

Mr. Arthur Honegger in London

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soweniger Grund haben wir, barmherzig zu sein, zum Schaden unseres Landes. Die Schweiz ist wahrhaftig nicht ohne Möglichkeiten, doch darf sich niemand darauf versteifen, gerade die Möglichkeiten zu finden, die er sich aus äusseren Gründen selber wünscht. Je mehr also die Rationalisierung als wichtiger Faktor in unser Wirtschaftsleben eingreifen wird, umsomehr Grund haben wir, die Jugend schon von früh auf dazu anzuleiten, in Berücksichtigung der eigenen natürlichen Fähigkeiten und der allgemeinen Verhältnisse eine Bahn zu wählen, die ihr selber und dem Lande zum Segen ausschlägt. Doch Vorbedingung bleibt, das muss immer wieder ausgesprochen werden, dass der handwerklich begabte Schüler, das Kind mit praktischer Spezialbegabung, in der Schule eine andere Stellung einnehme, als es bis dahin der Fall gewesen ist. Wir haben allzusehr versucht, aus allen Kindern Gleiche zu machen, als dass wir nicht auch einmal probieren könnten, unsere Jugend in einem andern Sinne heranzubilden. So typisch es ist, dass unsere Schule von der Stadt ausgegangen ist und darum zu einer falschen Landschule geworden ist, so typisch ist es auch, dass die Schule vom Kopfe ausgegangen ist und nicht von der Hand. Die Folgen sind heute schon deutlich genug. Die Rationalisierung wird sie noch deutlicher machen!

—Felix Moeschlin in "N.Z."

MR. ARTHUR HONEGGER IN LONDON.

There is no field of activity, ancient or modern, which has derived such an impetus from Broadcasting as music. Not only can we enjoy the classic masterpieces at our ease practically without any expense to us, but modern composers are receiving an encouragement which should atone for the traditional disappointments which belong to the curriculum of the artist. Thanks to the enterprise of the British Broadcasting Company we have been privileged to enjoy in this country works by one of our foremost modern composers, Mr. Arthur Honegger, who last Thursday week personally conducted two of his compositions at the Royal Albert Hall, a remarkable array of soloists, choirs and orchestra responding to his baton. Though the concert was undoubtedly a great success, English music critics have by no means been unanimous in their judgement; nevertheless, they have all been sympathetic. Here is what the *Daily Telegraph* (March 18th) says:

When lately a new composition of M. Honegger was performed in Paris immediately after "King David," a critic remarked that in comparison with the novelty "King David" was almost a masterpiece. Last night, thanks to the enterprise of the B.B.C., "King David" was performed at the Albert Hall for the first time. Perhaps because we had no occasion to compare it with anything else it seemed far from the masterpiece class. It is useless to compare anything with "Pacific 231," a harmless and luxurious toy, and there are no grounds on which a comparison could be made between the Swiss and the English composer, for the one is the product of a school in which novelty is the chief consideration, as clearly as the other is of a school in which music is the only concern.

"King David" is described as a symphonic psalm in three parts, after a drama by Rene Morax. It requires, besides chorus and orchestra, a soprano (Miss Elsie Suddaby), a contralto (Miss Phyllis Archibald), a tenor (Mr. Frank Titterton), and a narrator (Mr. Robert Loraine) who does not sing his part like the narrator of the St. Matthew Passion, but speaks it after the manner of Schumann's "Schön Hedwig." The recitation came through very clearly whenever the narrator had the field to himself. At one point, however, he had to contend against the orchestra, the chorus and a couple of soloists, and then, of course, we could only guess the general trend of the narration. "King David" was warmly received—a tribute to its colour and to the great forces used by the composer with some skill, and, possibly, the novelty of the experiment had a share in the success. Purely as a piece of music it is by no means flawless, the most glaring fault being the frequent repetition of melodic or rhythmic patterns which, however interesting in themselves, cannot but surfeit the appetite in the end.

To add my own experience in listening-in, "King David" at times became somewhat monotonous and one was tempted to switch on another station; this was probably due to the absence of a proper *milieu* or atmosphere, the work being in the nature of a pastoral play (Passionsspiel). "Pacific 231" was certainly more enjoyable, though the two are evidently not to be compared. Mr. Honegger's predilection for a railway engine—he was formerly a railway worker—has earned him the publication in most of the English illustrated papers of a picture showing him in the cab of an express engine; the *Daily Herald* (March 17th) has the following interview on his peculiar love for the iron "gee-gee":—

Mr. Honegger, the Swiss musician, who has composed a symphonic movement, based on the rhythm of a railway engine, yesterday had the pleasure for the first time of riding on a Toot-plate, and the experience proved delightful.



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He assisted to drive the "Flying Fox" express from King's Cross to Hitchin.

"Railway engines are full of music," he exclaimed afterwards. "They are lyrical. They sing. The song of the railway engine is a symbol and a tribute to the pluck and persistence of man in his big fight with things which are bigger, but not mightier, than he.

"I have wished to drive a railway engine since I was a boy.

"No, I shall not need to re-write 'Pacific 231.' What I learned to-day did not make that necessary. The experience was as I had imagined. But some day I may compose a bigger work about railway engines.

"All things have their own rhythms—you have only to discover them and put them into a musical structure."

Motor cars and mass machinery do not appeal much to Mr. Honegger; but the rhythm of Rugby football does, and one day he will put it into music.

What strikes me is that he singles out a motor-car engine as not appealing to him; I should have thought there is no more acceptable music on a frosty winter's morning than when the engine at last surrenders to one's efforts and starts kicking. I did not know there was rhythm in "Rugger," but after this I am quite prepared to hear that he has written a symphony on a doctor's prescription or an operation for appendicitis!

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