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Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. 3

Sunday Sun.

17 Dec. 1905.

Temple House, Temple Avenue, London,

"Salome."

A scheme is on foot for the performance of Strauss' "Salomé" in Berlin, by the ensemble of the Dresden Opera House, including, of course, Herr von Schuch and his orchestra. Those who know Strauss's method and are familiar with Wilde's poem on which this opera is based will not be surprised to hear of the stir "Salomé" has made in Germany. Herr Wirk (of Munich and Covent Garden) won great 2019-03-17 Jissen Women's University Library 409 One of the features of the scenery was the absence of sky borders, which is said to have added greatly to the effect.

2019-03-13 Higgen Women's University Library 411

The Kaiser discovered that
Wilde's *Salome* as a subject for an opera, and told him so.
Strauss may have to withdraw from the Royal Berlin
Opera.

Manuscript
Herald,
Jan 1906.

Musical Standard.

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF RICHARD STRAUSS' OPERA "SALOME."

[BY OUR DRESDEN CORRESPONDENT.]

ON Saturday, December 9, the great event, the *première* of Richard Strauss' music-drama "Salome," which lasted 95 minutes in performance, took place at the Royal Opera House, Dresden. Very few of my readers will imagine what a triumph this first sentence implies: a triumph of art over predisposed fanaticism, over religious scruples, over the prejudices of many whose musical judgment never allows them to go farther than the footprints of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and of those to whom Richard Wagner still appears as an outcast. For a long time—many months, at least—before the *première* the music-drama "Salome" had already a history. At several stages the colossal work had been accepted for performance or was in preparation, when shortly before the *première* some catastrophe occurred which caused the full score to be put back on the bookshelf of its gifted composer, unrevealed to the public. To bring off the great deed Richard Strauss was not the only man necessary to make it possible. For he wanted an operatic manager of an unbiassed mind, a man who dared to face everything. This man, after many failures, finally was found in the Intendant of the Royal Saxon Opera House. His Excellency Count Seebach, to whose genius and intense energy is due the fact that "Salome" saw the stage lights at all. The musical part was placed under the supervision of celebrated Herr von Schuch, who again was the master of the situation. He was so thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of this most difficult work as to contribute largely to the remarkable performance. The difficulties on the stage were of no smaller order. For the alterations there a foreign stage manager, Herr Wilhelm Wirk, was called from the Munich Royal Opera House. In the orchestra two special instruments were required. The one, the Celesta, a keyboard instrument emanating from the Mustel factory, the other, the heckelphon (named after the inventor Heckel in Biebrach). This is a wood-wind instrument of the reed order, looking like an oboe. Its range stands between the bassoon and Cor Anglais. Owing to the enormous number of wind instruments required the whole orchestra numbered 104 musicians.

The difficulties on the musical field commenced as soon as the rôles were distributed, for almost every one of the famous singers offered to strike. Twice it was that Frau Wittig handed back her rôle to Count Seebach, stating that the rôle of Salome was an impossibility. Her complaints were not unjustified: how on earth could she, as solo singer, dance for ten minutes long and sing right after, uninterruptedly, for a full quarter of an hour? Similar were the lamentations of our famous tenor, Herr Burrian, who affirmed that, owing to the difficulties, he had to study his rôle not act but measure by measure (in German language, *Nicht aktweise, aber taktweise*). Several months elapsed until the soloists had learned their parts, and then two weeks of daily rehearsals with the orchestra followed. Were these splendid orchestral artists not holders of a life-long position (with full salary for their pension) they all would have revolted, perhaps.

About ten days before the *première* Herr Strauss came to Dresden. He did not come to conduct, for Herr Schuch was a better hand for that: he came to make peace and to soothe the revolutionary elements, vocal and instrumental. Repeatedly he said at the rehearsal, when the feelings of the 104 overstrained musicians had become too significant: "Do scold, gentlemen! Do scold! That relieves your heart." One must have lived in Dresden during the last two weeks and be in feeling with the musicians to understand their position and to hear their one-man-like disgust about the new work in preparation. Here it should be said that players in a full orchestra—for the simple reason that for the most of the time they merely hear their next neighbouring instruments and not the whole band—are generally no good judges about a new work. When finally, through the kindness of the Intendant Count Seebach, the writer of these lines was invited to attend the last full rehearsal two days before the *première* the readers of THE MUSICAL STANDARD may take for granted that he arrived there laden with any amount of predisposition. So much the more, as the libretto of "Salome"—as Strauss wrote it—is no operatic arrangement, but is the real translation of Oscar Wilde's original drama, word for word. Owing to the enormous demand for tickets for the *première*, the critics had been invited to attend the last full rehearsal. Thus I was fortunate to hear the performance twice. On the eventful Saturday, December 9, theatrical and musical representatives from almost every civilized country had come to witness the performance. The house was packed. Though the tickets were sold at considerably enhanced prices (up to 10s. for the dearest seat) none were to be had on the Tuesday previous. The curiosity was roused to the very highest.

Punctually at 7.30 p.m., the performance started with an uncommon phrase, given out by the clarinet, and then a

little later other instruments sounded, and briefly brought about a musical climax of queer, though logical, thoughts, in the height of which the curtain was raised. In the glare of the full moon, which, though, was not visible, the forecourt of Herodes-Antipus' Palace was discerned. On the left stood the Palace itself, with the entrance, having a platform of two steps before leading to the court. On the right a part of the surrounding wall, with the outer entrance door, was seen, and near the back of the court stood the old cistern, in the depth of which Johannes (here he is called Jochanaan) was kept prisoner. The whole decoration was a beautiful picture of pure Assyrian style. A cloudless dark blue sky with hundreds of shining stars was arranged in a splendidly real way. Most wonderful to look at was this transparent sky, where none of those unavoidable corners or seams could be discovered. All of it breathed the air of a tropical night. Very carefully selected were the costumes of the Syrian and Egyptian soldiers that were standing about during the first scene. The dim light of three burning torches, reflecting on their shields and armour, gave a constant change to the charmingly arranged picture.

And now a word as to the music itself. The extraordinary and daring style in which Richard Strauss composes is well known. Triads connecting themselves in proper part progression are very rare occurrences. All rules and experiences in Harmony seem to be turned upside down. Strauss does not, for instance, mind when the chord of C major is sounded, providing the situation may justify it, letting a trombone play an A flat or a D sharp with *fortissimo*. With very few exceptions, like the love song of Salome or the preaching of Johannes, the music in this drama would not sound at all if played on the piano. Strauss, though, would only answer to this statement by saying: "Salome" is not written for the piano: it is written for the orchestra." But it is not only in Harmony that Strauss is a revolutionist, as he even mostly denies all what we perceive as periodical structure the eight-measure system which Richard Wagner still had respected. Strauss' music could consequently never stand an analysis by picking it to atoms. So in another instance in the drama "Salome," when five old Jews are disputing over religious questions, Strauss does not mind letting them sing simultaneously in 7-8, 5-8 and 4-4 time, while Herr Schuch unconcernedly conducts in full bars. No word, of course, could be understood then, though it gave a splendid sketch of the Jewish way without making fun over it. Where is rhythm there—where is feeling for measure? Nowhere! All that seems to be put aside as obsolete.

Yet in the connection of the whole, together with the orchestra, it sounded logical and marvellous. Everything on this remarkable evening was equal to perfection. Frau Wittig was at her very best as singer and as impersonator of the title rôle. The handing over of her rôle to Frä. Korb (from the ballet) during the dance was absolutely unnoticeable. Herr Burrian, as Herodes, was a splendid representative of this nervous and superstitious king. Equally well was Herr Perron as Johannes, Frä. von Chavanne as Herodias, and all the representatives of the smaller rôles. The orchestration sounded enrapturingly beautiful. And the impression of the whole work was grand and overpowering. Therefore, at the close, the audience seemed to want many seconds to wake up from its dream, and then it burst out into extraordinary applause. Herr Strauss had to reappear on the stage 25 times, accompanied for about twelve times by the singers and Herr von Schuch. The composer may congratulate himself on having experienced this splendid performance. I doubt whether he will ever see equal perfection on other stages. For the Royal Opera House, of Dresden, this *première* had been a grand advertisement.

PAUL COLBERG

The Observer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE "SALOME" OF RICHARD STRAUSS.

Sir,—Will you allow me to correct your correspondent on a question of facts in his admirable description of the opera produced at Dresden? The Jews of the play do not petition Herod for the release of Yochanaan; they ask that he should be delivered into their hands. The Nazarenes ask for his release. I am bound to say that the noisy and vulgar music of Dr. Strauss so entirely smothered the dialogue that the mistakes are easily explained, and it is extraordinary that one who was unacquainted with the play should have made out as much of the story as he was able to do from its presentation in Dresden. I have seen the play performed in France, Holland, Italy, in many places in Germany, and in England by the New Stage Club in the early part of this year. I have never seen it burlesqued until I witnessed the Dresden production. I leave to your learned critic the task of appreciating the music, but as a friend of Mr. Oscar Wilde, permit me to say that the opera was an insult to the author, only less distressing than the scene at Clapham Junction which he so vividly described in the pages of "Do Profundis."

Your obedient servant,
ROBERT ROSS.

10 [SUPPLEMENT.]

THE SKETCH.

DEC. 20, 1905

OSCAR WILDE'S "SALOME" SET TO MUSIC BY RICHARD STRAUSS.



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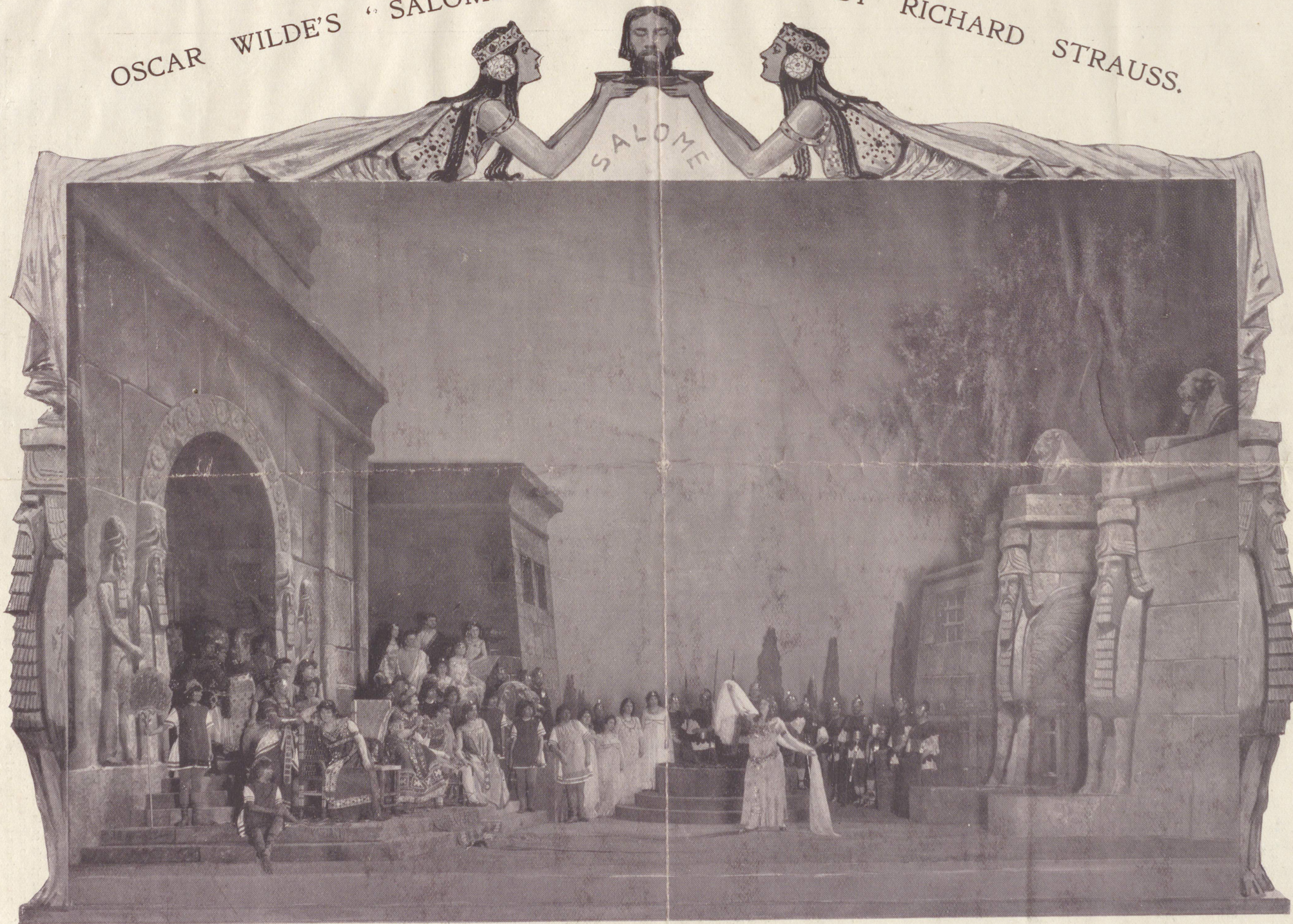
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THE SKETCH.

Dec. 20, 1905



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DECEMBER 20, 1905.

STRAUSS'S "SALOME."
Sir,—Arriving here fresh from hearing Strauss's "Salomé" in Dresden, some of Mr. Kalisch's statements on the subject in your Monday issue seem to me so misleading that they cannot be left pass without protest. In the first place he says that the music is "infinitely more complex than anything the composer ever produced." After studying the pianoforte score and attending three performances, the truth seems to me to lie rather in the opposite direction. There is no sustained polyphony anything like so complex—in the strict sense of the word—as is to be found in "Ein Heldenleben," "Zarathustra," or "Don Quixote," to say nothing of earlier works; and the same opinion on this point is expressed in the "Times" article of last Friday. Again, Mr. Kalisch says that Strauss's music suggests "a series of hurricanes," whereas the general opinion among musicians in Dresden, at any rate, is that nowhere has Strauss shown himself so extraordinarily economical with his heavy artillery. The beginning is calm and subdued as the moonlight over the Tetrarch's palace, nor do we encounter any great climax of sound until the moment when Iokanaan descends into the cistern cursing Salomé. This and the final scene of Salomé's exultation and succeeding doom are the only fortissimo passages in the drama. To characterise the music as "a succession of hurricanes" is indeed "sacrificing truth to epigram."—Yours, &c.,
A. J. ROWAN HAMILTON.

December 19.

The Sun.

DECEMBER 21, 1905.

MUSICAL NOTES.

In a very interesting lecture on Strauss's new opera Salomé, at the Concert Goers' Club, Mr. Alfred Kalisch, who is an enthusiast, where Strauss is concerned, confessed himself dissatisfied with the work as an opera. The drama of Oscar Wilde is, he said, simplicity in itself, but the music he holds is more complex than anything the composer has yet given us. "The atmosphere of the setting Strauss has given it suggests a series of hurricanes."

A real disappointment, it appears, is Salomé's great dance, which Mr. Kalisch points out, is so difficult, that it is almost beyond the powers of any performer to master. As the dance is an absolutely essential part of the opera, the over-elaboration in this particular scene may well militate against the success of the work.

Dec. 22, 1905

Yorkshire Daily Post,
MUSIC AND ART.

It may be long before we have an opportunity of witnessing Richard Strauss's new opera "Salomé," if, indeed, its Biblical subject does not absolutely bar it from our operatic repertoire. But the story of its production in Dresden is an instructive one, and affords some idea what a subsidised theatre may accomplish. The difficulty, the music was great, so great that, after the principals had learned their parts, "two weeks' daily rehearsals with the orchestra followed," as we read that the players were unanimous in the distaste for their task. Strikes were imminent; the principals were not easily persuaded to stick to their parts, and the orchestra would probably have risen en masse were they not in the position of state servants, with pensions in prospect. In short, the position seems to have been analogous to that which obtained at the Paris Opera in 1866 when "Tannhäuser" underwent 164 rehearsals of various kinds, and about £8,000 was spent in production which had to be withdrawn after the third performance, or, again, soon after, when "Tristan" was undertaken in Vienna, though the latter case the work never came to performance owing to the incapability of the tenor in role whose difficulty was certainly without precedent. In the present instance, however, all difficulties were got over, largely by reason of the commanding ability of the Dresden conductor von Schuch, though no doubt the successful issue is in a still greater measure attributable to the Intendant of the Royal Opera, Count Seebach. The wisdom of choosing a strong man as manager of any artistic enterprise of a public nature is a thing which cannot be too strongly insisted on.

Vanity Fair.

DECEMBER 21, 1905.

A BATH CONCERT.

A large and distinguished audience was present at the concert at the New Pump Room, Bath, on the 9th inst., to listen to seven pieces composed by the Baroness Overbeck, a Russian lady, who conducted the orchestra. The concert opened with the overture, "Antigone," the performance of which was forbidden at the last moment in St. Petersburg in consequence of the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergius, and the curious resemblance of the antique tragedy to the events then passing in Russia; Antigone representing the down-trodden people, King Kreon Nicholas II. and Hamon, the revolutionary party, while at Moscow also a body was lying unburied. The overture was enthusiastically received, and it is satisfactory to note that it may soon be heard in London under the composer's direction. The other items on the programme, including three charming songs set to music by the Baroness, had an equally favourable reception, and the audience was much struck by the clever and remarkable Orchestral Suite called "Salomé," written for Oscar Wilde's play as it was given in St. Petersburg.

The Lady,

The glowing accounts which musical critics have sent from Dresden of Herr Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," have been considerably discounted by a correspondent of "The Westminster Gazette," who condemns the music from an outsider's point of view, and adds a criticism full of insight of the dramatic side of the production. Musical critics seem able to swallow any amount of tawdry ugliness in the setting of operas. They talk of the splendid "acting" of this and that singer. It is quite as well that now and again they should be reminded that to a poetic and artistic eye operatic artists and scenery appear in a very different light.

Star.

27th 1906.

Strauss's "Salomé" is proving a great success in Dresden. It has been played ten or eleven times to full houses, and one of the features of the performance is the large number of visitors from Berlin who travel to hear it. Several other opera houses have determined to try their fortunes with the work, in spite of its difficulties. The fact that Berlin is so far not one of them is not a little strange at first sight.

DECEMBER 20, 1905.

Strauss's Very Latest

Richard Strauss's operatic setting of Wilde's mustn't-be-performed-in-England drama, *Salomé*. Having been informed by critics of varying views that the music is superhuman, beyond all comprehension, nerve-racking, ungrateful, unmelodious, devoid of airs or melody, the vocal parts being drowned by the orchestra, it has been added that "the composer has been vainly warned by the Kaiser to relinquish the composition of such terrific music." Now the Kaiser is not a very popular man in England, but he has now the supreme chance of capturing the sentiment of a large and influential body of musicians and critics in this country. Let his Majesty's acute ear detect in the strains—the very strained strains—of *Salomé* something not only terrific, but disrespectful, something rude, seditious, or detrimental to the memory of his immortal grandfather, and let him forthwith have Strauss arrested and incarcerated for twelve months in a fortress on conviction for *lèse-majesté*.

A Possible Cure

Let Strauss, while thus experiencing the simple life, be provided with a two-octave xylophone or zither, on the diatonic scale of C, upon which, in his leisure moments, he may be permitted to exercise his faculties for composition. If his tunes please the warden on shift, let Strauss be given a good mark, but if he show any tendency to obscurity, complexity, or chaos—as far as is possible in C major—let him be given bread and water until he repents. In this way the remnants of a distracted musical talent may yet be preserved for the world. If Strauss is allowed to continue indulging his frenzied imagination on the augmented orchestra, after the fashion of *Ein Heldenleben*, *Don Quixote*, *Sinfonia Domestica*, and *Salomé*, the rates will be

burdened to breaking-point by the necessity of opening a score or so new asylums to accommodate his victims. So far as *Salomé* is concerned, we, in England, have reason to be thankful that, the "book" of that opera being censoriously squashed, we shall not have the opportunity of hearing the "music."

More "Music of the Future"

These Germans are incorrigible. Not content with the Strauss nightmare, we are now threatened with one Max Reger. "Reger," we are informed by the December number of *The Musician*, that admirable new musical monthly, "is professor of counterpoint, etc., at Munich. He is a problem of more than usual difficulty. Some hail him as the greatest of his time, others find him incomprehensible." We are reminded by the writer, Mr. Frederic S. Law, that such comments often signify a new style, an extension of conventional limits, a hitherto unsuspected scheme of relations. Max Reger, in short, is another Wagner—perhaps—with another cupboard-full of "music of the future," too advanced for mere contemporary ears. Those poor inadequate ears of ours seem to be at constant war with our composers. And yet are they necessarily wrong? Surely it is their business to tell us what is good in music for our poor selves, and what is gratifying to contemporary taste, not to evidence

Bystander.

the probable tastes of our grandchildren. Strauss, and probably Reger, offend the ears of the vast majority of music-lovers of to-day, because, perhaps, they are "before their time." But what is their "time" to us? They will have it; let them enjoy it when it comes. For my part, I decline to be rushed into enthusiasm over a composer because he is going to be immensely popular in 1955, just as I decline to enthuse over a composer because he was popular in 1855. A hero of the forthcoming fifties is as much out-of-date to us of the tens as is a hero of the last fifties. Strauss and Reger, and the rest of the musical prophets, are out-of-date, and, therefore, contemporary critics may be pardoned for treating them accordingly.

IS STRAUSS PLAYED OUT?

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But this after all is a minor point. If "Salomé" is a good opera on its own account it does not matter much whether it does or does not exactly reproduce the atmosphere of the play on which it is based. So long as it has an atmosphere of its own which is consistently adhered to that is all that is required.

Other lines of criticism are less reassuring. As is so usual in the case of Strauss's works, one finds plentiful expressions of wonder and amazement but few which seem indicative of real pleasure or genuine admiration. In other words there is too great a suggestion of mere eccentricity and cleverness run mad about all the comments which the work has so far called forth to encourage the hope that Strauss has presented to the world in "Salomé" a work really worthy of his powers—and this apart altogether from the *outré* and unpleasant subject of its libretto. Sir Edward Elgar has been telling the world that in his belief Strauss is the greatest of living composers and few will be disposed to deny that in many respects at least that judgment is a sound one. It is only unfortunate that Strauss himself seems to strive so hard to inspire scepticism as to his real endowments by following precisely that procedure in regard to the choice and treatment of his themes which would commend itself to one who though enormously clever is conscious that real genius of the highest kind has been denied him. That Strauss indubitably has genius—or perhaps one might say, adopting a phrase which has been applied to him before, once was a genius—there is no manner of doubt. One need go no further than his "Till Eulenspiegel" or "Don Juan" to be convinced of that. Hearing the former work superbly played under Herr Steinbach by the London Symphony Orchestra last Thursday one was indeed tempted to ask if in all that he has written since Strauss has done anything more genuinely inspired than that marvellous Humoresque, with its wealth of lovely melody, amazing characterisation, and incredible colour effects. It is the fashion in certain quarters to talk nowadays of "Till Eulenspiegel" as a mere juvenile *jeu d'esprit* of Strauss—an amusing production which though clever enough in its way is not to be reckoned with seriously in comparison with his later works. But this is surely very absurd.

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Sphere,

DECEMBER 23, 1905.

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THE COMPOSER OF "SALOME"
Richard Strauss was born in 1864. He has out-Wagnered Wagner in his symphonic methods. His best-known works are *Tot und Verklärung*, *Don Quixote*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and *The Domestic Symphony*. He has often conducted in London.

As a matter of fact the score is the most astonishing production possible. Strauss's mastery over the orchestra is so great, the range of his power so wide, and his effects so fresh, that we come near being paralysed by the result. At the same time the whole is so undeniably beautiful that we leave with an impression that is wholly satisfying. Apart from the stupendous composition Strauss has done an unprecedented thing in taking Oscar Wilde's drama as it stands (with a very few cuts) instead of converting it into a libretto after the approved fashion. I do not propose in this place to analyse either the book or the music, but I have come to the irresistible conclusion that *Salomé* by Wilde-Strauss is as near our ideal of the perfect music-drama as we are likely to get. This opinion was fully shared by an audience representative of all shades of social and artistic rank, and the scene of enthusiasm which followed on the first moments of amazed and stupefied silence was unparalleled in the annals of the theatre.

The performance lasted for an hour and thirty-five minutes. Afterwards everybody who could get in adjourned to the big supper-room at the "Belle Vue" overlooking the Elbe, where we sat as various small or large parties discussing our impressions from 10.30 until three next morning. When the composer came in the applause broke out afresh, to be renewed a few minutes later when the conductor, for whom no praise is high enough, followed him. Strauss the man is quite different from Strauss the composer. A more simple or lovable nature does not exist. His pleasure at his success was that of a child, and with a beaming face he made the tour of the room during the evening, talking to everybody.

I am sorry I have no space to describe the performance or to praise the artists, of whom Burriau especially distinguished himself no less histrionically than by his vocalisation of the almost impossibly difficult music. They ought all to be praised in sonnets.

DECEMBER 20, 1905.

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Sir.—Arriving here fresh from hearing Strauss's "Salomé" in Dresden, some of Mr. Kalisch's statements on the subject in your Monday issue seem to me so misleading that they cannot be let pass without protest. In the first place he says that the music is "infinitely more complex than anything the composer ever produced." After studying the pianoforte score and attending three performances, the truth seems to me to lie rather in the opposite direction. There is no sustained polyphony anything like so complex—in the strict sense of the word—as is to be found in "Ein Heldenleben," "Zarathustra," or "Don Quixote," to say nothing of earlier works; and the same opinion on this point is expressed in the "Times" article of last Friday. Again, Mr. Kalisch says that Strauss's music suggests "a series of hurricanes," whereas the general opinion among musicians in Dresden, at any rate, is that nowhere has Strauss shown himself so extraordinarily economical with his heavy artillery. The beginning is calm and subdued as the moonlight over the Tetrarch's palace, nor do we encounter any great climax of sound until the moment when Iokanaan descends into the cistern cursing Salomé. This and the final scene of Salomé's exultation and succeeding doom are the only fortissimo passages in the drama. To characterise the music as "a succession of hurricanes" is indeed "sacrificing truth to epigram."—Yours, &c.,
A. J. ROWAN HAMILTON.

December 19.

The Sun.

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MUSICAL NOTES.

In a very interesting lecture on Strauss's new opera Salomé, at the Concert Goers' Club, Mr. Alfred Kalisch, who is an enthusiast, where Strauss is concerned, confessed himself dissatisfied with the work as an opera. The drama of Oscar Wilde is, he said, simplicity in itself, but the music he holds is more complex than anything the composer has yet given us. "The atmosphere of the play is that of a hothouse, the setting Strauss has given it suggests a series of hurricanes."

A real disappointment, it appears, is Salomé's great dance, which Mr. Kalisch points out, is so difficult, that it is almost beyond the powers of any performer to master. As the dance is an absolutely essential part of the opera, the over-elaboration in this particular scene may well militate against the success of the work.

Dec. 22, 1905

Yorkshire Daily Post,
MUSIC AND ART.

It may be long before we have an opportunity of witnessing Richard Strauss's new opera "Salomé," if, indeed, its Biblical subject does not absolutely bar it from our operatic repertory. But the story of its production in Dresden is an instructive one, and affords some idea what a subsidised theatre may accomplish. The difficulty of the music was great, so great that, after the principals had learned their parts, "two weeks' daily rehearsals with the orchestra followed," as we read that the players were unanimous in the distaste for their task. Strikes were imminent the principals were not easily persuaded to stick to their parts, and the orchestra would probably have risen en masse were they not in the position of State servants, with pensions in prospect. In short, the position seems to have been analogous to that which obtained at the Paris Opera in 1866 when "Tannhäuser" underwent 164 rehearsals of various kinds, and about £8,000 was spent in production which had to be withdrawn after a third performance, or, again, soon after, when "Tristan" was undertaken in Vienna, though the latter case the work never came to perform since owing to the incapability of the tenor in role whose difficulty was certainly without precedent. In the present instance, however, all difficulties were got over, largely by reason of the commanding ability of the Dresden conductor von Bülow, though no doubt the successful issue is in a still greater measure attributable to the Intendant of the Royal Opera, Count Seebach. The wisdom of choosing a strong man as manager of any artistic enterprise of a public nature is a thing which cannot be too strongly insisted on.

Vanity Fair.

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A BATH CONCERT.

A large and distinguished audience was present at the concert at the New Pump Room, Bath, on the 9th inst., to listen to seven pieces composed by the Baroness Overbeck, a Russian lady, who conducted the orchestra. The concert opened with the overture, "Antigone," the performance of which was forbidden at the last moment in St. Petersburg in consequence of the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergius, and the curious resemblance of the antique tragedy to the events then passing in Russia: Antigone representing the down-trodden people, King Kreon Nicholas II., and Hamon, the revolutionary party, while at Moscow also a body was lying unburied. The overture was enthusiastically received, and it is satisfactory to note that it may soon be heard in London under the composer's direction. The other items on the programme, including three charming songs set to music by the Baroness, had an equally favourable reception, and the audience was much struck by the clever and remarkable Orchestral Suite called "Salomé," written for Oscar Wilde's play as it was given in St. Petersburg.

The Lady,

The glowing accounts which musical critics have sent from Dresden of Herr Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," have been considerably discounted by a correspondent of "The Westminster Gazette," who condemns the music from an outsider's point of view, and adds a criticism full of insight of the dramatic side of the production. Musical critics seem able to swallow any amount of tawdry ugliness in the setting of operas. They talk of the splendid "acting" of this and that singer. It is quite as well that now and again they should be reminded that to a poetic and artistic eye operatic artists and scenery appear in a very different light.

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Strauss's "Salomé" is proving a success in Dresden. It has been ten or eleven times to full house one of the features of the performance. The large number of visitors from who travel to hear it. Several opera houses have determined to try fortunes with the work, in spite of difficulties. The fact that Berlin far not one of them is not a little at first sight.

DECEMBER 20, 1905.

Strauss's Very Latest

There is one extremely significant report issued in connection with the production at Dresden last Friday week of Richard Strauss's operatic setting of Wilde's mustn't-be-performed-in-England drama, *Salomé*. Having been informed by critics of varying views that the music is superhuman, beyond all comprehension, nerve-racking, ungrateful, unmelodious, devoid of airs or melody, the vocal parts being drowned by the orchestra, it has been added that "the composer has been vainly warned by the Kaiser to relinquish the composition of such terrific music." Now the Kaiser is not a very popular man in England, but he has now the supreme chance of capturing the sentiment of a large and influential body of musicians and critics in this country. Let his Majesty's acute ear detect in the strains—the very strained strains—of *Salomé* something not only terrific, but disrespectful, something rude, seditious, or detrimental to the memory of his immortal grandfather, and let him forthwith have Strauss arrested and incarcerated for twelve months in a fortress on conviction for *lèse-majesté*.

A Possible Cure

Let Strauss, while thus experiencing the simple life, be provided with a two-octave xylophone or zither, on the diatonic scale of C, upon which, in his leisure moments, he may be permitted to exercise his faculties for composition. If his tunes please the warden on shift, let Strauss be given a good mark, but if he show any tendency to obscurity, complexity, or chaos—as far as is possible in C major—let him be given bread and water until he repents. In this way the remnants of a distracted musical talent may yet be preserved for the world. If Strauss is allowed to continue indulging his frenzied imagination on the augmented orchestra, after the fashion of *Ein Heldenleben*, *Don Quixote*, *Sinfonia Domestica*, and *Salomé*, the rates will be

Bystander.

burdened to breaking-point by the necessity of opening a score or so new asylums to accommodate his victims. So far as *Salomé* is concerned we, in England, have reason to be thankful that, the "book" of that opera being censoriously squashed, we shall not have the opportunity of hearing the "music."

These Germans are incorrigible. Not content with the Strauss nightmare, we are now threatened with one Max Reger. "Reger," we are informed by the December number of *The Musician*, that admirable new musical monthly, "is professor of counterpoint, etc., at Munich. He is a problem of more than usual difficulty. Some hail him as the greatest of his time, others find him incomprehensible." We are reminded by the writer, Mr. Frederic S. Law, that such comments often signify a new style, an extension of conventional limits, a hitherto unsuspected scheme of relations. Max Reger, in short, is another Wagner—perhaps—with another cupboard-full of "music of the future," too advanced for mere contemporary ears. Those poor inadequate ears of ours seem to be at constant war with our composers. And yet are they necessarily wrong? Surely it is their business to tell us what is good in music for our poor selves, and what is gratifying to contemporary taste, not to evidence

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The Lady,

The glowing accounts which musical critics have sent from Dresden of Herr Strauss's new opera, "Salome," have been considerably discounted by a correspondent of "The Westminster Gazette," who condemns the music from an outsider's point of view, and adds a criticism full of insight of the dramatic side of the production. Musical critics seem able to swallow any amount of tawdry ugliness in the setting of operas. They talk of the splendid "acting" of this and that singer. It is quite as well that now and again they should be reminded that to a poetic and artistic eye operatic artists and scenery appear in a very different light.

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Sunday Times Feb. 4. 1906.

Strauss's "Salome" has proved so great an attraction at Dresden that it has been repeated ten times, and several other opera-houses have decided to produce it.—

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Star.

2 Feb. 1906.

Strauss' "Salome" is proving a great success in Dresden. It has been played ten or eleven times to full houses, and one of the features of the performance is the large number of visitors from Berlin who travel to hear it. Several other opera houses have determined to try their fortunes with the work, in spite of its difficulties. The fact that Berlin is so far not one of them is not a little strange at first sight.

Jissen Women's University Library

Dec. 22. 1905

Yorkshire Daily Post,

MUSIC AND ART.

It may be long before we have an opportunity of witnessing Richard Strauss's new oper "Salome," if, indeed, its Biblical subject does not absolutely bar it from our operatic repertory. But the story of its production in Dresden is an instructive one, and affords some idea what a subsidised theatre may accomplish. The difficulty, the music was great, so great that, after the principals had learned their parts, "two weeks daily rehearsals with the orchestra followed," as we read that the players were unanimous in the distaste for their task. Strikes were imminent the principals were not easily persuaded to stick to their parts, and the orchestra would probably have risen en masse were they not in the position of State servants, with pensions in prospect. In short, the position seems to have been analogous to that which obtained at the Paris Opera in 1866 when "Tannhaeuser" underwent 164 rehearsals of various kinds, and about £8,000 was spent in production which had to be withdrawn after the third performance, or, again, soon after, when "Tristan" was undertaken in Vienna, though in the latter case the work never came to performance owing to the incapability of the tenor in the role whose difficulty was certainly without precedent. In the present instance, however, all difficulties were got over, largely by reason of the commanding ability of the Dresden conductor von Schuch, though no doubt the successful issue is in a still greater measure attributable to the Intendant of the Royal Opera, Count Seebach. The wisdom of entrusting the management of any artistic enterprise of a public nature to a thing which cannot be too strongly insisted on.

Strauss's Very Latest

There is one extremely significant report issued in connection with the production at Dresden last Friday week of

Richard Strauss's operatic setting of Wilde's mustn't-be-performed-in-England drama, *Salome*. Having been informed by critics of varying views that the music is superhuman, beyond all comprehension, nerve-racking, ungrateful, unmelodious, devoid of airs or melody, the vocal parts being drowned by the orchestra, it has been added that "the composer has been vainly warned by the Kaiser to relinquish the composition of such terrific music." Now the Kaiser is not a very popular man in England, but he has now the supreme chance of capturing the sentiment of a large and influential body of musicians and critics in this country. Let his Majesty's acute ear detect in the strains—the very strained strains—of *Salome* something not only terrific, but disrespectful, something rude, seditious, or detrimental to the memory of his immortal grandfather, and let him forthwith have Strauss arrested and incarcerated for twelve months in a fortress on conviction for *lèse-majesté*.

A Possible Cure

Let Strauss, while thus experiencing the simple life, be provided with a two-octave xylophone or zither, on the diatonic scale of C, upon which, in his leisure moments, he may be permitted to exercise his faculties for composition. If his tunes please the warder on shift, let Strauss be given a good mark, but if he show any tendency to obscurity, complexity, or chaos—as far as is possible in C major—let him be given bread and water until he repents. In this way the remnants of a distracted musical talent may yet be preserved for the world. If Strauss is allowed to continue indulging his frenzied imagination on the augmented orchestra, in the fashion of *Ein Heldenleben*, *Don Quixote*, *Sinfonia Domestica*, and *Salome*, the rates will be

burdened to breaking-point by the necessity of opening a score or so new asylums to accommodate his victims. So far as *Salome* is concerned, we, in England, have reason to be thankful that, the "book" of that opera being censoriously squashed, we shall not have the opportunity of hearing the "music."

More "Music of the Future"

These Germans are incorrigible. Not content with the Strauss nightmare, we are now threatened with one Max Reger. "Reger," we are informed by the December number of *The Musician*, that admirable new musical monthly, "is professor of counterpoint, etc., at Munich. He is a problem of more than usual difficulty. Some hail him as the greatest of his time, others find him incomprehensible." We are reminded by the writer, Mr. Frederic S. Law, that such comments often signify a new style, an extension of conventional limits, a hitherto unsuspected scheme of relations. Max Reger, in short, is another Wagner—perhaps—with another cupboard-full of "music of the future," too advanced for mere contemporary ears. Those poor inadequate ears of ours seem to be at constant war with our composers. And yet are they necessarily wrong? Surely it is their business to tell us what is good in music for our poor selves, and what is gratifying to contemporary taste, not to evidence

Bystander.

the probable tastes of our grandchildren. Strauss, and probably Reger, offend the ears of the vast majority of music-lovers of to-day, because, perhaps, they are "before their time." But what is their "time" to us? They will have it; let them enjoy it when it comes. For my part, I decline to be rushed into enthusiasm over a composer because he is going to be immensely popular in 1955, just as I decline to enthuse over a composer because he *was* popular in 1855. A hero of the forthcoming fifties is as much out-of-date to us of the tens as is a hero of the last fifties. Strauss and Reger, and the rest of the musical prophets, are out-of-date, and, therefore, contemporary critics may be pardoned for treating them accordingly.

FULLER accounts of Strauss's "Salomé" are now available, and while all are agreed as to certain aspects of his music there seems to be the usual conflict of opinion in regard to matters of detail. Thus while one tells us that "there is probably no opera based on *leit-motifs* which has so few of them" another writes "every person has his or her motif; every passion has its motif; the result is an exasperating tangle of motifs impossible to unravel." In one respect, however, there seems to be general agreement. All accounts are at one in testifying to the fact that whatever Strauss's music may be it bears little or no relationship to Wilde's play.

The opera, as an interpretation of the play (says one critic), is simply ridiculous. . . . The music of Dr. Strauss so effectively smothered Wilde's libretto that the young English ladies completing their education at Dresden will be able to witness his opera without coming to very much harm. To any one unacquainted with the play it would have been quite impossible to realise the relations of the different characters to each other. . . . It must be left to the admirers of Dr. Strauss who greeted with enthusiastic applause this tawdry production to discuss the intellectual music of a very undomestic symphony. To the many admirers of Wilde's play in Germany and the few admirers in England it was an insult.

Another tells us:—

The chief impression left by the work is one of wonder that such a text could have inspired a composer with such music; and the wonder grows when one considers the theories which we know to be Strauss's. As one of the leading German critics has already said, between text and music there is a great gulf fixed. In effect the gulf is so deep that one can hardly talk of a conflict between the two; they are too far apart. Or if there is conflict at all it is short and sharp, and after twenty bars it ends in the complete rout of the poet.

But this after all is a minor point. If "Salomé" is a good opera on its own account it does not matter much whether it does or does not exactly reproduce the atmosphere of the play on which it is based. So long as it has an atmosphere of its own which is consistently adhered to that is all that is required.

Other lines of criticism are less reassuring. As is so usual in the case of Strauss's works one finds plentiful expressions of wonder and amazement but few which seem indicative of real pleasure or genuine admiration. In other words there is too great a suggestion of mere eccentricity and cleverness run mad about all the comments which the work has so far called forth to encourage the hope that Strauss has presented to the world in "Salomé" a work really worthy of his powers—and this apart altogether from the *outré* and unpleasant subject of its libretto. Sir Edward Elgar has been telling the world that in his belief Strauss is the greatest of living composers and few will be disposed to deny that in many respects at least that judgment is a sound one. It is only unfortunate that Strauss himself seems to strive so hard to inspire scepticism as to his real endowments by following precisely that procedure in regard to the choice and treatment of his themes which would commend itself to one who though enormously clever is conscious that real genius of the highest kind has been denied him. That Strauss indubitably has genius—or perhaps one might say, adopting a phrase which has been applied to him before, once was a genius—there is no manner of doubt. One need go no further than his "Till Eulenspiegel" or "Don Juan" to be convinced of that. Hearing the former work superbly played under Herr Steinbach by the London Symphony Orchestra last Thursday one was indeed tempted to ask if in all that he has written since Strauss has done anything more genuinely inspired than that marvellous Humoreske, with its wealth of lovely melody, amazing characterisation, and incredible colour effects. It is the fashion in certain quarters to talk nowadays of "Till Eulenspiegel" as a mere juvenile *jeu d'esprit* of Strauss—an amusing production which though clever enough in its way is not to be reckoned with seriously in comparison with his later works. But this is surely very absurd.

Strauss's later works such as "Ein Heldenleben," "Also sprach Zarathustra" and the "Sinfonia Domestica" are longer and bigger and more ambitious certainly; but are they necessarily greater? After all it is what is accomplished, not what is aimed at, which counts in these matters. No doubt there were those, and they are still to be met with, who argued in much the same way that Wagner's early works surpassed his later ones and sighed for the melodies of "Tannhäuser" when confronted with the obscurities of the "Ring"; and perhaps the Straussian development may supply a parallel instance. Yet it is certain that there are those disposed to maintain the view suggested and to plead the actual superiority of his earlier productions to his later although no less familiar with the latter than with the former. In Wagner's case it was usually otherwise. People preferred "Tannhäuser" to "Tristan" and "Lohengrin" to "Siegfried" because they were familiar with the one and had not yet got to know the other. It was the Johnsonian "sheer ignorance" which accounted for their error. Can one say the same in the case of Strauss's works? Hardly. Such compositions as "Ein Heldenleben" and the "Domestica" have now been heard often enough in London to be known to all. If therefore they are not as well liked as their predecessors want of familiarity with them can hardly be the cause. Meanwhile as regards "Salomé" if it should be found to be merely, as the criticisms would seem to suggest, a success of eccentricity and technique one can only regret it.

When a drama by Oscar Wilde is set to music by Richard Strauss the result will presumably be a great artistic event. So I wired for seats and went. The pilgrimage to Dresden is not a very comfortable one, especially if one arrives in time for the performance and leaves again immediately afterwards, but I suppose journeys of devotion ought to be difficult. After spending fifteen hours on end in a train upholstered in dusty plush I arrived at Dresden a little bit inclined to be peevish. The reaction, consequently, was all the greater when, walking into the supper-room at the "Belle Vue," I saw the composer, Herr von Schuch (the conductor at the opera), and Robert Henser (Germany's leading appreciator, who simply must be there).

I suppose there is no chance of our seeing *Salome* in London. Oscar Wilde is the literary darling of Germany at present, and *Salome* is recognised as one of the finest poems given to the world for many decades. You can buy it in an excellent German translation down to 2d. a copy; here you must subscribe to a limited edition.

The production at Dresden was magnificent. There were 110 players in the orchestra, and the cast was filled by singers who cost us 30s. a stall when they condescend to appear at Covent Garden. Not that they would not pay the price here if they were asked for it. As a matter of fact, pale-faced people with no foresight were walking about everywhere offering big money for a seat, but they could not get it. The lucky ones would sooner go to bed supperless or even lunch on air for a month than barter their privilege of attending the performance. And for the same money they might have gone to the Crystal Palace and seen the New Zealanders.

The scene at lunch-time was most stimulating. Every minute fresh delegates from the artistic, musical, and journalistic world arrived from all parts of the Continent, and there was a constant procession of newcomers circling round the room,

greeting those already seated with the exaggerated courtesy still in vogue here. All were intensely excited. The lucky man who had been at the dress rehearsal was the object of general envy, and his assurance that Herodias sang twelve bars in A flat while the orchestra played in A natural was received with surprise but not with incredulity.

As a matter of fact the score is the most astonishing production possible. Strauss's mastery over the orchestra is so great, the



Bieber

THE COMPOSER OF "SALOME"

Richard Strauss was born in 1864. He has out-Wagnered Wagner in his symphonic methods. His best-known works are *Tot und Verklärung*, *Don Quixote*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and *The Domestic Symphony*. He has often conducted in London.

range of his power so wide, and his effects so fresh, that we come near being paralysed by the result. At the same time the whole is so undeniably beautiful that we leave with an impression that is wholly satisfying. Apart from the stupendous composition Strauss has done an unprecedented thing in taking Oscar Wilde's drama as it stands (with a very few cuts) instead of converting it into a libretto after the approved fashion. I do not propose in this place to analyse either the book or the music, but I have come to the irresistible conclusion that *Salome* by Wilde-Strauss is as near our ideal of the perfect music-drama as we are likely to get. This opinion was fully shared by an audience representative of all shades of social and artistic rank, and the scene of enthusiasm which followed on the first moments of amazed and stupefied silence was unparalleled in the annals of the theatre.

The performance lasted for an hour and thirty-five minutes. Afterwards everybody who could get in adjourned to the big supper-room at the "Belle Vue" overlooking the Elbe, where we sat as various small or large parties discussing our impressions from 10.30 until three next morning. When the composer came in the applause broke out afresh, to be renewed a few minutes later when the conductor, for whom no praise is high enough, followed him. Strauss the man is quite different from Strauss the composer. A more simple or lovable nature does not exist. His pleasure at his success was that of a child, and with a beaming face he made the tour of the room during the evening, talking to everybody.

I am sorry I have no space to describe the performance or to praise the artists, of whom Burriau especially distinguished himself by no less histrionically than artistically. The music is most impossibly difficult music. They ought all to be praised in sonnets.

In these days of rapid transmission of messages and of rapid travelling, it is much easier than it used to be of old for a composer to defy the powers that be. Everybody remembers the story of Mozart when it was suggested that he should leave the Austrian Court, and when he replied: "How can I leave my beloved Emperor?" But now it would seem as though direct defiance can be given even to those who have strength and the will to use that strength. It appears that the Kaiser expressed his displeasure in that Richard Strauss should compose a score in conjunction with such a libretto as "Salome." The Kaiser's attitude was carefully explained to Strauss, who, as one making a repartee, carelessly remarked that he would not be dictated to even by an Emperor. We learn that "Salome" has scarcely any prospect of performance in Europe, save in the theatre where it has been given at Berlin. The same feeling was prevalent during the time when Wagner produced the "Ring," and when it was asserted loudly by the critics of a former generation that there was no earthly possibility of its being a widely extended work, partly on account of the immorality of the plot, and partly on account of the difficulty of the music. So history repeats itself; and a public which welcomes with joy the first act of "Die Walküre" is not likely to be terrified even by the prospect of "Salome." Mr. Conried, ever on the alert for new sensations, appears to entertain a desire to give the work at the Metropolitan in New York, but it seems that that desire is hedged round by the condition that Strauss himself shall conduct his work.

Musical News.

The Kaiser and "Salome."

It is stated that the German Emperor, who takes quite a paternal interest, not only in the material welfare of his people, but in their moral well-doing also, disapproves of "Salome," and is much displeased with Strauss for taking such a subject for his opera. More than this, his Majesty has been careful that the composer should not remain in ignorance of his Imperial displeasure. Strauss has refused to be dictated to regarding the subjects he may or may not choose for treatment. The Kaiser has probably learned of Strauss's reply to his admonitions, for relations seem somewhat strained. The composer still lives, but it is said that he will probably resign his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra.

Of course "Salome" is not a particularly savoury story for an opera libretto, but that is hardly the point. The choice of a libretto lies with the composer, and his is the responsibility. If he uses it with success he may be held to be justified; if his work is a failure he is condemned.

In other words, he must be judged by the many and not by the few, however highly placed they may be. We are not concerned to defend "Salome" itself, but those who cherish a high ideal of their art must applaud Strauss's stand for the independence of the artist. The inevitable sequel to "Thou shalt not!" is "Thou shalt!" and from this may the merciful Powers preserve us. Is "Roland of Berlin" not remembered, even as an object lesson? If the Kaiser is responsible for Strauss's withdrawal from the Berlin Opera, the Monarch may be said to have won the odd trick, but, at any rate, the composer scores the honours.

Musical Standard.

The "Telegraph's" Berlin correspondent states that between Richard Strauss, the composer of "Salome," and the authorities of the Royal Berlin Opera House an estrangement exists which, in all probability, will result in the withdrawal of the composer from his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra. "It is an open secret that the Kaiser was displeased with Strauss for turning his attention to such a subject as Salome, and that he took care that Strauss should know of his displeasure. Strauss in reply declined to be dictated to, even by his Majesty." And so would any composer of genius. Mr. Alfred Kalisch read a paper on "Salome" and the other operas of Richard Strauss at the Concert-Goers' Club on Saturday evening, December 16. Music-lovers in London have, as the "Post" points out in its report, had many opportunities of hearing Strauss's orchestral works, but of his two operas, "Guntram," produced in 1893, and "Feuersnot," produced in 1901, only a short excerpt from the latter has been heard in London. Mr. Kalisch gave a brief account of the texts of these works, short descriptions of the musical illustrations being given on the pianoforte by Mr. Richard Epstein. Concerning "Salome," Strauss' third and latest work for the stage, which was recently produced at Dresden, Mr. Kalisch, who was present at that performance, found much to admire, especially in the music, but he criticised some points in the score, and even in the orchestration. He frankly told his audience, however, that his promise to read a paper on the subject of the opera was somewhat rash, for he considered "Salome" a "terribly new work," and he felt that he would be more fit to speak about it in a year's time.

Feb. 10. 1906.

THE Berlin Correspondent of the "Telegraph" says: I hear from a reliable source that arrangements are being made for the performance of "Salome," Richard Strauss' new opera, in Berlin. The Kaiser's Court, it seems, is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to "Salome," believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the latest work of the most popular opera conductor of recent years. The Kaiser will probably decide the question in favour of the anti-"Salome" party.

Richard Strauss, whether to be praised or blamed, certainly is a much talked of personage. Between the composer of "Salome," and the authorities of the Royal Berlin Opera House an estrangement exists which, in all probability, will result in the withdrawal of the composer from his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra. The Kaiser was displeased with Strauss for turning his attention to such a subject as Salome, and Strauss in reply declined to be dictated to, even by his Majesty. After the first burst of enthusiasm for "Salome" has passed, fun is being poked at the new methods employed by Strauss in achieving his effects. It is the subordinate instruments which are most ridiculed—two pairs of castanets, four pairs of cymbals, two triangles, a tambourine, tam-tam, and a peal of bells. One critic in a Munich paper suggests the addition of a locomotive whistle, a fog-horn, and a battery of howitzers to improve the drum effects.

28 Dec. 1905.

The Times.

GERMAN INTEREST IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—May I be permitted to correct a statement made by Mr. Edmund Gosse in your issue of December 25 concerning the indifference of the intellectual classes in Germany towards contemporary English literature?

I spent three months this autumn in North Germany, visiting Gotha, Weimar, Jena, Erfurt, and finally Berlin. I had opportunities of talking with a variety of intellectual people—University professors, both literary and scientific, secondary teachers of both sexes, librarians, directors of art galleries, dramatists, novelists, and critics, and I was astonished at their knowledge of and interest in the works of contemporary English writers. Translations of Ruskin, Carlyle, Tennyson, the Brownings were *en vogue* in most private houses and in all the bookshops; the plays of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie, Stephen Phillips were drawing large audiences to the theatres; the novels of Meredith and of George Moore are being rapidly translated; articles on the newest English books and plays constantly form the *feuilletons* of the leading daily papers, while important literary reviews like the *Literarische Centralblatt* and the *Literarische Echo* devote considerable space to articles on English books, the latter publishing an *Englischer Brief* every month regularly.

In the *Englische Seminar* of Berlin University the director, Professor Alois Brandl, has brought together a collection of English books from the days before Chaucer down to our own period, which includes everything a student could possibly require for the study of our literature, old and new. A visit to Ascher's bookshop in Unter den Linden, Berlin—Ascher is the great purveyor of English books to North Germany—proved the large demand for new English books. I found English papers and magazines in the reading-rooms of all the towns I visited, and English books of reference like the "Encyclopædia Britannica" and the "Dictionary of National Biography" on the shelves of all the public libraries. Indeed, the knowledge my German friends showed of modern English books would put to shame that of many of my own countrymen and women.

I am wholly incompetent to offer any opinion on political matters, but if lack of knowledge of contemporary literature is a cause of the strained political relations between England and Germany, surely the weight of ignorance inclines to the other side. The interest taken in contemporary German literature by intellectual men and women here is exceedingly scanty.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Kensington, Dec. 25.

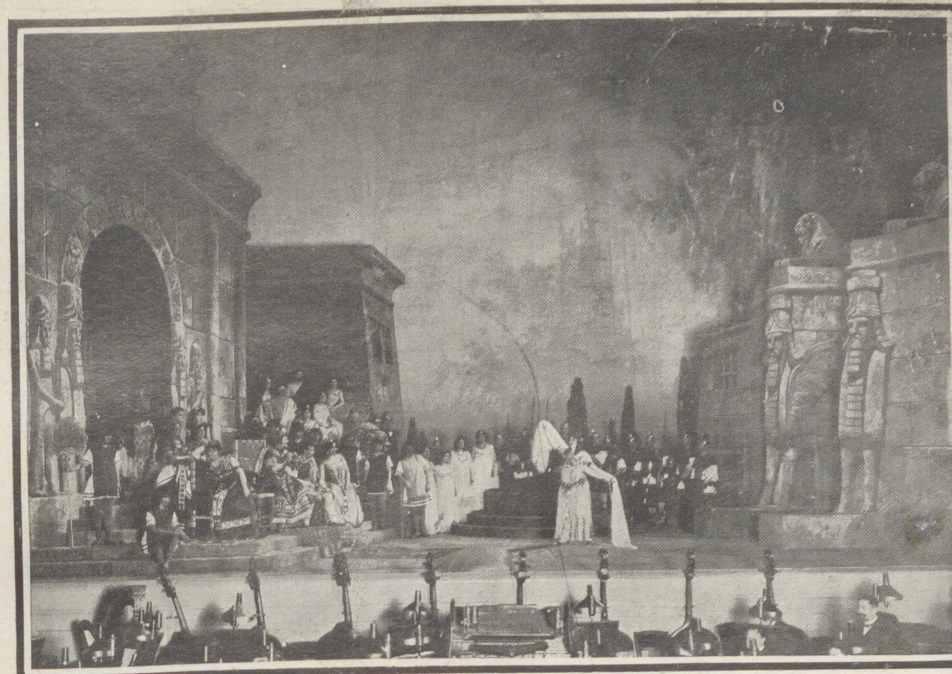
ELIZABETH LEE.

The Lady,

MUSICAL NOTES.

IN Germany the patronage of the arts by the State has its advantages, but sometimes the iron hand or the mailed fist is felt by the arts through the heptil velvet glove. It is reported from Berlin that Herr Richard Strauss has displeased a high authority by connecting his name with such a work as "Salome," and that the famous composer will, as a consequence, have to withdraw from his position as conductor of the Berlin Opera Orchestra. In these days artists will not submit to dictation, even from their patrons.

"Salome" is not likely to be heard in England, or, indeed, in many towns in Germany, not only because of the nature of the libretto, but because of the nature of the orchestra. The instruments number one hundred and twenty, and in addition to fourteen first violins, fourteen second violins, ten violas, eight double basses, and ten cellos, includes two pairs of castanets, four pairs of cymbals, two triangles, a tambourine, tam-tam, and a peal of bells. A Munich critic has suggested (so says "The Daily Telegraph") the addition of a locomotive whistle, a foghorn, and a battery of howitzers.



RICHARD STRAUSS'S "SALOME" AT DRESDEN—SALOME DANCES BEFORE HEROD

[DECEMBER 16, 1905]

An immense sensation was created in Dresden on Saturday night by the production of *Salome*, an operatic version of Mr. Wilde's drama by Richard Strauss. Frau Wittich, who is well known to London opera-goers, was the Salome. The production was notable for the introduction of a new instrument called the heckelphon, which stands between the oboe and English horn on the one side and the flageolet on the other.

29 Dec. 1905

The Tatler.

Royal Displeasure.—The production of Oscar Wilde's famous drama, *Salome*, has been the cause of unpleasantness between the Kaiser and Strauss. The latter being a royal servant in his capacity as one of the conductors of the Berlin operas was informed by the Kaiser that his Majesty did not think the mounting of an opera on such a theme as *Salome* was worthy of him or conducive to the advancement of pure art. To this Strauss replied that he was not going to take lessons on the qualities of art from anyone, no matter how highly placed, unless his inherent knowledge of the subject was superior to his own. A coolness ensued, and it is said that the contract with Strauss in regard to his position as director of the Berlin orchestra will not be renewed.

London Argus. Jan. 6. 1906.

RICHARD STRAUSS's new opera "Salomé," which was recently produced in Dresden, would appear, from all accounts, to be the most "Straussian" of that extraordinary composer's achievements, but of its reception by the public there can be no shadow of doubt, and it remains to be seen whether the Covent Garden management will enable Londoners to express their opinion on the work next summer. The orchestral parts are most complicated, and about 120 instrumentatists have to be requisitioned, with the inevitable result that the singers are easily overpowered, and the soloists only make themselves heard with extreme difficulty. From all accounts Frau Wittich scored a tremendous success in the *title-role*, whilst Frau von Chavanne, Herr Burrian and Herr Perron were entirely satisfactory as Herodias, Herodes, and Johannes respectively. Herr von Schuch (who is to direct a London Symphony Orchestra concert in February) conducted, and together with the composer, had to bow his acknowledgments repeatedly at the end of each act and the close of the evening. The mounting and dresses are said to have been superb and Strauss's triumph complete.

Birmingham Mail Feb. 14. 1906

Dr. Richard Strauss's "Salome" will, after all, be performed in Berlin. "The Kaiser's Court," says the Berlin correspondent of the "Telegraph," "is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to 'Salome,' believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the latest work of the most popular composer of recent years. The Kaiser will probably decide the question in favour of the anti-'Salome' party." A good story is going the rounds in Berlin. The other night the Kaiser was at the opera, and Richard Strauss was conducting. He carried out his duties to his Majesty's complete satisfaction, but during the entr'acte the Kaiser turned to one of his suite, saying, "Splendid fellow, that Strauss; but he cannot compose, not a bit."

The success of "Salome" at Dresden is phenomenal, and it is reported that ten performances have already been given in the Saxon capital, and that at every performance the house has been, in spite of raised prices, absolutely sold out, a thing without precedent in Dresden. At every performance of "Salome," it is said, there are several hundreds of visitors from other cities of Germany, and even from other countries. Two performances of "Salome" will form part of the Cologne Festival in May.

Free Lance.

Richard Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," has roused great interest and enthusiasm in Berlin, but news comes from the Prussian capital that an estrangement has arisen between the famous conductor and the authorities of the Berlin Opera House, which will probably result in Strauss withdrawing from his position as one of the conductors of the Royal Opera House.

It is stated that the German Emperor is displeased with Strauss for dealing with so debatable a subject. There does not now seem much probability that the opera will be performed at any other house in Europe, although it is rumoured that it may be produced in New York.

Monthly Musical Record

Feb. 1906.

ALLOTRIA.

In connection with Strauss's "Salome," the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of 10th January gives an interesting summary of the operas and oratorios written on the same subject. Of the former are named:—"Herodes," by Karl Jacob Wagner, produced at Dresden in 1810; "Marianne" (afterwards entitled "Erode"), by Saverio Mercadante, unsuccessfully produced at Venice in 1826; "Hérodiade," by Massenet (Brussels, 1881); and "Hérode," by William Chaumet; the last named won the Rossini prize with "Edith," which was produced at the Paris Conservatoire in 1885.

Morning Leader.

It is reported from Dresden that "Salome" has now been performed ten times, and that at every performance the house has been, in spite of raised prices, absolutely sold out, a thing without precedent in Dresden, and paralleled only by the recent success of "Madama Butterfly" in London. A singular feature of the case is said to be the fact that at every performance there are several hundreds of visitors from other cities of Germany, and even from other countries, in the theatre. Two performances of "Salome," with the Dresden artists and conducted by Herr von Schuch, will form part of the Cologne Festival in May. This will give English Straussians an opportunity of hearing the work without having to travel as far as Dresden.

Morning Post 5 March '06

Mr. Henry J. Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra start to-day on tour in the provinces. They commence this evening at Birmingham, and will visit in succession Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bradford, and Sheffield, giving one concert in each town. They will return to London at the end of next week for the first of their extra Symphony Concerts, of which five are announced, to take place on the 17th and 31st inst., April 24, May 3 and 10. At the fourth of these Dr. Richard Strauss will appear and conduct *Salomé's* Dance, from the music-drama "Salomé," for the first time in England.

Daily Telegraph.

Our Berlin Correspondent writes: I hear from a reliable source that arrangements are being made for the performance of "Salome," Richard Strauss's new opera, in Berlin. The Kaiser's Court, it seems, is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to "Salome," believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the latest work of the most popular opera conductor of recent years. The Kaiser will probably decide the question in favour of the anti-"Salome" party. A good story is going the rounds of Berlin. The other night the Kaiser was at the Opera, and Richard Strauss was conducting. He carried out his duties to his Majesty's complete satisfaction, but during the entr'acte the Kaiser turned to one of his suite, saying, "Splendid fellow, that Strauss; but he cannot compose, not a bit."

Daily Telegraph 10 July 1906

Leipzig is a particularly fortunate town. Not only does it number among its inhabitants Professor Arthur Nikisch, conductor of the Gewandhaus Concerts, and director of the Conservatorium, where his class for embryo conductors is in a particularly flourishing state, but it also has in Mr. Hagel an operatic conductor who seems to be pushing his way into the very forefront with remarkable rapidity. Mr. Hagel's performance of Strauss's "Salomé" has been more than favourably compared with Professor Schuch's in Dresden; he will direct the first performance of Miss Smyth's opera "Les Naufrageurs" in Leipzig next November.

Dec. 23.

1905

Pall Mall Gazette,

MUSICAL NOTES.

In these days of rapid transmission of messages and of rapid travelling, it is much easier than it used to be of old for a composer to defy the powers that be. Everybody remembers the story of Mozart when it was suggested that he should leave the Austrian Court, and when he replied: "How can I leave my beloved Emperor?" But now it would seem as though direct defiance can be given even to those who have strength and the will to use that strength. It appears that the Kaiser expressed his displeasure in that Richard Strauss should compose a score in conjunction with such a libretto as "Salome." The Kaiser's attitude was carefully explained to Strauss, who, as one making a repartee, carelessly remarked that he would not be dictated to even by an Emperor. We learn that "Salome" has scarcely any prospect of performance in Europe, save in the theatre where it has been given at Berlin. The same feeling was prevalent during the time when Wagner produced the "Ring," and when it was asserted loudly by the critics of a former generation that there was no earthly possibility of its being a widely extended work, partly on account of the immorality of the plot, and partly on account of the difficulty of the music. So history repeats itself; and a public which welcomes with joy the first act of "Die Walküre" is not likely to be terrified even by the prospect of "Salome." Mr. Conried, ever on the alert for new sensations, appears to entertain a desire to give the 2019-03-15 Jissen Women's University Library 429 work, but it seems that that desire is hedged round by the condition that Strauss himself shall conduct his work.

26 Dec. 1905

Western Daily Press,

Richard Strauss, whether to be praised or blamed, certainly is a much talked of personage. Between the composer of "Salome," and the authorities of the Royal Berlin Opera House an estrangement exists which, in all probability, will result in the withdrawal of the composer from his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra. The Kaiser was displeased with Strauss for turning his attention to such a subject as Salome, and Strauss in reply declined to be dictated to, even by his Majesty. After the first burst of enthusiasm for "Salome" has passed, fun is being poked at the new methods employed by Strauss in achieving his effects. It is the subordinate instruments which are most ridiculed—two pairs of castanettes, four pairs of cymbals, two triangles, a tambourine, tam-tam, and a peal of bells. One critic in addition of a locomotive whistle, a fog-horn, and a battery of howitzers to improve the drum effects.

Musical News.

The Kaiser and "Salome."

It is stated that the German Emperor, who takes quite a paternal interest, not only in the material welfare of his people, but in their moral well-doing also, disapproves of "Salome," and is much displeased with Strauss for taking such a subject for his opera. More than this, his Majesty has been careful that the composer should not remain in ignorance of his Imperial displeasure. Strauss has refused to be dictated to regarding the subjects he may or may not choose for treatment. The Kaiser has probably learned of Strauss's reply to his admonitions, for relations seem somewhat strained. The composer still lives, but it is said that he will probably resign his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra.

Of course "Salome" is not a particularly savoury story for an opera libretto, but that is hardly the point. The choice of a libretto lies with the composer, and his is the responsibility. If he uses it with success he may be held to be justified; if his work is a failure he is condemned.

In other words, he must be judged by the many and not by the few, however highly placed they may be. We are not concerned to defend "Salome" itself, but those who cherish a high ideal of their art must applaud Strauss's stand for the independence of the artist. The inevitable sequel to "Thou shalt not!" is "Thou shalt!" and from this may the merciful Powers preserve us. Is "Roland of Berlin" not remembered, even as an object lesson? If the Kaiser is responsible for Strauss's withdrawal from the Berlin Opera, the Monarch may be said to have won the odd trick, but, at any rate, the composer scores the honours.

28 Dec. 905.

The Times.

GERMAN INTEREST IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—May I be permitted to correct a statement made by Mr. Edmund Gosse in your issue of December 25 concerning the indifference of the intellectual classes in Germany towards contemporary English literature?

I spent three months this autumn in North Germany, visiting Gotha, Weimar, Jena, Erfurt, and finally Berlin. I had opportunities of talking with a variety of intellectual people—University professors, both literary and scientific, secondary teachers of both sexes, librarians, directors of art galleries, dramatists, novelists, and critics, and I was astonished at their knowledge of and interest in the works of contemporary English writers. Translations of Ruskin, Carlyle, Tennyson, the Brownings were *en évidence* in most private houses and in all the bookshops; the plays of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie, Stephen Phillips were drawing large audiences to the theatres; the novels of Meredith and of George Moore are being rapidly translated; articles on the newest English books and plays constantly form the *feuilletons* of the leading daily papers, while important literary reviews like the *Litterarische Centralblatt* and the *Litterarische Echo* devote considerable space to articles on English books, the latter publishing an *Englischer Brief* every month regularly.

In the *Englische Seminar* of Berlin University the director, Professor Alois Brandl, has brought together a collection of English books from the days before Chaucer down to our own period, which includes everything a student could possibly require for the study of our literature, old and new. A visit to Ascher's bookshop in Unter den Linden, Berlin—Ascher is the great purveyor of English books to North Germany—proved the large demand for new English books. I found English papers and magazines in the reading-rooms of all the towns I visited, and English books of reference like the "Encyclopædia Britannica" and the "Dictionary of National Biography" on the shelves of all the public libraries. Indeed, the knowledge my German friends showed of modern English books would put to shame that of many of my own countrymen and women.

I am wholly incompetent to offer any opinion on political matters, but if lack of knowledge of contemporary literature is a cause of the strained political relations between England and Germany, surely the weight of ignorance inclines to the other side. The interest taken in contemporary German literature by intellectual men and women here is exceedingly scanty.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Kensington, Dec. 26.

ELIZABETH LEE.

Musical Standard.

THE "Telegraph's" Berlin correspondent states that between Richard Strauss, the composer of "Salome," and the authorities of the Royal Berlin Opera House an estrangement exists which, in all probability, will result in the withdrawal of the composer from his position as one of the conductors of the Berlin Opera Orchestra. "It is an open secret that the Kaiser was displeased with Strauss for turning his attention to such a subject as Salome, and that he took care that Strauss should know of his displeasure. Strauss in reply declined to be dictated to, even by his Majesty." And so would any composer of genius. Mr. Alfred Kalisch read a paper on "'Salome' and the other operas of Richard Strauss" at the Concert-Goers' Club on Saturday evening, December 16. Music-lovers in London have, as the "Post" points out in its report, had many opportunities of hearing Strauss' orchestral works, but of his two operas, "Guntram," produced in 1893, and "Feuersnot," produced in 1901, only a short excerpt from the latter has been heard in London. Mr. Kalisch gave a brief account of the texts of these works, short descriptions of the musical illustrations being given on the pianoforte by Mr. Richard Epstein. Concerning "Salome," Strauss' third and latest work for the stage, which was recently produced at Dresden, Mr. Kalisch, who was present at that performance, found much to admire, especially in the music, but he criticised some points in the score, and even in the orchestration. He frankly told his audience, however, that his promise to read a paper on the subject of the opera was somewhat rash, for he considered "Salome" a terribly new work, and he felt that he would be more fit to speak about it in a year's time.

Feb. 10. 1906.

THE Berlin Correspondent of the "Telegraph" says: I hear from a reliable source that arrangements are being made for the performance of "Salome," Richard Strauss' new opera, in Berlin. The Kaiser's Court, it seems, is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to "Salome," believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the latest work of the most popular opera conductor of recent years. The Kaiser will probably decide the question in favor of the anti-"Salome" party.



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RICHARD STRAUSS'S "SALOME" AT DRESDEN—SALOME DANCES BEFORE HEROD

THE SPHERE

[DECEMBER 16, 1905]

An immense sensation was created in Dresden on Saturday night by the production of *Salome*, an operatic version of Mr. Wilde's drama by Richard Strauss. Frau Wittich, who is well known to London opera-goers, was the Salome. The production was notable for the introduction of a new instrument called the heckelphon, which stands between the oboe and English horn on the one side and the flageolet on the other.

29 Dec. 1905

The Tatler.

Royal Displeasure.—The production of Oscar Wilde's famous drama, *Salome*, has been the cause of unpleasantness between the Kaiser and Strauss. The latter being a royal servant in his capacity as one of the conductors of the Berlin operas was informed by the Kaiser that his Majesty did not think the mounting of an opera on such a theme as *Salome* was worthy of him or conducive to the advancement of pure art. To this Strauss replied that he was not going to take lessons on the qualities of art from anyone, no matter how highly placed, unless his inherent knowledge of the subject was superior to his own. A coolness ensued, and it is said that the contract for Strauss's services as conductor to his position as director of the Berlin orchestra will not be renewed.

Free Lance.

* * * *

Richard Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," has roused great interest and enthusiasm in Berlin, but news comes from the Prussian capital that an estrangement has arisen between the famous conductor and the authorities of the Berlin Opera House, which will probably result in Strauss withdrawing from his position as one of the conductors of the Royal Opera House.

* * * *

It is stated that the German Emperor is displeased with Strauss for dealing with so debatable a subject. There does not now seem much probability that the opera will be performed at any other house in Europe, although it is rumoured that it may be produced in New York.

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Monthly Musical Record
Feb. 1906.

London Argus . Jan. 6. 1906.

RICHARD STRAUSS's new opera "Salomé," which was recently produced in Dresden, would appear, from all accounts, to be the most "Straussian" of that extraordinary composer's achievements, but of its reception by the public there can be no shadow of doubt, and it remains to be seen whether the Covent Garden management will enable Londoners to express their opinion on the work next summer. The orchestral parts are most complicated, and about 120 instrumentalists have to be requisitioned, with the inevitable result that the singers are easily overpowered, and the soloists only make themselves heard with extreme difficulty. From all accounts Frau Wittich scored a tremendous success in the *title-rôle*, whilst Frau von Chavanne, Herr Burrian and Herr Perron were entirely satisfactory as Herodias, Herodes, and Johannes respectively. Herr von Schuch (who is to direct a London Symphony Orchestra concert in February) conducted, and together with the composer, had to bow his acknowledgments repeatedly at the end of each act and the close of the evening. The mounting and dresses were said to have been superb and Strauss's triumph complete.

Monthly Musical Record
Feb. 1906.

ALLOTRIA.

IN connection with Strauss's "Salome," the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of 10th January gives an interesting summary of the operas and oratorios written on the same subject. Of the former are named:—"Herodes," by Karl Jacob Wagner, produced at Dresden in 1810; "Marianna" (afterwards entitled "Erode"), by Saverio Mercadante, unsuccessfully produced at Vienna in 1826; "Herodias" by Massenet (Brussels, 1881); and "Hérode," by William Chaumet; the last named won the Rossini prize with "Edith," which was produced at the Paris Conservatoire in 1885.

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Feb
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Morning Leader.

It is reported from Dresden that "Salome" has now been performed ten times, and that at every performance the house has been, in spite of raised price, absolutely sold out, a thing without precedent in Dresden, and paralleled only by the recent success of "Madama Butterfly" in London. A singular feature of the case is said to be the fact that at every performance there are several hundreds of visitors from other cities of Germany, and even from other countries, in the theatre. Two performances of "Salome," with the Dresden artists and conducted by Herr von Schuch, will form part of the Cologne Festival in May. This will give English musicians an opportunity of hearing the work without having to travel as far as Dresden.

Morning Post & Herald '06

Mr. Henry J. Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra start to-day on tour in the provinces. They commence this evening at Birmingham, and will visit in succession Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bradford, and Sheffield, giving one concert in each town. They will return to London at the end of next week for the first of their extra Symphony Concerts, of which five are announced, to take place on the 17th and 31st inst., April 24, May 3 and 10. At the fourth of these Dr. Richard Strauss will appear and conduct Salomé's Dance, from the music-drama "Salomé," for the first time in England.

Birmingham Mail Feb. 14. 1906

Dr. Richard Strauss's "Salome" will, after all, be performed in Berlin. "The Kaiser's Court," says the Berlin correspondent of the "Telegraph," "is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to 'Salome,' believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the latest work of the most popular composer of recent years. The Kaiser will probably decide the question in favour of the anti-'Salome' party."

A good story is going the rounds in Berlin. The other night the Kaiser was at the opera, and Richard Strauss was conducting. He carried out his duties to his Majesty's complete satisfaction, but during the entr'acte the Kaiser turned to one of his suite, saying, "Splendid fellow, that Strauss; but he cannot compose, not a bit."

The success of "Salome" at Dresden is phenomenal, and it is reported that ten performances have already been given in the Saxon capital, and that at every performance the house has been, in spite of raised prices, absolutely sold out, a thing without precedent in Dresden. At every performance of "Salome," it is said, there are several hundreds of persons present. The success in Germany, and even from other countries. Two performances of "Salome" will form part of the Cologne Festival in May.

Daily Telegraph.

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Daily Telegraph 10 July
1906

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Jan. 1906.

"SALOME."

By RICHARD STRAUSS.

THE production of Richard Strauss's "Salome" at the Opera House, on Saturday, December 9th, was an event which excited no little curiosity. In a new work for the stage there are three points to be considered: the libretto, the music, and the reception by the public. The subject is taken from the Bible, with fanciful additions by modern writers. There is an objection, especially in England, to Biblical subjects; and the present story, in spite of one redeeming feature, can scarcely be accounted noble; rather the reverse. The composer has written some very terrible music. The character of the wayward, passionate Herodes is well depicted. Princess Salome is a curiously typical creature of the East, who only excites sympathy in that she was reared in a corrupt, cruel court. The sensuous music assigned to her is extremely clever, especially in the scene in which she dances before Herodes. This music accompanying the dance is thoroughly Eastern, and as the rhythm has to be clearly articulated, the composer was kept, as it were, within bounds; anyhow, it is clever, clear to follow, and effective. The one redeeming feature mentioned above is the "voice" of Jochanaan, the preacher of righteousness, but the appearance of this stern *dramatis persona* is altogether too episodic. In "Tannhäuser," for instance, we have the sensual and the spiritual elements opposed, but the latter conquers; hence the general effect is good. It is not so in "Salome." With regard to the performance, no words of praise can be too strong for the conductor, von Schuch, and the Dresden orchestra, whose task, indeed, was a heavy one. The principal roles were taken by Frau Wittich (Salome), Herr Burrian (Herodes), and Herr Perron (Jochanaan), and their impersonations were excellent. The house was crowded, and at the close—the short piece is in one act, during which there is no break—the composer, conductor, and actors were all summoned to the stage ever so many times; hence there was outward success. But there were many followers of Strauss present, and then all the applause was certainly not intended for him.

Strauss, in his symphonic poems, which have now become tolerably familiar, seems to try and make music itself express things apparently beyond its province; the result being that the form is often obscure, also that the composer has recourse to some very strange harmonies and harmonic progressions for the thoughts and feelings which he has in his mind. It is curious to note that Wagner believed Beethoven to have said the last word in instrumental music, whereas Strauss believes that Liszt opened new paths, and these he is firmly pursuing. It is interesting to note that in "Salome," with the text before one, and also the action on the stage, there is nothing to confuse the mind: the meaning and aim of the music is always perfectly clear.

SOME NEW MUSIC.

TWO NEW OPERAS.

Salome. By RICHARD STRAUSS. (First produced at Dresden, in December.)

Miarka. By ALEXANDRE GEORGES. (First produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, in November.)

HERE STRAUSS has an enviable reputation by now. Everything that he writes becomes famous, stupendous, marvellous—this from his admirers, a full half of the musical world; and unmusical, unintelligible, jargon—this from his detractors, the other full half of the musical world. Thus, between the two, nothing passes unnoticed; so much the better for the eminent composer. Even if the labour of the mountains gives birth to a *ridiculus mus*, half the world provides itself with fantastic opera glasses, and sees a glorious beast of noble proportions.

Salome, the newest work from Herr Strauss' pen, had a history long before its production. Battles had to be fought and won. Cæsars were to be appeased, a theatre and an *impresario* secured, and, hardest of all, artists to create the *roles*. The theatre was the Court Theatre, Dresden; the *impresario* was Count Seebach, and the chief exponents were Frau Wittich, Herren Burrian and Perron. The conductor was Herr Schuch. The orchestra demanded a hundred and twenty players, and included several unusual instruments.

The whole work is revolutionary. Every tradition of music is thrown aside. Metre, measure, beat, time, all are discarded for realism of an order the most advanced. With Richard Strauss, music as an art absolute does not exist. It seems as if he would say, "Let us adapt our daily life, our every action, our thoughts, concretely to music." The *Heldenleben* and the *Sinfonia Domestica* represented this ideal, and here in *Salome* the ideal is carried out. Nothing is logical, one beat is thrown against another, keys are mixed up, and strange melodies unravel themselves from a tangle of rich and wonderful orchestration. Never have such sounds been heard from an orchestra before. The average listener wonders where they come from.

Yet, in spite of it all, in spite of the mess and the muddle, the tangle and the impenetrable undergrowth, admirers find intense beauty, and acclaim the composer to the skies. If they have reason, time will show.

The Dresden performance, the result of heart-breaking rehearsals and long, long tours of uphill work, was a triumph. Report has it that Herr Strauss was demanded twenty-five times on the drop of the curtain. A record, we imagine; and, perhaps, a little suggestive of America.

More controversy as to "Salomé." Here is one hearer telling us that it is "infinitely more complex than anything the composer ever produced before" while another replies that so far from this being the case it is nothing like so complicated as "Ein Heldenleben," "Zarathustra" or "Don Quixote"; and again to the suggestion that the score consists of "a series of hurricanes" the same writer gives it as "the general opinion among musicians in Dresden" that "nowhere has Strauss shown himself so extraordinarily economical with his heavy artillery." Thus we are told that "the beginning is calm and subdued as the moonlight over the Tetrarch's Palace, nor do we encounter any great climax of sound until the moment when Jochanaan descends into the cistern cursing Salomé. This and the final scene of Salomé's exultation and succeeding doom are the only fortissimo passages in the drama." One gathers in fact that this writer is almost aghast at the moderation which Strauss has displayed. "A series of hurricanes" on the other hand undoubtedly sounds more like the authentic Strauss.

IN musical developments of the past twelve months though this is by no means to imply that the year which is now passing away has been without its feature of interest. In many ways indeed it has been a period of rather exceptional activity.

Considerations of space make it necessary to assume that the main outlines of Oscar Wilde's drama, "Salome," and the nature of his treatment of the subject are generally known. The mysticism of the *deliberately narrow range within which the whole is concerned*—all these things are well reproduced in Frau Hedwig Lachmann's German version, which the composer has slightly abridged. It is worth pausing here a moment to point out that Strauss calls his work a "drama," not *music drama*; and he is one of those who ponder deeply on such things. One must assume, therefore, that he desires words and music to be considered in more than the ordinary sense as being one and indivisible. There is no doubt, too, that the composer has striven—perhaps more consistently than any of his predecessors—to give to each line, to each idea suggested by the text, its appropriate musical setting, regardless of the usual laws of musical form; and that he is an apostle of the gospel of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* who regards the drama as the end and the music as the means. So far, all is plain sailing; but when we consider the net result, we are confronted with one of the strangest puzzles in the history of dramatic music.

The chief impression left by the work on the present writer is one of wonder that such a text could have inspired a composer with such music; and the wonder grows when one considers the theories which we know to be Strauss's. As one of the leading German critics has already said: between text and music there is a great gulf fixed. In effect the gulf is so deep that one can hardly talk of a conflict between the two,—they are too far apart. Or if there is a conflict at all, it is short and sharp; and after twenty bars it ends in the complete rout of the poet. It is Niagara diverted into the bed of a lakelet; and in the twinkling of an eye the banks have disappeared and there is a seething torrent where a few minutes before the placid mirror of the water reflected the surrounding landscape. Strauss, however, does not merely destroy,—he recreates. The skill and power with which he makes an atmosphere and with which he gives to each character in the drama its appropriate idiom, while yet preserving an essential unity, are proofs of real dramatic genius. He has made Salome, Herod and Jochanaan to live; but the life blood that flows in their veins is that of Strauss,—not that of Wilde. They are as new and as striking types as one can recall in the whole literature of opera.

Richard Strauss's opera, "Salome," which is composed upon Oscar Wilde's play of that name, was successfully given on Oct. 21 in the Mannheim Court Theatre, and is to be produced in Berlin, where it was at first looked at askance by the authorities, on Dec. 4. Although the rather "fleshy" colouring of both libretto and music seems to have an attraction for the public, the tendency of the German critics is to think that the composer has gone a little far in his Zoroastrian treatment of the human passions. Strauss's new work, "Bardengesänge," for chorus and orchestra, will be performed for the first time at the Museum Concert at Frankfurt on Dec. 10.

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It is understood that a French edition of Richard Strauss's opera "Salomé" will shortly be published. Oscar Wilde's drama, of which the libretto is an abridgement, was originally written by the English author in French and was first published by a Parisian firm.

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Strauss's "Salome."

[OCCASIONAL "TIMES" CORRESPONDENT.]

IT is impossible to imagine a work more baffling to a listener who is anxious to make up his mind as to what he hears than Strauss's one act drama, "Salome," which was produced at the Royal Opera House, Dresden, before one of the most competent audiences of musicians imaginable and with every outward sign of an epoch making success. That the enthusiasm was spontaneous, genuine and deeply felt there can be no doubt; but when we try to consider dispassionately what it means and what augury it has for the future of the work we find ourselves beset with doubt and with difficulty. "Salome" is certain to give rise to a vast deal of controversy; and, so far as the criticisms which have already appeared afford a means of judging, the attack will be delivered along two lines. Leaving for a moment out of account those who are convinced that all Strauss's music is only a particularly aggressive form of twentieth century lunacy, there are those who find that the music is wholly unsuitable to the text and there are those who find that it is symphonic and not dramatic; in other words, those who say that it expresses too much and those who complain that it expresses too little.

By LANDON RONALD.

THE production of a new opera by Richard Strauss is an event of great importance in the musical world, and accordingly most of the chief papers of London sent special correspondents to Dresden on the occasion of the first performance of "Salomé" a short time back. Many columns appeared, but, of course, it is always well-nigh impossible to form any opinion of a work from reading about it, and one can get no further than to learn whether it was successful, how it was received, and how it was rendered. All this we know about "Salomé," with the additional particulars that the work is scored for an orchestra of one hundred and twenty men (this being the minimum that it is possible to employ if the score is to be played as written), and that the Kaiser strongly disapproves of the subject having been taken by Strauss for an opera, and that Strauss very much resents the interference of his august King and Emperor. I understand from a very musical friend who was present at the first performance, that the music is ultra-Strauss; so much so that one thinks of his Symphonic Poems as simple, straightforward, tuneful little compositions in comparison with this opera of his. This, I admit, has not prejudiced me in favour of the work. Readers of this column know full well my views on these "little" tone-poems which Strauss has indulged in during the last few years, so it is unnecessary for me to repeat them. I learn, further, from my friend that scarcely one note from any singer was heard during the evening, the orchestra monopolising all the hearing powers that an ordinary individual is blessed with. This, in the case of certain German singers, might be considered a blessing in disguise as far as the audience is concerned; but as a rule, of course, it is more pleasant to hear singing when one goes to the opera, because there are just a few people who pay their money for that express purpose.

All this, however, is history repeating itself. Exactly the same charges were brought against Wagner half a century ago. The "Ring" was supposed to be a work which could only be performed in a theatre that was specially built for the purpose. "Tristan und Isolde," it will be remembered, was rehearsed for weeks and weeks, and eventually the singers threw down their parts and declared it was absolutely impossible to sing such music. To-day, however, we have the "Ring" given in its entirety in almost every opera house in the world, and "Tristan" is continually sung and performed even by English provincial opera companies! Thus it will be seen that the sensations of the fathers are the commonplaces of the children. Wagner was dubbed a musical maniac; Strauss has just been described by a very eminent musical critic as "an enormously clever man, who was once a genius." The differences between the two men, however, are undoubtedly very great. Wagner actually created a new school of opera, whereas Strauss is merely carrying on the Wagnerian traditions with additions that can scarcely be considered improvements. Wagner was a pioneer; Strauss is a disciple possessing originality and talent. Strauss has never had to shake the dust of the old-fashioned Italian opera off his feet and offer in its place a great art-work that was eventually to be acknowledged as such, but not until its creator had been dubbed a madman! Wagner undoubtedly made the path a comparatively easy one for any man of talent to pursue his way. He developed as no other man had ever done the musical intelligence of the public, and to my mind he actually was the creator of the modern school of music.

And yet, withal, one could in no sense compare the music of Strauss with that of Wagner. The reason why I have coupled their names together so much is because I wished to prove, as I have said, that History is repeating itself. I cannot insist enough, however, that the means Strauss employs to attain an end are identically the same as Wagner used before him, and that Wagner was not a copyist, but a creator. All of which brings me back to the interesting point whether or no "Salomé" will ever live to take its place eventually amongst the operatic repertoire. I certainly do not think that because an orchestra of 120 men is required, or because the libretto is disapproved of by Mrs. Grundy, that there are sufficiently potent reasons to prevent its ultimately being given any and every where. Opera houses will eventually have to be altered or built to meet modern-day requirements, and all this will come about when the next musical genius is born, and gives us works which demand different requirements and surroundings to those that are at present used. This occurred when Wagner came on the scene, and, without any doubt, will occur again. England, of course, is operatically so terribly far behind other nations that it is a very moot point whether even in centuries to come she will ever be able to hold her own. But abroad it is quite different; things go on apace there. In France and in Germany great works are not kept in the cupboard or consigned to the flames, because the libretto might shock one's maiden aunt. It is true that "Salomé" has been rejected in Vienna on account of the libretto, but this is only one of those regrettable exceptions that go to prove the rule. The question of moral or immoral operatic libretti is far too big a one to go into in these columns, but as a general principle I consider it preposterous that here in London we are deprived of hearing many really great operas because the libretti either deal with a Biblical or a so-called immoral subject.

Standard
15 March 1906

OSCAR WILDE'S WORK VETOED.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

VIENNA, March 10.
Richard Strauss's opera, "Salomé," written to Oscar Wilde's words, was down on the list for future production at the Vienna Opera, with changes in parts of the libretto objected to by the censor. It was intended to substitute an Assyrian priest for John the Baptist, with other minor alterations in the text. I learn, however, that it has now been decided by the management that it would be better to give up the piece altogether, and consequently Schilling's "Moloch" will be given in its stead, next season.

During the current season Mozart's "Figaro's Wedding" and Wagner's "Walkyrie" will be reproduced, with new and greatly improved staging.

The Star.

"SALOME" NOT WANTED.

Richard Strauss's opera, "Salomé," written to Oscar Wilde's words, was down on the list for future production at the Vienna Opera, with changes in parts of the libretto objected to by the censor. It has been decided, however, says the "Standard's" correspondent, to give up the piece altogether.

Manchester Courier. 16 March '06

Richard Strauss's opera, "Salomé," written to Oscar Wilde's words, was down on the list for production at the Vienna Opera, with changes in parts of the libretto objected to by the censor. It has now been decided by the management that it would be better to give up the piece altogether.

Newcastle Weekly Chronicle
31 March 1906

Notwithstanding the Kaiser's disapproval of Strauss's "Salomé," a performance is to be given in Berlin. The Royal Opera House has refused to produce the work, which was only to be expected. The management of the Theatre des Westens have taken the work up and all the principal performers and the leading orchestral players who assisted at the Dresden production have been engaged. It is intended to offer the parts subsequently to resident artists in the German capital, when it can be done without risk to the general performance.

Our Berlin Correspondent writes: It has been decided to present Richard Strauss's "Salomé" in Berlin. The Royal Opera House has definitely declined to have anything to do with the work, but the Theatre des Westens has been enterprising enough to offer it a home. The singers who took charge of the leading roles in Dresden, and likewise the principal instrumentalists in the orchestra, will all come to Berlin, and remain here until "Salomé" can be transferred without risk to Berlin artists.

TRIBUNE.

"Salomé" has now been given at a second German opera house, viz., at Breslau. Richard Strauss was present, and he had taken an active part in several rehearsals. The public received the opera, which was conducted by Mr. Trüwer, with enthusiasm, but the critics were not unanimously favourable. In two directions this performance has shed some light on the work. The orchestra numbered about eighty only. In a letter to the director of the opera the composer said: "The performance was, indeed, excellent, thanks to the artistic efficiency of the orchestra, which, if it was small, was eminently well trained. If, after the Dresden performance, I doubted whether performances of 'Salomé' would always be confined to a few of the largest Court theatres, I now may entertain hopes that they may be given also on stages of lesser importance—performances which shall still do justice to my intentions." The other point regards the greater or lesser importance of the vocal parts: The part of Herod, laid out for a high baritone, was sung by a high tenor, for whom some convenient changes into the higher range of his voice were made.

Morning Leader.

Strauss' "Salomé" has been produced at Breslau. The performance had been looked forward to with some anxiety, as the orchestra there numbers only 80 performers. After the production Strauss wrote a letter to the authorities expressing his gratification at the result, and saying that he now felt sure "Salomé" could be produced even on the smaller stages of Germany. After the first Dresden performance he still felt that it was impossible without the enlarged orchestra, but all doubts had now been removed. This is a somewhat rash confession, of which the most will be made by certain sections of the musical world. But, after all, the "Ring" is given at places where the orchestra is not so large as it is at Dresden or at Bayreuth, and nobody complains. The only people who have a real right to grumble are the Dresden authorities, who thus find themselves deprived of a lucrative monopoly.

Musical News.

With regard to Dr. Richard Strauss's attitude towards the Kaiser, we have been favoured with the following authentic statement by a Berlin correspondent:—"There is a talk in Berlin of Richard Strauss giving up his post as conductor at the Opera House, because of a dispute with the Kaiser, who objects to his new opera, 'Salomé,' which he considers 'degrading art.' Richard Strauss refuses to be dictated to even by an Emperor. It will be a blow for the Opera House in Berlin when he resigns."

Musical Standard

From a private source I learn that "Salomé" is still being given every week, at least once, in Dresden, and that the house is invariably sold out. Thus "Staccato" in the "Leader."

17 April 1906.

Daily Telegraph,

At 5 p.m. town theatre at Graz on the 16th, 17th, and 20th of next month, Richard Strauss's newest work, the one-act musical drama, "Salomé," will be performed, under the personal direction of the composer. On these occasions the orchestra will be strengthened by the addition of ninety instrumentalists. As this will be the first representation in Austria the directors of the theatre, wishing to give foreign music-lovers the opportunity of hearing this much discussed work, have decided to reserve a number of seats. The text-book of Oscar Wilde will be the version followed. In view of a performance of "Salomé," either at Paris or Brussels, the composer has adapted the declamatory phrases to the French text of Oscar Wilde. It is hoped that the work will soon appear in this new form.

Hunts County News. 16 Feb. 1906

ARRANGEMENTS are being made for the performance of "Salomé," Richard Strauss's new opera, in Berlin. The Kaiser's Court, it seems, is divided into two camps on the subject. One party will have nothing to say to "Salomé," believing it to be an unsuitable subject for opera; while the other, the musical camp, is eager to hear the work. It is believed the Kaiser will decide the question in favour of the anti-"Salomé" party.

Morning Post. 23 July 1906

FOREIGN NOTES.

Richard Strauss's "Salomé," has been given at Cologne with great success, the composer having been called some fifteen times before the curtain at the close. A special subsidy of 35,000 marks had been voted by the municipality in order to ensure a sufficient number of rehearsals for this very complicated work. Although only in one act "Salomé" takes about an hour and a half to perform. The tenor, Herr Burrian, is said to have been excellent in the part of Herod.

Jan. 1906.

"SALOME."

By RICHARD STRAUSS.

THE production of Richard Strauss's "Salome" at the Opera House, on Saturday, December 9th, was an event which excited no little curiosity. In a new work for the stage there are three points to be considered: the libretto, the music, and the reception by the public. The subject is taken from the Bible, with fanciful additions by modern writers. There is an objection, especially in England, to Biblical subjects; and the present story, in spite of one redeeming feature, can scarcely be accounted noble; rather the reverse. The composer has written some very terrible music. The character of the wayward, passionate Herodes is well depicted. Princess Salome is a curiously typical creature of the East, who only excites sympathy in that she was reared in a corrupt, cruel court. The sensuous music assigned to her is extremely clever, especially in the scene in which she dances before Herodes. This music accompanying the dance is thoroughly Eastern, and as the rhythm has to be clearly articulated, the composer was kept, as it were, within bounds; anyhow, it is clever, clear to follow, and effective. The one redeeming feature mentioned above is the "voice" of Jochanaan, the preacher of righteousness, but the appearance of this stern *dramatis persona* is altogether too episodic. In "Tannhäuser," for instance, we have the sensual and the spiritual elements opposed, but the latter conquers; hence the general effect is good. It is not so in "Salome." With regard to the performance, no words of praise can be too strong for the conductor, von Schuch, and the Dresden orchestra, whose task, indeed, was a heavy one. The principal rôles were taken by Frau Wittich (Salome), Herr Burrian (Herodes), and Herr Perron (Jochanaan), and their impersonations were excellent. The house was crowded, and at the close—the short piece is in one act, during which there is no break—the composer, conductor, and actors were all summoned to the stage ever so many times; hence there was outward success. But there were many followers of Strauss present, and then all the applause was certainly not intended for him.

Strauss, in his symphonic poems, which have now become tolerably familiar, seems to try and make music itself express things apparently beyond its province; the result being that the form is often obscure, also that the composer has recourse to some very strange harmonies and harmonic progressions for the thoughts and feelings which he has in his mind. It is curious to note that Wagner believed Beethoven to have said the last word in instrumental music, whereas Strauss believes that Liszt opened new paths, and these he is firmly pursuing. It is interesting to note that in "Salome," with the text before one, and also the action on the stage, there is nothing to confuse the mind: the meaning and the music is always perfectly clear.