

Ravel and Debussy, omnipresent throughout the cycle, and spellbindingly so in 'The Host of the Air'. But nothing else I knew prepared me for the Mahlerian resonance and intensity of the 'Foxhunter' (a 10-minute funeral march with hunting fanfares), nor the assured, incisive English word-setting, nor yet the clear, pervasive affinity with, and personal recreation of, the fiddling and piping idioms of Irish folk-music. It sounds—dare I say it—like the kind of music about Ireland that Bax *ought* to have written, but never quite succeeded. I have no idea if Loeffler ever visited Ireland, but his song-cycle (with, perhaps, Berlioz's *L'Irlande* as its distant ancestor), seems as heartfelt and imaginative a musical homage as that country has ever inspired.

The orchestral playing has plenty of warmth and fire, and the recording is pretty good—except that Neil Rosenshein seems unduly backwardly placed. He sings with intelligence and passion, but lacks the real lyric strength the music demands (one would have given much to hear McCormack premièring 'The Fiddler of Dooney' and 'Cathleen ni Houghlignan' in Boston in 1922) and is thus occasionally swamped in the bright intricacies of the orchestration. Still, a veritable find. Do they play this work every other week on Radio Telefis Eirann? And if not, why not?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

from ANTONY BEAUMONT

WITH HIS REVIEW of *Busoni the Composer and*, more recently, his report on the first English production of *Doctor Faust* at ENO, Calum MacDonald has done me the honour of devoting some eight pages of his journal to my work on Busoni. But by directing his review of the opera 'chiefly at future producers' he has severely limited the field of potential readers; by describing himself (*the modestia!*) as 'an ordinary listener' he disavows the very special qualifications needed to write at such length on so challenging a topic; finally, by implying that 'much praise in the press' is a sure sign that something is foul, he invalidates his own attempts at appraisal with just as sure an instinct as he thereby damns the positive and differentiated reactions of such recent commentators as George Steiner, Alfred Brendel, William Mann and many others.

Are these the *Drei Ratten in einer Falle* (sic) to which he refers in his review of my book? Evidently Mr MacDonald had some sort of Esperanto translation of *Doctor Faust* to hand, for in the German original the text is: *Drei Ratten in einer Falle*.

I would not wish to bore your readers with the lengthy refutations, explanations and corrections which Mr MacDonald seems to expect; but on one—symptomatic—occasion he has fallen into this own 'Trappe' and I feel the need to help him out of it:—A short piece by Norman Lebrecht in *The Sunday Times* did indeed refer, quite correctly, if somewhat jauntily, to the surviving photostat MS of *Doctor Faust* in the Music Library of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk in Hamburg. My note in the ENO programme gave the same information, phrased more precisely if with less journalistic flair. Mr MacDonald, despite the opportunity he will have had of listening to the BBC recording of the ENO production before writing his review, 'failed to detect' (his own words) the music interpolated from this MS. Permit me to prise open the metal spring, remove the remaining morsel of cheese, straighten out the crumpled critic and console him with the information that it occurs on p. 164 of the vocal score (from bar 599). The music is not lush, as described (before hearing it) by Lebrecht, and the passage is not 40 but 30 bars long. But all this will be perfectly obvious to anyone who a) knows the opera or b) can read music. As Mr MacDonald has failed on these two rudimentary counts, any further commentary on his reviews becomes superfluous.

Cologne