

Schubert Centenary Programmes from all Stations

SCHUBERT had one of the greatest gifts of melodic spontaneity ever bestowed on a composer. Someone once said it seemed only necessary for him to hold a pen for a magic flow of melody to find itself on a sheet of paper. Schumann, in the manner of a romanticist, said, "Schubert's pencil was dipped in moonbeams and in the flame of the sun."

MANY tributes have been written about Schubert's genius, and many things said about his personal characteristics. Perhaps one of the simplest and yet most enduring appreciations was written by Sidney Grew in his "Masters of Music." In it he said: "Schubert was a generous and loving man, with a soul so gentle, passionate and sensitive—being expressed as it is in vast supplies of music—his life made the world a different place for all music-lovers, who come after him; we have, by Schubert, a kind of beauty now around us which but for him we never should have had, because since music began there has been none just like him."

ABOUT the life of Schubert nothing will be said except to remind the reader that he was the son of a schoolmaster, was born in December, 1797, at Vienna, and that he died in the same city in November, 1828, the victim of typhus, like Mozart. The inferiority of his social position has, on the whole, been exaggerated. Though never mixing, as Beethoven did, with the Viennese aristocracy on terms of something very like equality, one or two fashionable houses were open to him. The truth of the matter, however, is that Schubert, almost pathologically shy and awkward, hated society; but that is not to say, as one writer puts it, that he "preferred the servant's hall." Schubert was a thorough Bohemian; he liked carousing with his friends in the cafes of Vienna, and we know that he was the life and soul of these carousals—which to anyone with a knowledge of human nature explains a great deal—and that his friends adored him. But these friends, so far from having anything in common with "the servant's hall," were in practically every instance men of intellect, men like Mazschofer, the poet, and Vogl, the singer. It was a careless, casual kind of life, admirably suited to one like Schubert, who was constitutionally incapable of bothering about money—he earned on the aver-

This month, music lovers throughout the world will commemorate the centenary of the death of Franz Schubert, one of the greatest melodists the world has ever known. Much has been written and said about Schubert this year, and the celebrations are being looked forward to with the keenest anticipation. Special programmes have been arranged by the four New Zealand stations, when all aspects of the many-sided genius of the great composer will be presented for the enjoyment and entertainment of listeners.

age, considerably less than a hundred pounds a year—but it was not, as has sometimes been said, a life of excess. Schubert's industry proves this much. He worked every morning from six to one, an impossibility to anyone addicted to regular dissipation.

NOW, these facts, taken together, are of importance if we are to understand Schubert's music aright," writes Mr. Francis Toye. "In Vienna, the city

compositions could have appeared in exactly the same form in any other city at any other period. What Elizabethan England was to Shakespeare, Vienna of the early nineteenth century was to Schubert. His dislike of social convention, his careless Bohemian tastes, count much, too, in the fashioning of his music. To these we may trace, I think, the excessive length of some of his compositions, the easy, spontaneous nature of his inspiration. To be more accurate, perhaps, these characteristics all spring from the same root.

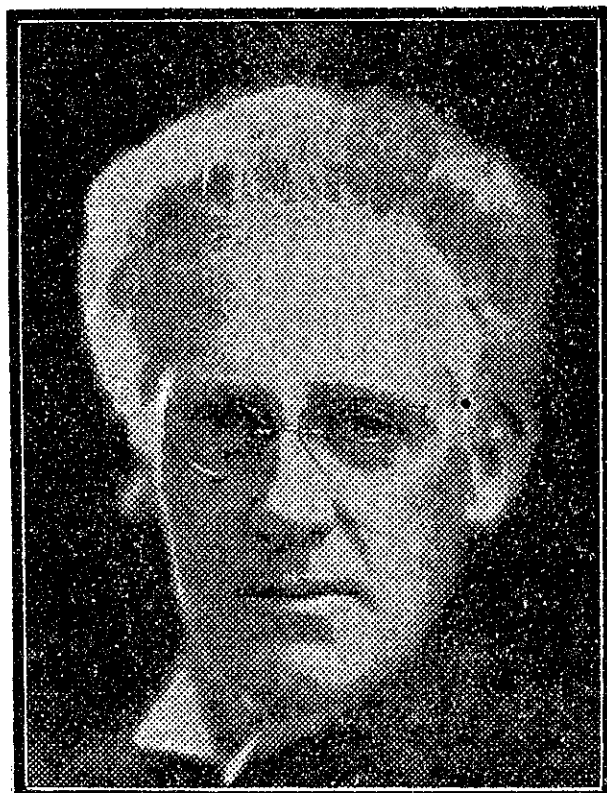
"PROFESSOR Donald Tovey, in the best essay on Schubert that has appeared in English hitherto, has shown that Schubert's lack of knowledge of musical form is more or less a myth. What he did, he did deliberately and of set purpose. But I think it is fair to say that his character was not one to trouble itself overmuch, as a Debussy or a Mozart would have done, with questions of form. The germinal musical idea is what mattered to Schubert first, last, and all the time. Temperamentally he was the natural musician—probably the most natural musician in the whole history of music. Not only could he set anything to music, as his contemporaries truly said, but nothing could stop him setting anything and almost everything to music. When he was not satisfied with a song, he did not, as a rule, revise it; he just wrote a completely new version. Essentially this generous, magnificent outpouring of ideas is characteristic of one temperament; we cannot expect to find allied with it the restraint characteristic of quite another temperament. Together with the great industry already referred to, it explains how Schubert, dead at the age of 32, left behind him a musical output considerably larger than that of most composers who attained the proverbial three score years and ten. Compare it, for instance, with that of Bizet, who also died in the thirties. I do not propose to give a list of Schubert's compositions, symphonic, operatic, ecclesiastical, or chamber; they can be found in any standard book of reference. But I will remind the reader that of songs alone he wrote nearly six hundred, and that some three hundred of these are masterpieces! Would you have such a man different in any particular even if you could? I know that I would not.

"FOR in his music, as in his life, Franz Schubert's personality is the quintessence of loveliness. I always like to imagine his real self,

underneath the uncouth, unattractive exterior, to have been something very like the first subject of the so-called 'Unfinished' symphony, when the clarinet steals in rather shyly against a background of busy, friendly strings, who are none other, of course, than Schubert and the other 'Schubertians.' Nevertheless, somewhere in this timid man there was a vein of boldness, of almost Beethovenian nobility. Think of the daring modulations characteristic of his best work, of the Scherzo of the 'Death and the Maiden' quartet, so prophetic of 'Siegfried'—above all, of the glorious Finale of the C Major Symphony (perhaps the greatest of essays in diatony), particularly towards the end, where the body of strings, like a Titan, hammers out the four great C's over and over again. thing about them is well-nigh miraculous—their mere number, their variety, the ease with which they were composed. On July 7 or 8, 1815, he wrote six songs; on October 19 he wrote no less than eight, one being in two versions. He composed "Gretchen am Spinnrade," the most remarkable song that had appeared in Germany up to then, when a lad of seventeen; 'The Erl King,' perhaps the most popular ballad in the world, was one of a hundred songs written only a year later. A learned biographer has classified the total output into more than a dozen well-defined categories, which gives some indication of their range of expression and emotion. In truth, Schubert's songs constitute a miracle every bit as inexplicable as other miracles less well attested. Think of the bustling, headstrong Scherzo of the marvellous Quintet for two 'cellos, two violins and viola, probably the best of all his chamber music, and heard far too infrequently. Think of one or two of the piano sonatas.

"NEVERTHELESS to the public at large Schubert remains primarily, I suppose, a song-composer, and in a sense the public is not wrong, because if any branch of composition had to be isolated and alone preserved we should all vote for the songs. Other composers may have surpassed Schubert in other forms; nobody, before or since ever wrote such songs."

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Mr. Cyril Towsey, of 1YA.
—Andrew, Photo.

itself and the country round, lay his while life; and it is the romanticism of contemporary Vienna that inspires his whole musical output. I doubt if his

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