Male-Voice Choirs

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Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 24, No. 488 (Oct. 1, 1883), p. 560

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3357239>

Accessed: 18-02-2016 14:20 UTC

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PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR MUSICIANS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I incline to the belief that the disease existing in the profession which "Justitia" fears is not so bad as he apprehends; or, if bad, its incipient growth is an inevitable appanage of the musical art.

Certificates are of no use. This is no serious question of the extreme importance and extent which "Justitia" considers attaches to it. I write from a suburb of London, where there is to be found the scarcely smaller evil flourishing of cheap pianos obtainable at one shilling and sixpence or two shillings per week. These instruments it would be mere flattery to designate as musical. However, no sooner is the honest mechanic or other workman whose little daughter sings convinced of her talent than the delighted parent hires a cheap piano and a cheap teacher. All this innocence is surely not to be taken up by "Justitia" as if anything depended upon it. Real music is not in the question. The eighteenpenny piano and the fourpenny lesson (see advertisement) are harmless delusions on both sides, and I do not concede that competent professors lose the price of a single quarter's tuition; for observe that the young gentleman pupil mentioned in "Justitia's" letter soon discovered his weak points and resorted to "Justitia" to remove them. Again, the father of the young lady also alluded to doubtless was uneasy, and so asked the professional musician for an opinion. I have no doubt "Justitia" has already added this pupil to his list.

I have said that certificates are of no use. I am a genuine amateur, and possess a certificate from one of the best known musicians in Europe. Not depending upon music for a livelihood, I shrink from employing the few leisure hours at my disposal in practising or teaching any music but such as I have been taught to believe is worthy of the name. But in the almost universal judgment of my unenlightened neighbours the young lady in the next street who throws up the parlour window when she plays, and advertises herself as "A 1," is a most brilliant performer, and they will be perfectly satisfied if she only teaches their children to play as well as herself.

Of what use, then, are certificates of competence, unless people are compelled to respect them? But how is this compulsion to be carried out?—Yours truly,

MEZZO-TERMINE.

London, E., September 4, 1883.

AN APPEAL TO COMPOSERS FOR THE CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—May I venture to draw the attention of Church musicians to a want that has been rather prominently brought before me lately? It is the custom at the "Three Choirs Festivals" to have at least one Symphony and an Overture of sacred character performed in the cathedral; at the recent Gloucester Festival no exception was made to this rule, Mr. Stanford's "Elegiac Symphony" and Spohr's Overture to "The Last Judgment" being given with grand effect by the orchestra. I wish now to point out to composers of orchestral music that there is an excellent opening for short Church Symphonies and Overtures of a sacred and solemn character, suitable for performance in a cathedral. Experience has taught me, in a practical manner, that at present a conductor has but a very limited choice when he considers what orchestral works to include in a cathedral performance. Two of Beethoven's Symphonies and perhaps half a dozen other works that will occur to the memory make but a small list to choose from.

Knowing that there are Englishmen who can, if they will, produce what I have called (for want of a better name) Church Symphonies and Overtures, I trust they may be persuaded to turn their thoughts to this subject; and therefore will only add that in my humble opinion *two movements* would be quite long enough—say, an Adagio and Allegro maestoso—but I must now leave it to wiser heads than mine to develop this idea. I can only speak to what I consider a musical want that has long been felt by others as well as myself.—Yours faithfully,

C. L. WILLIAMS.

Palace Yard, Gloucester.

THE EISTEDDFOD CANTATA COMPETITION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Will you permit me to say, in reference to the above subject, that I for one am by no means surprised at the withholding of the prize on the grounds of none of the works submitted having been considered worthy of it—that is, if it be true that a composer draws his inspiration from his libretto; for I can hardly conceive anything less calculated to assist in the successful "invocation of the muse" than the "English" translation (or adaptation, or version, whichever it is) of the "prize" libretto furnished by the Committee. In March last I sent for a copy of this "prize" libretto, and in the meantime made preparations for a few weeks of hard work at my Cantata. The libretto came in due course; and my first thought was, "How will it be possible to condense such a work into the compass (I think forty minutes as its time of performance) allowed by the Committee, unless it be at the loss of freedom and consequent effectiveness in the composition itself?" When I came, too, to read the words as they stood, I could not help feeling surprise at the notion that a composer could be expected to wed anything like good music to such an effusion. However, I set to work; but long ere the opening chorus and No. 1 Recit. were finished the whole thing had fallen so flat upon my imaginative powers as utterly to prevent any further progress. Is it reasonable, let me ask, to expect any composer who is capable of writing a Cantata at all to produce from *such* a libretto a work which shall be worth fifty shillings, to say nothing of fifty pounds? As a man who has written, amongst many other works, a three-act Opera upon *his own* libretto, I think I may venture to express this opinion. One could have little or no fault to find with the *plot* of the libretto or with the symmetry of its construction as a whole; but the language of nearly every line (or at least of every verse or sentence) was trashy in the extreme. Is this due to "translation" or "adaptation"? Let us hope that if the Eisteddfod Committee offer a similar prize for competition next year they will take care to either provide a sensible English libretto or keep to their native Welsh.

I am, Sir, obediently and gratefully yours,

S. E.

Limerick, September 15.

MR. HORATIO CHIPP.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—A rumour having been extensively circulated, both in and out of the musical world, to the effect that I have retired, or am about to retire, from the profession, and as such statements are calculated to most seriously injure me with respect to my professional engagements and otherwise, I should be extremely grateful if, with your unvarying courtesy, you would permit me, through the aid of your valuable columns, to publicly deny that there is the slightest truth or foundation whatever for any such rumour. It will be my anxiety, I trust, for some time to come to do my humble share towards the enjoyment and amusement of the public, and likewise to instruct those who intend to follow instrumentalism either as a profession or as a pastime.—Yours very obediently,

HORATIO CHIPP.

37, Andover Road, Hornsey Road, Holloway,
August 30, 1883.

MALE-VOICE CHOIRS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Several letters having appeared in THE MUSICAL TIMES advocating the formation in London of a large male-voice choir, I should feel greatly obliged if you would kindly allow me, through your valuable journal, to invite the co-operation of any gentlemen interested in such a project.—Yours very truly,

GEO. F. GEAUSSANT.

September 24.