

BERNERS AND BAX

THOUGH contemporaries, Berners and Bax represent two extremes in English music. Berners, it might be fancifully said, is most at home in the salon, whose rather languid brilliance he lights up with epigram and sally—he passes from one guest to another, picking the guard of each and lightly mocking the exposed weakness—a sometimes awkward but always salubrious visitor. Among the victims that have felt his satire are the sentimental German *lied*, the blustering English folk-song, and the Spanish dance.

His broadest laugh is heard in the “Three Funeral Marches” where the heir to the rich aunt bemoans her sudden decease with such rich unction; and his subtlest gesture is in

the Waltzes, whose sentimental associations he dismisses with good-humored chaff.

In a world of unconscious musical humorists, is it not a prize to find one who wears the cap and bells by royal patent?

Bax is the romantic weaver of dreams—no gilded smartness of a salon for him, nor bustling city either. He might have stepped out of a fancy of Barrie's brain, and his music has just the same quality of "fey."

A visit to Russia and his love for the legendary Celtic lore have been the two predominating influences in his musical inspiration. More prolific than any of his age in England, Bax has gradually reached a more incisive and direct utterance, of which stage the piano quartet is nicely typical.

Robust and even provocative in theme, it is the concentrated expression of what in an earlier Bax would have reached three separate movements. There is a great deal to be said for the age of the telegraphic code.

Arthur Bliss