

LYRIC THEATRE

HAMMERSMITH

Lessee: Associated Theatre Seasons Ltd.

Licensee: J. BAXTER SOMERVILLE

TENNENT PLAYS LIMITED

in association with

THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

present

FAÇADE

An Entertainment for

Speaking Voice and Six Instruments

The Poems

by

EDITH SITWELL

The Music

by

WILLIAM WALTON

First of the Second Series of **POETRY RECITALS**

organised by

LAURIER LISTER

Programme

Price 6d.

1. Sonata for two clarinets - - - - *Poulenc*

BERNARD WALTON and WILFRED HAMBLETON

2. From **THE SONG OF THE COLD** - *Edith Sitwell*

Two Poems of the Cornfields

Song for Two Voices

The Youth with the Red-Gold Hair

An Old Woman

Two Poems of this Age

Still Falls the Rain

A Mother to her Dead Child

Song: "The Queen Bee sighed"

The Two Loves (Part I)

Most Lovely Shade

Heart and Mind

Reader: DOROTHY GREEN

I N T E R V A L

3. **FACADE** - *Edith Sitwell and William Walton*

(1) Hornpipe

En Famille

Mariner Man

(2) Trio for two cats and a trombone

Through gilded trellises

Tango: "I do like to be beside the seaside"

(3) Scotch Rhapsody

Lullaby for Jumbo

Foxtrot: "Old Sir Faulk"

(4) By the Lake

A Man from a Far Countree

Country Dance

(5) Yodelling Song

Black Mrs. Behemoth

Popular Song

(6) Polka

Valse

Tarantella

(7) Four in the Morning

Something lies beyond the Scene

Sir Beelzebub

Speaker : CONSTANT LAMBERT

Flute : ARTHUR GLEGHORN Trumpet : HAROLD JACKSON

Clarinet : BERNARD WALTON and WILFRED HAMBLETON

'Cello : RAYMOND CLARK

Alto Saxophone : WALTER LEAR Percussion : JAMES BLADES

Conductor : LEIGHTON LUCAS

Curtain designed by JOHN PIPER and painted by ALECK JOHNSON

A NOTE ON "FACADE"

"Façade" was first performed privately at my brother's house in Carlyle Square, Chelsea, in the winter of 1922.

The first public performance, which took place at the Aeolian Hall on June 12th, 1923, caused alarm and raised an uproar among such custodians of the purity of our language, such upholders of tradition in Aesthetics, as writers of *Revue*, firemen on duty at the hall, and passing postmen, who, on being lassoed and consulted by journalists, expressed the opinion that we were mad. And that in no uncertain terms. I hope it will not be thought that I am imputing lack of education to firemen or postmen—I mean, only, that on this occasion they were precipitate in giving their opinion.

At the time when "Façade" was written, Dr. Walton was sharing a house with my brothers, so he and I worked, it might be said, together, and he, my brothers and I, discussed the work together in all its stages. There were, at first, difficulties about presenting it, because it was obviously impossible for the speaker's voice, unaided, to be heard above the sound of the instruments. My brother Osbert, therefore, who stage-managed the performance, and who was, indeed, responsible for the inception of the work, suggested that the writer should speak through a megaphone. And, because this would look ugly, and, too, in order to *deprive* the work of any personal quality (apart from the personality interest in the poems and music), he suggested the performance should take place from behind a curtain.

These arrangements were immediately seized upon by the custodians referred to above, and by other spirits of the same order, as proof that we were trying to *obtrude* our personality. In time, however, it was made safe for them in a popular version through the well-known ballet of the same name.

To speak of the poems for a moment (the music was discussed in the programme for the last performance of "Façade," by the late Mr. Edwin Evans). They are *abstract* poems—that is, they are patterns in sound; they are, too, in many cases, virtuoso exercises in poetry (of an extreme difficulty)—in the same sense as certain studies of Liszt are studies in transcendental technique in music.

My experiments in "Façade" are in the nature of enquiries into the effect on rhythm, and on speed, of the use of rhymes, assonances and dissonances, placed outwardly and inwardly (at different places in the line) and in most elaborate patterns. They experimented, too, in the effect upon speed of the use of equivalent syllables—that system which produces almost more variations than any other device.

There are experiments, also, in texture, in the subtle variations of thickness and thinness brought about in assonances, by the changing of a consonant or labial, from word to word, as, for instance, in "Valse," in the softening from "apiaries" to "Aviaries" in the lines:

"The stars in their apiaries,
Sylphs in their aviaries."

"Purely arithmetical relations," said Schopenhauer, "lie at the foundation of both rhythm and melody; in the one case, the relative duration of the notes, in the other case, the relative rapidity of their vibrations. . . . The rhythmical element is the essential; for it can produce a kind of melody of itself alone . . . and without the other."

This is the case with a work such as "Façade," where often (though not in such poems as "By the Lake," "Four in the Morning" and "A Man from a Far Countree") the rhythmical element has produced the melody.

In "Fox Trot," to take one experiment, the ground rhythm of the beginning of the poem is partly the result of the drone-sounds in the first lines, the dissonances—so subtle they might almost be assonances, of "Faulk," "tall," "stork," "walk"—but each having a different depth of darkness.

The three-syllabled words in "Periwigged as William and Mary, weep" twirl round on themselves; and the assonances, placed in such close juxtaposition to each other, of

"Among the pheasant-feathered corn the
Unicorn has torn, forlorn the"

give an extreme smoothness; the line might consist of one word only were it not for the change from sunniness to darkness.

Jean Cocteau, speaking of a work of the same order as *Façade*, said "For the majority . . . a work cannot be beautiful without a plot, involving mysticism, love, or boredom. Brevity, gaiety, sadness without reason are suspect."

The alarm, however, is over. The firemen are no longer called in.

EDITH SITWELL.

FUTURE POETRY RECITALS

Beginning in October, the Poetry Recitals will be given on
the first Sunday in every month, as the theatre will no longer
be available on Monday evenings

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6th, at 7.0

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