

The Worshipful Company of Musicians.

The pieces which won the five prizes offered by the Musicians' Company for music for military bands, were heard for the first time at a concert given by the Company in the hall of the Stationers' Company on the 6th inst. This is the seventh competition instituted by the Company for prizes for new compositions by British composers. Five prizes were offered as follows:—A first prize of fifty guineas, presented by Mr. S. Ernest Palmer, J.P.; a second prize of twenty guineas, presented by Captain A. S. Beaumont; a third prize of fifteen guineas subscribed for by members of the Company; a fourth prize of ten guineas, presented by Mr. Charles T. D. Crews, a past Master of the Company; and a fifth prize of ten pounds presented by Mr. J. Henry Hes. It was suggested that the pieces should take the form of a suite, overture, march, or phantasia scored for a full "military" band of reed, flue, brass and percussion instruments. In response to the invitation, no fewer than 119 compositions of different types were sent in. As showing the wide interest with which the scheme was regarded, it may be mentioned that pieces were forwarded from parts of the Empire as far distant as Burmah and Canada, India and South Africa.

A committee of judges and experts was appointed to examine and deal with the manuscripts. Twelve were finally selected for study and subsequent presentation by the Band of the Grenadier Guards under their Bandmaster, Lieutenant Albert Williams, M.V.O., Mus.D., a Member of the Company. The works chosen were after several rehearsals performed before the Committee, and on the result of the marking by the judges, the Court of the Company was recommended to award the five prizes.

The first prize was awarded to Mr. Percy Fletcher for a Suite entitled "Rustic Scenes," consisting of: (1) Introduction and Dance "In the hayfields," (2) Romance "An old-world Garden," and (3) Humoreske "The Beanfeast." The themes are in the style of old songs and old country dance tunes. This composition is of a most bright and engaging nature, the Humoreske being characterised by its splendid vigour and abandon; it is a fine *jeu d'esprit*. The second prize piece was of an altogether different character. It was entitled "Overture in A minor, Op. 31—A lost cause—Scotland, 1745," by Walter Wesché. It may be that this cannot properly be designated programme music, but the title and the annotations in the handsome programme presented by the Company, obviously informed by the composer, prove that it is not abstract music. The work is of noble character and served excellently well to show how high-class music can be satisfactorily scored for a military band. In fact, in this respect, one feels that Mr. Wesché has aimed higher than the other competitors, and has succeeded so well that it is to be hoped he will pursue a form of composition for which he is evidently peculiarly fitted, for the scoring was as masterly as the piece was artistic. The anti-climax at the close of the development section was overworked, for the finale was a brilliant piece of writing. The third prize also went to Mr. Percy Fletcher, for a Grand March, "The spirit of pageantry," a very showy composition. Mr. F. Cunningham Woods, M.A., Mus.Bac.Oxon, won the fourth prize with a Suite in C major. This also consisted of three numbers: 1, Prelude (Maestoso); 2, Waltz and Trio (allegretto, grazioso and molto moderato); and 3, March (allegro pomposo), a clever composition, perhaps it may be said a little too clever, for the object in view. The fifth prize piece was a "Triumphal March," by Mr. A. von Ahn Carse. The introduction is of a harsh and somewhat forbidding nature accentuated by long shrill high shakes on the piccolo. The work is boldly conceived, but suffers from over-elaboration.

The pieces were played by the band of the Grenadier Guards, under the direction of Lieutenant Albert Williams, M.V.O., Mus.D.Oxon. It is only fair to say that they were heard to some disadvantage, for the full strength of the Grenadier Band is overwhelming in so small a hall. Such bands are heard at their best in the open air or in very large buildings. None of the prize-winners had previously

made any attempts at this form of composition, which is obviously not difficult to master, for the scoring was, on the whole, excellently laid out, the instruments being judiciously handled. It is not difficult to understand why the first prize went to Mr. Fletcher. His music is simple and straightforward and charmingly melodious. There was too much scholarly writing in most of the pieces to commend them to the popular audiences for whom they are designed, and it may be further urged that there was too free a use of the combined resources of the band, so that the music was often noisy and tiresome, and the real climax weakened in contrast. The competition shows that there are no substantial reasons why British composers should not seriously and successfully enter this field of work, and it should prove a healthy stimulus to the output of original music for military bands.

The concert was opened with a performance of Dr. A. Williams' Overture, "Heinrich von Meissen," a work of bright, simple themes, in itself a fine study in orchestration for a military band. The pieces were agreeably interspersed with songs by Miss Ethel Wylie and Mr. James Horncastle, with Dr. E. Markham Lee at the pianoforte. After the interval, the Master of the Company, Dr. T. Lea Southgate, presented the prizes to the winners, with a few appropriate words to each. At the close of the concert, Sir Frederick Bridge, in a humorous and breezy speech, thanked the performers for the trouble and care which they had bestowed upon the music, saying that it was a great occasion to all those who knew what it implied. That hall had great interest to musicians, for in it Henry Purcell had himself taken part in a St. Cecilia concert, actually singing in one of his own works. Musicians, and there was never an audience more devoted to music than that, had been too prone to overlook the fact that in their military bands, both those in the Army and those associated with other spheres of life, they had a great possession. This competition was the most satisfactory of any in which he had ever taken part. So careful were the judges that they had the selected pieces properly played before them, before making the final awards. He was quite sure that was the right thing to do, but it had never been done before. English music for English bands should be their ambition, and it was clear that the time for it was now ripe. Sir Frederick paid a glowing tribute to the energetic labours of Dr. Southgate in the work connected with this competition, and said he had worked wonderfully hard. With all his faults he loved him still! He humorously advised the competitors to put their prizes away in some foreign country where there were no hen-roosts to rob. He knew of such opportunities in Canada where the Chancellor of the Exchequer ceased from troubling and the tax collector would leave them in peace.

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At the concert on December 1st, the following programme was performed:—Pianoforte, Scherzo (Chopin), Mr. Clement Cross; Song, "The Trumpeter" (Dix), Mr. R. M. H. Hamilton; Solo Violin, Sonata in A (Handel), Master Robert Pinnington; Recit. and Aria, "E questo il loco," "Ah! se tu dormi" (Romeo e Giulietta) (Vacca), Miss Lilian M. Allen; Pianoforte, Prelude and Fugue in D Major (Bach-d'Albert), Miss Marion Chilly; Song, "The Sailor's Grave" (Sullivan), Mr. S. B. Marshall; Violin, Adagio Religioso (from Concerto in D Minor), (Vieuxtemps), Miss Ruby Eager; Song, "I hear you calling" (Marshall), Miss Eda Green; Pianoforte, Chromatic Valse (Godard), Mrs. Fisher; Air, "Though faithless men (The Jewess)" (Halevy), Mr. J. Packer Ramsey; Mandoline Quartette in D major (Munier), (1st Mandoline) Miss Lilian Branston, A.G.S.M., and Miss Ethel Rudge; (2nd Mandoline) Miss Ada Whitehead; (Mandola) Miss Marie Macdowell; (Pianoforte) Miss Amy L. Parsons; Song, "The Rosary" (Nevin), Miss Marie Abraham; Recitation, "Catching a Mouse" (Fogerty), Miss Valerie Milch. Miss Jenny Hyman accompanied.