

# MUSIC IN ENGLAND.

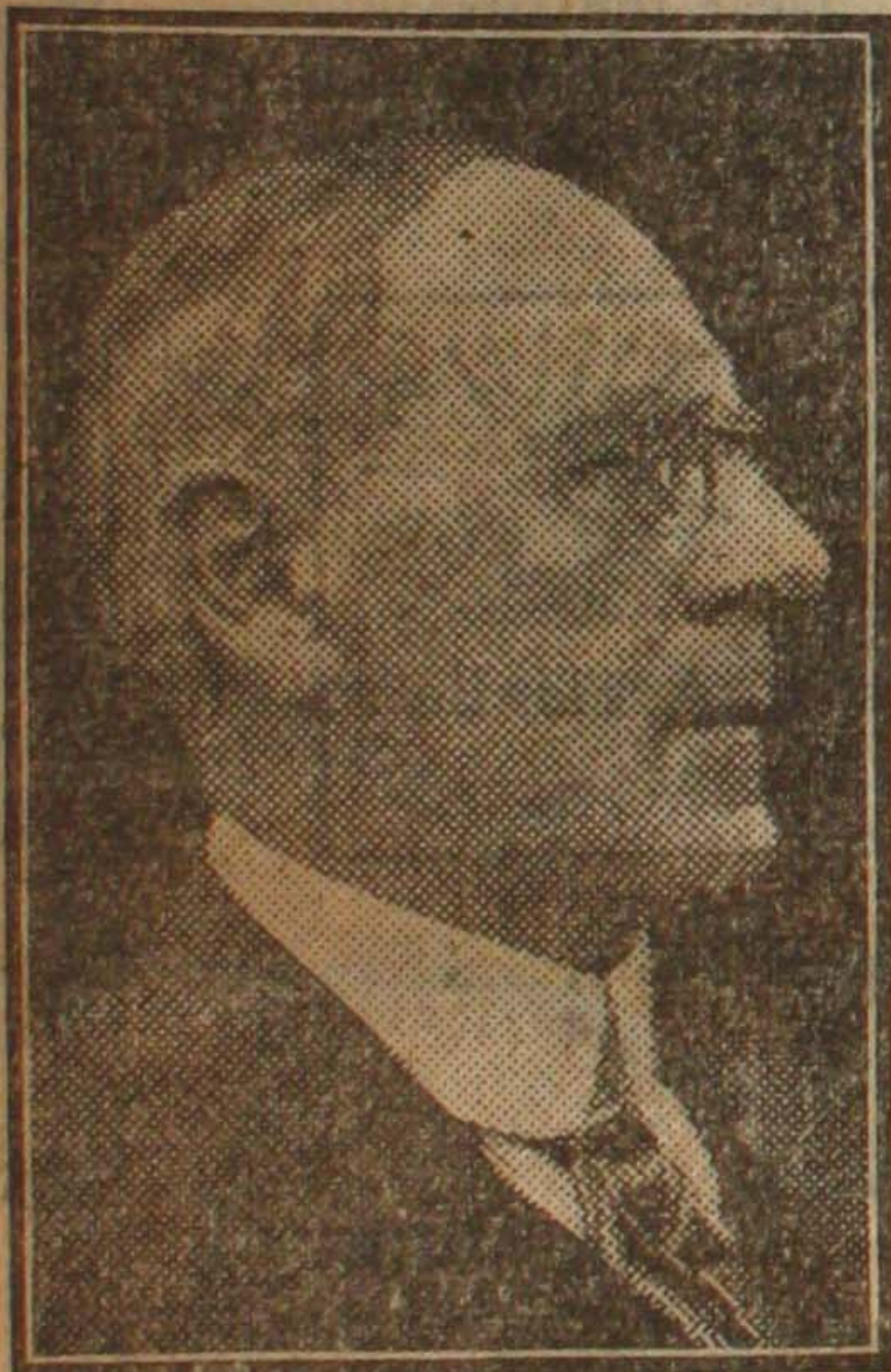
## THE EFFECT OF WIRELESS.

### IMPRESSIONS OF DR. DAVIES.

By the Naldera on Saturday, the Director of the Elder Conservatorium (Dr. E. Harold Davies) returned to Adelaide after an absence of nearly five months. He is looking forward to the resumption of his work, and his recent experiences of music and musicians, both in England and Germany, will doubtless prove of great value.

Asked to narrate his impressions, Dr. Davies said there was so much to say and about so many things that it was almost impossible to cover the ground within the limits of a newspaper interview. One single topic—such, for example, as the present state of music in England, as well as its future prospects—would suffice for more than the average reader would care to peruse. Touching lightly on this subject, he said the present position was as full of hope as it was of immediate perplexity. Without doubt the hopeful sign was the enormous development of wireless and the perfection to which both transmission and reception had now come. There were today about 2,500,000 receiving sets in Great Britain, and that might easily mean 20,000,000 listeners. The bulk of the British Broadcasting Corporation output was music, and a considerable percentage of this was music of the best kind.

"It is absolutely certain," said Dr. Davies, "that whereas a year or so ago comparatively few people would listen to Bach, Haydn, or Mozart, there are now hundreds of thousands who find their highest joy in the classics. This daily growing enthusiasm for the best in art is a most hopeful augury for the future." Quality and real public service were the ruling motives of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and it was a particularly happy thing for England that competitive broadcasting was not, and never would be allowed. If it were it would at once become commercial, and that would mean playing down to the



Dr. E. Harold Davies

lowest levels of public taste. As it was, however, one might even believe that gradually an entirely new sense of values would be created in the public mind. Instead of being attracted, as they now were, by mere sensationalism, and every kind of foolishness, people would realise the permanent joy of fine things, whether of the mind or the spirit. If the B.E.C., by its present admirable policy would achieve this, it would prove to be one of the greatest redemptive influences that a materialistic age had ever known.

But, said the pressman, you spoke also of immediate perplexity in your view of the state of music.

"Yes, that is so; for while the number of enthusiastic listeners is already increased a thousand fold, one is also confronted by the fact that the British National Opera Company is practically dead, and that Sir Thomas Beecham is making a last, despairing, and I fear vain, appeal for a new fund to establish opera on a sound and lasting basis. Then there is the fact that London, which is still the greatest city in the world, has no orchestra comparable with those of Philadelphia or Boston, although there are just as many fine players in England as there are in any other country.

But are not these admissions a direct contradiction of your belief in the growing love of good music?

"No," said Dr. Davies. "They only emphasise our perfectly stupid way of doing things. England is a hundred times more musical than America, but in that country music is constantly endowed by wealthy men and women who realise its value. On the Continent it receives generous State and municipal subsidies, with the result that in Berlin, for example, there

are two great opera houses running continuously to crowded audiences, not to mention the magnificent series of orchestral, choral, chamber music, and recital concerts which never cease all the year round. I would say, with all the emphasis possible, that we are a musical people, and we are becoming every day more and more so, but until either our wealthy citizens, or our Governments, realise that music is a public necessity, and not a private luxury, the stain of bankruptcy in matters of art will remain upon our reputation. So long as it depends on voluntary public subscription we shall go on floundering in the mud of incompetency and failure. What is everybody's duty is no one's responsibility. If deep drainage, a pure water supply, wide, well-lighted streets, or any other public benefit were dependent on voluntary subscriptions, we should never get it. There is only one way to secure national progress in sanitation, education, or in art, and that is to make these things a national charge. We Britishers have as yet no conviction about this, as it applies to music, and that is our worst reproach. But I believe it will come, perhaps when members of Parliament become either gramophone fiends or wireless enthusiasts. Let us pray for their speedy conversion."

### Music in Berlin.

And talking of stability, and continuity of personnel, reminds me of a glorious presentation of "Tristan" that I heard in Berlin. The players there are the sons, and probably even the grandsons, of the original Wagner players. I believe that if all the copies had suddenly been lost those men at the State Opera House could still have done the whole four hours performance without a page of music. It is literally "in their bones," and every note, every nuance, is instinctive. Need one say more?

There were many other impressive things about music in Berlin, but one quite small incident sticks in my memory. At all the performances I attended, either concert or opera, it was a remarkable sight to watch hundreds and hundreds of the vast audiences quietly promenading the foyer during the interval—and not a single cigarette or any other kind of smoke to be seen. In many English theatres smoking is now allowed in the auditorium. At Queen's Hall the corridors are blue with it "in between." But in both Brussels and Berlin I found that tobacco was not tolerated, even in the remotest precincts of the house. We Britishers have yet much to learn of the serious delights of art.

### English Music Schools.

Asked about his visits to the various music schools, Dr. Davies spoke enthusiastically about the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy, the Berlin "Hochschule," and the Leipzig Conservatorium, and of his talks with the directors of these famous institutions.

"At the Royal College," he said, "I also met, on two or three occasions, Sir Ernest Palmer, who still takes a very live interest in its welfare. Many years ago Sir Ernest made a gift of £27,000 for the formation of what is known as the "patrons' fund." This sum is invested for the benefit of British music students, who show special gifts; either as composers, performers, or conductors; and the interest, amounting to about £1,000 a year, pays for a professional orchestra, engaged for three morning concerts in each term, to bring to full public hearing the special gifts of the students chosen. Although the concerts, as well as the fund itself, are identified with the Royal College, brilliant "comers" from the Academy, or even from private teachers, are given an equal opportunity. On the morning I heard a patrons' fund concert—before a crowded audience by the way—the whole programme was from the Royal Academy. What a splendid fraternity it shows!

I told Sir Ernest Palmer that we would gladly kidnap him for the benefit of Australian music. It would certainly be a vast encouragement for our Elder Conservatorium if some generous benefactor would treat us similarly. And, what is more, we, too, would gladly share the benefit with others.

### Australian Students.

Talking of students, did you meet any of our South Australian scholars?

"Yes," said Dr. Davies, "quite accidentally at Queen's Hall, I encountered John Bishop, who was on the point of leaving to take up an appointment in New Zealand. He seemed to have done well, and was full of hope and eager anticipation of his new job. Then several times I saw Dick Watson, who has a good position in Eton College Choir. He is still at the college with Johnstone-Douglas, who is undoubtedly one of the finest singing teachers in England. Watson has already made quite a reputation for himself, having been offered a tour with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, which he wisely declined. Vaughan Williams also has chosen him to do the premier of "Falstaff," a new work of his to be staged shortly. His singing has greatly developed in every way, but it is hard work for even the best of them. I am quite sure that many Australian students who think they may succeed in England would do far better to stay where they are. England itself, and for that matter Germany, too, is full of starving talent.

"Apart from music I had one or two very happy experiences, such as a most delightful week-end, spent with Professor and Mrs. Haldane at Oxford; and a visit to Leeds, where I lectured at the University on 'Australian Aboriginal Songs.' Altogether it has been an inspiring and refreshing time."

REG. 16. 4. 28

## MUSIC ABROAD.

### Return of Dr. Harold Davies.

#### Interesting Experiences.

On Saturday, Professor Harold Davies returned to Adelaide, after an absence of some months in England and Germany. During his stay abroad he enjoyed many opportunities of hearing the finest music, and also of close intercourse with several of the leading musicians of the old world.

Asked for some account of his travels, Dr. Davies said it would be quite impossible to make any kind of comprehensive statement of the many experiences that had fallen to his lot. That could well be left to some future occasion. But a few points of interest might be mentioned. "For example," said the doctor, "I was anxious to discover the condition of orchestral playing in England, and particularly in London. It is much as I had imagined it to be from my previous readings of reliable critiques. In London there is really no definite orchestral organization to which its members give permanent allegiance. There are, of course, hundreds of fine players, but each man takes the most lucrative job offering from time to time; and the so-called "deputy system" allows him to send a substitute whenever a more profitable engagement comes his way. The result of this is continual and disastrous change in the personnel of a band; and it is no exaggeration to say that a conductor, after having carefully rehearsed his programme, often finds a whole lot of unfamiliar faces in front of him on the night of the performance. The evils are obvious. How in the world is it possible to develop "esprit" and pride in an organization of hirelings, however competent they may be individually? The really big conductor, who dominates his men, can often force them up to fine moments of enthusiastic playing and complete fusion; but for the most part they present no sort of unity or finish of ensemble.

#### Queen Hall Concerts.

In three successive concerts at Queen's Hall, the whole position was made clear. The first was a "Philharmonic," under the conductorship of Ansermet, and the playing was utterly slack and disappointing. A few days later I heard a Wagner programme, under Albert Coates, and the "dry bones" came to life. It was vastly better, not because the players were more skilful, but simply as a result of the contagious fire of enthusiasm streaming from the conductor. The following week B. B. C. brought down the Manchester "Halle" Orchestra, under Hamilton Harty, and for the first time I heard real playing. This, in my judgment, is the only solidly good band in England. The same players are always together, continuously rehearsing and performing as an organic whole, obviously proud of their reputation, and utterly keen about their work. They did the Mozart "G Minor" symphony with most exquisite finesse—as it were a piece of delicate chamber music, and then rose to magnificent heights of tone splendour in subsequent works of Beethoven and Wagner. London will simply have to learn its lesson from Manchester, and in some way secure at least one complete orchestra of permanent personnel. Only thus can it ever rival Boston, Philadelphia, or the best of the Continental cities.

ADV. 17. 4. 28

## ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

### A STUDENTS' CONCERT.

#### THE DIRECTOR WELCOMED.

The second concert of the 1928 season of the Elder Conservatorium, which was held at the Conservatorium on Monday evening, was given by advanced students, who submitted attractive classical numbers, which were greatly enjoyed by a large audience. In-

strumental and vocal solos of a varied character were given, and talent of more than ordinary merit was shown by the performers.

The programme was opened with Mendelssohn's pianoforte concerto in G minor (first movement) played by Miss Vida Cozens. A pleasing and skilful interpretation of the number was given, and its great musical beauties were nicely emphasised. A 'cello solo, "Romance," by Goltermann, was played by Master Allan Gibbs, and it was evident that the young instrumentalist had been well grounded in tone production. The item was creditable to the youthful performer. The songs, "Synnove's Song" and "On the Ling Ho," were prettily sung by Miss Hannah Marrett, the Norwegian crooning in the former being effective. More sparkle was introduced into the second number, and the singer was well received. The lovely piano solo, "Andante and Rondo Capriccioso," by Mendelssohn, was well played by Miss Joan Mellowship, who gave due attention to the various shades of tone coloring with which the piece abounds, and exhibited considerable executive ability. Another Mendelssohn item followed in the violin solo, "On the Wings of Song," by Miss Hansie Haken-dorf, who maintained a sweet singing melody, and overcame the difficulties of the double stopping passages with success. The organ solo—an intermezzo by Stanford, founded on an old Irish air—played by Mr. Fred Finlay, was a praiseworthy effort in which the soloist showed good command of the instrument, and an understanding of the composition, which he interpreted with sympathy. The chansons "A Toi" ("To Thee") by Paul Lebrun and "Thou art Risen," by Coleridge Taylor, were pleasingly sung by Mr. Harold Tidemann, who has a baritone voice of excellent tonal quality, especially in the middle register.

A novelty in the form of an oboe solo was provided by Miss Betty Evan, who played Schumann's "Andante Cantabile" with highly creditable results, and was warmly applauded. The piano solo, "Ronda from Sonata, Op. 24" (Weber), was brilliantly played by Miss Dorothy Fiebig, who surmounted the technicalities of the piece with ease, and demonstrated her powers as an executant. Miss Edna Lawrence, who will be remembered as having taken the part of "Orpheus" in the opera of that name given by the Conservatorium opera class last year, sang "Sing No More" and "Love In the Woods," by Landon Ronald. Her tuneful, contralto voice is showing greater breadth and depth, with good enunciation, and the items were acceptable in every way. The first movement of Brahms's "Sonata in A Major for the Violin and Pianoforte," received musicianly treatment at the hands of Miss Jean Barbour and Miss Louise Hakendorf. The "Song of the Nubian Girl" (Coleridge Taylor) was sung in good style by Miss Jean Berry, who possesses a rich contralto voice of great promise. Miss Mollie Scollin played the violin solo, "Romance" (Svendsen) in a convincing manner, her work being noteworthy for the evenness of tone produced. The programme concluded with the first movement of Grey's "Concerto in A Minor" skilfully performed by Miss Bessie Francis, with Mrs. C. H. Hyde at the second piano. The item was full of artistic merit and brilliancy of treatment, which reflected credit upon both players. The predominance of the first piano was appropriately maintained. The accompaniments were played by Miss Alice Meegan and Miss Joan Mellowship.

Mr. I. G. Reimann, who has been acting Director of the Conservatorium during the absence of Dr. E. Harold Davies, took advantage of the opportunity to welcome the Director back. He said Dr. Davies had evidently had a delightful time abroad. He had done his best to keep the flag flying during his absence. They all trusted that he would be refreshed both in body and mind as the result of his trip, and be able to carry on his duties with renewed vigor. (Applause.)

Dr. Davies thanked them all for their kind welcome, and assured them that he was glad to be home again and resume his work. He congratulated Mr. Reimann on having carried on the duties of Director so successfully during his absence. He was glad to acknowledge the value of Mr. Reimann's efforts on behalf of music in South Australia. He had learned a good deal from his experiences abroad, but he felt certain that they had nothing to be ashamed of in South Australia from a musical point of view. He considered the Australians as a whole were a musical people, and they could safely look forward to great progress in the future. The chief necessity was the cultivation of the right sense of values. Unfortunately, they strived after a great many things that were not worth while. The thing to do was to give more attention to those that were worth while. He trusted that the year's work at the Conservatorium would be crowned with success. (Applause.)