

ELGAR and DELIUS under Palestine Skies.

By HERMAN SVET.

There is scarcely a second community in the world of only 450,000 souls which has developed so full and varied a music life as the Yishuv of Palestine.

Villages in which string quartets may be heard playing Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert again and again; remote settlements whose choirs study Bach cantatas; gramophone concerts in rural districts with programmes consisting of the best chamber music and symphonies; community singing evenings; concerts by the Palestine Orchestra, which are reminiscent of the concert halls of Europe and America; chamber music evenings in the buoyant atmosphere of the big hall of the Tel-Aviv Museum; Handel and Haydn oratorios by the excellent Tel-Aviv Choir; "Messiah" relayed by the Jerusalem Broadcasting choir and orchestra—here is some idea of the colourful music life of Palestine.

Naturally, the main feature of music life here are the concerts of the "Tizmoret Erez Israelit," the Palestine Orchestra, founded by the great violinist, Bronislav Hubermann, and now in its third season. Hubermann himself recently performed with his beloved Orchestra. Accompanied by string instruments and piano, he played the Bach A-Flat Violin Concerto which could not have sounded more beautiful in New York, London or Paris. Toscanini, who enchanted us with his magic during each of the first two seasons, found an orchestra still not quite perfect in its collective playing. But even in those initial stages of the "Tizmoret" the attentive ear could remark the magnificent power of execution latent in that body of musicians, which is gradually being revealed.

During the last two concert seasons as guest conductors we had Toscanini, Hans Steinberg, Issay Dobrowen, Eugen Szenkar, Dr. Malcolm Sargent and Michael Taube. This season most of the concerts were conducted by Eugen Szenkar. Dr. Malcolm Sargent, who won great popularity from his audiences, gave excellent renderings, among others, of important works by English composers such as Delius, Elgar and others. This season was to have been launched by the famous Paris conductor, Pierre Monteux (who is a Sephardic Jew), with the cellist, Emanuel Feuermann, as soloist. His Palestine visit had to be deferred, however, until the beginning of the coming season.

The repertoire of the Tel-Aviv Oratorio Choir includes Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Haydn's "The Creation," "The Seasons," and Handel's "Messiah." Performances of "Avodat Hakodesh" by Ernest Bloch and works by Paul Dessau will be presented jointly by the Palestine Orchestra, the Oratorio Choir and artists of the Habima.

It was originally intended to include Wagner's "Meister-singer" overture in the first concert of the season. The season's opening, however, coincided with the pogroms in Germany and the music of Wagner, with whom, in any case, Jewry has an old historical reckoning, would not have harmonized with the feeling of a Jewish audience in Palestine, apart from the present-day associations of the name of Nuremberg.

A great deal of chamber music is to be heard in Palestine. In Jerusalem for the past five years the string quartet of Emil Hauser, creator and one-time guiding star of the famous Budapest String Quartet, has been maintaining the highest tradition of chamber music. There are several chamber music quartets and trios in Tel-Aviv and their concerts, which take place in the hall of the Tel-Aviv Museum, are invariably overcrowded so that often the same programme must be repeated on two or three evenings.

The Jerusalem broadcasting station is gradually developing into an important factor in Palestine's music life. It has at its disposal a small permanent body of musicians, among them some excellent performers, and an orchestra numbering thirty instrumentalists. Its programmes include numerous classic works and all broadcasting stations in the world, popular and light music, as well.

A third of the Yishuv at least consists—as is still perhaps not sufficiently well-known—of Jews from Near Eastern coun-

tries, such as Yemen, Persia, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Boukharia, Syria and Turkey. In their musical taste, as in many other respects, these Jews are essentially oriental. To cater for them Ezra Aharoni—a Jewish singer and composer from Bagdad, who some years ago carried off first prize for his compositions and oudh-playing at an Oriental Music Congress at Cairo—broadcasts weekly with his choir and small oriental orchestra. Of the 36,000 wireless sets in use in Palestine, over 30,000, incidentally, are owned by Jews.

The development of Jewish music in Palestine is a chapter in itself. In a community made up of Jews from different countries, reared in different cultures and traditions, the conception of Jewish music is understood in a variety of ways. A Jewish song, litany or dance heard in a Yemenite, Bokharian or Baghdad synagogue sounds to the Jew from New York or Frankfort as though it were Arabic. While to the oriental Jews, the Hassidic "nigun" of the Ashkenazim seem essentially slavie. The musical creations of the so-called new national Jewish school, namely, the works of such composers as Achron, Gnessin, Krein, Millner, Rosowsky, are still little known. Although the Palestine Orchestra played the "Israel" Symphony by Bloch, the "Jewish Suite" by Alexander Weprik, the "Variations on Jewish

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