

English and Foreign Cathedral Services

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from "Benvenuto Cellini" (Berlioz); Pianoforte Soli (Bach, Liszt).

Ischl.—Concert of Herren H. Franke and A. Grünfeld (August 25): Sonata for Pianoforte and Violin (Schumann); Violin Concerto, Andante and Finale (Mendelssohn); Fantaisie-Caprice for Violin (Vieuxtemps); Pianoforte Solos (Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Raff, Chopin); Fantasia on Themes, by Wagner (Grünfeld).

CORRESPONDENCE.

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN CATHEDRAL SERVICES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I have been present this morning at the High Mass at the cathedral of St. Stephen's in this city, where the immortal Josef Haydn was a chorister; and have had the great pleasure of hearing one of his compositions performed with an exquisite beauty and precision which certainly made a near approach to that absolute perfection which should characterise all our acts of worship, and at the attainment of which some of us humbly aim in the simpler services of our own church.

The choir consisted of not more than eight or ten boys, soprani and alti, and perhaps as many tenori and bassi; they were ranged in front of a gallery extending above the stalls on one side of the quire, *Cantoris*, as we should term it in most English Cathedrals (*Decani* at Ely); this gallery contains a small accompaniment-organ, and it is built out on brackets behind, or towards the aisle, so as to afford room for an orchestra, which consisted this morning of some twelve or fourteen strings, with the wood and brass necessary for the due rendering of the score. The whole service was very quietly conducted by a gentleman with a *bâton*, standing in the midst of the boys and close to the organ. As the interior of the noble church is somewhat dark, the gallery was furnished with rows of shaded lamps.

Before the Mass, and after it, a little anthem or hymn was sung by the boys only, *tutti*, with a truth and sweetness which I never heard excelled, and which I shall not easily or soon forget. The alti especially were quite free from the coarseness which so generally offends the ear in the choirs of Belgium, of France, and, it must be said, of Italy, once the land of song. The highest credit is due to the teacher of these boys, and if I thought it possible that this my letter could meet his eye, I should venture to offer him the humble tribute of my appreciation of his success. I may add that from my post of observation I detected no irreverence or inattention among his young pupils; there was no whispering during the intervals of silence, and all were careful to perform those little acts of devotion which belong to their ritual.

Sir, in asking you to admit this communication into your columns, I trust I shall not be suspected of approaching even the confines of those polemical controversies which distinguish or disfigure our own days. I write from a purely musical standpoint, and I may rely upon dispassionate readers if I ask whether we islanders may not wisely take some few hints from our continental friends in the management of the purely musical accessories of divine worship.

Our services are simpler, I have already admitted or implied. Nevertheless we have in England some twenty-five ancient cathedrals in which endowments exist, and are still applied, for the maintenance of a choral body consisting of boys and men equalling or exceeding in number those who sing in St. Stephen's. Twice every day throughout the year vocal compositions are performed at the ordinary morning and evening prayers, some of them of a highly elaborate character, occasionally for a double choir, or in eight parts, by no means simple. A German capellmeister, paying a visit, let us say, to an English cathedral organist, would probably form anything but a low opinion either of the *matériel* or of the *répertoire* at his friend's disposal.

But do we make the most of these resources? I fear that at this question the visitor would shake his head.

In the first place he would notice that as the Psalms are chanted antiphonally, we divide the choir into two equal parts or sides. He would see the necessity of this division

in the antiphonal chanting of the Psalms, but I think he would advise us most strongly to mass our two choirs into one when the antiphonal music is over. We might not care to discuss with our foreign friend the many difficulties which our intense English conservatism interposes in the way of such a change, but he would have done a good work if, after his departure, we discussed them among ourselves with a view to overcoming them; and if this letter should contribute towards a full and careful consideration of this subject by church musicians of eminence and learning, I shall indeed very heartily rejoice. Much of the excellence of the vocal performance this morning at St. Stephen's was doubtless due to the position of the vocalists in a compact group clustered around their master. No wonder that *les nuances* were so delicately given, when boys and men were alike within the influence of the signs, perceptible by themselves alone, which an experienced conductor knows so well how to give. At home we augment greatly the difficulty of securing the accurate performance of arduous compositions by leaving the divided choir where it has been placed during the antiphonal Psalms, and by denying to it the immense advantage of a conductor. With us the conductor is at his organ, out of sight, often many feet above the pavement of the church, and several yards from the choir. That little boys should sing steadily and well under such circumstances, especially in solo passages, is to myself a matter for wonder. If all our larger anthems and all the greater modern settings of the *Te Deum laudamus* and the other noble hymns of the church could be sung by the choir grouped in the nave, or in the chancel east of the stalls, near to a small but adequate organ, played by an assistant, the whole conducted by the principal organist, standing among the singers and controlling the player, a vast improvement would be the result.

And then we should have room for an orchestra! Then we might hope that the enthusiasts, who are found in most cathedral cities, would bring together their violins, celli, and contrabassi, and diligently practise the orchestral church music which we already possess, and to which additions would doubtless soon be made by the unerring operation of the law of supply and demand; and every Sunday in the year, or at any rate on frequently recurring occasions, music might be reverently offered as an adornment of our worship in a form not less complete and entire than that which we deem essential in the pursuit of our own gratification.

One point more. I think the stranger from Vienna would criticise severely our retention of the falsetto voice. A solo, especially, by an adult counter-tenor, would be to him little short of abominable. This may, indeed, be a matter of taste; with those who so regard it, the old proverb bids us avoid disputation. But all, I think, must concede that we should greatly increase the power, and improve the balance, of our English choirs by throwing the whole strength of our men into the legitimate adult male parts, the tenor and bass, and by dividing the boys between the two upper parts. The change of system would not be unattended with formidable difficulties; much of the music which still holds its place in our services must be consigned to oblivion, or republished with extensive modification of inner parts; the choirmaster's work with the boys would at first be largely increased, and he must not shrink from the assiduous drilling of the youthful alti in the art of vocalisation from day to day and from year to year: but, let the change be once made, not in one cathedral only, but in all, not timidly and by way of experiment, but with bold and resolute decision founded on the deliberate advice of sound professional musicians, men who have at heart the progress of true musical art in England, and especially its consecration to the highest of all purposes—let the change be boldly made, I say, and in a very few years, when the peculiar effect of the falsetto voice, which has many admirers, has been forgotten in English churches, the authors of that change will be remembered with gratitude.—I am, Sir, your faithful servant,
W. E. DICKSON, Precentor of Ely.

Vienna, Sept. 7, 1879.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I have attended another very noble service, with an augmented orchestra, including tromboni and timpani. Against this instrumental force,

the handful of voices held their own wonderfully, the high notes of the boys, frequently including the B flat, being perfectly clear and free from harshness or effort. A soprano solo, with muted strings, was perfect. The young successor of Haydn, who sang it, probably possesses decided talent, but it was easy to see how implicitly he obeyed the slightest indications from the conductor, by whose side he stood. If the high standard of musical efficiency attained at St. Stephen's is chiefly due to this gentleman, *palmarum qui meruit ferat*.

Sept. 8.

MUFFAT, GEORGE AND GOTTLIEB.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—The September number of THE MUSICAL TIMES contains a notice of the recently published "Selections from the Versets of George Muffat," edited by Mr. N. S. Heineken, of Sidmouth. The musical world is much indebted to Mr. Heineken for his labour of love, and the extracts he has printed are most interesting and worthy of careful perusal, but they are erroneously attributed to George, being in truth the compositions of Gottlieb. Of the former we read in Burney's "History of Music," and it is only necessary to add to the information there given, that he was the father of Gottlieb, whom he instructed in the art of organ-playing and composition. When Gottlieb had made sufficient progress and attained considerable proficiency, his father placed him under the care of the celebrated Fux. His diligence and ability must have been very marked, for in the year 1727 the Emperor Charles V. gave him the appointment of court composer, and retained his services as musical instructor to the Princes and Princesses. In this same year he published seven Overtures under the title "Componimenti musicale per il cembalo."

My friend, Mr. Heineken, has permitted me to examine his manuscript volume of the "Muffat Versets," and therein I find an autograph note "*Transcribed from the original by J. Groombridge, 1796.*" By a happy coincidence the original is in my own library; that it is the very one from which Groombridge made his manuscript copy it is impossible to doubt, containing, as it does, the autograph signature *Jno. Groombridge*. The transcript may have been made to present to some musical friend, or perhaps for the daily practice of Groombridge himself.

The original volume, now lying before me, is remarkable for the boldness and beauty of the engraving, being printed from copper-plates; it is an oblong quarto of eighty-eight pages, with a flowery and grandiloquent dedication followed by a preface which is so quaint that the following translation from the original German will be perused with interest:—

Kind reader, having studied for a long series of years to improve as much as possible in the art of organ-playing, under the direction of Mr. Jo. Jos. Fux, who without flattery is esteemed the greatest master in the world; I have suffered myself to be persuaded to tread in the footsteps of my father, the late Capell-Meister of Cardinal Lamberg (who in the year 1690 published a work consisting of Toccatas Chacones, etc., which is still in use), and to publish these trifles with the sincerest intention of being useful to the learned professor, and of satisfying the wishes of amateurs. Although I have composed a large number of galantry pieces, as they are called, which I intend to publish at some future time, yet I preferred first to devote these first-fruits of my diligence to the Supreme Being and his Divine service, this little work being particularly adapted for choral service and vespers, comprising twelve applicable tunes (tones), each of which contains one Toccatas, six Versets or Fugues, making in the whole eighty-four pieces composed in a style of which but few specimens have as yet been printed. If the beginner should not have learned my method of fingering which is commonly observed by the best authors (performers), he will not repent having adopted it and leaving his former mode. I have frequently made use of transpositions* to convince the scholar that the upper part of the stave is so peculiar to the right hand and the under part of the stave to the left hand, that neither ought to cross the other. This great variety of transposition has prevented me from marking the pedals which every one ought to use in the longer notes. I have pointed out the various ways of performing the grace-marks by explanations at the end of the book, to enable performers to play the pieces with more spirit and elegance. Whatever may be the success of this undertaking of mine, I shall always remember that I, as well as my applauders or censurers, are but poor, erring and imperfect men; I have endeavoured to be useful, but not to make a show.—Farewell.

* The author refers here to the transposition of the C clef C to the position of which is constantly changed in both right and left-hand parts.

The last composition in the book, a *Fuga Pastorella*, ends on page 87, and is followed by the pious ascription "Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam." Page 88 is devoted to the grace-marks or ornamentations referred to in the preface, and has the explanation of each fully written out in notation; this is a most valuable part of the book, giving a key to a large number of signs which by lapse of time have fallen into disuse. Curiously Mr. Groombridge omitted to make a copy of the page; possibly in 1796 such grace-marks had not become obsolete.

It only remains to add that Gottlieb Muffat printed and published his book in Vienna in January, 1726, just one year before he was so honourably distinguished from amongst his compeers by the Emperor Charles. Probably but few impressions of the work were printed: my own copy, the only one I have ever seen or heard of, is so sharp and brilliant that it must have been taken before the plates had become worn; and it is more valuable from the fact that the preface is dated in MS., probably by the composer himself.—Yours truly,

W. H. CUMMINGS.

MOZART'S PIANO COMPOSITIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Kindly permit me to draw the attention of Mr. Statham, the writer of the article on the above subject in the current issue of your paper, to the following remarks by Ernst Pauer (a well-known authority), in his edition of Mozart, anent the variations upon Grétry's "Une fièvre brûlante." Herr Pauer says: "These variations, although generally attributed to Mozart, and therefore included in this edition, are, according to letters from Mozart's widow (May 25 and June 25, 1799), not by her illustrious husband. The real composer is unknown."

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

W. J. S.

September 11, 1879.

[Herr Pauer, in the quotation made by "W. J. S.," merely repeats the statement made in Köchel's "Catalogue," so that his "authority" hardly enters into the question. I am indebted to your correspondent for calling my attention to the fact, but I am by no means convinced that the work is spurious. The evidence on the subject is merely negative, and rests principally on the statement of Mozart's widow; and what is now known of her behaviour in the matter of the "Requiem" renders her word worth very little either in regard to critical judgment or truthfulness. On the other hand, many parts of the variations (the third especially, and the arpeggio passages of the last variation, which may be compared with a passage of a similar character in the Fantasia in C) are so like Mozart's workmanship, that if not his they must have been written with a deliberate attempt at forgery; and a man writing with this object would not have been likely to introduce a movement in so original a style, and so unlike Mozart's usual manner of pianoforte-writing, as the fourth variation (the one I quoted from), as this would have tended to defeat his own object.

The fact that Mozart had already written variations on a subject from one of Grétry's operas ("Les Mariages Samnites") would naturally have led to his trying other themes by the same composer; and Cipriani Potter, probably as good a judge of Mozart's style as any man could be, admitted the variations here referred to without any question. On the whole, therefore, and in the absence of any other claimant, I am inclined to consider that the composition is, at all events, more probably by Mozart than not, though of course I should not have laid so much stress on it in my article if I had been aware that the authorship had been disputed.—H. H. STATHAM.]

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TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I think it would be well if some definite statement could be made in your columns in regard to the use in churches of manuscript copies of copyright works.

However complicated the law of copyright may be in some respects, I cannot doubt that the habit which prevails in some cathedrals of copying, without permission, the vocal parts of copyright music for use during Divine