

## BLACKFRIARS

sources used by Eckart; and in the third, the references to his other works, or to derivatives. The work is a model of a critical edition, and it would be hard to exaggerate its value.

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### THE PLAY

IF Toscanini—who, praise be ! will be with us again in June—is the prince of conductors, it is in virtue not of any particular effects or personal renderings, but of a clarity of exposition rooted in profound understanding, a surety of phrasing and emphasis in which every detail has its full and proportionate significance, so that the work as the composer conceived it speaks through him, in ideal perfection.

It was precisely some such qualities as these that struck me as the rarest merit of Gielgud's *Hamlet* at the New Theatre. In no play can the temptation be greater for an actor to seek a purely personal triumph—as Mosievitch did, to take an extreme example, moulding and mutilating to suit his conception. Instead, John Gielgud lets the play speak for itself as fully as imaginative and respectful meditation on every line of the actual text will enable, and in such a manner that reason is satisfied at every stage. Thus presented, Hamlet's behaviour appears no 'problem,' but natural, almost inevitable. In Gielgud's sensitive, straightforward rendering Hamlet deliberately feigns his madness; making it obvious that for one so shaken thus to feign was to walk a perilous border, with temptation willingly to overstep it (like Pirandello's *Enrico Quarto*) in escape. The words justify him, every line.

With a like surety Jessica Tandy's Ophelia, (very young, with a touch of modern boyishness not amiss in a part originally written for a boy's playing) is moulded to Laertes' words :

Thought and affliction, passion, Hell itself,  
*She turns to favour and to prettiness.*

Thus her mad scene is rendered with a quiet pathos, unusual but surely right.

One may note again how in Polonius supposed contradictions vanish, when we see him as one of those worldly-wise old courtiers familiar in Elizabethan portraiture, who filled their journals with high-sounding moral maxims. The pattern of the play is still further clarified by the treatment of minor *motifs*, delicately picked out and woven into continuity—the recurrent contrast, for instance, between young Fortinbras, the man of action, and Hamlet, a captive in a world of shadows, striving in vain to dominate events too potent for his control; or the tender friendship between Hamlet and Horatio, that forms a

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single thread of brightness running through the whole play.

The staging is extremely beautiful, and the use of gorgeous draperies strikes a middle course between modern austerity and the abuse of furniture of the last century. It is in short as satisfying a performance as one could wish to see.

BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER.

## GRAMOPHONE

The pianoforte *Concerto in B Flat Major* was signed and dated, January, 1791; the *Magic Flute* and the *Requiem* followed; in December Mozart was dead. A year of ill-health and neglect for the man, yet the composer's genius seemed never more free. Was his music an escape?—how else the infectious gaiety of the *allegro vivace*?—or did the very want and debts make possible the *larghetto*?—or simply not affect the concentrated art of the first *allegro*? Distractionism, expressionism, patternism, three rather crude simplifications; bookish to read them into the three movement of Mozart's last work in concerto form; stuff, when one can listen to Schnabel playing it (DB 2249-52). But music sometimes has to be written about in words. Few want their Mozart always level, but two soprano arias from *Don Juan* seem sung with unnecessary swoops (CA 8194). The finish of Beethoven, like that of Newman, shows little trace of constant re-writing, for instance in the perfect contrasts of horns, silence, orchestra in the fourth recension of the *Fidelio Overture* (DB 2261). Schumann's symphonies are not commonly counted among his greatest works, lesser men have had a greater sense of orchestral discipline and symphonic style, but *No. 4 in D Minor* has the true romantic moments (DB 2231-33); the playing by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra is somewhat coarse at times. The *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto* is now recorded as performed by the Berlin Philharmonic in the manner of the period (LY 6101-4); the cembalo playing by Franz Rupp calls for particular praise. *Hotter than Hell* (O 1974) sounds like a frenzied scrum of freight-trains; but at least it makes one appreciate the gracious relief of Holst's *St. Paul's Suite* for strings (F 5365-6), with the delightful *ostinato*. Similarly, *Rug Cutters Swing*, the reverse side of the hot record, may be kept to prepare by violent contrast for Elizabeth Schumann singing Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Bach's *Bist du bei mir* (DB 2291) or for the piano transcriptions for four hands of a Bach chorale and pastorale played by Mark Hambourg and his daughter (B 8276). *The pig got up and slowly walked away* (F 5377), this was banned by the B.B.C., on almost ethical grounds, it would seem. Which is funny-peculiar, for even though the