REC. 30·6·26

WHAT IS MUSIC?

A five minutes by Dr. E. Harold Davies, given to 2,500 school children at the South Australian Orchestral children's concert at the Exhibition Hall on Tuesday evening.

There are many wonderful things in the world that people never trouble to think about, but if we want to be wise we must never stop asking questions. So to-night I shall imagine that one of you jolly youngsters has asked me to say what music really is, and I am going to try and do it in five minutes. There are two answers to that question—one entirely wrong—one partly right—and one wholly and splendidly right. We will take the wrong answer first, because such a lot of folk would give it. They would tell us that music is just a clever invention. There are hundreds of different sounds—high sounds and low sounds—short sounds and long sounds—soft sounds and loud sounds and the musician simply sets to work and combines them in different ways, exactly as any one might take every so many wooden blocks and make various shapes out of them.

If that were true it would certainly be a brainy thing to do—and, what's more—we could not expect people of the education to do it. But I must tell you that all over the world, in every age, as far back as human memory can go, savage and uncivilized races have made music and sung their own native songs. Even our Australian aborigines, who are very primitive people, have their corroboree songs. I have listened to many of them, and found in them the beginnings of our own music. But that is not all, for I think aboriginal children who have the most beautiful voices and sing English songs quite wonderfully. So we must believe that music is a natural thing, or, as we might say—instinctive and universal—and to think of it as only a clever invention is absolute foolishness.

The second answer is that music is an art like painting or sculpture. That is true, but it is not all of the truth. It is a glorious art—I think the greatest art of all—but it takes, any musician will be sure to say that. Well, if you like, we will allow that it is the equal of painting. But that forces me to make an argument for just a moment in order to suggest that we should therefore respect this great art. Music is just as much we do that of painting. Why do people so often class music among the amusements? No one would go to see a beautiful Art Gallery on North terrace for amusement. Any one might go for joy, but that is a fine thing—much better than being amused. Think of music as a joy then, but never degrade it to the level of a mere amusement.

But now we come to our third answer and while we agree that music is a great art we must realize that it is also a most perfect language. The only language that every one can understand is their own tongue of human feeling. All over the world people begin with song, and song is one of the truest ways of expressing deep feeling. People talk in order to give utterance to their thoughts, and sing in order to express something that words cannot tell. And out of singing music has gradually grown to be a great art—that is out of simple, halting speech, language has grown into wonderful literatures. And you must remember that there is just the same difference between baby talk and a play of Shakespeare as there is between simple folk songs and a symphony of Beethoven. Both have developed in exactly the same way.

So when any one asks you what music is just say what I have told you—that it is the most wonderful language in the world, and that it will give the right answer. And now I want to say one last word. It is this. All of you children are being educated. You are all going to school and learning principally about things that are useful—like grammar and arithmetic, geography and history, cooking and sewing and carpentry. But that isn't the whole of education. We need to learn of the things that are beautiful, as well as of those that are useful, for only in this way can every part of us grow to the full. Music is one of the things that grows our mind and growth of spirit. I should like to think that the children of each school regularly went to the Art Gallery to feast on those lovely pictures and live for a little while in the world of heavenly forms and colors. And I should like to think that the children of each school regularly went to hear good music, especially a fine orchestra. As it is most of you only hear stupid jazz and silly little ditties, that are as far from great music as comic cuts are from the Art Gallery. But perhaps some day soon it will be different. After all there is a great deal, that even our members of parliament might sometimes think about.

ADV. 30·6·26

WHAT IS MUSIC?

VIEWS OF DR. DAVIES.

AN ADDRESS TO CHILDREN.

Must children, says Dr. Harold Davies, only hear stupid jazz and silly little ditties, that are as far from music as "Comic Cuts" is from the Art Gallery.

The question—What is music?—was asked and answered in an interesting way at the Exhibition Building last night by Dr. Harold Davies, when addressing 2,600 school children. There were, he said, many wonderful things in the world that people never trouble to think about, but if they wanted to be wise they must never stop asking questions. So he would imagine that one of the jolly youngsters in the audience had asked him to say what music really was, and he would try and do it in a few minutes. There were three answers to that question—one entirely wrong, one partly right, and one wholly and splendidly right.

The Wrong Answer.

He would take the wrong answer first, because such a lot of folk would give it. They would tell them that music was just a clever invention. There were hundreds of different sounds—high sounds and low sounds, short sounds and long sounds, soft sounds and loud sounds—and the musician simply set to work and combined them in different ways, exactly as anyone might take ever so many wooden blocks and make various shapes out of them. If that were true it would certainly be a brainy thing to do, and, what was more, they could not expect people of the education to do it. But all over the world, in every age, as far back as human memory can go, savage and uncivilized races have made music and sung their own native songs. Even our Australian aborigines, who are very primitive people, have their corroboree songs. I have listened to many of them, and found in them the beginnings of our own music. But that is not all, for I think aboriginal children who have the most beautiful voices and sing English songs quite wonderfully. So we must believe that music is a natural thing, or, as we might say—instinctive and universal—and to think of it as only a clever invention is absolute foolishness.

A Glorious Art.

The second answer was that music was an art, like painting or sculpture. That is true, but it was not all of the truth. It was a glorious art—he thought the greatest art of all—and, of course, any musician would be sure to say that. They liked he would allow that it was the equal of painting. And that forced him to make an argument for just a moment in order to suggest that they should therefore respect this great art of music as much as they do that of painting. Why do people so often class music among the amusements? No one would go to see a beautiful Art Gallery on North terrace for amusement. Any one might go for joy, but that is a fine thing—much better than being amused. Think of music as a joy then, but never degrade it to the level of a mere amusement.

But now we come to our third answer and while we agree that music is a great art we must realize that it is also a most perfect language, the only language that every one can understand if they type the language of human feeling. All over the world people begin with song, and song is one of the truest ways of expressing deep feeling. People talk in order to give utterance to their thoughts, and sing in order to express something that words cannot tell. And out of singing music has gradually grown to be a great art—that is out of simple, halting speech, language has grown into wonderful literatures. And you must remember that there is just the same difference between baby talk and a play of Shakespeare as there is between simple folk songs and a symphony of Beethoven. Both have developed in exactly the same way.

So when any one asks you what music is just say what I have told you—that it is the most wonderful language in the world, and that it will give the right answer. And now I want to say one last word. It is this. All of you children are being educated. You are all going to school and learning principally about things that are useful—like grammar and arithmetic, geography and history, cooking and sewing and carpentry. But that isn't the whole of education. We need to learn of the things that are beautiful, as well as those that are useful, for only in this way can every part of us grow to the full. Music is one of the things that grows our mind and growth of spirit. I should like to think that the children of each school regularly went to the Art Gallery to feast on those lovely pictures and live for a little while in the world of heavenly forms and colors. And I should like to think that the children of each school regularly went to hear good music, especially a fine orchestra. As it is most of you only hear stupid jazz and silly little ditties, that are as far from great music as comic cuts are from the Art Gallery. But perhaps some day soon it will be different. After all there is a great deal, that even our members of parliament might sometimes think about.

ADV. 30·6·26

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION. LECTURE.

STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE.

A lecture was delivered by Professor Kerr Grant on the "Contents and Structure of the Universe" in the Prince of Wales lecture-room, Adelaide University, on Tuesday night. Professor Darnley Naylor occupied the chair.

Professor Kerr Grant said that the number of stars visible to the unassisted eye was actually only a few thousand, but many more were seen by the use of telescopes and the photographic plate. A photographic plate could show hundreds of thousands—high sounds and low sounds, short sounds and long sounds, soft sounds and loud sounds—and the musician simply set to work and combined them in different ways, exactly as anyone might take ever so many wooden blocks and make various shapes out of them. If that were true it would certainly be a brainy thing to do, and, what was more, they could not expect people of the education to do it. But all over the world, in every age, as far back as human memory could go, savage and uncivilized races have made music and sung their own native songs. Even their Australian aborigines, who are very primitive people, have their corroboree songs. He had listened to many of them and found in them the beginnings of our own music. But that is not all, for he knew aboriginal children who have the most beautiful voices and sing English songs quite wonderfully. So we must believe that music was a natural thing, or, as they might say, instinctive and universal; and to think of it as only a clever invention was absolute foolishness.

A Glorious Art.

The second answer was that music was an art, like painting or sculpture. That was true, but it was not all of the truth. It was a glorious art—he thought the greatest art of all—and, of course, any musician would be sure to say that. They liked he would allow that it was the equal of painting. And that forced him to make an argument for just a moment in order to suggest that they should therefore respect this great art of music as much as that was true, but it was not all of the truth. Why do people so often class music among the amusements? No one would go to their beautiful Art Gallery on North terrace for amusement. Anyone might go for joy, but that was a fine thing—much better than being amused. Think of music as a joy, but never degrade it to the level of a mere amusement.

A Perfect Language.

But now they came to the third answer and it was the most important of all. Music is a great art they must realise that it was also a most perfect language, the only language that everyone understands—the language of human feeling. People talked in order to give utterance to their thoughts. They sang in order to express something that words could not tell. And out of singing music had gradually grown to be a great art, just as out of simple, halting speech language had grown into wonderful literature. And they could remember that there was just the same difference between baby talk and a play of Shakespeare as there was between simple folk song and a symphony of Beethoven. Both had developed in exactly the same way. So when anyone asked them what music was they should just say what he had told them. Music is was the most wonderful language in the world, and they would give the right answer.

A Growth of Mind and Spirit.

And that the children present were being educated. They were all being taught principally about things that were useful—like grammar and arithmetic, and learning principally about things that were useful—like grammar and arithmetic, geography and history, cooking and sewing and carpentry. But that was not the whole of education. They needed to learn of beautiful things that were useful, for only in this way could every part of them grow to the full. After all education was the growth of mind and growth of spirit. He would like to think that the children of each school regularly went to the Art Gallery to feast on those lovely pictures and live for a little while in the world of heavenly forms and colors. And he would like to think that the children of each school regularly went to hear good music, especially a fine orchestra. As it was most of them only heard stupid jazz and silly little ditties, that were as far from great music as "Comic Cuts" was from the Art Gallery. He would ask them to say that it would be different. Let them hope it might be. For the more of real music they heard, the more they would be happy in the world, and that surely was a great ideal that even their members of Parliament might sometimes think about. (Applause.)

REC. 30·6·26

MUSIC AND YOUTH.

Orchestral Concert for Children.

The Exhibition Hall has never housed a more enthusiastic audience than that which assembled at the orchestral concert arranged for 2,600 State school children on Tuesday evening. The South Australian Orchestra gave a melodious programme from great composers of grand opera that was particularly applicable to young people. There was a large number of adults also in the crowded hall and galleries. This initial attempt to educate boys and girls in the art of listening to good music and appreciating it also, met with such a whole-hearted response last night, that those responsible should feel encouraged to continue such a worthy aim. Included in the audience were the Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill) and Mrs. Hill, and the Director of Education (Mr. W. T. McCoy) and Mrs. McCoy.

Appreciation of Music.

Professor Davies opened the proceedings by expressing the hope that the children would have a good time, but he asked them to "be just like mice" while the programme was in course of performance.

His remarks on "What is Music" appear on page 11.

The conductor (Mr. W. H. Foote, A.R.C.M.) then began a brief description of every number on the programme, each of these being explained, before playing the item to be played. The popular overture to "William Tell" (Rossini) was described in the "Ranz des Vaches" heard in the Alps, the storm in the mountains, a pastoral scene, and the brilliant marching song in the finale. Illustrations of effects heard in the overture were given by Mr. Harold Parsons, Mus. Bac., on the 'cello, Miss Mignon Weston on the violin, and Miss Constance Pether on the flute. Then, with Miss Sylvia Whittington, A.M.U.A., as leader, the massed orchestra interpreted the selection with typical ability, under the baton of Mr. Foote. Offenbach's familiar "Barcarolle" from "Tales of Hoffmann" was second number, and this poetical excerpt was described as an interlude in the opera, waiting for the lovely music.

Grieg's "Peer Gynt" suite followed, with its four tonal narratives:—"Morning" (in which the lovely effect of the bird-calling of instruments were shown to indicate sunrise); "The Death of Ase," with its muted strings and plaintive melody; "Anitra's Dance," descriptive of the little Egyptian maid performing her graceful measure; and "In the Hall of the Mountain King," with its hobgoblins and a frenzy that reaches its climax with the collapse of the castle—the "Finale" in which all of the orchestra were assembled. A contrasting selection was the enasing waltz, "Aniowthen," by Gung'l, which rendered the first of the classic theme, demanding a rare combination of instruments. The concluding offering was taken from the ballet music of "Coppelia" (Delibes) that contains the famous dance of the doll. This trifle bracket was finely interpreted with all the precision of rhythmical message. Each of the programmed numbers was given an ovation. The National Anthem sang by the throng brought an innovation in musical influence to a close.