

# **"A MASTER OF MELODY"**

**ALBERT W. KETELBEY**

By

**BASIL HOGARTH**

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## **PREFACE**

**T**his little monograph is written for the benefit of those who, playing in cinemas, theatres and concert halls, desire a concise guide to the works of the foremost lyrical composer of the present day. The author has had no intention of offering a critical dissertation on Ketelbey and his works, rather has he sought to illustrate the capabilities and inherent artistry of such pieces as "In a Chinese Temple-Garden" "Cockney Suite," "Chal -Romano" (Overture)", "In a Persian Market," and "Sanctuary of the Heart," etc. It is hoped that this slight brochure will fill a long-felt want in the musical world, namely, a book that will illuminate, interest and prove of use in countless ways. It is respectfully suggested that it will be used in compiling "programme notes".

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*(NB. References to Themes, see page ?, are copied to the back of this transcript)*

## ALBERT W. KETELBEY

### (The Man)

It is probable that there is no other composer before the public to-day of whose music we hear so much as that of ALBERT W. KETELBEY, the creator of the greatest orchestral successes of this age. Thousands of cinema-goers have been enraptured by his tone-pictures; millions have heard the bands in the park play his music, and many thousand concert devotees have enjoyed his more serious essays ; but very few know much of the remarkable personality that lies behind the magic of his name. So little is known *personally* of this great musician (thanks to his lack of self-advertising) that a few words describing the man and his career may be at once usefull and encouraging.

ALBERT W. KETELBEY was born at Birmingham, and it may be interesting to state that his name is of obvious Danish origin. The name has nothing whatever to do with "Kettle"-bey (as some people wrongly pronounce it), being etymologically KETELBEY (the " Ke " being a " prefix " cognate with the " Ke" in the names "Ke-nelm," " Ke-steven". "K" nut, "Quebec" i.e., Ke-bec, the "Que" being the French equivalent of " Ke"), and is pronounced with the accent on the second syllable. While quite a young boy he showed a decided *penchant* for music, and was a good solo pianist. At the age of eleven he had already composed a piano sonata, which he performed publicly at the Worcester Town Hall, and which earned in later years the praise of Sir Edward Elgar. Seeing that music was the boy's *forte*, his parents wisely allowed him to compete for a Trinity College Scholarship. He came out many marks above the other entrants, and at the age of thirteen was installed at college as Queen Victoria Scholar for musical composition, which he again won three years later, having swept the board of *every prize anal medal (gold and silver)* – (except the accompaniment prize, which he was told he had just failed to win, because in his impetuosity in turning over, he had pulled his music over on to the floor and, of course, as the examiners afterwards told him, thereby ruining a good performance. Rather hard luck on the boy 1). He was appointed organist at St. John's Church, Wimbledon, at the age of 16, and continued the study of higher composition. This period of intensive research was of great utility, especially in later years, when a consummate knowledge of style made him the foremost lyrical composer.

After four years of organist's work, carried on mostly while still a student, he travelled as conductor with a light opera company, gaining an indispensable command of the orchestra. All this eventful career had so far been crowded into his early twenties, for when he eventually undertook the Musical Directorship of a West End theatre he was only 22.

Though his most notable work has been in the spheres of light music, he has done a good deal of worthy writing in highly classical vein. Some of these works include a Quintet for Woodwind and Piano that won the Sir Michael Costa prize ; String Quartet ; Overture for Full Orchestra; Suite for Orchestra; *Concertstuck* for Solo Piano and Orchestra; Caprice for Solo Piano and Orchestra, all of which have been performed at important West End concerts, at Queen's Hall, etc. But his really famous era commenced with the publication of the charming " Phantom Melody " (which won the prize offered by Van Biene), " In a Monastery Garden," to be followed by " In a Persian Market," " In a Chinese Temple-Garden," etc. Successes rapidly followed, and in the course of a few years he became famed as the

greatest composer of the day. He is essentially a good melodist and a fine craftsman, and undoubtedly a great deal of his success is due to the extraordinary pains he takes to make his orchestrations as perfect as they can be ; and since he is able to play nearly every orchestral instrument (the 'cello, clarinet, oboe and French horn having been his secondary- studies), he is obviously well equipped to write effectively for the orchestra. In addition, he is something of a linguist, having a very good knowledge of French, German and Italian.

## THE MUSIC OF KETELBEY

Of all his works that are entitled to the name of " world successes," "**IN A PERSIAN MARKET**" is certainly one of the most famous. Audiences throughout the world have been enthralled by the work, and there is scarcely a popular concert (wireless or otherwise), cinema, or theatre in the world that has not heard it featured. A description of the piece is quite unnecessary, as it is so well known. A few remarks on the scoring may, however, be very interesting to the reader. The scoring is essentially oriental, the composer having had in mind the fantastic aspect of an eastern trading-market. He pictures the husky cries of beggars in the market, the entrance of the beautiful princess, the dance of the juggler and snake-charmer, the whole being an impression of the riotous colour and scenes of the orient. The approach of the camel-drivers is heralded by the tom-tom, piccolo, and lower strings (*pizzicato*), which works up to a gigantic climax as the beggars cry for alms, eventually subsiding as the theme of the beautiful princess is heard, first by clarinet and 'cello, then by full orchestra. The jugglers and snake-charmers entertain the crowds, the instrumentation being very picturesque. As the princess departs, the market place becomes deserted, and the work ends in a filmy tonal impression with one resounding *ff* final chord. Themes, see page 4.

"**IN A CHINESE TEMPLE-GARDEN**" is another well-known and popular oriental work, entirely different from his " In a Persian Market," requiring little description. It is an Eastern Fantasia, with a tone-colour scheme in which the wood-wind are very prominent. Many exhilarating oriental touches are found , in the score, particularly in the depicting of a street fight among the Chinese coolies, the music for which is founded on the actual Chinese scale. The words given to the priests' melody are also actual Chinese words of the Canton dialect, phonetically spelt, and great effect is gained by having a Baritone sing the vocal (*ad lib.*) part. Altogether a valuable item for all classes of performance. Themes, see page 6.

"**CHAL ROMANO**" (Gipsy Lad) Overture is a spirited work that is rapidly becoming as welcome as " In a Persian Market," and will undoubtedly prove another " Zampa " in popularity. The atmosphere of Romany life is well sustained throughout; the opening theme is closely followed by the plaintive song of the rejected lover. The music ceases, dramatically giving way to the strident motive of fate; the tremolo vanishes, and in its place we have a dashing czardas. The tambourines shake, the guitars twang, and all is a whirl of gaiety. The dance rushes wildly along, pausing slightly while the lover pleads his suit. " On with the Dance " is the scornful answer; the people dance more furiously than before. The overture ends-a mass of whirling, tingling *joie de vivre* and hopeless love. A really brilliant work, played by the most famous bands in France, Belgium and of course, Great Britain.

**"SUITE ROMANTIQUE"** is a still more ambitious work, inscribed to Sir Dan Godfrey. As it is impossible to do full justice to the work in a few lines, we shall only scan the salient features. It is a superb masterpiece of quasi-impressionistic composition. The first number, entitled "The Awakening of Love," opens with *cor anglais* or (clarinet) solo, from which the ensuing development is mainly derived. The subject is treated variously by different instruments, and after the climax we hear the second subject, for cellos and horns. On these themes the first number is built ; there are many points of lyrical beauty apart from the scoring. The second number, "Scherzo" ("Troubled Thoughts"), is a fantastic and whimsical item (after the manner of the modern French style as exemplified by Dukas' "Apprenti Sorcier"), perhaps rather difficult, but well repaying the trouble of rehearsal. Although it is to a certain extent satirical, it has many tempestuous points, especially where the score works closely to the programme. The final number, "Valse Dramatique," depicts a quarrel followed by a reconciliation. It opens with a graceful melody in the wood-wind, accompanied by celesta and harp ; as it proceeds along, the music becomes more and more agitated, the clarinets ominously murmuring, the harp (or piano) shrieking, powerful *glissando* passages, the entire forces pounding an orgy of sound. The flutes, clarinets, bassoons successively scream out an impetuous cadenza in chromatics, but are gradually persuaded to calm down. Then the love themes are heard again., at first rather petulantly, then more sinuously, finally ending to the strains of a rollicking waltz.

This is undoubtedly Ketelbey's finest piece of published orchestral music so far, and will become a standard classic with symphony orchestras. Themes, see page 8.

**"THE SANCTUARY OF THE HEART."** A fervent, meditative subject with contralto voice and chorus (*ad lib.*). It has an apparently folksong style of theme. This piece centres round a lonely wanderer hearing an old-time religious melody of his native land. The first subject has a dignity of style which is *unequaled in any other piece*. It is arranged for oboe, violin and bassoon, set off by fine and substantial harmonies. The same theme is given by way of contrast to solo cornet, after the original enunciation. A passage *poco piu mosso*, in which an actual old religious melody of centuries ago is introduced, is done in repeated triplets lending an air of suspense to the chief themes. These are formulated more stridently, eventually working up to a dramatic climax, which in turn gives way to the more poignant expression of the original melody. This is given to the clarinet (or contralto voice), and later, a fine piece of four-part choruswriting includes the (*ad lib.*) vocal section. The whole orchestra takes up the theme, dramatising it until the final phrases conclude on a loudly reinforced cadence. Themes, see page 10.

**" COCKNEY SUITE." CAMEOS OF LONDON LIFE.** London !. What a feast of imagination it provides for the artistic mind. Several of the greatest composers of to-day have been inspired by its magic glamour. Elgar has given us the *Cockaigne* (In London Town) Overture, Mackenzie has given us his *London Day by Day*, Vaughan Williams his excellent *London Symphony*, but few have seen London in music so realistically as Mr Albert W. Ketelbey has in his "Cockney Suite." Here the composer takes the most prosaic of metropolitan scenes and makes wonderful music out of them, humorously sly in some parts, and intensely emotional in others.

The Suite, which is in five numbers, opens with a " **State Procession.**" One is to imagine the King and Queen are opening Parliament. Pall Mall is crowded with onlookers. The band plays a stirring march as the King and Queen pass along the route. Commencing with a military fanfare, we are introduced to the atmosphere of pomp and pageantry. The march proceeds along with a swing that only military bands possess. In the trio, another band passes, and a different tune is developed, growing gradually louder and louder; presently the first band is heard again and the march ends in a brilliant display of colour.

The second number in the Suite is a gem indeed ; it is a portrayal of a Cockney romance, and is entitled "**The Cockney Lover.**" The rendezvous is apparently Lambeth Walk. The piece opens with a treatment of the Cockney air "'Arf a Pint of Mild an' Bitter." The piece is an illustration of how a master of harmony like Mr. Ketelbey can transform an almost inane tune into a fine work of art. Some of the most haunting harmonies imaginable are contained in the first few phrases. The theme is treated languidly, with a sensuous harmonic scheme, very much like that of the French impressionistic school. Later a suggestion of " **Little Brown Jug** " serves to indicate that the public-house has become a centre of attraction. Another treatment of the first theme brings in the chimes of Big Ben. After the clock has ceased to chime, the main theme is heard in the bass, this time with everchanging chromatic harmonies. A lovely cadence closes this wholly delightful number.

London without its representative " **Palais de Dance**" would be as incomplete as Paris without its *Folies Bergeres*. True to proletarian London life, the composer has given us in the third number a taste of the London dance as it is seen through a musician's eyes. A typical dance theme is treated in the fashion attributed to the waltz a brilliant section following is treated very freely in modulation, following closely in the style of the modern jazz bands, and with a suggestion of a saxophone, muted trumpets and xylophone, and the robust bellowing of the trombone, the waltz goes merrily along, leaving us with a truly London feeling.

The next number is an " **Elegy** " (Thoughts on passing the Cenotaph). Here the subjectmatter is mainly reflective in style. Gradually the thoughts grow more and more agitated as we proceed, eventually merging into one of Ketelbey's most touching melodies. There is a heart-throb in every note of it. This gives way to a solo violin version of the first theme with *tremolo ponticelli* accompaniment, and with a glowing orchestral treatment of the second subject (in which the 'celli have a very " fat " part) we come to an ecstatic climax of great emotional intensity.

The final number is a typical London one. Full of exuberance, obstreperous melody and gay hilarity, it is the picture of a " **Bank Holiday** " on 'Ampstead 'Eath. We are immediately plunged into the hilarious rhythm of a country dance, the orchestration serving to accentuate the general mirth. Heralded by the strains of a mouth-organ the Cockney lovers dance a onestep. Regardless of the dancing, an itinerant cornet-player comes along and performs a stream of well-known melodies, " The Gipsy's Warning," the prison air from " *Il Trovatore*," " Tell me the Old, Old Story," " There is a Tavern in the Town," etc., and how the composer has fitted two independent melodies is an example of his musicianship, besides being a humorous commentary. After the cornet has done his bit (and incidentally collected the cash, it is supposed), a steam-organ blurts out the old waltz " Over the Waves " (beloved of all Round-about), and goes through to the bitter end, in spite of the fact that the dance (in 2/4) is still proceeding. Again, the theme of 'Appy 'Ampstead is heard, and this successful suite is concluded by a mirthful treatment of the lighter side of London. Themes, see page 11.

" **WEDGWOOD BLUE**" is a typical number representing the composer at his daintiest. One can imagine the exquisite workmanship of a Wedgwood vase, translated into musical sound. The strings commence with a *pizzicato* bass, the oboe adding a piquant counter-melody which is afterwards elaborated by the 'cello. This serves to bring in the delightful duet between 'cello and oboe, with the *Glockenspiel* and *pizzicato obligato*. The second theme is scored in the same fashion. The trio, in E, is responsible for a graceful 'cello solo, later scored for violin, flute and clarinet in turn. The piece concludes with the repetition of the first theme. The entire work is a delicate and fragile miniature that goes excellently in cinema and concert. Themes, see page 12.

" **IN THE MOONLIGHT**" is a poetic intermezzo, very daintily scored. The first theme, given to the violin, 'cello and oboe, supported by sustained bass, and remaining strings *pizzicato*, is one of fascination. The second section, although slightly quicker in *tempo*, is still calm and tranquil. The sonorous scoring brings out the beauties of the harmony, while the flute adds charming counter-melodies above the main theme. A new episode lends a passionate fervour to the movement, and is improved in the performance by a *rubato* style; the premier subject is again announced, with a modified orchestral palette; the piece being brought to a close by a coda in which the *Glockenspiel* and flute have a lovely duet. In passing, it may be mentioned that this piece exemplifies the wonderful command of tone-colours possible in the usual small cinema combination. Themes, see page 13.

"**SOUVENIR DE TENDRESSE**" is a legend, and is an attempt, unquestionably successful, to portray in music the relating of some old and interesting tale. A slight introduction suggests the reposeful setting; the opening theme is given to the strings, the sustained harmony being divided between wood-wind and brass. The theme is irresistible, and is taken up by the full forces *tutti*. The middle section is replete with soothing harmonies, and the return to the first theme, shortly afterwards, serves to introduce the clever coda. A beautifully shaded *diminuendo* given to the solo 'cello and accompanying strings is the signal for the final cadence.

"**FAIRIES OF THE STREAM.**" so capable of various treatment in interpretation, is preeminently suitable for cinema and concert performance. Its scoring has a perfection and individuality that marks itself out for specific treatment and consideration. Moreover, it is one of the very few brilliant works capable of good playing by small bands. The flute and violins open with reiterated semiquavers suggestive of the rushing waters. The theme then enters, more prominently announced as it goes along, working up *crescendo* to a tempestuous *tutti* passage, in which the entire resources of the orchestra are utilised. Onwards the writing pictures the whirling stream, and the fantastic dancing of the fairies and elves. A lull in the piece brings a new subject in A flat. Scored for strings, flute and *Glockenspiel*, it has a most wonderful conception of the translucent waters. Again we hear the first theme, this time with increasing verve. A final stroke of brilliance is added, and the work is finished by a gripping *accelerando*. Themes, see page 14.

" **GALLANTRY,**" is another welcome intermezzo akin to " In the Moonlight." It is really a love-duet, and may be played as a duet for 'cello and violin with piano accompaniment. The piano opens with a guitar-like accompaniment. The 'cello sings a declaration of love, which elicits a reply from the violin (no doubt the lady), and afterwards the two instruments join in a duet, each playing their own melody in contrapuntal combination, the orchestra this time supplying the accompaniment which hitherto had been solely in the hands of the pianist. An

*appassionata* movement follows, but the calm tones of the 'cello lead the duet to a peaceful close. Themes, see page 15.

" **IN A CAMP OF THE ANCIENT BRITONS** " (A.D. 47 and the present day). This is Ketlbey's most recent orchestral tone-picture, and was suggested by a visit to the ancient Worlebury Camp at Weston-super-Mare. A very uncommon subject, treated in a striking and (as usual with Kctelbey) a very melodious manner. The themes are divided into two kinds; first we have the *modal* quasi-Gregorian melodies of the Druids and the Ancient Britons, then we have the Roman Legion theme (very militant and domineering), and the battle scene. Lastly we get the light, airy waltz-theme of the present day; but the manner in which the composer has gradually blended the two styles is notably skilful, and how he turns an Invocation into a Waltz will interest all musicians for its technical adroitness, while the beautiful melodes themselves will appeal forcibly to the lay mind. Themes, see page 16.

" **WILL YOU FORGIVE ?**" An orchestral arrangement of the new song specially composed by Mr. Ketlbey to the words in the novel " This Frail Woman," by Andrew Soutar. It is a song that will live. It stands out because of its fine melody combined with a perfection of ranch in the accompaniment. The theme is peculiarly appealing, and will be found of the utmost value for all scenes of sentiment and pathos. The book is shortly to be filmed, and the number will be the " leading " musical motif. It is published as a violin, 'cello, or cornet solo with full orchestra accompaniment, in D, also in C as a vocal accompaniment. Themes, see page 20.

" **SWEET LOUISIANA** " and " **VALSE APPASSIONATA** " are two waltzes, both of a totally different class ; the first is a light type of dance music, perfect in the rhythmic vitality of the waltz; the latter is a poem in waltz tempo, but passionate and tensely emotional. The first section of "Sweet Louisiana" is an appealing waltz melody, the second is a 'cello solo, rendered *marcato*, while the trio has a typical *scherzando* lilt. The " Valse Appassionata " is introduced by a sonorous theme scored for strings and wood-wind. It is developed at great length, and the scoring is strengthened at every appearance of the theme. The middle episode has a rather lighter tune, which, after a reference to the original theme, is transported into a lively waltz measure. This soon gives way to the calmness of the first theme, and the waltz ends on the theme given out double jorta. Themes, see pages 18 and 19.

" **BOW BELLS** " is another successful essay into the ranks of dance music. It is a bright and breezy fox-trot, out of the ordinary run of meagre jazz items. The lively peal of bells gives us the text, at once. A rhythmic touch of comedy is indulged in by the three trombone. Another melody enters, in which a bell *obligato* is afforded a good part. The 'trio is exceptionally bright, and introduces many original effects. 'though in a different plane to the accepted idiom of Ketelbey, it proves that his powers are not limited to the realms of " serious " music. Themes, see page 17.

A feature of Ketelbey's work is his remarkable power of orchestral perspective evident in all his works. In two orchestral arrangements of pieces by William Aston, he proves his ability to transform a mere piano solo into a vital orchestral work. " **A MUSICAL JIG-SAW** " is an amusing parody on old songs, classical, operatic, modern, ancient and popular tunes ; these are carefully woven together in a pot-pourri, but the attractiveness of this popular number is undoubtedly due to the masterly orchestration by Mr. Ketelbey. " **CHRISTMAS** " is a typical fox-trot, with life, energy, rhythm, humour, tune and eff\_cts in abundance, also orchestrated by Mr. Ketelbey. Old carols crop up very frequently, also many Yuletide airs. The customary bell effects are introduced, and the dance is a skilfully arranged medley-dance, which can be played also as an intermezzo very effectively.

## KETELBEY AND THE CINEMA AND THEATRE

One reason for the overwhelming success of Mr. Ketelbey in the cinema world is that he is an essentially professional man. He has a marvellous knowledge of the orchestra and its requirements, consequently his orchestral music seems literally to "*speak*" and there is no scene or situation in any picture which cannot be fitted by his extraordinary expressive melodies. Perhaps his most important works written *specially for cinemas* are the recently issued "LOOSE LEAF FILM PLAY MUSIC SERIES." In these there are twelve excellent pieces to suit the requirements of the various film aspects. No 1, a "**Dramatic Agitato**" is in C minor, *molto vivace*; it is consistently scored, and in performance takes three minutes. No. 2, "**Amaryllis**," is suitable for use in dainty, fickle scenes. It is penned in D major with a section in the dominant. No. 3, "**Arabian Nights**," is an oriental piece. A picture whose scenario lay in the East could be fitted entirely with the oriental works of Ketelbey, utilising this particular number for the street scenes. "**A Processional March**" is often wanted for fitting pictures, and this number so entitled is at once useful and musical; very suitable for coronations, ceremonies and the like. "**True Love**" is a sentimental theme in which the pathetic style is strongly to the fore. It will give excellent results when used in sad scenes. The "**Mystery**" number is greatly in favour for the uncanny and weird picturisations. It might also be used in dramatic situations. A "**Comedy**" number is often called for, and the piece of this title is surely the last word in humour! Far from being the usual concoction of rubbish, it possesses a strong originality of rhythm and harmony. It is a well-written piece, thoroughly in the Ketelbey style.

"**A Wanderers Return**" is a nice and a love-like air, introducing the appropriate air "Home, Sweet Home." A "**Storm**" scene is of course essential in fitting pictures. The music for this is *tense* and very *graphic*; it is a cinema number *par excellence*, and should be in every Musical Director's library. "**Love's Awakening**" and the more strenuous "**Rhapsody Appassionata**," No. 11, are two numbers noted for the passion throughout. They are welcome additions to the series, and, by virtue of their artistic nature, will be heard in concerts as much as in cinemas. The concluding number, "**Agitato Furioso**," is famous for its excellence in playing to riots, storms, wars, etc. Scored with a richness that is indescribable here, it is fiery in nature, and suggests an overture in the strength of form that it displays. These cinema items have undoubtedly come to stay. They fill a gap that has been sadly apparent in the cinema world for years. Though written as accompaniments to screen actions, they are essentially good music from first to last, and that is why they will succeed when all the rest of so-called cinema works have miserably failed.

It must not, however, be supposed that these twelve works are the only pieces suitable for cinema; on the contrary, Mr. Ketelbey is easily the foremost composer of the day for all cinema purposes, because all the works he has written are so *assimilable* by every cinema orchestral combination. It would probably be impossible to go to *any* cinema theatre in the world and not hear Ketelbey's music. He stands an efficient bulwark between the two extremes of the classical "absolute - school and the balderdash that so frequently passes as "cinema music." Very few are the musicians who do not employ his works in fitting pictures. The most favoured items are the Oriental works; "Chal Romano," Romance (from "Suite Romantique"), and the intermezzos such as "Gallantry," "Wedgwood Blue," "Sanctuary of the Heart," "In

the Moonlight," " Souvenir de Tendresse," etc. The reason why they are so favoured is because they present three essentials combined-

- (1) Artistically ideal.
- (2) Richness in scoring with abundant cues, and *which is of great importance to Musical Directors of Cinemas*)
- (3) Durability of paper and cheapness of cost.

In fitting, they do not thrust themselves aggressively on the people listening, but *blend artistically* because they are so *naturally* expressive of every situation ; they haunt the public by their sheer melodic beauty and musical sincerity.

Little need be said of the theatre and Ketelbey ; from the first these two were inseparable. As incidental music and as entr'actes his compositions are the best attractions for audiences of all types. " **In a Persian Market,**" " **In a Chinese Temple-Garden.**" " **Chal Romano** " Overture, and " **Sanctuary of the Heart** " are in great demand by theatrical producers for use in *character plays*, and " **Wedgwood Blue**" " **Souvenir de Tendresse,**" " **In the Moonlight** " and other of the earlier items are highly popular for *costume or modern plays*.

One of the most remarkable attributes of Ketelbey is his versatility in adapting himself to the various exigencies of the theatre, cinema, or concert. The concert-halls have gained inestimably from his pen. Orchestras, military bands, brass bands, solo players, etc., are all indebted to him for much of their repertory.

In his " **Suite Romantique,**" " **Cockney Suite,**" and " **Chal Romano** " Overture, he has specially written for the concert-hall, and one of his most captivating charms is undoubtedly his wonderful grasp of orchestration. (A celebrated London critic said of his " **Suite Romantique,**" when it was performed at the Queen's Hall under the composer's direction, " the orchestration is delicious.")

Altogether Albert W. Ketelbey's position is supreme in **Concert, Theatre** and **Cinema**, and he is the composer *par excellence* upon whom all in the musical world rely for " *Something different and better !* "