

# MUSIC FESTIVALS

This issue of *Tempo* is devoted largely to the subject of music festivals, which are dominating increasingly our musical life, both nationally and internationally. It is not a "Festival Baedeker," and some festivals which may be quite important in their own localities or even beyond them, are not mentioned at all. Nor have we sought to penetrate the Iron Curtain. There seems no point in doing so at the present time, though many who remember the beauty of Prague and the warmth of Czech hospitality will regret that the link with central and eastern Europe which the Festival there used to afford should have been severed.

We have aimed at a broad survey, and have only to apologise for one omission, an article promised by Mr. Peter Diamand, the General Manager of the Holland Festival, but not delivered, in which he was to have written on the talks which have started and are to continue between certain of the leading international festivals as to how they may best contrive to live in peace together. The competition between these festivals for artists, orchestras, audiences and first performances is growing so fierce that in the absence of any such understanding it will probably not be many years before some of them become the victims of their own enterprise.

Even without Mr. Diamand's contribution, however, there are one or two observations that may pertinently be made, by way of underlining what is said in the ensuing pages. Edinburgh and Holland appear to be based on a belief in largeness: "The bigger the better," seems to be their motto. Whether in fact this is the final answer to contemporary requirements and tastes remains yet to be proved, but size alone is not likely to prove an enduring substitute for individuality, and something more than the setting of the place is needed to provide that. Next, the scramble for first performances of new works is in danger of reaching rather ridiculous proportions. That contemporary composers should receive encouragement is one thing, and a very good thing, but to insist that nothing short of spectacular "world premières" will serve is quite another. Of course this insistence has much practical importance as bait for critics, tourists and press publicity, but it is an inducement to composers to force their output and it tends to imply that there is something necessarily rather squalid and inferior about a second or a third performance, even if the first one has taken place months before and hundreds of miles away.

Finally, festivals must have a *raison d'être* beyond the mere satisfaction of local pride. They must be musical rather than municipal in purpose, and they must show a proper respect for the Art they serve. Otherwise they are injurious to the advancement of Music as a whole. As far as Great Britain is concerned, next year is likely to be fraught with particular dangers in this respect, and it will be one of the times when the late G. K. Chesterton's paradox that anything which is worth doing at all is worth doing badly does *not* apply.

A.G.

