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AUSTRALIAN MUSICAL EDUCATION.

AN AMBITIOUS SCHEME.

(From our Special Correspondent.)

London, January 25.

Mr. Francis Bohr, a popular London composer and pianist, who has had a number of Australian singers under his tuition, was subjected to an interview by the "British Australasian" the other day, and in the course thereof propounded an ambitious scheme for the furtherance of musical education in the Commonwealth. After touching on the fact that comparatively few instrumentalists came from Australia, whilst the number of voices from there is abnormally large, Mr. Bohr said:—

"There is one thing which particularly strikes me in regard to these singers from the South, which does not only apply to them, but to all professionals. Singers are apt to be only interested in their own class of song, and their own class of voice. Now, I think this cramps their outlook, and renders them narrow-minded. Then, again, every singer should have a knowledge of some instrument, and of the theory and history of music; how very few there are who have! Some have a smattering of the piano, and not all have even that, and there their instrumental knowledge ceases, whereas it is quite essential that a good singer, who is to attain to any prominence, should be a fairly good instrumentalist as well.

"I have encountered numerous instances of girls from Australia coming direct to London from a small township without having first entered even the larger circle of a principal city. They are discovered to possess a moderately good voice; they sing at the local institute, or at some concert, mainly engineered by admiring friends, receive the usual praise, and are straightway hailed as prodigies. Then they immediately come to London, and as they are ill-equipped, without experience, and without even a groundwork of knowledge and training to fit them for the hard work and merciless competition they will inevitably encounter in London, the results are frequently disastrous. They may get on, they may even make a fairly comfortable living, but they will never attain to the position which their natural voice heritage should give them every claim to, had they started under better conditions from the outset. Every little town in Australia seems to be producing its vocal artist, with a great natural gift of voice, only requiring development on right lines. Why should not these born singers be able to come down to the large centres—Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane—and there enter a college of music affiliated with the English Royal College of Music, and Royal Academy of Music, and with the best facilities afforded them for competing for an annual travelling scholarship, to bring them to the continent and to England?"

Mr. Bohr proceeded to lay down the broad lines of his scheme. He suggests that there should be at least four residential colleges in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, with possibly Perth to be added. These are to be endowed by wealthy Australians, whose love of music and art generally would, Mr. Bohr believes, move them to put their hands in their pockets for so great a national cause. He thinks the whole idea could be established on an endowment fund of £10,000. This amount he deals with as follows:—

"There should be ten maintenance scholarships for each city, each costing £100 per annum. Therefore, for the four cities this would amount to £4,000 for residence and tuition, the scholarships to be competed for being pianoforte, singing, stringed instruments, organ and composition—two scholarships in each class; five professors being appointed (from amongst the best resident musicians in each city) to teach his special subject. I would suggest that a retaining fee of £100 per annum be paid to every professor (similar to the system in the Paris Conservatoire) for giving lessons and lectures to the scholarship-holders, this, of course, being quite apart from his fees for other pupils who might study at the different colleges, and need not interfere with his private practice; and, in fact, would add a certain kudos to his position amongst his fellow-musicians and pupils. So we have the item of salaries amounting to £2,000. Then it would be advisable that the Australian board of examiners should once a year invite an English examiner to visit Australia, and join them in their different examina-

tions, and, under these auspices, one of the best men would probably be sent. Some half dozen travelling examiners from the four principal colleges would probably be required to go up country at the end of each year and examine at the local centres. I should advise the appointment of a European musician to be director of all the colleges, visiting each in turn, and generally supervising the whole. His salary might at a rough estimate be about £1,000 per annum.

"The modus operandi would be this:—A pupil would come to, say, the Adelaide college, and enter for one year's tuition. He or she, on passing the entrance examination for the ten residential and maintenance scholarships, would be eligible in the second year to compete for the travelling scholarships, of which there would be two per annum. These would include three years on the Continent and London. One year in London, one in Paris, and one in either Germany or Italy. The endowment necessary to cover these three-year travelling scholarships would be about £1,600.

"Public tuition for pupils entering the colleges and not holding scholarships I estimate at a revenue of £40 per annum per pupil. And, of course, there would be no limit to the number of outside pupils the colleges would be prepared to take. That is my scheme for an Imperial Conservatoire of Music, and the endowment schedule may therefore be thus set down:—

Residence scholarships	£4,000
Travelling scholarships	£1,600
Salaries	£2,000
Director of music	£1,000
Total	£8,600

"Deducting that from our initial proposed fund of £10,000, we have a balance in hand of £1,400 for the hire of examination halls (for, of course, we cannot hope to build colleges at the beginning) and incidental expenses. I suggest that the municipal authorities in the different cities might place the use of rooms in the municipal buildings at the disposal of the colleges for examinations, lectures, &c., until such a time should arrive when they could afford buildings of their own.

Mr. Bohr is quite proud of his scheme, but it seems to me that he has built it up on foundations which include large blocks of ignorance of the existing facilities for musical education in Australia, and an absolute disregard of the commercial aspect. On his own figures his homeless conservatoire requires at least an income of £8,600 per annum, apart from the renting of suitable rooms in four cities, printing, postage, secretarial, and other expenses. At the very lowest estimate £10,000 a year would be required to carry on such a scheme as that of Mr. Bohr's, and, though it means only 240 pupils at £40 a year each, one may be permitted to doubt whether such a number could be easily got together in the face of the competition of such excellent institutions as the Adelaide Conservatorium and those already existing in the other centres. Mr. Bohr proposes to tap for a beginning.

MUSIC TEACHERS AND THE CONSERVATORIUM.

The decision of the University to admit Messrs. C. J. Stevens and E. E. Mitchell as members of the Faculty of Music has given general satisfaction among the teachers, because it is believed that these gentlemen will carefully watch the interests of the profession. While Messrs. Stevens and Mitchell do not intend to make a rush for reform, it is understood that in conformity with the wishes of those whom they represent they will aim at it. Their elevation to the faculty has gone a long way towards a settlement of the trouble. "Personal matters are not in any way involved," said a prominent teacher on Tuesday. "It really amounts to a question of business. We have to get our living, and we do not want the Conservatorium to take it from us. The drapers and other tradesmen are in competition, and each tries to do the best for himself. That is just the situation in this matter. The teachers must live and must do the best they can for themselves, and if reform is effected in the Conservatorium we contend it will be better for both the Conservatorium and ourselves. The appointment of Messrs. Stevens and Mitchell will help to bring about better conditions. The simple explanation of the whole thing is that the Conservatorium is too big an affair for this small city, and as a certain teacher said at one of our meetings, I understand the University Council would not mind if they had to shut it up to-morrow." The Conservatorium term will begin next Monday, but the teaching staff will not start work until the following day, and it is impossible to forecast the number of students. A meeting of the Faculty of Music will be held shortly, and the new representatives of the teachers will attend.

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LOADING UNIVERSITY HONOURS LIST.

An article dealing with the senior public examination, published in another column of this paper, discloses the different conditions under which candidates from this and from the western State compete. Those who see the University lists only once in each year—that is to say, on the date on which they are published—and have no opportunity of looking back at the results of previous examinations, observe that the leading places in the senior lists are appropriated by Western Australian boys. This result gives rise to the enquiry whether the Perth schools have better educational methods and better teachers than the South Australian schools. A careful comparison, however, of the senior honour list of 1906 with the honour lists of the preceding years would yield a reply not unfavourable to this State. If the names of Western Australian boys who appeared in honour lists prior to 1906 be eliminated from the senior honour list of 1906 the only Western Australians remaining will be those of Leedman, Gemmell, Medcalf, Pike, and Pidgeon, who, of the 43 honour candidates in 1906, gained the ninth, twelfth, twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, and thirty-sixth places respectively. Even of these five boys two had already passed the senior in 1905, so that, the conditions under which South Australian and Western Australian candidates compete being equal, the Western Australian names on the honour list would be reduced to three, namely, those of Gemmell, Medcalf, and Pike. It should be added that there is no irregularity in the use made by the western schools of the Adelaide examinations. The University regulations allow candidates to take the examinations year after year if they deem such a practice desirable. Furthermore,

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Professor Henderson returned to Adelaide by the Melbourne express on Tuesday from a holiday trip to Tasmania.

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RHODES SCHOLARSHIP.

Candidates for the Rhodes scholarship will be interviewed by the selection committee on Thursday. It is expected that the members will hold a late meeting to consider the qualifications of the students on that day; but their final decision will probably not be known until early in March.