

bination—psychological insight and tact, ability for exact analysis, as well as profound and genuinely imaginative musicianship. It should, it would seem, irresistibly tempt musicians or musicologists whose interest in their art is more than a purely historical one. It should not however be attempted by anyone not fully aware of its pitfalls, or unwilling to reconsider in full the cherished concepts of existing musical theory. Above all it must aim, in the spirit of the practical artist, and not that of the speculative student, at demonstrating facts, not establishing laws, and at the enhancement of a musical language capable of meeting all of the varied demands which the composers of today place upon it.

Roger Sessions

TOVEY'S ANALYSIS

WITH the fifth volume published a few months ago, Donald Francis Tovey completes his *Essays in Musical Analysis* (Oxford University Press). This last book concerns "vocal music" (chiefly choral), and like the preceding four volumes it consists of a series of analyses of various classical and modern compositions. In its general plan it is not unlike other more or less familiar collections of musical annotations—Rosa Newmarch's, for example, or even Upton's old-fashioned *Standard Symphonies, Standard Oratorios*—but it differs from them in that Tovey happens to be a man of consummate genius in whose hands the medium has become an art-form.

It would be tempting to enlarge on Tovey's gifts; his masterly prose style with its almost poetic imagery, his humor, or his common sense. But those who know any of his works, even his extraordinary articles in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* will find it hardly necessary; others are best advised to look him up and find out for themselves. Tovey is the only living writer on music (with the possible exception of W. J. Turner) of whom it is not fantastic to say that his best work may possibly be remembered as literature.

The works analyzed by Tovey have been chosen from those performed at his concerts in Edinburgh and naturally the classics predominate to a large extent. But as his interests are

wide, he has taken up a considerable variety of modern works. There are analyses of two of Sibelius' symphonies and the violin concerto to explain his unique forms, of Strauss' *Don Juan* and also works by Hindemith. Perhaps Schönberg is unrepresented as is Mahler, because his works are beyond the resources of the Edinburgh orchestra; although this reason is less likely to account for the absence of Ravel and Stravinsky. The space given to modern English music may seem disproportionate to a foreigner, but it provides an interesting picture of the healthy state of musical activity in Great Britain today.

Tovey's attitude toward modern music is daring in at least one way, for he has ventured to question a fundamental assumption that prevails generally among writers of modern music: that originality is a necessary factor in determining the importance of a musical composition. Originality is of course one factor, and a not inconsiderable one, but there can be no doubt that the vast overemphasis placed on it by criticism has conditioned living composers so completely that it exerts an almost paralyzing effect on a large proportion of a serious music today—and, incidentally, nowhere more than in America. A few quotations from Tovey's discussion of Brahms' *Second Serenade* will bring out his point.

"Every age has its own central criterion of art; and each later age sees how its predecessor's criterion was misleading. In the eighteenth century our central criterion was correctness. We are just emerging from an age in which the central criterion is originality, a much less fruitful concept. . . .

"Permanent values depend on more ascertainable things than the question, who told the truth first. The artist's conviction of the truth is not to be weakened by such a question; the poet can call the sky blue, or even rhyme 'dove' with 'love,' if these details are the right thing in the right place. The quality of the style line by line, and the power to organize the work as a whole, these things will remain. . . . Meanwhile it is extremely doubtful whether any valuable criticism, or any artistic principle whatever, has been pronounced by people who take originality for their criterion. They do not even make significant mistakes: they fail to touch permanent values at any point; and their judgments will be merely unintelligible a generation hence."

Ernest Lubin