

The Chesterian 1915-1961

The Chesterian [CHE], one of England's most important journals dealing with the development of musical composition and style during the first half of the twentieth century, was published by J. & W. Chester, the well-known music publisher. The journal¹ was issued in two series, the first from 1915-1919; the second, titled *New Series*, from 1919-1961. Publication was interrupted from 1940 to 1947, years of the Second World War. The journal's format is small: ca. 11 x 19 cm.

The volumes were published annually from September to July. The first series consists of twenty, sixteen-page issues containing 320 numbered pages. The *New Series* consists of two-hundred-and-eight issues and 8,632 pages, including unnumbered pages. The number of annual issues begins at eight per volume in September 1919; declines to six in September 1932 until 1939; and, after the interruption, to four issues in 1947. The cover pages often contain information, such as lists of contributors, opinions of subscribers, contents of earlier issues and advertisements.

The appearance of the *New Series* sparked sufficient interest to be recognized in the *New York Tribune* which offered an extensive preliminary list of contributors, citing letters as being of special interest:

A feature of this magazine will be letters from various music centres containing information of current musical events. Ernest Newman, René Chalupt, Guido M. Gatti and Adolfo Salazar will be the respective contributors of letters from London, Paris, Italy and Spain.²

The journal's appearance was also noted in *The Musical Times*:

The Chesterian will be a ... very readable little circular ... In its new form it will appear eight times in the year. M. Jean-Aubry has been appointed editor. Judging from the list of writers, [it] will be a journal of exceptional interest ... The more the merrier—at least, we hope so.³

After eighteen months of publication, the value of the journal was recognized in the *New York Tribune*: “the new English magazine, each month contains edifying and entertaining matter by those in authority.”⁴

In the Foreword of the first issue published after the Second World War, the journal's editor offers insights into the publication's goals and aesthetic position, and justifies its reappearance.

The [revival of] *The Chesterian* was based on many requests of former readers in many countries and the particular position it occupied in the hierarchy of the musical press has never

¹ *The Chesterian* was printed initially by J. Miles & Co. Ltd, Wardour St. W. and later by Cheney & Sons, Banbury.

² *New York Tribune*, “New Musical Periodicals,” (20 July 1919): 8.

³ *The Musical Times* 60, no. 918 (1 August 1919): 402.

⁴ *New York Tribune*, “A New French Periodical,” (2 January 1921): 5.

quite been filled by any other publication. Briefly its aim has always been in the past and will continue in the future, to provide information about new works and new personalities in the world of music, irrespective of nationality; to encourage free discussion of the various problems with which the contemporary musician is confronted; to keep its readers informed of musical happenings not only in this country, but all over the world; and, above all, to preserve a strictly international outlook on all questions connected with music likely to interest not only the practicing musician, but the ordinary music-lover wherever he may be found.⁵

From the start the editors of the journal underscored its openness to new ideas:

We condemn nothing but habitual admirations, fossilized ideas and ossified dogmata; —*The Chesterian* is justly recognized to-day (1921) as being, among the world's musical magazines, one of those who most readily admit new ideas ... one of those who are always open to music of today;⁶

and its international perspective:

The Chesterian with its consistent policy of internationalism ... and modernism with a proper respect for the great past, has its own place and has never sought competition with its contemporaries.⁷

The journal's first editor, Otto Marius Kling, was a Swiss by birth. He maintained a business relationship with the Leipzig music publisher Breitkopf & Härtel from 1897 to 1914. In 1916 Kling defended himself against rumors that he was a German sympathizer during the First World War which he denied in a declaration published in the journal.⁸ His connections with Scandinavia, Russia and France resulted in the publication of many related articles. His son Harry Kling (1890-1936) became managing director of J. & W. Chester after his father's death in 1924.

The French Anglophile Georges Jean-Aubry was appointed editor in 1919, a position he held until the July-September 1940 issue, the last to appear before the Second World War. He was charged with creating the New Series and the task of adding more in-depth articles and reviews. In all he edited the first one hundred-fifty issues of the New Series "bringing the benefits to it of his wide knowledge of both literary and musical matters."⁹ Jean-Aubry wrote extensively on music, and his books and contributions to the journal were highly regarded. His many publications include *La Musique et les nations*¹⁰ and *La Musique française aujourd'hui*.¹¹ In all Jean-Aubry contributed forty-one articles to the journal, several of which are devoted to single composers. Others deal with a wide range of topics including the translation of songs (a specialty of Aubry), music and poetry, Wagner and Ruskin, Beckford and music, Joseph Conrad and music, and the Swedish Ballet. Composers Gian Francesco Malipiero, Eugene Goossens and Manuel De Falla set some of Aubry's

⁵ The Editor, Foreword. *The Chesterian* 22, no. 151 (June 1947): 1-3.

⁶ G. Jean-Aubry, "Couldst thou not watch with me?" *The Chesterian*, no. 17 (September 1921): 1-3.

⁷ Anon., "Number 100," *The Chesterian* 13, no. 100 (January-February 1932): 89-90.

⁸ Otto Marius Kling, "A Personal Explanation," *The Chesterian*: no. 5 (November 1916): 67-71.

⁹ Anon., "G. Jean-Aubry," *The Chesterian* 25, no. 163 (July 1950): 19.

¹⁰ Georges Jean-Aubry, *La Musique et les nations* (Paris, 1922).

¹¹ Georges Jean-Aubry, *La Musique française aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1916).

poetry, and Albert Roussel wrote incidental music to Aubry's play (*Le Marchand de sable qui passe*).

The third and final editor, Rollo H. Myers (1892-1985), assumed the position after the end of the Second World War and held it until the journal's demise. Myers was a music critic and author of several books including *Modern French Music*¹² and of monographs on Debussy,¹³ Ravel,¹⁴ Satie¹⁵ and Stravinsky.¹⁶ Myers contributed ten articles to the journal including: "The Psychology of Listening to Music," "Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*" and "Charles Koechlin." He also translated French songs and writings about music into English, including Cocteau's *Le Coq et l'arlequin* and *Le Rappel à l'ordre*.

Issues in the first series mainly contain informative advertising and one or two articles. Towards the end of the first series the number of articles per issue grows to three or four. The advertising promotes works published by Chester, that frequently include extracts of reviews of compositions from the international press and extensive commentaries. From the beginning, the journal's content displays its international scope. For example, in the first series there are several articles dealing with Russian music during the First World War and articles on contemporary music in Scandinavia, Finland, Spain, and Italy, and a fascinating article by the well-known critic Ernest Newman dealing with English music during wartime. There are also many valuable biographical sketches and studies of the works of composers published by Chester. Among these are Eugène Goossens, the Belgian Joseph Jongen (a student of César Franck), Gabriel Grovlez (a student of Fauré), César Cui, Granville Bantock, Malipiero and Joseph Holbrooke.

A typical New Series issue opens with (i) several lead articles on a variety of topics, (ii) short announcements of news, interspersed throughout the pages, about performances of works published by Chester and those forthcoming; (iii) "Letters from..." contain reviews and comments from foreign correspondents; (iv) biographical sketches; (v) reviews; and (vi) advertisements. The articles in the New Series cover a wide range of contemporary topics. During the first six years of the New Series, for example, the following articles were published: "Igor Stravinsky and the Objective Direction in Contemporary Music," "Opera Season in Prague," "Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Fedra*," "The Psychology of Listening to Music," "The Attitude toward Native Composition in America," "The Soul of Poland: Frederic Chopin," "Maurice Ravel [compared to Debussy]," "Music An Affair of Races," "The Development of Art Music in Hungary," "Pizzetti as a Song Writer," "The New Italian Musical Lyricism," "Rhythm and Colour in Arab Folk-Music," "The *Gurre-Lieder* of Arnold Schoenberg," "Musical Life in Poland" and "Music in Slovenia, Yugoslavia." There are also several articles on musical life in America. In fact, the subjects treated are as varied as the list is long.

Contemporary compositional styles are discussed: impressionism, neo-classicism, atonality and twelve-tone systems, "popular" music, music incorporating folk-music idioms, and the

¹² Rollo H. Myers, *Modern French Music* (Oxford, 1971).

¹³ Myers, *Debussy* (London, 1948).

¹⁴ Myers, *Ravel: Life and Works* (London, 1960).

¹⁵ Myers, *Satie* (London, 1948).

¹⁶ Myers, *Introduction to the Music of Stravinsky* (London, 1950).

experiments of *musique concrète* and post-war serialism. The range of subjects and composers treated is quite remarkable: French music from Debussy and Ravel to Auric and Poulenc and to Messiaen and Boulez; German music from Max Reger, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern to composers of the post Second World War period; music of the Italian modernists: Franco Alfano, Alfredo Casella, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Pizzetti and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco; Russian and Soviet music from Rachmaninov and Stravinsky to Myaskovsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich; British music from Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, Granville Bantock, Arnold Bax and Ralph Vaughan Williams to Benjamin Britten, Alan Rawsthorne, Michael Tippett and Edmund Rubbra; and American music from Edward MacDowell, Charles Martin Loeffler and George Gershwin to Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Roger Sessions and William Schuman.

Another important feature of the journal is “Letters from ...” of two or three printed pages containing news of musical interest and reviews of operas, ballet and concerts. The subjects treated range from concerts, conductors, education, influence of the First World War on concert life, to musical associations, festivals, performers, music education, orchestras, ballet companies, concert series, opera companies and notices concerning the visits of foreign artists and deaths. The changing political climate of Europe leading from the First World War, the Russian Revolution to the Second World War and its aftermath is understood as a backdrop to changing musical attitudes. While most numerous are the letters from London and Paris, letters from Argentina (Buenos Aires), Canada (Toronto), Denmark (Copenhagen), Holland, Germany (Wiesbaden), Poland (Warsaw), Romania, Czechoslovakia (Prague), Italy (Rome and Venice), Belgium, Spain (Barcelona, Madrid), Switzerland (Basle), Russia (Moscow), the United States (New York), Greece, Hungary (Budapest), Austria (Vienna) and from as far afield as Palestine, are also published.

A good deal of attention (much more so than in other journals) is paid to conductors. Of particular interest is a series of short articles on, among others, Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski, Felix Weingartner, Willem Mengelberg, Thomas Beecham, Hamilton Harty, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Hermann Scherchen, Henry J. Wood, Václav Talich, Adrian Boult, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Ernest Ansermet, Serge Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, and Bruno Walter. Offering insights into the conducting styles of those who created many definitive recordings (that remain today in our CD collections and in our musical psyches) is a remarkable feature of *The Chesterian*.

There is an excellent series of articles containing the opinions of several contemporary composers on the sources of their musical inspiration, and, another series on the musical cities of Italy. The activities of the International Society for Contemporary Music are also closely followed. And, despite the emphasis on contemporary music, history is not at all neglected in articles such as “Henry Purcell,” “The French Clavecinist,” “The History of Italian Melodrama,” “Music in French Society in the Seventeenth Century,” “On Editing Old Music,” and “The Position of the Madrigal.”

Biographical sketches and notes as well as informative obituaries are an important feature of *The Chesterian*. These constitute primary source material for both well-known and little-known composers and reveal the manner in which they were perceived by their

contemporaries. Following are a few of the personalities receiving biographical treatment (in no particular order): William Fenney, Vladimir Rebikov, Joseph Jongen, Gabriel Grovlez, César Cui, Malipiero, Lord Berners, Fred Barlow, Paul De Maleingreau, Bantock, Renzo Bossi, Roger-Ducasse, E. J. Moeran, Charles Wakefield Cadman, Serge Liapounov, Vincent d'Indy, Leoš Janáček, Paul Dukas, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Manuel de Falla, Serge Prokofieff, Paul Hindemith, Déodat de Séverac, Constant Lambert, Gustave Mahler, Alexander Tcherepnin, Lennox Berkeley, George Gershwin, Alexander Scriabin, Bizet, Adolfo Salazar, Joseph Holbrooke, Jean Bartholoni, Vincenzo Tommasini, Mather Spelman, Otokar Šín, Charles W. Orr, Albert Roussel, Jacques Ibert, Paul Juon, Roy Thompson, Luigi Dallapiccola, Lazare Saminsky, Jerzy Fitelberg, Joaquín Turina, Tibor Harsányi, Olivier Messiaen, Virgil Thomson, Francis Poulenc, Louis Durey, Hilarion Eslava, Arthur Honegger, Niels Viggo Bentzon, Yrjö Kilpinen, Heinrich Kaminski, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Nadia Boulanger, Felipe Pedrell, Gabriel Fauré, Puccini, Serge Liapounov, Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, Frederick Delius, Sandulenko, Charles Martin Loeffler, Koechlin, Wassili Safonoff, Henri Kling, Alphons Diepenbrock, Saint-Saëns, Arthur Nikisch, Winthrop Lincoln Rogers, Otto M. Kling, Louis Fleury, Serge Diaghilev, Philip Heseltine, Poldowski, L. Dunton Green, Harry Kling, Ottorini Respighi, Pedro Morales, Rosa Newmarch, Alfredo Casella, Willem Pijper, Richard Strauss, and Edward Dent.

Initially titled “Reviews” (1919) and later (1922) more appropriately “Our Contemporaries” column contains a useful list of notable articles published in other music journals including those in foreign languages. This column appears regularly from issue no. 1 in 1919 to issue no. 149 in 1940.

The “New Music Reviewed,” column which appears more than a hundred times, treats newly-published mainly contemporary compositions, mostly but not exclusively British. For ten years, until 1930, L. Dunton Green¹⁷ was responsible for its contents. Seven writers succeeded in Green’s function: Ralph Hill, Robert H. Hull, J. A. Westrup, Robin Hull, Wilfrid Mellers, Colin Mason and Iain Kendell. Occasionally there are reviews of books.

The appearance of a significant repertory of music recorded by the electrical process in 78 and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm L.P. formats were reviewed on a fairly regular basis beginning in December 1926 in a column first titled “Gramophone Music.” This title was later replaced with “Gramophone Notes,” followed by “The Gramophone and Composers of Today.” The early reviews dealt with a vast repertory of songs and instrumental pieces not exceeding approximately four-minute duration. As the technologies permitting longer recordings developed, they were discussed in the journal. The reviewers dealt with the recordings issued by the major companies active in Britain, the Continent, and the United States: His Master’s Voice, Columbia Records, Parlophone Records, Decca, R.C.A Victor, L’Oiseau Lyre, Polydor, Odeon and Argo labels.

Broadcasting “the biggest thing that ever happened to music” is also a subject of interest. Here one deals with the choice of repertoire to be broadcast, the educational value of broadcasting, and especially the British Broadcasting Corporation with its many concerts and its “Third Programme” devoted to culture and particularly to music.

¹⁷ The Editor, “L. Dunton Green,” *The Chesterian* 15, no. 113 (Jan.-Feb. 1934): 61-62.

A good deal of advertising of Chester's publications also appears in the New Series, which introduces advertising from other music publishers, including Novello and Co. and Schott & Co. Ltd. is also present. Taken collectively, these advertisements "provide a picture of the publishing activity of the time."¹⁸

The Chesterian profited from an unusually high number of important contributors, many of whom made significant contributions to music criticism and to scholarship. Among the best-known writers/critics are: Edwin Evans, Herbert Antcliffe, Hans F. Redlich, Henry Raynor, Ernest Newman, Adolfo Salazar, J. A. Fuller-Maitland, Rosa Newmarch, J. G. Prod'homme, Guido M. Gatti, Henri Prunières, Leigh Henry, Rollo H. Myers, Erwin Stein, R.-Aloys Mooser, Eric Blom, Percy A. Scholes, Cecil Gray, Victor Belaiev, Paul Landormy, Roland-Manuel, Charles van den Borren, Ralph Hill, Edward Lockspeiser, C. M. Girdlestone, David Ewen, Robert H. Hull, Gilbert Chase, J. H. Elliot, Willy Reich, J. A. Westrup, Peter Gradenwitz, Renée de Saussine, W. H. Mellers, Martin Cooper, Geoffrey Sharp, Winton Dean, Donald Mitchell, Norman Demuth, Marius Flothuis, and Alec Robertson. By any standard this is a truly remarkable international collection of contributors.

The most prolific contributor is René Chalupt who wrote the eighty-three "Letter[s] from Paris" containing reviews of musical life in *la capitale*. Chalupt wrote several books including: *Gershwin*¹⁹ and *Ravel au miroir de ses lettres...*²⁰ In terms of numbers of contributions he is followed by Leigh Henry, Scott Goddard, Edwin Evans, and Colin Mason. Leigh Henry, a well-known English music critic and composer, wrote sixty-one "Letters from London." He also wrote for many other important British music journals: *The London Musical Standard*, *The Musical Times*, *Modern Music* and the little magazine *Fanfare*, which he edited together with Philip Heseltine. Scott Goddard contributed to several music journals and newspapers, among them, *The News Chronicle*, *The Listener* (a British Broadcasting Corporation publication), *The Monthly Music Record*, *The Penguin Music Magazine*, and *Music and Letters*. Edwin Evans (1874-1945), music critic with special interest in contemporary French and British music, wrote for *The Musical Times*, *The Outlook*, *The Daily Mail* and the short-lived music journal *The Dominant* (1927-29). Evans was also president of the British branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Colin Mason (1924-1971), music critic and Bartók specialist, became responsible for "New Music Reviewed" column in 1950 and continued until 1958. He was also music critic for *The Listener*, *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

An impressive number of important contemporary composers also contributed to the journal. For example, Milhaud on Honegger and Louis Fleury, De Falla on Debussy, Cassella on modern music in Italy, Bantock on musicians in France and England, Roussel on young French composers, Malipiero on Italian melodrama, Louis Durey on Ravel and Poulenc, Bliss on Purcell, Bartók on art music in Hungary, Florent Schmitt on Fauré, Willen Pijper on music in Holland, George Migot on the twelve-note system, and Kaikhosru Sorabji on oriental influences in contemporary music, Joaquin Turina on Manuel de Falla, Mario

¹⁸ Charles Lindahl, "Music Periodicals in the U.S. Research Libraries in 1931," *MLA Notes* XXXVII, 4 (June 1981): 866.

¹⁹ René Chalupt, *Gershwin* (Paris, 1948).

²⁰ René Chalupt, *Ravel au miroir de ses lettres* (Paris, 1956).

Castelnuovo-Tedesco on Pizzetti, Lazare Saminsky on music in Russia, Carl Engel on music in the U.S.A., Arnold Bax on Cyril Scott, Eugène Goossens on Lord Berners, Edmund Rubbra on Gustav Holst, H.H. Stuckenschmidt on Hindemith, Humphrey Searle on the International Society for Contemporary Music, László Lajtha on music and films, Karl Haas on fifty years of unusual music, and Harold Truscott on Medtner. Mention should also be made of the contributions of two conductors: Ernest Ansermet (on Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat*) and Adrian Boult (on the orchestral audience today), and the well-known French author André Maurois.

From 1923 to 1931 *The Chesterian* published sixty-three music supplements, and from 1950 to 1958, four. These are generally compositions of two or three pages in length for piano solo or small ensembles by, for example, Malipiero, Bax, Bantock, Holst, Poulenc and De Falla.

A yearly index appears sporadically.²¹ An index of the first ten years of the New Series was printed in 1929. Illustrations or photographs are very rare. In all there are only two caricatures of Eugène Goossens, a photograph of Lord Berners and two facsimiles: a journal order form filled out by G. B. Shaw and a letter by Otto Kling.

The journal's demise was sorely lamented by many including its third and final editor,²² and no doubt, by the many musical journals that borrowed from its contents including the *Revista musical de México*, Germany's *Melos*, Austria's *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, Italy's *Musica d'oggi*, and Spain's *Gaceta musical*. Unlike them, *The Chesterian* almost never returned the "compliment."

Upon publishing its issue number 100 in 1931, *The Chesterian* stated, with a bit of self-praise, that it had:

... earned for itself the dignity of being the most exclusive musical paper in the English language. With its international circulation and list of contributors gathered from a score of nations *The Chesterian* represents the finest survey of world music thought available for English reading musical people.²³

Writing fifty years later, Charles Lindahl found this self-praise "somewhat overstated perhaps," but concluded that "this journal ... accomplished a great deal [and its] list of contributors ... is impressive indeed."²⁴

²¹ These were found in: 1920, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, three yearly indexes in 1950, 1956, 1959, 1961.

²² Rollo H. Myers, review of "Albert Roussel by Basil Deane" (London, 1962) *Music and Letters* 58, no. 2 (April 1962): 149.

²³ Anon., "Number 100," *The Chesterian* 13, no. 100 (January-February 1932): 89-90.

²⁴ Charles Lindahl, "Music Periodicals in the U.S. Research Libraries in 1931," *MLA Notes* 37, 4 (June 1981): 866.