

## **BIRMINGHAM POST 1933 (?)**

### **Music and Musicians**

#### **Discipline in Orchestras**

##### **German Horn Playing**

A friend of mine asked me the other day why any man could take up the contra-bass as a musical instrument – was it from love or spite? I confess I do not know, although a chat with Mr F A Ward, late cellist of the Theatre Royal for many years, partly enlightened me.

"Forty years ago," he said, "the discipline in the orchestra compared with today was startling. The principal contra or double-bass of a well known orchestra was the proprietor of a public house. It was nothing extraordinary for him to attend rehearsal at 2 o'clock, become a trifle thirsty at three, depart for his home for refreshment, and return at four without any explanation or apology."

Mr Ward went on to tell me that it was a Mr Cockerill who revolutionised double-bass playing in Birmingham, and made it an art like the playing of any other string instrument. And in those days for an orchestra to turn up say ten minutes before the time due for rehearsal or a concert was something at which to marvel.

##### **Mr Albert Ketelbey**

Apropos of a recent paragraph in this column I am informed that the well-known composer of light music, Mr Albert Ketelbey, won the Mendelssohn Scholarship early in life, but finding writing music for tuneful music and attractive tunes. As the gramophone people say, "Titles are everything," and certainly this writer of light salon and band music must have discovered the secret many years ago.

##### **The City Orchestra**

The last Sunday concert of the city Orchestra takes place on Sunday next, but the activities of that body are by no means over yet, for a considerable number of important engagements remain to be met.

These include the symphony and popular concerts, and presumably some away events, so there is plenty of good music still to be heard by the faithful patrons of our municipal orchestra. Next season should see a determined effort to make every concert a financial success. I am convinced the thing could be done with the right kind of public announcement, apart from the ordinary channels of advertisement.

## **Halle Orchestra Conductorship**

If all the famous conductors whose names have been mentioned to me are really in the running for the Halle vacancy, caused by the retirement of Sir Hamilton Harty, the choice of one of their number will be rather an embarrassing one for the committee. It is an important post and attractive, I should say, to almost any conductor in England.

It may be taken for granted that the man who secures so coveted a position will be one of the best conductors and musicians in our midst.

## **Comparisons of Horn Playing**

An interesting comparison of the horn playing in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with that of the BBC body was made on the occasion of the recent visit of the former to London. It was found that the playing of the Berliners when soft was similar to ours, but in louder volume became brassy, coarse and blatant.

At the foreigners' second concert in Queen's Hall the player of the horn solo in Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony appeared in that work only. As one writer put it "They would die if they had to work as we do in London." The intonation of the German horns was faulty, although this might be ascribed to their use of an unsuitable mouthpiece, which is typical of broad-bore instruments in general.

British orchestras must invariably feel a trifle sore on the occasions when Continental orchestras visit us. The latter have ample rehearsals before touring; ours a couple or three at most before a big concert, yet comparisons are made as though conditions were equal, which is unfair.

W.B.