr. Warrack on the subject of his investigations into Sherlock Holmes's musical gifts and tastes. Holmes's passion for music was one of the outstanding characteristics of his complex personality, and in the career of no other criminologist, not even Lord Peter Wimsey, has music played such a large part.

Mr. Warrack explained that he was a foundation member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, a group of enthusiasts who meet periodically to discuss various points in the Baker Street canon. At one meeting, he remembered, the BBC commentator Wynford Vaughan Thomas had read a paper on the subject of "Sherlock Holmes and Wine"; at another meeting a paper on "Sherlock Holmes and Tobacco" had been read; he himself had contributed a brief study of Holmes's disguises.

He remembered another time when the Baritsu Chapter of the Baker Street Irregulars in Tokio had provided a plaque outside the Criterion Restaurant in Piccadilly Circus to commemorate the meeting there of Dr. Watson and Young Stamford, which had led to the great collaboration between Holmes and his biographer. The plaque was unveiled by ex-Chief Inspector Fabian of Scotland Yard, and proceedings were considerably stimulated by the arrival of a hansom cab containing Holmes in person—who turned out to be none other than the well-known actor Carleton Hobbs in disguise.

The first conclusion he had come to as a result of his musical studies, Mr.

Warrack said, was that Holmes was a schizophrenic who used music as an "escape," in the psychological sense, from his primary business of detecting criminals. He had other interests such as Early English Charters, Philology and Apiculture, but music was (apart from cocaine and shag tobacco) his main relief. Mr. Warrack backs up this conclusion with numerous quotations from Watson's accounts of Holmes. The most convincing is that in which Watson describes Holmes in 1890, nine years after their first meeting, listening to Sarasate in St. James's Hall:

All the afternoon he sat in the stalls, strapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid, dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound. Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his arm-chair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions. . . . When I saw him that afternoon so enraptured in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

Of Holmes as a performer Watson first says that "he plays the violin well." A few years later he notes, "My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer, but a composer of no ordinary merit." Unfortunately, this is the only reference to Holmes as a composer, and there is no record of his ever having committed any of his works to paper. Watson records in *A Study in Scarlet*, that when left to himself, Holmes "would seldom produce any music or attempt any recognised air. Leaning back in his arm-chair of an evening, he

would close his eyes and scrape carelessly at the fiddle which was thrown across his knee. Sometimes the chords were sonorous and melancholy. Occasionally they were fantastic and cheerful. Clearly they reflected the thoughts which possessed him."

Watson also tells us that Holmes's instrument was a Stradivari worth 500 guineas, which he was lucky enough to get from a pawnbroker in Tottenham Court Road for 55 shillings.

At the end of *The Red Circle* case Holmes took Watson off to a Wagner night at Covent Garden. He was also fond of Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer and Offenbach, and the artists he admired besides Sarasate, include the virtuoso Norman-Noruda. It is significant, too, that Holmes's great and admired enemy, the beautiful Irene Adler, had been a contralto singer at La Scala in Milan, and prima donna at the Imperial Opera in Warsaw. Another woman of his acquaintance, Violet Smith, whom Watson describes in *The Solitary Cyclist* as being "tall, graceful and queenly," was a teacher of piano. It might be noted, too, that Parker, the garrotter of *The Empty House*, was a "remarkable performer on the jew's harp."

The section of his book which had aroused most criticism from enthusiasts, Mr. Warrack said, was that in which he declared that Sherlock Holmes could never have written his famous mono-



DESIGN from the dust-jacket of Guy Warrack's monograph "Sherlock Holmes and Music"

graph on "The Polyphonic Motets of Lassus." The existence of this work has never been proved, Mr. Warrack claims and there are other gaps in the study of Holmes as musician. From whom did he learn the violin, for instance? Did he always play by ear? And who were the experts mentioned in *The Bruce-Partington Plans*, who proclaimed the problematical monograph on de Lassus to be "the last word on the subject?" These questions may never be answered unless, perhaps, in some attic in Baker Street, scholars may one day discover yet unpublished accounts by Dr. Watson of his long friendship with England's most famous detective.

HER MAJESTY'S CHRISTMAS BROADCAST

THE Queen's Christmas broadcast this year will be made from the Governor-General's study at Government House, Auckland, at 9.0 p.m. (N.Z. time) on Christmas Day.

In a joint statement the Minister in Charge of Broadcasting (Hon. R. M. Algie) and the Minister of Internal Affairs (Hon. W. A. Bodkin) said the time fixed met three important conditions: It was convenient for the Queen; it was suitable for the greatest number of Commonwealth listeners; and it offered the most favourable transmission and reception conditions.

From Government House the Queen's message will travel by landline to IYA's control room, where it will be fed into a network of lines for transmission to NZBS stations throughout the country. From Wellington the transmission will be fed to Radio New Zealand's two shortwave transmitters at Titahi Bay and beamed toward Australia. Two shortwave transmissions will be beamed, in different directions, toward the United Kingdom. These will be from the Services' transmitter, H.M.N.Z.S. Irirangi, at Waiouru, and from the Post and Telegraph Department's transmitter at Himatangi. For its worldwide broadcast, the BBC may pick up either of these transmissions direct or may receive one or other on relay from the BBC shortwave station at Tebrau, near Singapore. The BBC will also have the

option of picking up the broadcast from the powerful transmitters of Radio Australia.

Atmospheric conditions at the time of the Queen's broadcast are expected to be satisfactory, and the NZBS is taking all precautions to ensure that no other interruptions occur. Important items of equipment will be duplicated



JOHN ANTILL, the Australian composer, who is providing the incidental music for the BBC-ABC-NZBS Commonwealth Christmas programme

and, as far as humanly possible, every chance of a "technical hitch" eliminated.

The Commonwealth Christmas programme, which precedes the Queen's message, will this year be produced in Australia. Music for the programme—which consists of contributions by various Commonwealth countries—will be composed by the Australian John Antill and performed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The BBC's Head of Features, Laurence Gilliam who, with Alan Burgess, will produce the Christmas programme, described this orchestra as "one of the best I have ever heard."

Mr. Gilliam said also that the narrator of the programme would, if possible, be the Australian film star Peter Finch. This actor is at present being seen here in the role of Rupert D'Oyly Carte in *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan*.

Messrs. Gilliam and Burgess are to leave Britain three months before Christmas, and between them will visit Cyprus, Kenya, Rhodesia, South Africa, Mauritius, India, Pakistan, Singapore and the Cocos Islands to discuss programme contributions from these places.

According to Mr. Gilliam the Queen will make her broadcast to the Commonwealth "after spending a typical New Zealand day, on the beaches, picnicking in the New Zealand summer."