Review: Dr. Basil Harwood's New Organ Concerto

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 51, No. 812 (Oct. 1, 1910), p. 641

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/905979>

Accessed: 15-02-2016 03:01 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

DR. BASIL HARWOOD'S NEW ORGAN
CONCERTO.*

Dr. Harwood's Concerto for organ and orchestra was one of the features in the recent Gloucester festival. It is an important work, and deserves special notice. The composer has somewhat departed from the traditional treatment of such works. In place of the continuous contrasting of the solo instrument with the orchestra we have here a work in which both are much more brought together; indeed, save in isolated places, they are seldom heard apart. No doubt there is much to be said for this kind of treatment, and certainly it is done with great mastery by the composer, but one misses the old effects of dialogue and especially the relief and delight one got from hearing the pure diapason tone alone. The work is laid out in three movements. In the initial movement a short, improvisation-like introduction leads to the first subject, which is given out by the orchestra. It is one which calls for considerable freedom rhythmically, and taken with proper elasticity it has much breadth, though perhaps, on the whole, it is in this quality that one finds the work most lacking. After being taken up by the organ and being subjected to some varied treatment, there is a vigorous re-statement of the theme, given out now on the full organ in broader time and with majestic effect. This leads to the second subject in F major, which is of a suave, graceful character. After being introduced by the orchestra it is taken up in a highly ornamented form by the organ. In the development section the two themes are discussed at some length in most interesting fashion. Here, as elsewhere, the passage-writing for the solo instrument is of a masterly character. In the recapitulation, the second subject makes its appearance in the tonic major, the theme being very effectively allotted to the pedals, with brilliant semiquaver passages above it. After a fine crescendo on a dominant pedal, when the theme is given to the orchestra, it reappears with the most impressive effect, being now assigned to full organ and orchestra. This is the real culmination of the movement, and it reveals singular breadth and dignity; after it the short Coda is almost anti-climactic.

The second movement—an Intermezzo—is cast in a chaste and delicate vein, and is admirably suited to show off the quiet stops of the organ. In mood it recalls Elgar, and the idyllic character of the opening bars (deliciously scored for muted strings) is preserved to the end of the movement, which breathes throughout an atmosphere of tranquillity and tenderness.

In the last movement the Rondo form is used, to which a certain freedom is imparted by episodes of a recitative-like character for organ and orchestra. In these the composer makes much use of certain solo stops of the modern organ, notably the clarinet and orchestral oboe. When the actual instruments are at hand in the orchestra, it seems scarcely justifiable to use what must be at best but poor imitations of the real thing, and when performed with orchestra it will probably be found expedient to play these passages upon stops exemplifying pure organ tone. The scoring in these episodes is of a particularly happy kind, some charming effects of an entirely new character being obtained from the celesta. At first sight it seemed curious to include this instrument in the score of a work of this character, but the result shows that Dr. Harwood had admirably calculated his effect, for, in combination with the organ, it gives

very much the idea of an extension of the tone-colour of the Willis Lieblichs, 8 and 4. A striking feature of the movement is the introduction of a fugato section founded upon the principal theme of the first movement. Here great demands are made upon the pedal technique of the player, as is also the case in the cadenza, which presents the only instance of a pedal *glissando* known to the writer. The cadenza itself is a brilliant fantasia upon material heard in previous parts of the work, and, though short, is extremely effective. A final presentation of the first theme of the work, given out with the full weight of organ and orchestra, leads to a Coda (Presto) characterized by some brilliant passage-writing, with which the work ends.

Though thematically the work has not quite the distinction we are accustomed to expect from Dr. Harwood, the way in which the themes are handled is exceedingly interesting; the orchestration, too, is very modern in character, and, moreover, the composer knows how to work up to great masses of sound, and how to secure dignified and imposing effects. The concerto calls for a fine technique, and it is such a work as the modern organist will revel in getting up. Like Handel's overtures as issued by Walsh, it will be found 'very apt for the improvement of the hand'—and, one may add, the foot.

MODERN ORGANS AND ORGAN MUSIC.

BY FREDERICK KITCHENER.

That the organ is the 'king of instruments' is an assertion which the average British music-lover accepts without question. If this assertion was true when first made, many years ago (the organ at that time being a comparatively clumsy and unmanageable instrument, to play upon which involved no small amount of sheer animal strength and physical endurance), how much more true it is in these days of orchestral stops, pneumatic action, and labour-saving contrivances! Given the most perfect of stops, no player could possibly give much pleasure to his hearers while the actual effort of performance caused him great discomfort, if not positive pain. What a vast amount of mental energy is expended by enthusiastic protagonists upon the question of the improvement of the modern organ! That a considerable number of persons, competent no doubt, and thoroughly understanding the subject argued upon, should differ greatly in their individual ideas concerning what does and what does not constitute a genuine innovatory improvement in organ construction, is in itself a healthy sign of the importance generally attached to the matter. While allowing for and admiring the high pitch of excellence in organ-building already attained to, those of us who are young may confidently expect that changes, no less far-reaching and wonderful than those contemplated or carried into execution during the last few years in other branches of human activity, will take place in both the mechanical and artistic designs of the organ of the future.

Every musician knows what an immense advance in the style of pianoforte composition was caused by the extension of the keyboard of the instrument. It is no exaggeration to say that a revolution in Beethoven's pianoforte conceptions was largely the result of the greatly increased opportunities of self-expression which this mechanical extension afforded him. Comparing the pianoforte with the organ, no one will deny that the improvements made in the construction of the former during Beethoven's lifetime were relatively of

* Concerto in D major for Organ and Orchestra. No. 10 of Original Compositions for the Organ. By Basil Harwood. Novello & Company, Ltd.