The article which follows is by one of the more unexpected writers on indexing, Constant Lambert (1905-1951), prodigy in his time amongst twentieth-century British composers, hero still of a small but strong cult. Though he doesn't now get into all musical dictionaries, and current recordings of his music are few, Constant Lambert will be remembered on the musical front at least for Rio Grande suite (he preferred his Piano Concerto) and in prose for his Music Ho! which from 1934 educated most of us in modern musical thought. This is still in print in the USA.* Lambert had his prejudices, but they were studied ones, and as composer, executant and conductor he knew in all musical spheres what he was writing about.

But Constant Lambert as theoretician on the index? This seems unlikely until you know more of the character of the man. Keynes called him 'potentially the most brilliant person I have ever met', and there is a school of thought which regards him at least as much a loss to literature as to music. In fact, Lambert was a man of many parts and did write a considerable amount of journalism. Among topics he took were the cinema and railway music, and the journals to which he contributed were very varied. A man of questing mind and difficult personal life (he is acknowledged as a basis for the composer Moreland in Anthony Powell's novel sequence A dance to the music of time) he seems to have had the need to express himself in media other than music.

So ultimately it is not too surprising that 'What, no index?' appeared in Lilliput 22(6) June 1948, an article to which Geraldine Beare has drawn our attention, and which is reprinted here as a curiosity. I am not going to comment on the article except to say that it is expressed with Lambert's usual wit, his line being that indexes may please from an aesthetic point of view. You can read it now, reprinted by courtesy of Syndication International. Accompanying the article were two cartoons by Hoffnung, one by the title, a version of the 'Wot, no...' figure, Mr Chad, which was all the rage then.

One final point. To see how far the author followed his precepts, I checked the indexes to Lambert's own books. By 1948, the date of this article, he had published Music Ho! in two editions, both indexed. It was to reach a third, the last edited with a useful introduction by Arthur Hutchings. It may be assumed that Lambert did his own indexes, as he initials them. Disappointingly in a sense, the indexes have no scattering of the Lambert wit and are largely confined to names. Some forenames are omitted, but I suppose Stravinsky and Wagner don't require such pedantry, and some entries have the dreaded 'strings' of page numbers. The indexes in the new editions were revised.

Whether there is any other aspect to Lambert and indexing which remains to be discovered I don't know, but this is certainly a good example of his writing, which you may enjoy. As for specialized aspects of music and indexing—we should welcome an article on this subject for this journal.

J. D. Lee

What, no index?

Constant Lambert

'The book would be improved by a map.' How often has some young author had the gilt taken off the gingerbread of his self-congratulation by that damning phrase at the end of a review. But that is as nothing to the chagrin he sustains when told 'It is absurd that this book should have no index.'

In the case of a map he can console himself with various excuses: (a) he had not been asked for one, (b) he was never very good at drawing maps anyway, (c) what did they think his book was—a detective story? In the case of the index he has no such frail excuses ready to hand for reasons which the average reader may not realise.

To start with, some publishers are brutal enough to insist that the author himself shall supply an index. This I can assure you is an almost intolerable burden for the inexperienced author. The house becomes littered with scraps of paper, hasty memos on the backs of laundry bills, and such blue-pencil scrawlings on the walls as ‘Don't forget the letter Q.’ Finally, when the dread task is finished, he discovers all too late that in his daring survey of Napoleonic history, ‘Elba and After,’ he has left Waterloo out of the W’s because he thought it had already been listed under B for Battle. He is thus convicted of incompetence.

If he feels unequal to the task but still has to fulfil his contract he is forced into the humiliating and costly expedient of employing a professional hack to do the job for him. Not only does this involve wild risks owing to the fact that professional indexers combine extreme technical ability with a complete indifference to the theme of the book, it also means that the author has received even less than the exiguous sum promised him.

*and is likely to be reprinted later this year by Chatto in the UK.

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by the publishers. He broods over this in the small hours and is thus convicted not only of timidity but of avarice. Should he boldly shove the thing out minus index on the public, he is hauled over the coals by the highbrow weeklies.

After he has got over that temporary annoyance he begins to wonder precisely why he left the book in that condition and is convicted of the most humiliating fault of all—subconscious artistic jealousy. He could not bear the thought of the indexer as a rival.

It must be obvious to any student of the subject that indexers are artists manqués. Not only does their work save the hasty and/or malign reviewer an enormous amount of time, it is frequently read for its own sake. Hence the fact that some authors have deliberately worked at their indexes in order to defeat their prospective rivals. The first to do this as far as I can make out was Samuel Butler who in the index to a perfectly serious travel book Alps and Sanctuaries inserts such entertaining but unexpected pieces of musical information as 'Fourth, hippopotamus grunts a,' and other oddities.

An index gains in humour in proportion to the seriousness of the book and for many years I thought that the best example of this incongruity was the index to Philip Heseltine's life of Delius, particularly as I knew the author so well. But I found out, at first to my disappointment though eventually to my delight, that the author in a mixture of laziness and mistrust had handed the thing over to a hack, who showed that almost complete indifference to the main theme which as I have pointed out is one of the hall-marks of the true indexer. What an artist the man was, particularly in his use of the element of surprise! It is true that Delius is referred to as 'Mother, a, Reclaims her Child from the Den of an Astrologist' or follow up 'Elephant on the Rampage' with 'Wigwams, etc., demolished by an Elephant' (after carefully lulling one with the comparatively dull 'Waggoner attacked by Spanish Lady')—who could fail to read on? And for a moment I so misjudged the author as to think he was just out for dramatic effect. It was not until I found that 'Explosive Oysters' were also listed as 'Oysters, Explosive' and that even 'Bridge of Sighs, the' turned up as 'Sighs, the Bridge of' that I realised the author was an undoubted master of the diagonal style and that, in spite of his full-blooded material, subtle arrangement meant more to him than crude melodrama. Who else would arouse one's interest by 'Astrologist, the Den of an' only to whet it still further by 'Mother, a, Reclaims her Child from the Den of an Astrologist' or follow up 'Elephant on the Rampage' with 'Wigwams, etc., demolished by an Elephant' (after carefully lulling one with the comparatively dull 'Rampage, Elephant on the')? But it would be a mistake to give a flippant view of this anonymous Victorian who seems to have reached the height of his powers in 1871, the Paris Commune not unnaturally giving him ample opportunity to display his flair for the macabre, returning ruthlessly to his point as in 'Paris, fearful Vengeance in . . . 328'—'Summary Execution of a Woman in Paris . . . 328'—'Summary Execution of a Woman in Paris . . . 328'—'Woman in Paris, Summary Execution of . . . 328,' or 'Hideous Scene in Pere-la-Chaise,' 'Pere-la-Chaise, Hideous Scene in,'—after which it is a relief to return to the English calm of 'Cold Water thrown upon Official Authorities' with its expected sequel 'Official Authorities, Cold Water thrown upon.'

The only trouble about reading indexes from the aesthetic point of view is that eventually you become quite incapable of using them from the practical point of view. For example, the other day I tried to find out the origin and date of 'Tis the Last Rose of Summer,' a simple enough matter one would think. I not unnaturally began by looking up 'Summer, Last Rose of, 'tis the' but drew a blank. And so on through all the other combinations with equal result. Eventually I made a bold guess at the facts and let it go at that. I then found that I had omitted to do only one thing. It had never occurred to me to look up the song under 'Tis.'