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Though it was never designed to accommodate musical performance, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham (which was opened in 1854 and was an enlarged rebuilding of the famous glass and iron structure first erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851) quickly established itself as the most important single location for public music-making in the United Kingdom. For almost fifty years the orchestral concerts conducted by August Manns provided weekly performances which set new standards and introduced a range of new repertory (not least British) unparalleled anywhere in its time. The giant choral festivals offered performers and listeners a musical experience of an entirely new kind, as well as opening up the choral literature (especially of Handel) to vast new audiences. Numerous other activities served a range of musical, social and educational functions well into the twentieth century, which the unique physical context of the Palace itself often helped to shape.

Since its spectacular destruction by fire in 1936, the once familiar patterns of music-making have been long forgotten. This is the first book to reconstruct the musical history of the Crystal Palace. In doing so, Michael Musgrave also offers a unique survey of British musical life stretching from the Victorian period to the eve of the Second World War. Fully illustrated and with valuable catalogues of performers and repertory, the book will be of interest to students and scholars of nineteenth- and twentieth-century music, British social history and architecture, as well as to the general music enthusiast.

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*For Liza*

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## *Preface*

I first became interested in the music of the Crystal Palace whilst researching the first performances of Brahms's orchestral music in England: I had no idea of the true extent of its importance. I soon discovered that Brahms formed only a very small part of its musical story: that a considerable slice of what was soon to be regarded as the standard orchestral repertory had first been heard in Britain at the Crystal Palace. And when reading the programmes to find out more, a whole world of music-making of all kinds, decade on decade, began to emerge. Moreover, the literature concerning the musicians of the later nineteenth century revealed that, for them, the Crystal Palace was one of the central venues: they all knew its musical life intimately and looked to it for a musical lead, and more than musicians, the lives of countless people were touched by the role of music in other public contexts over the eighty years or so of its existence from 1854–1936. Yet none of this accorded with the status given the music of the Palace in the modern historical literature: apart from a few brief dictionary entries, it was for the modern reader a non-subject. Thus the reconstruction of the musical life as a whole became an imperative: not just the music performed, but how it came to be performed in this extraordinary building which so captured the Victorian imagination, though it had never been designed for music. Hence the scope and character of the present book. No such study can ever be wholly comprehensive, since it rests on the blessing and the curse of all work of the kind: the availability and non-availability of programmes in providing the essential detail of what took place or was planned to take place. Crystal Palace programmes are never to be found in complete runs of more than a few years without significant omissions, and the programmes for the early years are very rare indeed. Of several projects which have

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emerged from this work, the provision of a union catalogue of sources in different libraries is one of the most pressing.

The importance of the programmes signals my special debt of gratitude to three libraries which have been particularly helpful to my work: to the staff of the Library and of the Portraits Gallery of the Royal College of Music, for access to their unique holdings in this period of British music and for their response to numerous enquiries; to the staff of the Music Library of the British Library, who kept their extensive runs of programmes on what seemed like permanent standby for me for months on end; and to the Local History Library of Bromley Central Library. Other libraries I have consulted have included the University of London Library; Goldsmith's College Library; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Local History Library of Lewisham; West Norwood Library; Lower Norwood Library; Upper Norwood Library; the Local History Library of Croydon; the Greater London Record Office; the Public Record Office; the Guildhall Library; the Minet Library, Lambeth; the Coke Collection; the Heritage Centre of the Salvation Army. I acknowledge the permission of the following libraries to reproduce illustrations from materials in their collections; the Guildhall Library (Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 18, 19); the Portraits Gallery of the Royal College of Music (Nos. 13, 15), the British Architectural Library, RIBA, London (No. 2), the Local History Library of Bromley Library (No. 20); the Salvation Army (No. 21); the Greater London Record Office (Nos. 8, 19). I am grateful for the supportive interest of many friends. I particularly wish to acknowledge the benefit of conversations with Professor Cyril Ehrlich, who freely shared his unique understanding of the period with me. Quotations from *Shaw's Music* are by permission of the Society of Authors on behalf of the Bernard Shaw Estate. Finally I wish to thank Miss Mary Cullwick to whom I was introduced through Celia Clarke of the Royal College of Music Library, and who has a special connection with the Palace as a close friend of many years standing of Louise Bonten, the granddaughter of August Manns: not only did Miss Cullwick provide me with some valuable materials, but above all with a real sense of a continuity from the great days of the Palace down to my own attempts to capture something of its achievements. I am only sorry that it has taken so long for her to see the results.

Michael Musgrave  
London