

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, *Tempo*.

Dear Sir,

I wonder if you can spare me space to print a few observations on Mr. Ralph Hawkes' most interesting article in your June issue, on 'Music in the open air.'

At the outset I should like to thank him for the kind things he says about the B.B.C. Music Department and its work. We are, rightly, subjected to a great deal of criticism. No Government Institution can flourish without it; and though I think many of our critics feel that we take no interest in what they say, I can assure them that serious criticism is most anxiously watched and carefully discussed. Mr. Hawkes' compliments therefore are correspondingly welcome.

The future of orchestral music is certainly full of problems, and I feel that the great new audience which has appeared may easily get lost if we do not all very carefully watch their habits and find out when to give them their music. There will, I think, be no use in placidly going on on Saturday and Sunday afternoons when they have got their cars back. We must learn to conform to their new habits.

I had the pleasure of conducting a series of open-air concerts with the Chicago Orchestra at Ravinia Park in 1939. They told me then that the whole of the first week in 1938 had been practically ruined. Dr. Rodzinski had to stop a number of times because the rain on the wooden roof drowned the sound of the orchestra, and a large number of people left their cars bogged in the parking place for days. I think I remember, too, reading recently that Mr. Eugene Goossens had a contract for twelve dates at the Lewisohn Stadium and that only

seven of them could take place. Surely English weather cannot do worse than that. There is no reason why we should not have out-of-door concerts in well planned acoustic shells of the American type.

May I add a small point about the B.B.C. Orchestra? Mr. Hawkes' hints that the man-power authorities have not raided us much. I wish we were so fortunate. In 1939 the orchestra was 119 strong. On the outbreak of war it was reduced to 70, and later gradually increased, partly from outside sources, partly by the recall of musicians unfit for military service or above military age, to 92. The present strength of the Orchestra is 97.

It is also fair to point out that the case of each musician of military age has been under continual review by the Music National Service Committee, which is an advisory body constituted by the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry, upon the recommendation of the Committee, has granted deferment to a small number of irreplaceable principals whose cases they review at regular intervals: but no deferments have been granted to rank and file players nor to players of higher grade for whom temporary substitutes could be found. Approximately 100 B.B.C. musicians are serving in the Forces or undertaking other forms of National Service distinct from broadcasting, and 24 of these were members of the Symphony Orchestra.

Yours truly,

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An American in London

Among several well known musicians at present serving with the United States forces in England is Sgt. Marc Blitzstein, one of the outstanding American composers of the day. His list of compositions includes orchestral, choral and chamber-music works and several operas. Of the latter 'The Cradle will Rock' (1936) and 'No for an Answer' (1937) attracted widespread attention, and have frequently been performed in New York and other American cities. Blitzstein's job here is that of director of music of the American Broadcasting Station in Europe, and since his arrival he has composed an orchestral tone-poem, 'Freedom Morning,' dedicated to the United States Negro troops. It has been played several times in England by the London Symphony and R.A.F. Orchestras; in Philadelphia; and by the New York Philharmonic at a Lewisohn Stadium concert. He is just now finishing a 'ballad symphony,' 'The Airborne,' inscribed to the U.S. Eighth Air Force, to which he is assigned. Blitzstein studied composition under Rosario Scalero, Nadia Boulanger and Schoenberg, and before the war was active as teacher, writer and lecturer. His scintillating performance with the London Philharmonic Orchestra of Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue,' at the Adelphi in the spring, showed that he is also an excellent pianist. There is a thirst for knowledge of contemporary American work among progressive music lovers in this country, and if a radio adaption of one of Blitzstein's better known operas were feasible, the B.B.C. would be rendering a service by sponsoring it.

Shaw on Subsidies.

"The concert last week in aid of the project for establishing a municipal band in London reminded me of the late Edmund Gurney's demand for an orchestra for the East End. If I had my way in the matter the money should not be raised by a concert and a subscription list, as if the London County Council were a distressed widow: a fitter course would be to levy the cost by the strong hand of the tax-collector on the thousands of well-to-do people who never go to a concert because they are 'not musical,' but who enjoy, all the same, the health-giving atmosphere which music creates. Just as the river is useful to men who do not row, the bridges to West Enders who never cross them, and the railways to the bedridden, so the provision of good music and plenty of it smooths life as much for those who do not know the National Anthem from Rule Britannia, as for those who can whistle all the themes in the Ninth Symphony."

Bernard Shaw in *Music in London*, 1890-94.

Some authors in this issue.

Henry Cowell: American composer of Irish descent; experimenter in musical acoustics; author of 'New Musical Resources' and editor of 'New Music' Edition.

Neville Cardus: Music critic (formerly on the "Manchester Guardian") and authority on cricket. Now living in Australia.

Eric Fenby: Composer; collaborator in Delius's last works; author of 'Delius as I knew him.'