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Singing Birds

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authority for such sprightly strains being permitted in a cathedral could be referred to Psalm cxlix. 3. But, apart from what is or what is not sacred music, is not Beethoven's No. 7 always a delight to the ear? The second part of another inordinately long programme was devoted to Spohr's "Last Judgment," in which the same soloists as in "Hora Novissima" took part. The duet "Forsake me not in this dread hour" was a fine display of pure vocalisation on the part of Madame Albani and Mr. Edward Lloyd—who, it should be recorded with regret, made his last appearance at a Three Choirs Festival in this work. The quartet "Blest are the departed" made its old effect—the combination of deep devotional feeling and sublime simplicity. But how few can attain unto it.

The programme of Thursday evening was of too familiar a nature to call for detailed notice. It opened with Bach's church cantata "God's time is the best" (soli by Miss Ada Crossley, Mr. William Green, and Mr. Charles Phillips), followed by Sir Hubert Parry's ever-popular "Blest Pair of Sirens"—one of the best things he has done—conducted by himself. The "Hymn of Praise" concluded the day's doings. The soloists were Madame Albani, Madame Amy Sherwin, and Mr. William Green. Special acknowledgment should be made of the admirable manner in which the exacting tenor music was interpreted by Mr. William Green—it is his just due. I had the privilege of hearing the "Hymn of Praise" in the distant Lady Chapel. There, with only the companionship of a colleague, in the shadowed solitude of that sanctuary within the Cathedral walls, I listened to the familiar strains of Mendelssohn's music. The performers were afar off and invisible, and, in the stillness of that evening hour, the music floated through the arches of the vaulted fane with a strange ethereal beauty that is beyond description.

"The Messiah," on Friday morning, concluded the Festival, except that a "grand closing service" was held in the evening of that day. The soloists in Handel's masterpiece were Madame Albani, Miss Ada Crossley, Mr. William Green, and Mr. Andrew Black; and the trumpet obbligato to "The trumpet shall sound" was played by that estimable artist, Mr. W. Morrow.

The performances throughout the week (with the exceptions above stated) were conducted by Mr. Ivor Atkins, by virtue of his office as organist of Worcester Cathedral. The duties of organist were discharged—and most capably discharged—by Mr. A. H. Brewer (of Gloucester) and Dr. Sinclair (of Hereford) at the morning and evening services respectively. A special organ for the Festival was erected by Messrs. Nicholson and Co., of Worcester. The analytical programmes, written by Mr. Herbert Thompson, of Leeds, were models of what such aids to the intelligent appreciation of music should be. The genial hospitality of the Mayor of Worcester and others in the old city must in justice to their kindness be duly acknowledged with appreciative gratitude.

A "THREE CHOIRS" SERVICE.

At five o'clock every evening during the Festival there was a service in the Cathedral, at which the Three Choirs of Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester Cathedrals combined their forces, with highly impressive results. These services do not receive the attention they deserve in the newspaper press, probably because the critics become satiated with music at the actual Festival performances. I therefore made an effort to attend two of the services and was well rewarded. The Psalms were devotionally

sung and the Glorias taken in unison with fine effect. There was an absence of that hurry-scurry, irreverent method of chanting, too often prevalent in churches, that was highly commendable. The service was Hopkins in F, which received a very adequate rendering. The anthem, "Blessed be the God and Father," by S. S. Wesley, is always a welcome feature, especially as on that occasion there was provided an opportunity of hearing a traditional rendering of that beautiful work. The solo and chorus, "Love one another," was sung more slowly than I have heard it in other "quires and places where they sing," with the result that it gained in impressiveness and devotional feeling. The solo was most feelingly sung by one of Dr. Sinclair's boys from Hereford. Dr. Sinclair, who was at the organ, made an unusually long pause on the dominant chord preceding the final chorus. The effect was good and intensified the feeling of suspense before the voices entered, as they did with excellent precision, at the words, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The second anthem was Barnby's "Sweet is Thy mercy, Lord." The Precentor of Worcester (the Rev. H. H. Woodward of "Radiant morn" fame) conducted. Dr. Sinclair's organ accompaniments were irreproachable. Though modern in feeling, there was a fine artistic restraint in their unobtrusiveness that was in the highest degree praiseworthy. He did not worry his singers, nor did he adopt that stop-changing restlessness which is too often the stock-in-trade of so many organists. Dr. Sinclair's voluntary at the first service was Handel's Organ Concerto in C minor (arranged by Best), and on the second occasion he played his own arrangement of Rachmaninoff's Prelude.

The statistics of the attendances are as follows:—

Tuesday morning	. ("Elijah")		2,875
evening	. ("Creation," &c.)		1,553
Wednesday morning	. (Brahms's Requiem, &c.)		1,821
evening	. (Concert)		734
Thursday morning	. ("Hora Novissima," &c.)		2,380
evening	. ("Hymn of Praise," &c.)		1,935
Friday morning	. ("Messiah")		2,776

SINGING BIRDS.

In the early part of the last century a great deal of attention seems to have been paid to the training of singing birds. If the instruction books of the period can be trusted, not only natural songsters, such as the thrush, blackbird, skylark, and nightingale, but even the chaffinch and sparrow were taught to whistle quite elaborate airs, with turns and flourishes worthy of a prima donna.

One of the earliest of these instruction books, written apparently about the year 1700, is still preserved in manuscript in the British Museum. It is entitled:—

A description of all the musical birds in this kingdom, with their nature, breeding, feeding, diseases, and remedies. Also several new tunes made for birds, and may be taught them by the Cantillo or Small Flageolet. By John Hamersley.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the "breeding, feeding, diseases and remedies," and contains much curious information, as that the hedge-sparrow "lays eggs of a pale blew or sea green colour, which neatly emptied and wired yong ladies were at their ears for pendants"; or, again, of the woodlark: "for lousiness take him out of the cage and smoak him with tobacco."

When he is not dealing with practical matters of this sort, the author often displays a pretty fancy, as when he speaks of "the loud harmonious blackbird, the high-soaring lark, the sweet singing linnet, the voluntary singing redbreast and the division nightingale." At times too he bursts into poetry of

a quaint, if not inspired character. Observe, for instance, the delicacy with which the sexes are discriminated in the following description of the skylark:—

If clear the sky be and fair weather,
This bird will sing four minutes together:
She sings and flies up to the cloud,
Her voice is sweet and also loud:
He is more brisk and flyeth higher,
To com near the celestial quire.
Of all the birds in Noah's ark
None sings so long as the Skylark.

From the title it might be imagined that the Cantillo was a small form of flageolet, but the following passage shows this is not the case:—

The best way to teach birds to whistle is with a small pipe or flageolet, but it must not be too small, for most commonly the least are false, and they are so short that ther is not room for the fingers. A pipe that is between five and six inches long and the bore of it so small as the lowest note to be half a note above E la in consort pitch is a very good size and pitch. Ther is another way to teach birds to sing, and that is by a Cantillo, which is with the blade of an onion or leek, scraping the outsides of it, and the middle is a thin membrane which they put between their lips and will sing like a bird in their own natural wild notes. Some men will do it so exactly and imitate birds so much to the life, that if they were unseen, many would mistake them for singing birds.

They must be taught in the night without any light, for then all their senses are void of their office except hearing.

Then follows, by way of introduction to the examples of bird tunes, a delightfully original metronomic direction for the benefit of such bird-fanciers as may not be musicians:—

Two minims make a semibrief, and a semibrief is the length of the natural song of the wild chaffinch. I except the Essex chaffinch, which is longer than ours are in these parts. And 28 semibriefs is a minute of an hour.

The tunes themselves (fourteen in number) are simple four-barred strains, of which the following may serve as examples:—

In a later book, printed by Walsh about 1720, the tunes are of a much more elaborate character, and each bird has a definite key assigned to it, C minor being given as the bullfinch key, F major as the canary bird key, and so on. The title of this book is:—

The Bird Fancier's Delight, or Choice Observations and Directions concerning the teaching of all sorts of Singing Birds after the Flageolet and Flute when rightly made as to size and tone, with Lessons properly compos'd within the compass and faculty of each Bird, viz.: for the Canary-Bird, Linnet, Bull-Finch, Wood-Lark, Black-Bird, Throutill, Nightingale, and Starling.

Here is the tune actually set down for the sparrow:—

and here is the opening phrase of "a proper tune for a Linnet," with the flageolet notation below:—

The flageolet notation was already being superseded by the staff, which had the great advantage of being easily readable at sight. This is pointed out in a prefatory address "to the reader," which is worth being quoted in full:—

'Tis still in memory, the old manner of Playing on the Flute, which was by the way of Dots, a memorial of which remains in the Gamut for that Instrument to this time, but it being so impracticable and never to be attain'd to at sight, that the use of the Instrument was almost lost, till introduc'd by the Gamut rules, which has not only brought it much in vogue, but the Performers on it are as ready at sight as on any other Instrument, 'tis not doubted but the like Improvement will be made on the Flagellet by this Method, which Instrument is not only delightfull, but also profitable, particularly to Bird Fanciers, it having been often known that Birds after being taught by the Flagellet has been sold for great value, all Lessons or Airs that are made for the Flute may now be play'd on the Flagellet, which must of Consequence be very gratefull to all Lovers of the Instrument, the improvement of which is owing to the Ingenious Mr. Hill, who has made several Incomparable Peices for the Flagellet, and is an excellent performer on it, and to encourage the Lovers of it, he is willing to instruct in this new Method, any that is desirous to learn.

In this tablature the six lines of the stave represent the six holes of the flageolet, the dots showing which of them must be stopped to produce the required note. The cross on the top line indicates that the uppermost or thumb-hole must be half stopped, the effect of this being to produce a note an octave higher than would be given if it were fully stopped. When all the holes are to be left open, a small circle is placed on the top line.

J. F. R. STAINER.

WEBER'S FUNERAL.

ST. MARY'S Roman Catholic Chapel, Moorfields, is about to be demolished and its site utilised for less sacred purposes. Thus another of the old, and, alas! rapidly diminishing landmarks of London possessing musical interest will soon be gone. "Change and new bricks on all around I see," was the observation of a certain divine upon beholding a crop of villainous villas which had sprung up since his last visit to a pleasant suburb, and the same may soon be said of St. Mary's, Moorfields. In the vaults of this former Pro-Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in London there rested for eighteen years the remains of Carl Maria von Weber. The composer of "Der Freischütz" died in Sir George Smart's house, now 103, Great Portland Street, on June 5, 1826, and he was buried, temporarily, as it subsequently proved, in the vaults of St. Mary's, Moorfields. A public funeral was immediately proposed, which was to include a performance of "Mozart's 'Requiem' upon a scale equal to the solemnity and dignity of the occasion, and to draw from the performance the means of assisting to raise a monument to the deceased." Many offers of assistance in the Requiem performance were received from the Philharmonic Society, "the entire Band of Covent Garden," and others. A committee, formed to carry out the funeral arrangements, included the names of Moscheles, Braham, Attwood, Sir George Smart, Collard, Chappell,