

**LEICESTERSHIRE
SCHOOLS SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA**

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The Leicestershire Education Authority has over the last twenty-one years been paying particular attention to the development of the potentialities of music as an integral part of the educational opportunities offered in its schools. There, in addition to the normal choral work, it has given every encouragement to the teaching of instrumental music. From the most rudimentary beginnings in 1947 the position has now been reached where one pupil in every ten is learning an instrument of the orchestra - in addition to which a very much larger number from the earliest age onwards acquire a feeling for music and skill in its performance through experience in manipulating a wide variety of percussive instruments, from which many hundreds progress on to work with recorders.

Throughout this period the Education Authority has with ever increasing success been attracting into its schools teachers with genuine musical ability. In addition, under the leadership of its County Music Adviser, Mr. Eric Pinkett, it has been building up a team of instrumental teachers who travel from school to school to teach both string and wind instruments. The work done in schools is reinforced by area meetings after school hours at which children with enthusiasm and talent from schools in each district come together once a week, on different days according to the area, to receive more advanced tuition and the opportunity to play together in larger groups under the guidance of the County Music Adviser and his staff. This process is taken a stage further on Saturdays when the most talented pupils from all over the county come together to what is called the County School of Music. Here again, trained and conducted by Eric Pinkett and his staff, some four hundred children meet together to receive tuition and to play in three orchestras graded according to age, which ranges from nine to eighteen, and in a military band. In addition to the work on Saturdays during term time, courses are run during the holidays.

Of these orchestras, the senior one, with an age range of roughly fourteen to eighteen, is known as the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, and consists of around 100 players. This orchestra has over the years steadily enhanced its standards of performance and now enjoys a unique reputation. At its various public performances it has been conducted by composers and conductors who include Malcolm Arnold, the late George Weldon, Sir Adrian Boult, and Rudolf Schwarz (both in turn permanent conductors of the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra), Norman Del Mar and Sir Michael Tippett.

The orchestra plays a very prominent part in the Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music which, under the permanent patronage of Sir Michael Tippett, was first organised in 1965 and is now a biennial event. During the 1967 Festival the orchestra gave two major public concerts; at the first of these the programme consisted entirely of new compositions, specially commissioned (including choral and instrumental works, together with a dance drama), each conducted by the composer, while, at the other, a purely orchestral programme was conducted by Norman Del Mar and Sir Michael Tippett. At the end of the Festival these same conductors directed the orchestra on its first appearance at a major concert venue in Greater London, when it played a programme of contemporary British music in the Fairfield Hall. On this occasion, the extremely high standard of music-making earned the orchestra a remarkable ovation and excellent press criticisms.

Along with music of the classical and romantic periods, twentieth-century British music figures largely in the repertoire of the orchestra and, as a result of its concerts at home and annual tours overseas, it has become widely known for its enthusiastic and persuasive performances of works by contemporary composers.

Since 1953 the senior orchestra has each year made a concert tour lasting about a fortnight to some European country. The tours have included visits to various parts of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, including the capital cities of all these countries (with the exception of Bonn). The young players stay with families in the host centre or occasionally in hostels. The Leicestershire Education Authority is glad to receive a return visit of musical or other groups of young people from the centres where the orchestra stays abroad. In 1965 the orchestra visited Berlin, to which city it was invited to return in 1969. In 1966 it visited Belgium, at the invitation of Jeunesses Musicales, and was conducted at four concerts, including two in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, by Sir Michael Tippett. The same year the orchestra, centred on Dusseldorf, played a number of concerts in various cities of the Ruhr, being conducted by Norman Del Mar. In 1967 it went to Odense, Copenhagen and Gelsenkirchen, and in July of that year it carried out one of the most important engagements in its history when it made a gramophone record for Pye Records Ltd. The works included were:—

Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles (Suite in D) Sir Michael Tippett
 Concertante Music by Alan Ridout
 Sinfonietta by William Mathias
 Divertimento by Malcolm Arnold

The first three works were conducted by the composers and the fourth by Eric Pinkett. The Sinfonietta was one of the works commissioned for the 1967 Festival and the Concertante Music was composed specially for the recording.

In the summer of 1968 the orchestra gave a concert in the Guildhall as part of the City of London Festival, and in the autumn it undertook its most ambitious continental tour. After recording an item for B.B.C.-1, it gave a concert in Fairfield Hall, Croydon, again under Norman Del Mar, and immediately afterwards set off for Austria for a fourteen day tour. Concerts were given in Passau, Linz, Eisenstadt, Leoben, Graz, Salzburg, and eventually, in the Musikvereinsaal, Vienna, the home of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, where it was the first amateur orchestra to be allowed to play. On the return journey it played and broadcast in Munich.

The orchestra has broadcast on radio and television, both at home - B.B.C. and Independent Television - and abroad - Radio Hilversum, Stadtfunk Berlin, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (Cologne), Flemish Television, Danmarks Radio, Austrian Radio and Bavarian Radio. Its first television programme at home was in 1965, in a "Tempo" programme for A.B.C. Television, and this was followed by appearances in "Music International" for B.B.C.-2, "How It Is" for B.B.C.-1, and "Come Here Often" and "Sounds Exciting" for Rediffusion Television. The orchestra also appeared in the film "Music!" which had a Royal Premiere in November, 1968 and was scheduled for general release the following year.

1969 marked the 21st anniversary of the founding of the County School of Music by Eric Pinkett, and, appropriately, it became the most eventful and memorable year of all. In nine months the orchestra took part in the following:-

"Roundhouse", for London Weekend Television.

"Youth Orchestras of the World", for B.B.C. Radio 3.

"Youth Makes Music," at the Royal Festival Hall, a "concert of outstanding performances".

"Music Now", for B.B.C.-2.

The Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music - the 21st anniversary celebrations of the County School of Music - during which it gave a concert at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, in the presence of Miss Jennie Lee, M.P. the Minister for the Arts, and Lord and Lady Harewood.

The Bath Festival, with Sir Michael Tippett and Richard Rodney Bennett,

and, finally, a fourteen day tour, with Sir Michael and Richard Bennett, when it gave concerts in Hanover, Gelsenkirchen, Cologne and, most memorable of all, in the Gedachtniskirche and the Philharmonie in West Berlin.



*B.B.C. Television Studios, Lime Grove, London.
Eric Pinkett conducting the orchestra for the
programme "How It Is". September, 1968.*

*Photograph by courtesy of Barratt's
Photo Press Ltd.*

As a 21st birthday tribute to the County School of Music, Eric Pinkett wrote an informal history of the years 1948–1969 and this was published in the summer of 1969 under the title, "Time to Remember". It can be obtained, (price 15/-, plus 1/- postage), from Mr. J. Richards, Longslade Upper School, Birstall, Leicester.

For the first event of 1970, the orchestra will make another record, this time for the Argo Record Co. Ltd. Two works will be included: "Dead in Tune" by Herbert Chappell and Robin Ray, which was featured originally in the "Sounds Exciting" television programme, and "George and the Dragonfly" by Herbert Chappell and John Kershaw, a new work written specially for this recording.

Later in 1970, the orchestra has been asked to play in the Melton Mowbray Three Arts Festival, the Peterborough Festival and, under Sir Arthur Bliss and Sir Michael Tippett, in the Cheltenham Festival. They will also undertake another continental tour in September.

December 1969.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REPORTS

(Concert venue in parenthesis)

Belfast Telegraph, 8.9.1964, (BELFAST).

Prolonged and enthusiastic applause ,.... in the Ulster Hall, Belfast last night saluted the Symphony Orchestra of the County Schools of Leicestershire, after a concert of music which would not have come amiss from a senior professional body of players.

One rejoiced first of all at the absence of tentativeness in approach. Bold confident playing from all sections was allied to clean articulation, security in intonation, a fine sense of ensemble and, above all, an absorption in the music which was readily communicated to the audience. (Rathcol)

Der Tagesspiegel, 1.9.1965, (BERLIN).

(Symphony No. 2 by Alan Ridout). A colourfully inventive work in three movements, it brought gratification to strings, wind and the sharply rhythmic percussion.

Morgenpost, 9.9.1965, (BERLIN).

The Leicestershire Youth Orchestra distinguishes itself by its sheer joy in music-making, its intelligent playing, pronounced rhythmic sense and strict discipline. The young men and women play with a style and a sophistication that would do honour to a good many professional orchestras.

... one was continually struck by their precise entries, their effective teamwork and the close attention they gave to the conductor. (H.F.)

Nacht Depesche, 9.9.1965, (BERLIN).

These young musicians display a polished technique and an assurance both in expression and rhythmic sense. (G.H.P.)

Rheinische Post, 15.9.1965, (MÖNCHEGLADBACH).

... right from the beginning of the evening, in Elgar's Cockaigne Overture, one could appreciate their sheer joy in music-making and their pronounced tonal sensitivity; their good intonation was particularly noticeable... (E.H.)

Rheinische Post, 15.9.1965, (VIERSEN).

The results achieved by this orchestra, consisting exclusively of school children, are astonishing ... they played the overture "Ruy Blas" by Mendelssohn with a remarkable feeling for interpretation; it was shaped with great dynamic power and rendered with a sureness in intonation which was astonishing for a youth orchestra. (E.H.)

Westdeutsche Allgemeine, 15.9.1965, (VIERSEN).

... it was a pleasure to experience the rarely heard overture, "Ruy Blas" by Mendelssohn, performed with exemplary dynamics, exceptionally disciplined wind entries and outstandingly polished rhythms.

The orchestra's ability to adapt itself to the interpretation of Ridoit (Symphony No. 2) after Beethoven (Violin Concerto in D major) and now to that of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante was to be admired. Here was music-making in the true Mozart style, wherein the oboe and clarinet duets shone, as did the ensembles with horns.

In "Timpat", one could detect drum rhythms executed in a meticulous manner ...

Once more, this ("Mars" from "The Planets" by Holst) gave the young musicians an opportunity to show their extraordinary ability and to display dramatic and rhythmically startling effects. (A.J.)

Le Soir, 18.1.1966, (BRUSSELS).

... The Four Sea Interludes from the Opera "Peter Grimes" by Benjamin Britten with their rich lyricism and sonorous beauty brought to a close a concert which made no concessions to popular taste but which earned for these young virtuosos whole-hearted admiration. Apart from their whole deportment and the technical level of their performance, one must underline the fact that the programme was entirely composed of works by English composers and in itself constituted a useful and justifiable piece of propaganda for British music. (Jacques Stehman).

Daily Mail, 15.3.1966, (LEICESTER).

The young players' strong sense of rhythm was enjoyably evident in Tippett's intricate Fantasia on a Theme of Handel, and still more so in a remarkably assured performance of Lambert's The Rio Grande.

The strings ... gave a vigorous account of the Tippett and positively revelled in the Blues of Gershwin's American in Paris. (Eric Mason)

Rheinische Post, 12.7.1966, (KREFELD).

This fine orchestra ... followed their conductor with well-rehearsed discipline. They began with Brahms' Academic Festival Overture executed with brilliance and formal precision. In the Weber Concertino the orchestra showed their well-practised skill both in accompaniment and in the tutti passages.

Probably the most ambitious offering came last - Elgar's Enigma Variations ... The difficult passages for brass, wood-wind and strings were magnificently managed by the youthful orchestra.

Aachener Nachrichten, 16.7.1966, (AACHEN).

In this Symphony Orchestra from Leicestershire we have a musical group which has all the essential characteristics of a professional orchestra. Eric Pinkett, the conductor, has trained his players, some of whom are remarkably young, to a high level of precision.

One was impressed by a number of things: the range of nuance and dynamics with the knife-sharp contrast between forte and piano and the disciplined, firm unanimity of bowing. Yet their playing had more than technical perfection. Its superb, lyrical quality, the precise, elemental rhythm and the exciting and sustained, full-blooded vitality aroused warm

enthusiasm. It was an unusual blend of simple, direct music-making and sophistication.

Odense newspaper, 2.9.1967, (ODENSE).

"Nothing less than fantastic, I would say. We were all deeply astounded that children of this age, who are not studying at any conservatoire of music, can nevertheless produce, as if by magic, such brilliant music. I am not easily impressed, but the concert which we heard at the Ejby School was phenomenal ..."

This highly flattering statement came from three teachers of the Kragstbjerg school ... when the school orchestra of 101 pupils from England had yesterday given their first concert during their stay in Odense.

Buërische Zeitung, 16.9.1967, (GELSENKIRCHEN).

Tailor-made to suit the orchestra ... this rhythmically and tonally arresting work (Concertante Music by Alan Rawsthorpe) displayed the full potential of this orchestra from Leicestershire. Brass, wood-wind, strings and percussion all played their part in an exciting rendering of the work.

(of Piano Concerto No. 2 by Alan Rawsthorpe) The accompaniment was controlled and distinguished ... Compositions by Michael Tippett (Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles) and Elgar (Enigma Variations) were further highlights in a fascinating and, for the German listener, most instructive programme. The "Variations on a Theme of Haydn" by Brahms gave the Youth Orchestra full opportunity to show its paces in a musical field normally reserved for fully professional orchestras.

2,400 young people acclaimed with delight the young musicians ... in the two successive concerts on Friday morning ... the orchestra played, with the greatest élan from all sections - the brass surpassed all expectations - a programme adapted for the youngsters, with works by Berlioz, Saint-Saens, William Mathias, Harold Walters and Bryan Kelly. (J.H.S.)

Ruhr Nachrichten, 16.9.1967, (GELSENKIRCHEN).

The playing was as rhythmically secure as if one were listening to a student orchestra with years of concert-giving behind it.

(of Piano Concerto No. 2 by Alan Rawsthorpe) The silkiness of the strings and the caressing smoothness of the wood-wind were especially to be admired. (Franz Beste)

Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 16.9.1967, (GELSENKIRCHEN).

It was a wonderfully refreshing experience: the Leicestershire Schools Senior Symphony Orchestra, with professional, unconventional and far from timid style, entertained the ... audience at the evening concert and really held the young listeners at both of the morning performances. (K-g)

Westfälische Rundschau, 16.9.1967, (GELSENKIRCHEN).

The Youth Symphony Orchestra of the County of Leicestershire represents a selection of the best players from several school orchestras and, with its 100 or so members ..., is impressive.

The conductor is Eric Pinkett, who, through long years of work with his instrumentalists, has achieved an outstanding technical level, far above the usual standard of music-making in schools.

The young artists gave a many-sided programme with works by Brahms, Elgar and contemporary English composers ...

In "Concertante Music" by Alan Ridout, the wind excelled in their uninhibited escalations. Brahms's famous Variations on the St. Anthony Chorale produced a more subtle range of sound and revealed genuine musical training.

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FESTIVAL OF MUSIC, 1965

Leicester Mercury, 11.5.1965.

... the opening concert of the Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music at the De Montfort Hall, was an exhilarating triumph for all concerned in it and, in particular, for Michael Tippett whose inspiring direction and warm personality evoked playing from his young orchestra that, at times, had a touch of miraculousness about it.

The fine playing of the senior County Youth Symphony Orchestra demonstrated the quite amazing progress in individual skill and corporate response that are achieved in relatively few years.

Tippett's own Concerto for Double String Orchestra was splendidly performed with a quite amazing acceptance of its technical difficulties and with a beautiful realisation of the slow movement's elegantly discursive melodic line.

Even more exacting were Britten's Four Sea Interludes from "Peter Grimes" in which the full orchestra rose to the very heights of their achievement. There must have been many people in the audience who occasionally pinched themselves (as I did) as a reminder that this assured, virtuosic performance was by school children. (R.A.P.)

The Guardian, 12.5.1965

Tippett conducted the first performance of the Prologue he had written for the Festival and was rewarded by some very bright brass and percussion playing.

Perhaps the most surprising performance of all was that of Alan Ridout's Second Symphony, the other work commissioned for the occasion. It is not a great work, but it is a pleasing one with considerable rhythmic interest. Again, the orchestra was equal to this aspect of the music, even in the most tricky metres, and the whole performance was admirable for its discipline, its lively colouring and its purposefulness. In comparison with this, Elgar's "Cockaigne" Overture and Britten's Four Sea Interludes seemed mere child's play. (Gerald Larner)

The Observer, 16.5.1965.

The Leicestershire Schools' Festival of Music last week displayed such an 'embarras de richesses' that I am convinced that no other area in the country provides a comparably successful musical education for its youth.



Theater am Aegi, Hanover. September, 1969.

*Photograph by courtesy of K. W. Padley,
Loughborough College of Art and Design.*

Financial backing, musical instruments, professional advice and tuition are being proffered constantly and enthusiastically. The result is that the county sends out students well equipped to become top professional musicians; its scientists and engineers have an inestimably valuable cultural awareness; and often it has launched a pupil on a career who might otherwise have foundered by the way. (Meirion Bowen)

The Times, 12.5.1965.

Mr. Tippett, who conducted the concert, drew some splendidly uninhibited playing from his young orchestra here (i.e. in Symphony No. 2 by Alan Ridout) and again, from the strings, in the outer movements of his own Double Concerto. Earlier, in Elgar's "Cockaigne", it had been the wind - the brass especially - who had been the first to give us confident playing. (Special Correspondent)

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FESTIVAL OF MUSIC, 1967.

The Times, 3.5.1967.

... This year the schools symphony orchestra gives three concerts ... This is only the most accomplished of three schools symphony orchestras in Leicestershire, an achievement made possible by the enlightened policies of the authority which sends peripatetic music teachers round the schools, creating and fostering musical enthusiasm, and which raises funds to buy the instruments required.

... Leicestershire seems to lead the way in linking this activity (schools orchestras) with the work and participation of the living British composer, and in propagating the achievement nationally, and indeed internationally. (William Mann)

Times Educational Supplement, 12.5.1967.

The Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music, which was held throughout last week, is perhaps the most ambitious undertaking of its kind in the country, and the education authority must be congratulated for its imagination and initiative.

... The welcome generosity of big business provided most of the first orchestral concert in which five new works were heard, under the able and some times inspiring direction of their composers. The thematic material of Bryan Kelly's Sinfonia Concertante had an exuberant, athletic quality and served to display the highly competent ensemble playing of the instrumental groups; but the great variety of original and more subtly coloured orchestral textures, and a little leaning to a popular melodic idiom, in William Mathias's "Sinfonietta", caught the imagination of the young players more surely.

In the slow movements of this piece the wood-wind produced some deliciously sweet-toned arabesques.

... In the final concert the orchestra, under the direction of Norman Del Mar, played an exacting programme with confident skill. ... It was left to Sir Michael Tippett to display the astonishing quality and maturity of the orchestral playing. His "Prince Charles Birthday Suite" is occasional

music but richly scored, and the golden sonorities which he conjured up in an affectionate performance seemed most succinctly to sum up the achievement of the festival. (Special Correspondent)

Financial Times, 4.5.1967.

... The concert was rather an exceptional one, the opening of the Leicestershire Schools Music Festival. The orchestra was exceptional too, not only in its size but also in the admirable quality of its playing. After the concert Sir Michael Tippett, patron of the festival, owed to me that he had felt the same initial sense of disbelief almost, that an orchestra assembled from schools up and down the county could achieve so satisfying a tone, so high a standard. (Andrew Porter)

Daily Mail, 2.5.1967.

... (William Mathias's SINFONIETTA) received a remarkably assured performance.

... Finally and most ambitiously, a legion of youngsters took part in Funeral Games for a Greek Warrior, a dance spectacle imaginatively choreographed by James J.J. Clarke, with strong, colourful music by Alan Ridout which the symphony orchestra played with near professional aplomb. (Eric Mason)

Leicester Mercury, 2.5.1967

... The five specially commissioned new works which comprised last night's programme not only provided pleasing variety and balance (a little luck), but seemed each in its own way to contribute to the spirit of adventure which characterises the festival idea whose motivating force is the concerted achievement of the seemingly impossible.

... The choreography (i.e. of the 'Funeral Games for a Greek Warrior') was interpreted with unflinching confidence by each member of the large company.

... The Leicestershire Schools' Symphony Orchestra who produced so polished a realisation of Ridout's score gave further evidence of their excellence in the two orchestral works, where, with technical and musicianly assurance, they effectively presented the contrasting styles of Kelly and Mathias.

... The supreme assurance of some 250 junior singers was reflected in their singing from memory the whole (with the exception of two short cuts) of Browning's "Pied Piper" in Brian Bonsor's delightful and witty setting ... (R.A.P.)

Leicester Mercury, 6.5.1967.

The 1967 Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music ended on a spectacular note at the De Montfort Hall, last night, with Norman Del Mar conducting the County Senior Symphony Orchestra in a quite electrifying account of Bliss's "Checkmate" ballet suite.

This was fine playing by any standard; but from 100 young musicians all still at school -- incredible. The strings had praiseworthy intonation and flexibility and alacrity of phrase, and from all other departments there was

technical assurance and excellence of ensemble.

The Bliss work was the final item of a well balanced programme, decidedly modern in bias (quite rightly) and which included a splendid account of Rawthorne's second piano concerto with Norma Fisher as soloist.

... The orchestra seemed to share their conductor's affection for the work (i.e. Symphony in One Movement by Robin Orr) and their response was splendid. There was, indeed, no blemish that came between the listener and the music. (R.A.P.)

CONCERT IN FAIRFIELD HALL, LONDON.

Daily Telegraph – 11th May, 1967

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, ... revealed astonishing confidence and technical ability in their concert of contemporary British music at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon, last night. They were steered through their formidable task with avuncular firmness and sympathy by Norman Del Mar.

A certain raggedness of ensemble in a few places and occasional lapses of intonation were small defects in a concert that would rank high by professional standards.

In Rawthorne's Piano Concerto No. 2, admirably played by Norma Fisher, the orchestra showed a subtle understanding of the problems inherent in an accompaniment of symphonic proportions.

Space does not permit a consideration of the works performed which can – and will – speak for themselves. This was the orchestra's evening and they have reason to be proud of it. (J.R.H.)

The Croydon Advertiser – 12th May, 1967.

With a programme of five works, all scored for full orchestra, by contemporary British composers – this sort of programme can never have been given at Fairfield before! – Wednesday evening's exceedingly impressive concert by the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra certainly lacked nothing in ambition.

In many ways, the orchestra were heard to their best advantage in the "Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles" (Suite in D) by Sir Michael Tippett. ... Where the strings had previously been slightly overshadowed by the rest of the orchestra, they really shone in this suite, especially in those full-blown unison passages.

Bryan Kelly's three-movement "Sinfonia Concertante", appeared to rely very much upon rhythmic impetus rather than thematic growth for its impact. Thus did the firm tone and zestful attack of the orchestra suit the highly-strung and tightly-knit character of the score.

Primary honours for this stimulating concert must go, of course, to the members of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra.

But, presumably, they could not have achieved their triumph without sterling training from their conductor Norman Del Mar. ... His ardent, clearcut style brought out the maximum potential of the orchestra.

Credit is unreservedly due, also, to the enlightened administration in Leicestershire.

EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS OF GRAMOPHONE RECORDING

on Pye Golden Guinea GGC 4103 (mono), GSGC 14103 (Stereo)

The Gramophone, March, 1968.

The Leicestershire Orchestra ... has for some time had a reputation both for its standard of playing and for its adventurous policy, both shown admirably on this record.

The violins ... play in tune and with good quality. If the strings are good but lightweight, the woodwind as usual doesn't suffer in that way ..., while the brass and percussion are splendid. Best of all, there is a freshness and zest about the playing that is lacking from many a professional performance.

Tippett's suite (i.e. Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles – Suite in D) wasn't composed for players with limited technique, so it's the more remarkable the way this Orchestra gets round the difficulties ... in the third movement the presto folk-tune section is delightful and in this the strings do remarkably well in their extremely difficult part. Arnold's attractive 'Divertimento' is as expertly played as is all the rest – and musically played too, which is perhaps even more important. (T.H.)

Records and Recording, March, 1968

... this record needs no indulgence. Though the scores are by no means easy to play, these young people achieve a remarkably high standard of performance which compares favourably with many professional orchestras. Predictably the woodwind are very good; less predictably, the brass are first-rate with some thrilling playing from the horns. (K.L.)

Audio and Record Review, March, 1968.

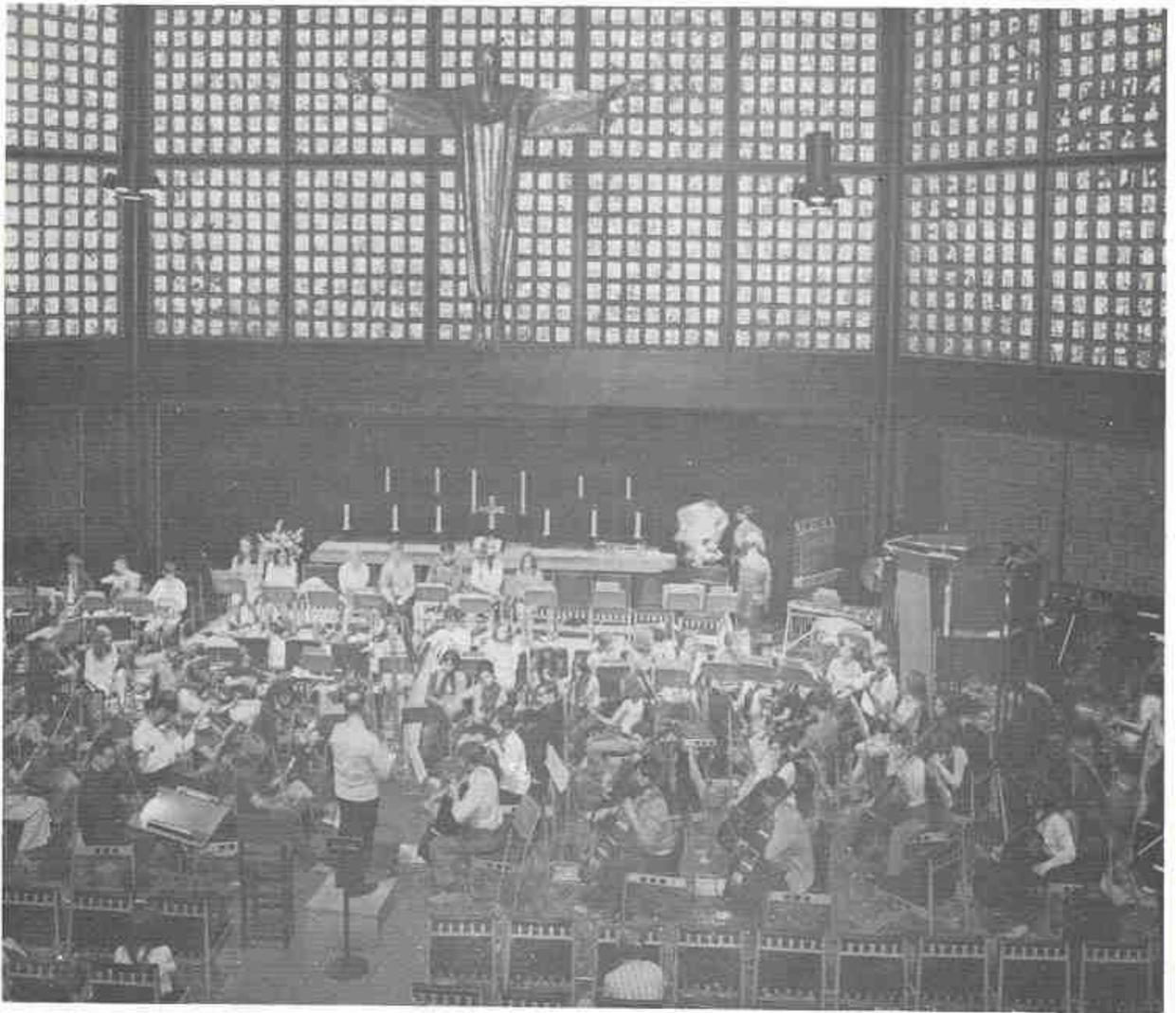
The orchestral playing has in general the natural exuberance and technical caution characteristic of very young musicians. Brass, woodwind and percussion are especially enthusiastic ... (Burnett James).

Daily Telegraph, 11.3.1968.

... an attractive anthology of works by Tippett, Ridout, Mathias and Malcolm Arnold ... which in spite of the entertaining character of the music is perhaps even more notable for the remarkably high standard of the playing of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra. The undertaking is clearly an ambitious one for such young players, but the confidence of their performances combined with their youthful vigour are an encouraging illustration of just what can be achieved when the interest of young musicians is first stimulated and then moulded by the right kind of guidance (Robert Henderson)

The Guardian, 12.3.1968.

Normally one makes allowances with young players, particularly over string intonation, but not so here, for the astonishing thing is how close these school children come to professional standards.



*Rehearsal in the Gedächtniskirche, Berlin.
September, 1969.*

*Photograph by courtesy of K. W. Padley,
Loughborough College of Art and Design.*

I hope the brilliance of this record will encourage a few more local authorities to follow the enlightened policies of Leicestershire. (Edward Greenfield)

CONCERT IN DE MONTFORT HALL, LEICESTER – 1st MAY, 1968.

Leicester Mercury, 2. 5.1968.

(Walton's 'Partita') was first performed a decade ago, at which time nobody ... would have conceived of its being attempted by a school orchestra. But played it was, last night, fearlessly and with evidence of a genuine instinct for Walton's characteristic rhythmic energy in the outer movements and with good solo work in the central Siciliano.

In a different way ... the Delius (Brigg Fair) was as fully revealing of orchestral quality and, more, of mature orchestral thinking. Under Eric Pinkett's direction this was a highly successful performance in which the various sections of the orchestra used intelligence and excellent ensemble sense to fill out with fine balance and tone the composer's rich harmonic textures. There were some really sumptuous sounds to be heard.

(Ibert's Divertissement) was extremely well played by chamber orchestra with percussion and the 25 performers relished its sharp wit without loss of musicianly restraint. (R.A.P.)

The Times Educational Supplement, 10.5.1968.

The finest playing of the evening ... came in the Delius Rhapsody 'Brigg Fair'. Here the conductor, Eric Pinkett, drew from his team some luscious string tone matched in sensitivity by limpid phrases in the woodwind and secured a glowing climax of balanced sonorities at the ending. (F.M. Laming)

The Musical Times, June 1968.

Their music-making is wonderfully drilled ... The confidence and accomplishment of the wind and percussion sections was the hallmark of the opening and closing pieces, Bernstein's 'Candide' overture and Copland's 'El Salon Mexico'. The pungent orchestration ... was effectively caught as were the infectious rhythms ... The highlights were Delius's 'Brigg Fair' and Franck's Symphonic Variations. The former had a beautifully controlled performance while the latter ... was most impressive for its emphasis on the work's symphonic logic ... immense talent and potential here. (Niall O'Loughlin)

CITY OF LONDON FESTIVAL, 1968 – CONCERT IN THE GUILDHALL, 13th JULY, 1968.

Financial Times, 15.7.1968.

The central Pastorale Siciliana (of Walton's Partita) ... emerged most successfully with some sensitive solo work ... Best of all was Tippett's own 'Little Music for Strings' ... how zestfully the orchestra's string section played it!

CONCERT IN FAIRFIELD HALL, CROYDON – 20th SEPTEMBER, 1968.

The Times Educational Supplement, 27.9.1968.

The professional brilliance of the orchestra is presumably well known by now, ... Their playing last week was technically remarkable and musically mature.

... Tippett's 'Little Music for Strings' ... got an intense performance that was adult, clear in counterpoint, very cleanly phrased and surprisingly full in tone. (Richard Deveson).

The Advertiser (Croydon), 27.9.1968.

... The young players' ardent music making provides a stimulating evening's listening.

... Delius' 'Brigg Fair', showed some musicianly solo work from individual members of the orchestra.

In any amateur orchestra, the inherent tendency is for the string tone to be relatively limited. The fact that the Leicestershire woodwind and brass could be so vibrant when required, served to emphasise this slight deficiency in the strings.

Nevertheless, the item for strings alone, Tippett's 'Little Music for Strings', proved one of the most enjoyable performances of the evening, as the scale of the tone could be kept in the same perspective. Indeed, the tone quality itself was pure, and the contrapuntal textures were always cleanly defined, with some good attacking bowing and accurate intonation throughout.

... Walton's splendid 'Partita for Orchestra' had a number of exhilarating moments, with confident solo viola, oboe and clarinet playing. (David Squibb).

CONCERT TOUR OF AUSTRIA AND GERMANY (MUNICH) – SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER, 1968.

(Arranged by the British Council in association with Musikalische Jugend, Civic Authorities, etc.)

Neue Zeit, 27.9.1968 (LINZ)

We carry on under the impression that Austria leads the world in music. All of a sudden there comes out of the blue from England a Symphony Orchestra of 100 musicians, boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years who are 'only' secondary school children. We suffer a shock comparable to the Americans when the first sputnik was launched. There is not even in our music schools a student orchestra which is much above the strength of a chamber ensemble.

These young people from all parts of the county play with such fantastic devotion and enthusiasm that difficulties are surmounted which no Austrian music pedagogue would ever demand of them. One wishes that the Minister of Education could hear this. (Franz Kinzl).

"Süost Tagespost 6.10.1968. (GRAZ)

The intonation of all instruments was astonishingly good, with the wind, especially the brass, outstanding. They make music with great enthusiasm and a high degree of discipline ... (K.S.)

Kurier (Morgenausgabe), 3.10.1968 (VIENNA)

The skill of this orchestra of 14 to 18 year olds is indeed quite astonishing as they perform the most difficult contemporary items. No other school orchestra is likely to compare with them in the near future. It is evident that they have grown up with modern music and feel quite at home with it. Norman Del Mar did not find it difficult to hold together the young musicians in a performance of full tone and precise ensemble which gave evidence of much good work in rehearsal and much enthusiasm.

William Walton's 'Partita for Orchestra' ... fitted in very well with their rhythmic vitality and the splendid feeling which their playing displays. (STO -)

Volkstimme, 4.10.1968 (VIENNA)

This is an ensemble of young people ... who possess enough technical capacity coupled with a super-abundance of enthusiasm to tackle even the more demanding works of the symphonic literature.

It is not only wise that the orchestra mainly plays new English music, and thus avoids unjust comparisons, but also useful as it fulfils an important cultural task better than others would. Furthermore, the young people play whatever it may be with great discipline and set their musical sights high. (M.R.)

Salzburger Nachrichten, 4.10.1968 (SALZBURG)

Apart from César Franck's 'Symphonic Variations', the programme was exclusively devoted to works ... which in a normal programme would be sandwiched between a work from the classical period and a romantic piece – if they were played at all.

The appearance of the English school children should make our authorities think a little more about encouraging youth orchestras here, not least because the spontaneous reaction of the enthusiastic young audience was plain to see. (Werner Thuswaldner)

Demokratisches Volksblatt – Salzburg, 4.10.1968 (SALZBURG)

To start with it is an unusual experience to see one hundred youthful musicians on the platform of the Mozarteum; it is really a joy when the auditorium is filled to bursting with young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five and finally a pleasure when, to add to an outstanding performance this spark soon jumps the gap to the hall and kindles flames of enthusiasm. These factors met together on Wednesday evening in the large hall of the Mozarteum, when at the beginning of the second season of Salzburg 'Jeunesses Musicales', the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Norman Del Mar played a programme of Bernstein,

Tippett, Franck, Delius, Copland and, as encore, a work by Britten (after Rossini). It was a happy guest appearance and the guests from the United Kingdom could take richly earned applause with them on their way home.

What the encouragement of music-making means is shown in the early start made by these young musicians. From the music they do at school they learn, in the best sense of the word, the tools of the trade which others only acquire with much drudgery at a conservatoire. Besides which, in their foreign tours ... they gain experience of incalculable value to a musician while still very young. Apart from the youthful élan which sometimes makes them jump free of the reins a little and prefer the loud passages in their enthusiasm, these concerts offer all those things which one only expects to get from the 'big fish'.

The young Britons, who gave an impressive demonstration of England's intensive musical education in one county alone – Leicestershire – were rewarded with an outburst of applause and impatient demands for encores. The enthusiasm was absolute. (Gerhard Lindinger).

Munchner Abendzeitung, 4.10.1968 (MUNICH)

... a symphonic firework display which because of its perfection left them (i.e. members of the audience) scarcely the time for amazement. Such amazement was caused in fact by about one hundred 14 to 18 year olds in a well-rehearsed musical team, steeled by musical tours, to whom could be entrusted without hesitation the entire symphonic repertoire of any small city; young people who replace the blood and tears of playing with skill and good humour. (Helmut Lesch)

CONCERT TOUR OF GERMANY – SEPTEMBER, 1969.

(Arranged by the Deutsch – Britischer Jugendaustausch E.V., the British Council for International Contact, Civic Authorities, etc.)

Berliner Zeitschrift, 15.9.1969 (BERLIN)

The famous, well-travelled Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra – an orchestra of schoolchildren under the direction of the internationally known composer Sir Michael Tippett – in the Philharmonie, played difficult pieces with such precision that we could only wonder at their technical boldness.

Spandauer Volksblatt, 16.9.1969 (BERLIN)

A far cry from the School Orchestra

At the Anglo/German Youth Festival, the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra were the guest orchestra last Saturday at the Philharmonie. Sir Michael Tippett, one of the most important figures in British music, conducted the orchestra, which is as far removed from a school orchestra as a Philharmonic orchestra is from a palm court orchestra.

It is really astonishing – and they play with skill, spontaneity and verve, though they are particularly inspired, as you would expect, in the loud, vigorous passages. But Sir Michael Tippett is able to draw from them a colour, a shape, and a phrasing which at this age is almost magical. And it is a 'genuine' programme, not the normal one for a school orchestra.

Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung 17.9.1969 (HANOVER)

Spirited Music Making

English schools orchestra at Theater am Aegi

The Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra appeared at the Theater am Aegi in a truly ambassadorial manner. Ambassadorial not only because of the evening dress of each of the 100 participants, but also because two eminent English composers, Sir Michael Tippett as conductor and Richard Rodney Bennett as pianist (in Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue'), added to the reputation of this schools' symphony orchestra the weight of their names and their personalities.

Music making is concerned not only with form, but should also evoke elemental joy in those taking part. Joyous verve was apparent in this performance, and also an astonishing sureness of touch in the orchestral parts, and a remarkable mastery of the solo parts in the wind sections. Along with the fullness of tone of the whole orchestra, there were impressive moments of chamber music in Copland's 'Quiet City' for strings.

This symphony concert by 14 – 18 year old English schoolchildren was many-sided and inspiring, and the good attendance of young people at this concert was very pleasing. Even more pleasing was that the musical aristocracy of Hanover was also represented, not least by the attendance of the town's General Musical Director.

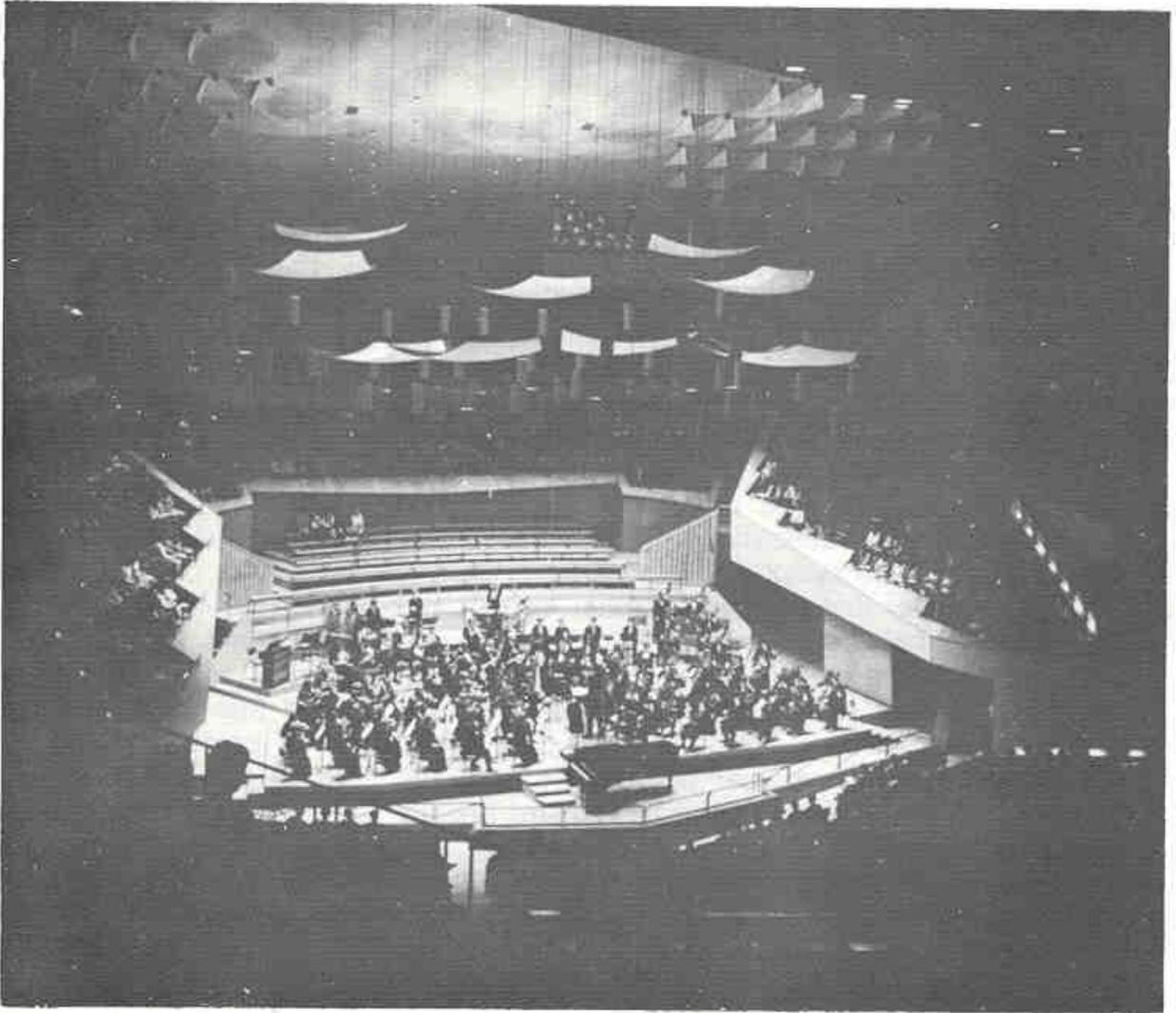
Westfälische Botschaft 18.9.1969 (GELSENKIRCHEN)

Tumultuous applause greets soloists and orchestra

Brilliant performance by youth orchestra from Leicestershire

More than 100 young musicians between 14 and 18 years played last Tuesday in the Hans-Sachs-Haus; close on 1,000 listeners on the platform and in the body of the hall gave tumultuous applause, which was richly deserved by the orchestra, by its own soloists, by the pianist Richard Rodney Bennett (soloist in Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue'), and last, but not least, by the conductor, composer Sir Michael Tippett.

If we wished to reduce the essence of this orchestra to a formula, we should have to speak of 'a stroke of genius in musical education'. This orchestra is Britain's best cultural export.



The orchestra with Sir Michael Tippett and Richard Rodney Bennett in the Philharmonie, Berlin.

Photograph by courtesy of K. W. Padley, Loughborough College of Art and Design.

Ruhr-Nachrichten 18.9.1969 (GELSENKIRCHEN)

Inspiring English orchestra

Verve and skill of young musicians greeted with much applause from the audience

Berlin, Hanover, Gelsenkirchen and Cologne are the stops on this year's tour of Germany by England's most famous schools' orchestra, the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra.

What is achieved by these school children from Leicestershire seems unimaginable to those astonished German audiences who hear it. It is with shame that we learn that 10% of all school children in Leicestershire learn to play a musical instrument, and that they do so in school time. These refreshing young boys and girls, perform a quite unconventional programme with a verve which is so lacking in our own routine, subsidised professional orchestras, and, it must be realised, are only the top of a broad based pyramid of musical education; the schools of the Leicestershire area alone support three such symphony orchestras.

No wonder that the gap between 'school music' and real music, which has hitherto been so cruelly and sadly apparent, seems not to exist in England. The best composers and conductors in the country see it as their business to work with school orchestras. Thus it is that this orchestra is conducted on its tour by none less than Sir Michael Tippett, England's least compromising musical personality; and the solo part in Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' was played by Richard Rodney Bennett, one of the most prolific composers of the younger generation.

Conductor and orchestra received tumultuous applause from the young people of Gelsenkirchen.

Kolner Kulturspiegel, 20/21.9.1969 (COLOGNE)

Astonishment at young musicians

The most extraordinary thing of all, is that these young people are in no sense training to become professional musicians; the orchestra is not a place of apprenticeship for future instrumentalists, and its members are allowed to play only so long as they are still at school.

It is, then an orchestra of 14 to 18 year olds – but what maturity of interpretation, what brilliant technique, especially in the strings.

A great deal of the brilliance of course was attributable to Tippett; but the whole performance showed that anything is possible musically if a firm mind guides available talent along the right lines.

L.S.S.O. DISCOGRAPHY

Tippett *Suite in D*
Ridout *Concertante Music*
Mathias *Sinfonietta*
Arnold *Divertimento*
Conducted by Tippett, Ridout, Mathias and Pinkett **PYE** GSGC 14103

Chappell *Dead in Tune; George and the Dragonfly*
Narrators: Robin Ray, Susan Stranks and John Kershaw
Conducted by Chappell **ARGO** ZDA 134

Bliss *Introduction and Allegro*
Previn *Overture to a Comedy*
Ireland *Downland Suite: Elegy*
Chappell *Overture Panache*
Kelly *Cuban Suite*
Tippett *Shires Suite: Interlude II and Epilogue*
Conducted by Bliss, Previn, Tippett and Pinkett **ARGO** ZRG 685

Brian *Symphonies Numbers 10 and 21*
Conducted by Loughran and Pinkett **UNICORN** RHS 313

Brian *Symphony Number 22; Psalm 23*
English Suite Number 5
Conducted by Heltay and Pinkett **CBS** 61612

Bedford *Instructions for Angels*
Conducted by Bedford **VIRGIN** V2090

Tippett *Shires Suite*
Young *Virages - Region One*
Conducted by Fletcher **UNICORN** UNS 267

Young *The Hunting of the Snark*
Narrator: Peter Easton
Conducted by Fletcher **CAMEO** GOCLP 9019

Xenakis *Jonchaies*
Young *Third Night Journey under the Sea;*
Rain, Steam and Speed
Conducted by Fletcher **PERFORMANCE** PER 84061

Front Cover: Rehearsal in the Berlin Philharmonie with Sir Michael Tippett, September 1969

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