Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 21, No. 448 (Jun. 1, 1880), p. 301

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3355714>

Accessed: 12-12-2015 11:33 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 and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

chapter; for as the author has been permitted to inspect some of the best specimens of their manufacture, he is enabled minutely to analyse the differences of material and workmanship. It is of course difficult for any person who has not made a deep study of this subject to avoid being imposed upon, and amateurs therefore should feel highly indebted to Mr. Davidson for the advice he gives them on the choice of an instrument. Speaking of the various devices resorted to by unscrupulous "repairers" to trap the unwary, he tells us that often when in old violins the belly becomes fractured, the other parts remain comparatively little worse; then, he says, the fraudulent renovator recommends a new "lid" or table to be put on, "in order to have the original one for the purpose of building up an apparently genuine Cremona; at other times a new back, or neck is added, when the original one may chance to be fractured, on the plea that such would be more suitable, so as to give strength and solidity to the instrument. Several thoughtless owners have had bitterly to regret their sanction to this base roguery, whilst in other cases no such sanction had ever been given, but merely a recommendation upon the part of the repairer. In the latter instance, after such an abstraction, the part is made up, and copied as closely as possible from the original; the instrument is returned, and eventually passes by the inexperienced for a genuine old violin, the chief merits being largely dwelt upon, and this excellence often attributed to the very part so abstracted." After some very good remarks upon the bow, the rosin, and the strings, and also upon the "Cremona Varnish," the secret of which we fear is lost, a few anecdotes more or less connected with stringed instruments are given, and with an alphabetical list of violin makers and an account of the various collections the work ends. Every credit must be given to Mr. Davidson both for the care and attention he has bestowed upon collecting the materials for his task, and the excellent manner in which he has arranged them. To the professor as well as to the amateur the book will prove invaluable for reference.

St. John the Baptist. A Sacred Oratorio. The words selected and the music composed by William Taylor, Mus. Bac., Oxon. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE title-page of this Oratorio informs us that it was "composed in the year 1862, and first performed by the Kidderminster Philharmonic Society, November 12, 1867." So much, perhaps, it was good for the author to tell us, seeing that since that time a work on the same subject has been produced and won its way to fame. Mr. Taylor, however, must be under no fear that he will be considered a poacher on any musical preserve, for although he works on the old lines, he thinks for himself, and his music bears throughout unmistakable evidence of artistic skill and earnestness of purpose. That we do not see equal proof of inspiration must not be accepted as a reason why "St. John the Baptist" should not be written; for the truthful critic cannot disguise the fact that, although talent abounds, genius is rare; and whilst many a sacred work therefore deservedly obtains a recognition due to its merits, but very few strike so truly to the heart of the listener as to glorify and deepen a text already held in reverence. It is impossible, of course, to do full justice to so important a composition as an Oratorio by merely perusing the vocal score with pianoforte accompaniment; for so much of the beauty of a musical work resides, or should reside, in the instrumentation, that it is almost like judging of a picture by an engraving; but Mr. Taylor has very judiciously indicated some of the principal points of the orchestration, and we are therefore enabled partially to imagine the general effect. The only purely instrumental movements in the work are the Overture and a Funeral March. The Overture commences with a subject in G major, with an arpeggio accompaniment (afterwards used in the Chorus "Holy, holy!") and then follows a Fugue in the tonic minor, well written, but not amply developed. The Funeral March is an appropriately pathetic movement, in E flat minor, which seems, however, to want the varied colouring of the orchestra for its due effect. Of the double-choruses throughout the Oratorio we must speak in high praise, No. 1, "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge," and No. 19, "In the beginning" (which contains some remarkably vigorous writing), being highly favourable specimens of the

composer's sound musical knowledge and power of combining voices and orchestra. The Choruses "O Lord, we will praise Thee," "Lo, this is our God," and "Blessed is the man" (the last a brief, but melodious, choral movement), have also much merit; and a tenor Solo, "He was in the world," with Chorus, "God so loved the world," commencing with the voices in turn from acute to grave, has many charming points. Unquestionably the choral movements are the best in the work; for although we have cited the names of some with which we are specially pleased, there is no really weak writing in any one. The least attractive solos are those given to *John the Baptist*. The soprano Aria "Ho! every one that thirsteth" has a refined and graceful subject; but all the pieces in which the voices are combined seem more spontaneous than the songs or recitatives. A Trio, "Thou wilt keep him," combined with Chorus, "Trust ye in the Lord," deserves mention as a good example of pure vocal writing, and as a proof that the composer has studied in a good school. On the whole the text is well selected; but, as we have already said, the chief merit is in the choral pieces; and we can scarcely wonder therefore that the words for these movements have been perhaps more carefully chosen than those for the solo portions. Mr. Taylor, however, deserves high praise for the manner in which he has performed his double task, and this we conscientiously and unreservedly award him.

Henry Smart's Compositions for the Organ. Analysed by John Broadhouse. Reprinted from the *Musical Standard*. [W. Reeves.]

Any artist who aids in disseminating a knowledge of the organ compositions of the late Mr. Henry Smart is a contributor to the highest testimonial that can be raised to his memory; and the little book now before us shows that Mr. Broadhouse is not only an earnest but an able toiler in the cause. Brief as are the extracts given from his works, they are amply sufficient to illustrate the remarks upon their characteristics, and sufficient also, we sincerely hope, to stimulate the reader to explore a mine which displays such tempting treasure upon its surface. We quite agree with Mr. Broadhouse that all those pieces written by Mr. Smart especially for the organ must be performed upon the organ only, if their due effect is to be realised. "Played on the pianoforte," he says "(when passages will admit of it), they seem to require an instrument infinitely more noble—more epic, we were about to say—than the 'drawing-room orchestra';" and certainly, although good music can never quite lose its intrinsic beauty, this is an absolute truth as regards some of his finest pieces, particularly the Andante in G major, "the *motif* of which," Mr. Broadhouse reminds us, "seems to demand to be played on the grand and nobler 8-foot tone of a cathedral organ, and to be heard in the grand and nobler space of a cathedral aisle." We should especially recommend a study of some of the themes with variations named in this book as a proof that work of this kind can have but an ephemeral existence when attempted by those who can merely split chords into *arpeggio*, and surround the subject with pretty passages. Mr. Smart's organ works should live, not only from their own intrinsic merits, but because they show that a real artist, instead of falling into the fashion of the time, throws his whole energy into reforming its abuses.

Organ Compositions. By Gustav Merkel. *Zehn Vor- und-Nachspiele*, Op. 134. *Sechste Sonate*, Op. 137. [Leipzig: J. Rieter-Biedermann.]

AMONG organ composers of the present day, Herr Gustav Merkel holds a foremost place. His works are distinguished by sound learning and refined taste. While the requirements of modern feeling are by no means disregarded, the nobility and dignity of style befitting the king of instruments are preserved, and we may therefore regard the Dresden court organist as a legitimate representative of the school of Bach and Mendelssohn, the two composers who have shed the greatest lustre on this department of musical production. The ten commencing and concluding voluntaries are published in two books, five in each book. They are all equally devotional in style, the writing being mostly in four-part counterpoint, though but little use is