

AN ORATORIO LIKE NO OTHER.

THE habitual concert-goer finds he cannot keep away from an unusual musical programme even when all the sights of ancient Rome are at hand, not to speak of as radiant an Easter Sunday afternoon as can be imagined.

The unusual concert in question was the last of the winter series conducted by Bernardino Molinari in the Augusteo. Musical people who do not know Rome



Arthur Honegger.

may be interested in a word about this singular concert hall. It is built in the ancient Mausoleum of Augustus. You go from the blazing streets into passages chilly as a vault. You go up a good many steps, and then find yourself in a big circular concert hall, rather bigger than our Queen's Hall, and reminding you somewhat of the Albert Hall, though it is not nearly so huge.

The programme at the concert contained Malipiero's "St. Francis of Assisi" and Arthur Honegger's "King David."

QUEER AND EXACTING.

Of the former I prefer to say nothing, not being able to find anything favourable to say. Of the latter one could say much, and first of all that it was a privilege to be introduced to such a queer and exacting work by so capital a performance. Bernardino Molinari is an excellent conductor, and he gave himself heart and soul to Honegger's work.

It is an oratorio like no other. Honegger, who is Jewish (Swiss by birth and French by upbringing), has treated the heroic old story with a vigour, enthusiasm and realism which would make the average "Three Choirs" Biblical oratorio look very pale.

The narrative is spoken. The musical numbers are mostly short (choruses; tenor, soprano, and contralto solos). The most extended are David's lament on the death of Saul and Jonathan (spoken, to an accompaniment of orchestra and wailing women—a thrilling movement) and David's dance before the Ark. In the latter there are signs of Stravinsky's influence. But on the whole Honegger is strikingly individual and original.

FIERCE TRIBAL ANNALS.

He has looked with fresh eyes on those fierce tribal annals, and in his music he depicts the ancestors of his race as he sees them—passionate, headstrong, furiously self-centred—Asiatics, poetic and wild.

A mistake was made on Sunday in separating Parts II. and III. by a long interval. The whole work is short, and the "wait" destroyed the atmosphere that had gradually been created. At first the narrator's intrusions between the short musical numbers made for scrapiness of effect, but this was overcome, and by the end of the tremendous Dervish-like dance Honegger had the audience won. The final part (beginning with the episode of Bathsheba, and ending with David's death) came as an anti-climax.

"King David" was composed in 1921 when Honegger was 29. It ought to be heard in England. If it is done in London as excellently as in Rome it will thoroughly stir all hearers. **MARCATO.**