

The Dog Orchestra.

BY JOHN WEST.

[From Photographs by Marceau, San Francisco.]



THE DOG ORCHESTRA—A DRESS REHEARSAL.



HE "Dog Orchestra" is the property of Mr. Louis Lavater, and a very respectable property it is. Anyone with a head for figures can calculate the profits on the investment. Mr. Lavater pays from eighteenpence to five shillings (never more) for a dog, and the orchestra brings him in £50 or £60 a week.

The orchestra consists of six dogs, gorgeously dressed, and provided with specially made instruments. They are not remarkable for pedigree, but they *are* remarkable for intelligence. Let us introduce these canine instrumentalists. Commencing on the left-hand side of the photograph above we have Jack, the trombone player. Next comes Tim, the bass; followed by Patsey, the first violin; Prince, the big drum; Peter, the cymbals; and Bob, the small drum. The bows, drum-sticks, etc., are fixed to the dogs' paws by means of little bracelets.

Mr. Lavater has been a public entertainer (and a lover of dogs) all his life. Many years ago, whilst performing

with a circus at Copenhagen, he resolved to set about getting his dog orchestra together—for it had long been his pet idea. He therefore went to the Dogs' Home in the Danish capital and paid five kroner for a nondescript cur. He took that cur home, fastened a stick on his paw, and persuaded him to beat a tea-tray. This same mongrel's musical education was in a fair way to be completed, when his master had to get rid of him on account of his pugnacious disposition.

Here is Jack, the trombone player. Now, it is a comparatively easy matter to get a dog to stand upon his hind legs, but give him a relatively heavy instrument to hold in his front paws the while, and see if he does not overbalance himself and relapse into his natural position. Jack had to be taught to stand on his hind legs for half an hour at a time; next, to balance himself, holding the trombone in position; then to work the instrument properly; and, finally, to act in conjunction with his colleagues. And this with six different dogs, having six different instru-



"A LITTLE QUIET PRACTICE."



A MUSICIAN OF IMPORTANCE.

ments, to say nothing of the "funny" dog, who makes blunders purposely, and is betrayed by his neighbour, who leaves his instrument and "informs" in his master's ear! The thing seems impossible, but was not so to Mr. Lavater, to whose skill and patience and humour and fertility of imagination the dog orchestra is a living monument.

But look at Jack, the trombone player. Long association with that doleful instrument has made Jack a mournful dog. It took him three months to learn to keep his balance. Mr. Lavater was almost in despair at the end of the first, and bought Jack a pair of cymbals, each weighing 8oz. "This," thought Jack, "is *not* beyond me," and he pounded away at the "sounding brasses" with no regard for tune. This dog has had an adventurous career. He was once locked up in Basle for wandering at large without a muzzle. He swam across Niagara rapids, and has been "held up" by robbers in America.

It is Mrs. Lavater who makes the dresses for members of the orchestra. Tim, the bass viol player, next depicted, wears an almost painfully sumptuous suit of bright green satin. He is a Maltese,

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is Tim, and this is probably why he wears at all times an air of dignified alertness, as who should say, "I'm doing my very best, but don't trifle with me." Tim's immediate predecessor had a rooted objection to all forms of work. He was as obstinate as he was lazy, and so he had to go.

Mr. Lavater was years getting together his orchestra and rehearsing before he ventured to appear in public. The *début* took place in a theatre near Amsterdam, and the trainer won't forget it this side of his grave. "They came out reluctantly," he said, "dazed by the glare of the footlights. When they *were* out, they sat there looking helplessly at each other as if to say: 'What on earth are we doing here?' Then they did wrong things at wrong moments. Prince fell over his big drum. The others got up and tore aimlessly about the stage, scared by the trailing of their instruments behind them; and to crown all Jack, the trombone 'man,' fell into the (human) orchestra. My Dutch audience were hysterical with merriment, and even my wife, who stood in the wings, couldn't help laughing, in spite of her vexation and dismay."

The first violin is next represented—a quiet, sober dog, of evident culture and re-



PATSEY—THE FIRST VIOLIN.



AN ENERGETIC PLAYER.

finement. Not even the highly inappropriate clown cap, stuck rakishly on one side of his head, can detract from this animal's musicianly appearance. Patsey—a hideous name for a canine Sarasate—is clothed in a dress of green and mauve-striped silk. We fear his real character belies his appearance, however. He is always in trouble, being—like Esau—a mighty hunter, mainly of cats and people's pets generally.

Prince, who plays the big drum and whose portrait is next given, has but one fault—he is too excitable, too strenuous. Look at him in the photo. reproduced on the front page of this article. He is panting with excitement; his sharp little teeth are showing; he is pounding away for dear life. And yet he occupies the position of deputy-conductor under Mr. Lavater himself! However, although Prince may lack the composure of a

Mottl, a Richter, or a Seidl, yet he makes up for it in feverish zeal. He is a Yorkshire, and affects a suit of pink and white satin.

"The first big drummer I had," remarked Mr. Lavater, "I bought at Frankfort. He was a half-bred terrier. I took him away and tied him up, but he broke loose time after time and ran back to his master, who was a stableman. He was a queer dog. At rehearsals, and even on the stage during public performances, he would wait until I wasn't looking, and then he'd give his nearest neighbour a sharp nip. For a long time I could never make out what caused those frightful yowls now and again, because, after biting his fellow, Prince would thump his drum anxiously, as though his soul was in his work and he wanted to get along with the show."

This dog (the predecessor, that is, of the "Prince" shown in our photo.—the same name is handed down, so to speak, from dog to dog) went mad on board a steamer going from Rotterdam to Antwerp. It was the funniest sight imaginable. The dog had the deck to himself in less than ten seconds. The captain wanted to have Prince thrown overboard, but Mr. Lavater wouldn't hear of his property being disposed of in that way. The trainer threw some water over the dog, and that brought him round—for a time. Not long afterwards he went mad again, and finally ran himself to death in the streets of Antwerp. Another member of the orchestra was torn to pieces by pariah dogs in the streets of Constantinople. The present big drummer, Prince, was bought from a butcher in Hamburg, so they are a cosmopolitan lot, these performers.

It took one or two of the dogs some time to forget their former owners after passing into Mr. Lavater's possession. Bob, the small drum, belonged to a widow



"WARBLING A LITTLE THING OF HIS OWN."

who kept a perfumery shop, and for years that dog would run after ladies with black dresses.

Next comes Peter, the cymbal player. Many vicissitudes has Peter seen. Originally he belonged to a Paris *chiffonier*, or rag-picker. He used to go out o' nights with his master and mind the little cart, whilst unconsidered trifles were being gathered in. Peter is an Irish terrier, and he is a little sentimental, as may perhaps be judged from the portrait, in which Peter seems to be crooning a simple love song, accompanying himself on the cymbals. This is the manner of the whole performance, as told by Mr. Lavater:—

"The dogs follow me on to the stage and take their seats—the small drum first, then the big drum, the bass, the first violin, the cymbals, and last of all, the serious trombone. I stand up in the middle and commence by playing 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' A waltz comes next, and then the dogs follow with 'The Last Rose of Summer'—played, I should explain, by means of bells on their paws, and not by their several instruments. It was an awful job to get them to play the bells properly. Either they would all play together or not at all. Later on in the performance, I call upon the dogs to sound a preliminary chord. They do so, and I say, 'That is a false chord.' Prince, the big drum, then hops up officiously and whispers something in my ear, whereupon I say, aloud, 'Oh, is he, indeed? Tim, I hear it is you who are out of tune.'"

Mr. Lavater tells us that each dog knows his own dress, so that the moment it is held up he runs forward to push his little head into it. The dogs are fed well—their ordinary diet consisting of biscuit, soup, bread, rice, and occasionally boiled cabbage. Each acting member has an understudy, so as to avoid hitches when the unforeseen happens. A former "big drum" came to a

bad end on board an Atlantic liner by swallowing a lot of tow or jute, with which the engineers had been cleaning the machinery.

The last member of the orchestra to be introduced is Bob, the little drum. Bob is a water-spaniel, whose lines are cast in pleasant places. He is a painstaking dog, devoted to his profession. He is apt to thieve a little, but he is very lovable with it. "He forgot himself one night," remarked Mr. Lavater, sternly, "and made away with a pound of steak. I didn't beat him; I never do. I ignored him. He became penitent at once, and tried to attract my attention, but I would not look up from my paper. At last he was struck with an idea. He knew that whenever he did a smart thing he was applauded, so patting my knee eagerly with his paw to attract my attention for a

moment, he began to parade across the hearth-rug on his hind legs!

Asked as to whether the dogs and their instruments were interchangeable, so to speak, Mr. Lavater sadly replied that they were not. "One night I tried it," he said. "I put the first violin on the big drum, and *vice-versâ*. The result was comic in the extreme. The big drum began to bang his fiddle as though he would knock a hole through it, whilst the first violin seized his stick and began to

draw it slowly across his drum."

At the same time, the dogs have a keen sense of duty. Mr. Lavater was one evening taking them in his brougham to the theatre, when suddenly a Volunteer band struck up outside. The effect was extraordinary. The dogs leaped up in their baskets. One commenced to saw the air, another to clap his paws together, and so on. They thought they had received their cue, and they hastened to respond according to their lights, notwithstanding the trying circumstances.



THE SMALL DRUM.