

*Tuesday Evening, 8-0.*

Outline of a Lecture on Musical Appreciation.

BY MRS. HOWARD GLOVER.

ON Tuesday evening, May 31st, Mrs. Howard Glover gave a lecture on "Musical Appreciation," taking Grieg, the composer who is being studied in the Parents' Union School this term, for her subject.

Miss Parish, in introducing Mrs. Howard Glover, said that the staff and students of the House of Education had all been looking forward to Mrs. Glover's visit more than she could say. So many people were not able to play an instrument, but if they were helped to understand music, they would be able to get great enjoyment out of hearing it. Mrs. Glover was the first to have the idea of helping children to listen to music with understanding.

Mrs. Glover said that before beginning to speak of Grieg, she had been asked to say a few words about Musical Appreciation, and not to presume on any previous knowledge.

Miss Parish had reminded them that Musical Appreciation—which was so much before the eye at the present moment—had originated in the P.N.E.U. about 25 years ago. Mrs. Glover said that at that time she was playing to her little child much of the best music in which she was interested, and Miss Mason happened to hear of what she was doing. Miss Mason realised that music might give great joy and interest to the life of all, and she felt that just as children in the P.U.S. were given the greatest literature

[p 507]

and art, so they should have the greatest music as well. She asked Mrs. Glover to write an article in the "Review" on the result of her observations, and to make a programme of music each term which might be played to the children. From that day to this, at the beginning of every term a programme had appeared. Miss Mason through her insight recognised thus early the value of a movement which was to spread far and wide.

But the P.N.E.U. must still be pioneers and teach Musical Appreciation as well as it can be done. Many public schools and some elementary schools were now doing it with success. Sometimes attendance at these classes was voluntary and it was encouraging to find that children came.

Musical Appreciation, of course, had nothing to do with playing the piano. It used to be thought that "learning music" must mean this, and children who had no talent for playing, concluded that they were unmusical and would not like concerts. But Musical Appreciation had no more to do with playing an instrument than acting had to do with an appreciation of Shakespeare, or painting with enjoyment of pictures. Mrs. Glover felt that all children should take Musical Appreciation and not only the musical ones, for it had been proved that only 3% of children were what is called "tone-deaf" and that if they were taken at an early age it was astonishing how children who appeared to be without ear, developed it and were able to enjoy listening to music with understanding.

Musical Appreciation need not be taught by a professional music teacher; it could be done by an ordinary governess or by the parents. Many people felt incapable of playing the illustrations, but it was now possible to supplement with gramophone or pianola. All the greatest works were to be had in this way.

An interesting book showing what could be done to train oneself in appreciation of music, was "The Musical Pilgrim's Progress" by J.F.M. Rorke. This was the story of an "unmusical" man, who with the help of a pianola came to understand and love, and even to be something of a critic of, the works of Chopin first, then Wagner and finally of Beethoven and other great composers.

Mrs. Glover also told of a little girl who became  
[p 508]

possessed of a gramophone. She was considered an unmusical child, but first she began to dance to the music and then to sing the tunes and to remember them.

The Gramophone Companies quite realised what they could do in the educational way, and had their Education Department from which records were going out to schools in all directions. One or two of their Grieg records would be heard that evening. The gramophone was further of use in that it could reproduce an orchestra.

Musical Appreciation lessons should be held every week for half-an-hour. Ten minutes of this might be given to ear-training. Saturday morning often proved a good time and several families could join for this Class. To have Musical Appreciation three times a term was little good, and to play through the programme once a term was no good at all—this merely became a school concert. The children must not be given too much at a time; they would listen to a certain amount and then they would not want to hear any more that day. No piece must be left before the children were able to recognise it and really knew it.

The month before the opening of each term, an article on the composer to be studied appeared in the "Review." Names of books on the subject were given and a programme of music to be performed for the children to listen to, with suggestions as to easier pieces which children might play themselves. Notes on each of the pieces in the programme were given—more particularly on things which were not to be found in books.

Music should be fitted into the scheme of history-study, and not left isolated—for instance, Frederick the Great and Bach, Joseph II and Mozart, Beethoven and Napoleon would naturally be linked together, and use should be made of the history charts.

But it was no good doing Musical Appreciation once a week, if children were allowed to sing rubbishy school songs and bad hymn tunes. We ourselves had suffered from having learnt in our youth hymns with worthless tunes, but they may be endeared to us by memories and associations. There is no reason, however, why our children should not have a fresh start, and learn hymns which in words and tune are worthy to be offered in praise.

[p 509]

Mrs. Glover urged the students present not to leave out Music when they opened the other doors of knowledge to children. She hoped they would try and do Musical Appreciation in their posts, and would encourage children to take the examination at the end of the term. She was sure their efforts would be repaid, as people did not really like bad music—unless they were offered nothing else—and students had a great opportunity to bring good music with its inspiration, its comfort and its power of raising the ideals, to a wide circle of children.

Mrs. Glover then turned to the subject of the evening—Edvard Grieg and his Work. Some of his Children's Songs were sung to get the audience into the right atmosphere.

Mrs. Glover pointed out several characteristics of Grieg which were to be listened for. Indeed, Grieg's music as a whole was so individual that it was easier to recognise than that of almost any other composer.

Edvard Grieg was born in 1843 and died in 1907—so that perhaps some of the audience had seen him. For some time his music was very popular in the home-life of England, where he took the place of Mendelssohn, but during the last 10 years or so his popularity had waned. Other more modern composers had taken his place for the time, but Grieg would always appeal—his piano concerto was very attractive and all violinists played his 3 violin sonatas.

Some of his songs and simpler pieces were well known to everyone, but others had been rather unfairly neglected. Grieg's shorter pieces were very possible for amateurs to play and could be enjoyed at the first hearing.

Grieg was not an innovator in form, but he was a harmonic innovator, with original harmonies and rhythms, and we still feel his undoubted individuality and freshness.

One outstanding thing about Grieg was that he was an ardent patriot. He was inspired by the Folk Songs and dances of Norway and as a national composer he was known and appreciated all over the world. This was a remarkable achievement. Grieg invented his titles first and then wrote music to them.

It was interesting to us to know that one of his ancestors was Scotch. His great-grandfather lived in Aberdeen but fled to Bergen in 1745 during the Jacobite Rebellion.

[p 510]

Grieg's father was British Consul at Bergen. His mother was a very musical woman and also a very energetic one, and her son inherited both these qualities. Grieg, however, was very idle at school, but when he was 15, the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, visited his family and advised that Grieg should be sent to Leipsic to study music. Here the boy met many promising young musicians including Arthur Sullivan. Unfortunately while Grieg was at Leipsic he overworked himself, fell ill with pleurisy and as a result of this illness was left with only one lung for the rest of his life. It is wonderful to think how much he accomplished under the circumstances.

Grieg passed his final examination at Leipsic with credit, but he was now 19 and had not done anything noteworthy, at an age when Schubert and Mozart had written wonderful things.

The next year Grieg spent at Copenhagen and came under the influence of Gade. He also met the young musician, Nordraak—a patriot like himself—and he played with Ole Bull. By degrees Grieg shook himself loose from the influence of the German classical school in which he had been educated, and dared to become himself and Norse. One German critic said of Grieg "that he got stuck in the fyord and never got out again." Grieg is not to be placed among the greatest composers but it was given to him to find an individual expression and to enrich music with new harmonic and melodic expression. He was a real Tone Poet and created an art distinguished by poetic feeling and the charm of many moods.

At 21 he became engaged to his cousin, Nina Hagerup, and she inspired him to write one of his best-known songs, "Ich Liebe Dich." Grieg now settled down in Christiania to routine work of teaching and conducting. Three years later he married and became Conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts, through which he tried to raise the public taste. This work and earning a living left him little time for original work.

In 1869, when Grieg was 31, he went at the Norwegian Government's expense, to Rome to visit Liszt, who had seen and admired his piano sonata. Liszt was very famous at this time and most generous in his help to and criticism of other musicians. Grieg took with him his second violin

[p 511]

sonata, but was rather alarmed when on his arrival Liszt asked him to play it to him on the piano alone. However, Liszt was so much pleased with it, that he afterwards played it himself, combining the two parts like a wizard and delighting Grieg.

About this time the Norwegian Government gave Grieg a pension of £90 a year for life, and he was at last able to devote himself to composition. He settled in Bergen and composed the incidental music to Ibsen's "Peer Gynt." The play, however, proved difficult to stage and Grieg saw that his music would be lost if it was only performed with the play, so he put much of it into the two very well-known Suites. "Peer Gynt," with the incidental music, is now being played at that home of enterprise, the Old Vic.

At this point the 2 gramophone records from the Suite were heard—"Morning Mood" in which the delicate orchestral effects came out clearly, and "Ase's Death" with its background of poignant grief.

For 8 years Grieg lived at Lofthus on the Hardanger Fjord, close to Nature. He was very happy in his marriage, and his wife, who was a singer, was able to interpret his songs as no one else could.

In 1888 and 1889 Grieg and his wife visited England. Mrs. Glover described the striking effect made on the audience at the old St. James's Hall, when they came on to the concert platform—hand in hand, with aureoles of greyish-flaxen hair. They sang and played delightfully. In all they paid 5 visits to England.

In 1894 Grieg was made a Mus. Doc. of Cambridge and in 1896 of Oxford. He last appeared in London in 1906.

In 1907 he gave some concerts in Germany and Denmark, but spent the summer quietly at his villa Troldhaugen, a few miles out of Bergen, to recover from the strain of them. It was arranged that he should come to the Leeds Festival in October of that year, but he was overtaken by illness at Bergen when on his way, and died aged 64. He was mourned by the whole nation as a great musician and as a great Norwegian.

Grieg was modest and sincere and, in spite of his invalid body, his music was always happy and healthy. The spirit of truth which is in it, will make it live after much that is artificial is forgotten.

[p 512]

The lecture was illustrated by the following compositions, played and sung by the students; Mrs. Glover herself playing the two Lyrical Pieces at the end.

3 CHILDREN'S SONGS—

(a) Farmyard Song.

(b) Dobbin's Good-Night Song.

(c) Fatherland Psalm.

VINJE SONG—Springtide.

PIANO DUET—Elegiac Melodies No. 2.

VINJE SONG—The Wounded Heart.

PIANO SOLO—Holberg Suite—

(a) Prelude.

(b) Gavotte.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS—Peer Gynt—

(a) Morning Mood.

(b) Ase's Death.

(c) Solveig's Song.

SONGS FROM VINJE CYCLE—

(a) A Fair Vision.

(b) On the Way Home.

(c) Faith.

PIANO SOLOS—Lyrical Pieces—

(a) Butterfly.

(b) Spring.

Notes on the above will be found in the article on Grieg in the April "Parents' Review."

The Lady Helen Cassel thanked Mrs. Glover on behalf of all the members of the Conference for her excellent and helpful lecture. She also thanked the students for their help in illustrating it. She felt sure that parents and teachers and students would go out determined that children should learn how to listen to music: Mrs. Glover had shown them the possibilities of this work and she was sure there would be great results.