

Register Sept. 10th 07

THE CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC.

The Register to-day prints a memorial from the Music Teachers' Association to the University Council relating to the Elder Conservatorium and the dissatisfaction existing in the profession on its account. The Association, which represents a large proportion of the music teachers and numbers more than one hundred members, requests—“(a) That the minimum annual fee payable by students of the Conservatorium be raised to sixteen and a half guineas for one principal subject together with the usual secondary subjects, and that there be but one grade of fees for all students; and (b), that those members of the Conservatorium staff whose services during term time are entirely at the disposal of the Council shall at all times be precluded from accepting outside professional engagements in South Australia, save in such very exceptional circumstances as the Council may grant special permission, and that this principle be an express stipulation in all future engagements with the said staff.” Apart from the bearing of the suggested restrictions upon competition with private enterprise, the memorial revives the larger question concerning the true functions of the Conservatorium. In The Register of September 3 Professor Peterson (Ormond Chair of Music, University of Melbourne) dealt in an illuminating manner with the subject of Universities and Music, both historically and practically; and the substance of his argument was that higher education in music should be controlled by Universities under conditions similar to those prevailing in connection with other branches of culture. Nowhere in his article did the professor contemplate a University engaging in primary and secondary instruction—a mistake which, committed through the Elder Conservatorium, the Register pointed out in the beginning. Our recent visitor noted in passing that the original meaning of “Conservatorium” was hospital. That word conveys the idea of nursing, but the Adelaide University has won the doubtful distinction of having had the definition facetiously extended in music to include “nursery.” Mr. Bryceon Treharne, in a letter published in The Register, has taken exception to Professor Peterson's exclusion of elementary training from the Conservatorium sphere, and has urged that the importance of having the student properly grounded in the earliest stages justifies the innovation.

All University authorities rightly insist that candidates for graduation in every course shall show proficiency and fitness to receive the higher culture; but they leave it to other institutions to supply the preparation. From this rule music should not be exempt. It may be quite correct, as Professor Peterson indicates, that secondary musical education in Australia is “in a state of the most hopeless helpless confusion;” and thus it may continue if obstacles are thrown in the way of the establishment of schools or colleges served by staffs familiar with university requirements. In one sense the

University may control all preparatory instruction by offering special facilities to qualified teachers, and in this matter the time is ripe for a movement not alone in music. The Elder Conservatorium was founded on a bequest clearly intended to promote advanced musical culture and supply a training which was beyond the scope of private enterprise; but, owing to circumstances which need not here be discussed, and doubtless with the best and kindest intentions, the fund has been partly diverted, and outside teachers naturally complain of a competition which was never contemplated by the benefactor, and which is unnecessary and in opposition to sound university principles. While these conditions prevail it is only reasonable that the private teachers should claim such restrictions of the competition as are mentioned in the memorial. The patronage contained in the Music Teachers' Association relative to University examinations is sufficiently valuable to ensure for the requests the fullest consideration; but it is obvious that, if the Conservatorium were limited to its true function, the matter of fees would be no concern of the outside teachers—unless, indeed, it were to bring them to the lowest point in order to encourage students to pass through the secondary stage. The modern tendency is to reduce university fees, and not raise them—to abolish them rather than that higher education should bear any stigma of cost.

As Ruskin has observed, a duty of the community concerning intellectual art is to discover its talent, which is always limited in quantity, and is ever distributed in the most unlikely places among all classes. It follows that educational facilities should be made as free, as comprehensive, and as effective as circumstances permit. Capacity to reach standards, not to pay high fees, should be the qualification for admission to the University or the Conservatorium and any other branch working on a proper university basis. Painful experience has shown that examinations as they are conducted are far from satisfactory as a test of capacity. Fortunately they need not be the sole alternative, though they appear as such in Australia. In the United States the

University authorities inspect secondary schools, and where they are satisfied with the competency of their staffs and the efficiency of their methods the institutions are registered. From these students are admitted to University courses without qualifying examination, on the certificate of the head masters attesting proficiency and fitness. The plan, which (according to Professor Jordan) answers admirably, might well be adopted here in connection with colleges which are not inferior to any of their kind in the world; and it could be extended to music relatively to teachers who have received the Conservatorium diploma. In order to meet the cases of other candidates—those under unregistered or self-tuition—the matriculation examination should be available. Thus there would be no monopoly, no injustice; the examination evil would be greatly abated; and the University would go a long way towards controlling secondary education by controlling the teachers. The

reasonableness of the argument that the regular University staff should not accept outside professional engagements is too obvious to require elaboration. Their leisure should be consecrated to research and increased efficiency. Still, the Council will be wise when making any rule on the subject—as has been fairly suggested by the Music Teachers' Association—to reserve to itself the right to allow any exception in the public interest.

Advertiser Sept. 10th 07

MUSIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

THE CONSERVATORIUM STAFF. REGISTRATION OF TEACHERS.

The September meeting of the Music Teachers' Association was held at Woodman's on Saturday night, Mr. C. J. Stevens presiding. After much discussion it was unanimously decided to send the following memorial to the Council of the University of Adelaide:—By direction of the council of the South Australian Music Teachers' Association I respectfully ask your earnest consideration of certain requests which, after prolonged debate, have been decided upon. Our association is representative of a very large proportion of the music teachers in this State, numbering, as it now does, over one hundred members. We feel confident that your council, recognising our desire to support our own University in the matter of musical examinations, will sympathetically weigh these requests with a view to removing such feelings of dissatisfaction as continue to exist in the profession. We therefore pray:—(a) That the minimum annual fee payable by students of the Elder Conservatorium be raised to sixteen and a half guineas for one principal subject, together with the usual secondary subjects, and that there be but one grade of fees for all students. (b) That those members of the Conservatorium staff whose services during term time are entirely at the disposal of the University shall be precluded from accepting outside professional engagements in South Australia save in such very exceptional circumstances as your council may grant special permission; and, further, that this principle be an express stipulation in all future engagements with the said staff. With reference to (a) we feel assured that no loss to the University would be entailed, while it would unquestionably elevate the status of the Elder Conservatorium, and, to a large extent, remove it from direct competition with the majority of outside teachers. Moreover, such a step would be in keeping with the obvious intention of the generous benefactor, who, we have always believed, desired to promote the higher musical culture in this State. As regards (b), there is a pronounced and widespread feeling that it would be in the best interests of the University if members of its teaching staff abstained from competing with those who are engaged in similar work outside, and, while we would not seek to unjustly restrict the scope of their usefulness in special spheres, our association would emphasise the fact that such competition is, in most cases, both avoidable and undesirable.”

Messrs. Stevens, E. H. Packer, E. E. Mitchell, W. R. Pybus, and J. M. Dunn, Miss F. M. Tilly, and Dr. E. Harold Davies were appointed to wait upon the Premier as a deputation in regard to a proposed Act of Parliament for enforced registration of all teachers of music. After the business of the evening Dr. Davies delivered an interesting and lucid address on “Form in music,” referring to the sonatas of Beethoven by way of illustration.