THE BLIND MUSICIAN
AND HIS TRAINING

By
Edward Watson
Director of Music Publications,
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Mr. H. C. WARRILOW, F.R.C.O., the Blind Organist and Director of Music, National Institute for the Blind, at the organ in the Armitage Hall of the National Institute
Published by the

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND**

*(Registered under the Blind Persons Act, 1920)*

Hon. Treasurer - G. F. Mowatt, J.P.
Secretary-General - Henry Stainsby

*Head Office:*
224 Great Portland Street, London, W.1

*Names and Addresses of Branch Offices and Secretaries will be found on the back cover*
WHENEVER one is inclined to think of this world as hard and cruel, it is a spiritual and mental tonic to turn the clock back so as to compare existing conditions with those of, let us say, a century ago. In ameliorative work generally, tremendous advance in public sympathy is evident everywhere, and in no branch of such work has more enlightened progress been made than in that which affects the well-being of the blind; nor is there any cause which makes a more direct appeal to the heart.

Hundreds of Thousands of Publications

Less than a century ago there was no system by which the blind themselves could write (emboss) either literature or music. Let us note the difference to-day. The National Institute for the Blind, 224-6-8 Great Portland Street, London, W., is turning out from its' Braille embossing press
every year hundreds of thousands of publications in Braille type. Last year, for instance, nearly 6,000 large volumes (standard works, etc.), over 85,000 magazines of various kinds, literary and musical, and over 115,000 copies of newspapers were published. The price charged for any single paper, volume or piece of music is one-fourth the cost of production for blind customers in the British Isles, and one-half to those in the colonies.

The embossing plant at the National Institute is capable of turning out, if required, 24,000 sheets of Braille-typed matter per hour: while its stock room is capable of accommodating 75,000 volumes on racks, which, if put end to end, would stretch three miles.

The Braille Shorthand Writer

What a tremendous contrast to the days prior to Louis Braille, the inventor of the system (in 1829), when there was little or nothing for a blind man to read, and he was utterly dependent upon those with sight. To-day, by means of a special and most ingenious Braille embossing machine, known as the “Stainsby-Wayne” (named after its inventor and designer, Mr. Henry Stainsby, the well-known Secretary-General of the National Institute), Braillists are able to emboss from dictation at a speed of 140 words per minute. The machine is small and portable, and it would be quite possible for a trained
THE BRAILLE ALPHABET
(The large dots represent the raised points of the Braille letter.)

Reproduction of a Braille book and the Braille alphabet

The power to read is the greatest joy in the life of the Blind. The National Institute for the Blind supplies reading matter to practically the whole of the English-speaking Blind throughout the Empire.
operator to take down, in highly contracted Braille, a sermon as it was being delivered, and, if necessary, to transcribe it immediately into ink-print, on an ordinary type-writer, for sighted people to read.

**Conversing between the Blind and Deaf**

Another ingenious instrument has been invented whereby the blind and deaf may converse with each other in Braille. The sighted may thus hold converse with a person totally deaf and blind. The instrument is controlled by a duplicate series of six "buttons," one set of six for each person, which are made, as it were, to tap the Braille characters upon the finger-tips of each hand.

**Braille Music**

To those who take special interest in music it is gratifying to reflect that all this originated in an attempt made in 1829 by Louis Braille, a blind student of the School for the Blind in Paris, to write down the notes of music in characters made out of the permutation of six dots, each the size of a pinhead, arranged thus ::. Now, there are sixty-three variations of these six dots, and out of the infinite permutations thereof, all that is desired to be embossed, whether it be music, literature or mathematics, can easily and readily be transcribed into Braille. Indeed, outside colour-painting, it is almost impossible to imagine anything that cannot be so transcribed for the use of the blind.
In the early schools for the blind, music was greatly cultivated, and it has always been an important feature everywhere in up-to-date schools. The Braille system was not quickly introduced; indeed, it was not until 1868 (nearly forty years after its invention) that any serious attempt was made to teach it in this country. Dr. T. R. Armitage, a wealthy London physician, who himself had become almost sightless, spent £17,000 out of his own private means before the State took any particular notice of the cause of the education of the blind. He obtained an account of the Braille system from Paris, and published such information as he could glean. Utensils for embossing were provided, and a start was made. Then followed the famous Gardner bequest of £300,000. A Royal Commission sat, under the presidency of Lord Egerton of Tatton (a name held in high honour amongst Freemasons, by the way), and a definite forward movement began. The British and Foreign Blind Association was formed, which ultimately became the National Institute for the Blind, the headquarters and administrative centre of the ameliorative work of the Empire for the blind.

On the 19th March, 1914, the magnificently equipped building of the National Institute in Great Portland Street was opened by King George, just a few months prior to the beginning of the Great War.
Braille Music-Notation

Braille music-notation is a difficult problem to tackle, and is really only beginning to come fully into its own. Louis Braille did not write a treatise upon his invention: indeed, he only dimly foresaw its developments. The musical side developed but slowly; and although in 1888 an International Congress met in Cologne, when the system was codified, it is only recently that modern Braillists have completely revised the whole musical system, and brought Braille music-notation up to modern requirements.

In 1902 there was published (in Messrs. Novello's "Music Primers" series) the first complete sighted text-book on Braille music in any language, and one which has been the recognized text-book to date. This was compiled by the Music Publications Director of the National Institute, the writer of this booklet, but owing to the recent Conference and general Braille music revision, this has now been temporarily withdrawn from circulation in order to be brought up to date. The National Institute has just published a Key to Revised Braille Music-Notation, the result of the deliberations of a special committee of Braille music experts sitting under the Chairmanship of Mr. H. C. Warrilow, F.R.C.O., Organist and Director of Music to the Institute. The labours of a number
The Proofreader is John Ford who prepared the plates for the first Braille Bible. From the Institute’s presses issue vast quantities of religious books—Bible portions, Hymn Books, Prayer Books, etc. in both the Braille and Moon type.
of years have thus culminated in this satisfying and tangible result.

A Home of Music

The National Institute is a veritable home of music. The concert-room is equipped with a fine Chappell grand piano, as well as a beautiful Norman & Beard organ, and concerts and recitals of the highest type are constantly being given for both the blind and those of the general public who are interested and care to look in. Every Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock, a free Organ Recital is given by some eminent blind performer, and the public is invited not only to the recital, but afterwards to inspect the building, and see the various processes of embossing, etc.

Edition of Works by Blind Composers

Perhaps the most interesting recent musical development has been the inauguration, under the auspices of the National Institute, of a special ink-print edition known as the National Institute Edition of the Works of British Blind Composers. This edition is strictly limited to high-class music, so that musicians and the public may rely on the quality of the compositions.

No attempt is made to "play to the gallery," and nothing is eligible which is second-rate. The National Institute is financing the scheme, but not one penny of the profits on sales is appropriated,
This Edition, published under the auspices of the National Institute for the Blind, is exclusively devoted to selected works of high artistic value by Blind Composers.

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Eleven of these were placed in the list of "The Month's best Pianoforte Music," classified and graded by Mr. Ernest Fowles, F.R.A.M., in the July, 1922, issue of *The Music Teacher*.

* Selected for Competitive Festivals.

[See over for Organ & Vocal Music]
National Institute Edition of the Works of British Blind Composers

Played by Mr. H. L. Balfour, Mr. G. D. Cunningham, Mr. R. Goss Custard, Mr. H. F. Ellingford, Dr. Alfred Hollins, Mr. Arthur Meale, Mr. Herbert Walton, etc. etc.

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Orders may be sent direct to the London Agents:

EVANS & Co., Ltd. - 72 Wells Street, Oxford Street, W.

or to the Publishers: RYALLS & JONES, Ltd., 107 Grange Road, Birkenhead.
the whole scheme being founded and worked for the benefit of the blind composer. The edition is exquisitely engraved, and published by Messrs. Ryalls & Jones, Ltd., of Birkenhead, and can be ordered through any music dealer. As it is issued under a scheme for the encouragement of British musical art, it will be seen in due time that a very notable contribution will have been made to British music, and that the National Institute has indeed undertaken a very special work of national importance as affecting Music and musicians.

The scheme has greatly interested sighted musicians, so many of whom are impressed by the difficulties of their sightless brother-professionals in endeavouring to obtain a hearing for their inspirations in the larger world of the seeing. Some are sending contributions to the “Music Publications Fund” of the National Institute.

How Organists Can Help

Organists are already helping by the proceeds of Recitals, and by inviting blind performers to contribute to their Recital Series, and in this and other ways they are helping the National Institute to extend invaluable help to many a highly-gifted blind musician, who without such assistance would find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a hearing in these days of keen competition.

One of the composers on the Catalogue is not only blind, but deaf. Here is an unconquerable
spirit, indeed! Who would not rejoice to help such an one to recognition?

The following is an extract from the October number of "The Music Teacher," London (one of the most widely-read professional journals) written by its Editor, Mr. W. R. Anderson, Mus. Bac.:—

The Independence of the Blind

"I am always most glad to hear of the work of the blind. The fine thing about the blind man is that he wants to prove his ability in the open market. And how finely he is doing that, day by day, we all know—or ought to know. Those who are not familiar with the work of the National Institute should send for a copy of the Annual Report, which is just out. There is inspiration in it for the sighted musician who is inclined to be downcast at his lot. To read it does one good. The Institute’s Music Department continues to keep up a considerable output of music in Braille notation. During the past year it has produced nearly 1,500 volumes of music, and over 17,000 pamphlets on music. A wide range of music is covered, including not only the classics, but the latest piano and organ pieces, songs and lighter music.

"The music for standard examinations has been much in demand, and a boon to
PREPARING BRAILLE MUSIC PLATES

Hundreds of Blind Musicians are dependent on the Institute for their music. A department also finds employment for blind piano tuners.
blind candidates for the R.C.O. exams. is the organ in the Armitage Hall, which is a duplicate of that at the College."

Where We Can All Help

"I very much hope that the National Institute, which needs all the financial help it can get, may be in the thoughts of those of my readers who organise concerts and recitals this winter. It is an excellent thing to set aside at least part of the proceeds of one or two recitals for some worthy outside object; and there could be none worthier of help than the N.I.B. It is helping blind musicians to be self-supporting, and to make the best use of their often remarkable gifts.

"The edition of music which has lately been put forth has been mentioned already. Part of Mr. Watson's work is in trying to correct the erroneous popular opinion about the 'poor blind.' These men, anxious to toe the line with their sighted brethren, are depressed by being considered 'wonders' when they do so. But there are certain directions in which, obviously, they need the sighted man's help. In those directions the N.I.B. is assisting them tremendously, with the aid of those who admire their splendid pluck."

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A Prophet of old, foreseeing our day, yearningly uttered these remarkable words—"Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened." It is the privilege of each one of us, now, to help in the fulfilment of what was once a far-off vision—a seemingly all-too fantastical dream.

The National Institute has Branch Secretaries in many of the principal cities and towns all over the country, and their addresses are given over page. All information can be obtained from them, as to any or all of the multifarious activities of the National Institute for the Blind, of which music is but one amongst a great number. But from the comprehensive nature of its musical enterprise the range and detail of all its other interests in the great cause of the civilian blind may be gauged.

Many men, themselves blind, and famous in the world of the blind have been, or are, intimately associated with the Institute, among whom may be mentioned Dr. T. R. Armitage, M.D., Sir Arthur Pearson, Bart., Sir Washington Ranger, D.C.L., Captain E. B. B. Towse, V.C., Mr. H. M. Taylor, M.A., F.R.S., and Mr. G. F. Mowatt, J.P.
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of the
National Institute for the Blind


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