INTRODUCTION

Our purpose in issuing this News-Letter, which is intended for performers and listeners alike, is twofold. Firstly, it will be a source of information for those with an interest in present-day composers and musical activities. We hope to publish periodic news-reports, such as appear in the present issue, concerning composers of established reputation, while younger musicians and others who have not yet attained popular recognition will also receive adequate attention. The News-Letter will also contain articles and information about new works and important older works, and in this connection we hope to obtain the collaboration of composers themselves in shedding light on their compositions, especially where these are of an unusual or problematic nature. Edmund Rubbra has contributed an article on his new Symphony to the present number, and our next issue will probably include a note by Ernest Bloch on his recently completed Violin Concerto. Articles of a more general nature will also appear from time to time.

By this method, if only in a modest way, we hope to establish a closer contact between composers and the music-loving public, neither of whom can readily progress without assistance from the other. An observer at the "Music and Life" Congress held in London last summer, at which several composers spoke about their own music and personal attitude towards the art, could hardly have failed to note the marked and attentive interest with which the audience listened to those speeches, and it is felt that a continuation of this rapprochement, so obviously needed at the present time, might well be one of the purposes best served in these columns.

Secondly, this News-Letter will contain a list of new publications issued both by ourselves and the various foreign firms for whom we act as British representatives. A publisher may perhaps be allowed a legitimate pride in the goods he offers the public, and we should therefore like to draw attention, in the first number of this News-Letter, to the unusually large and varied list of composers whose names will be found in our catalogues. Among living English composers whose works are at present published by Boosey & Hawkes Ltd. are Arthur Benjamin, Lennox Berkeley, Arthur Bliss, Benjamin Britten, Alan Bush, Howard Ferguson, Armstrong Gibbs, Herbert Howells, John Ireland, E. J. Moeran, Roger Quilter and Edmund Rubbra.

Of the foreign firms for whom we act as English distributors, Universal Edition of Vienna, with its remarkable list of modern composers from practically every European country, will need little introduction: Bartók, Berg, Casella, Janáček, Kodály, Krenek, Mahler, Milhaud, Schoenberg, Szymanowski and Webern are only a few of the contemporary composers whom they championed. In the field of Russian music we represent three firms, Belaieff, Bessel and Edition Russe de Musique, who between...
them have published the bulk of Russian music from Balakirev to Stravinsky, and finally we have the agency for several well-known American firms, whose new publications are a source of constant interest. With international connections such as these we feel we can fairly claim to be in touch with musical activities throughout the world, and thereby provided with the means by which these pages can display a panorama of musical news and new publications of exceptional variety.

MUSIC AS A LANGUAGE

Music has frequently been characterized as an international language: its purely human expression was to be understood by all peoples, and it would therefore serve as a means of common approach and friendship between nations and individuals alike.

This fine and popular idea ought not, however, to be interpreted as an obligation for the composer to speak in terms of such simplicity that everyone could appreciate and understand his intentions at a first hearing. The listener, for his part, should not switch off the wireless directly he is confronted with a musical idiom that is strange to him, but at least endeavour to meet the composer's intentions halfway.

At the time of the early English and classical German music there existed a more or less common musical language or vocabulary, determined by a certain use of the elements of composition such as harmony, melody and design. The music of those days was easy to understand. To-day it speaks in many languages.

Every human utterance is an individual one, and the stronger the personality, the more individual its expression will be. This can be observed in music with greater clarity than in other of the arts, since music is rarely, if ever, concerned with the representation of commonly intelligible concrete subjects. Music is perceptible only as sound, and through sound alone can a composer express his thoughts. Where his ideas are new, he seeks a correspondingly new sound, and just this new sound will mean a modification of the normal musical language. In fact, the whole personal and artistic development of the greatest composers has always been coincident with a like development in their methods of musical expression. Particularly, and in the first instance, harmony underwent this change, which later became also apparent in the melodic structure, rhythm, design and instrumentation. There have been individual composers whose thoughts and ideas demanded a complete transformation of the musical language. Richard Wagner is the best-known and most outstanding example. Many younger composers followed him. Others who did not find in his style a suitable medium for the expression of their own individuality pursued different paths—but the next generation of composers perhaps followed innovators again. Thus arose one schism after another, until to-day we are faced with a number of different schools of composition, some of which are related, some contrasted, but all extremely individual in character.

One method of expression may be as good as another. But there is one question of importance—whether a composer has anything to say or not. It is to the credit of this epoch that, by means of these numerous musical languages, quite a few composers have produced works of outstanding quality and significance. It may be embarrassing for the public to hear a concert beginning with a classical overture, followed perhaps by works of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Debussy—the language seems to vary with each composer. Indeed, this might be compared to a lecture at which poems are recited in several languages. But it is here that music can prove a direct means of inter-human understanding, for, provided only that the listener is not prejudiced, no learning of the strange languages is required. Two attributes only are necessary in listening to new music: a receptive ear and an open mind.