

A MAGIC ...cornet?

By Liveryman Bram Gay.

MOZART AND THE BRASS BAND? Different worlds – or at least, one may think, opposite poles of this one? Not at all. They co-exist happily in the mind of a chap who owes his musical beginnings to the band and who has spent a working life at Covent Garden. Bringing them together in public was not my idea, though. Solna Brass, of Stockholm, asked me to conduct the *Zauberflöte* overture as part of a concert ten years ago. Typically, after a decade of experiment with contemporary brass band writing – the purpose for which that group was formed – they had decided to play a concert of "arranged" band-music, just for fun. William Rimmer's transcription, which they knew by repute to be a classic of the genre, was an obvious starting-point.

In the event that was the only really successful score of those chosen. It is a truly marvellous score, and the players loved it. A ball started rolling that day which absorbed most of my spare time for years to come.

Solna's conductor, Lars-Gunnar Björklund, is a member of the teaching staff at the Stockholm Opera School, and a first-rate répétiteur. It was his

idea to score more "Flute" to perform a year later, with voices from the school. I made some obvious things; the Sarastro music, some choruses, the Pamina-Papageno duet and so on. They scored very easily; I make it a rule, in that situation, never to "twist the composer's arm" but no composer has ever surrendered to the brass band more encouragingly than WAM did then. The subsequent concert was a great success. These events were remembered, as the Mozart anniversary hove in sight, by another Swedish group, the splendid Gothenburg Brass. It has become the best of the Swedish bands, centred on the Gothenburg Music School. Gothenburg asked for even more Mozart, for a concert, part of the Gothenburg Symphony's subscription series in the Gothenburg Concert Hall; a fine room which I remembered happily from a Barbirolli concert in the sixties. The plan was for a week's rehearsal in my annual holiday, during which I would press the players into the right style. Then in October there would be ten days during which band and voices would work together for the concert.

So I scored – effortlessly, it seemed to me – one and a half hours of this amazing score. It is, as I have hastened to reassure those who fear a Mozart

Cycle from me – the only Mozart which really will score for brass. My friend Wolfgang chose to write mainly in flats; keys preferred by brass players, whose instruments are (I wonder how it happened?) pitched generally in B flat, E flat, and F. The thing became an absorbing pastime, with hardly a technical or musical problem to spoil my fun, day by day. How did I find the time? Easily. I am a happy insomniac and I write something or other every morning before six-thirty. The work was a delight.

With enough done, I showed the result one day to two fellow spirits, orchestral – and operatic – musicians who share my brass band roots. Elgar Howarth and Howard Snell conferred over my extracts for a half-hour, declared them utterly splendid and demanded the rest of the work. This suggestion I laughed out of court, having never for a moment contemplated the complete opera. I was sure that the remainder would not score. My friends were equally certain that it would.

Then – an astonishing coincidence – on the following day came a telephone call from Denmark. The Odense Theatre wished to play the opera, using the Band of the Danish Life Guards and a score made by its Director of Music Erik

ENCORE!

AN ENCORE is one accepted way that an audience expresses its appreciation of events. The fact that anyone has turned up at all is an indication of their expectations – and so with your Company's events and functions. However, times and tastes are always changing with the result that the Court has asked your editors to prepare a questionnaire to enquire into the reasons for wildly fluctuating attendances at certain Company functions and to receive ideas for changes...

It would seem that convenience such as timing, location, travel, parking and refreshments as well as cost might affect support. The next issue will include this questionnaire. However, if you should have any prior thoughts or comments, please tell us about them now. They will be helpful in developing the format.

The matter of speeches (vis back page) has already been noted.

THE LIVERY COMPANIES' EXHIBITION



Pastmaster Henry Willis 4 and Assistant David Hill demonstrating their skills on the Company stand at Guildhall. They were ably supported by Assistant Frank Fowler. Appreciation is also due to Pastmaster John Morley and Liveryman Anne-Marie Sizer for their contributions. The general opinion was that the Exhibition as a whole had been well supported and highly successful. Considerable interest was shown in the Musicians' display and a large number of our new pamphlets were distributed.