Review

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AN Orchestral Society has been formed in Lewisham, to meet every Saturday evening, under the conductorship of Mr. Warwick Jordan, Mus. Bac. Many amateurs of well-known ability have joined, and it is intended to admit none who are not thoroughly efficient. The places of first oboe, first clarinet, and first bassoon are for the present filled by professionals, and the music to be practised will consist of symphonies, overtures, pianoforte and organ concertos, &c. The first two meetings have taken place, and Haydn's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies, Beethoven's Overture to "Prometheus," Mozart's Overtures "Cosi fan tutti," "Idomeneo," and "Director," have been played.

AN interesting incident in connection with the lamented death of Mr. George Cooper, who had been Organist to Christ's Hospital for some thirty-four years, occurred at Christ Church, Newgate-street, on the Sunday following his decease. The boys of Christ's Hospital, who attend service at that Church, sat in solemn silence at the close of the Morning Service while the organist of the Church, Mr. J. T. Cooper, performed on the grand organ Handel's appropriate Dead March in "Saul." The effect of the boys remaining reverently in their seats until the last notes of the solemn dirge died away was very impressive, and shewed esteem for their late talented organist.

A NOTICE in the *Athenæum* of the 11th ult. of the recent production of "Fidelio," at the Lyceum, contains two or three points so amusing that it is worth while to call the attention of our readers to them. In reference to Mdlle. Torriani, the writer says that "in the concerted pieces she was undertoned, and Miss Gaylord took the lead therein, with her rich and round soprano notes." This remark is simply ludicrous, when it is remembered that in the pieces referred to Beethoven has written the part of Marcellina above that of Leonora almost throughout—a fact of which the critic appears to be unaware. An even more droll observation is made with respect to the Prisoners' chorus. After saying that "except by German companies the chorus of Prisoners has never been sung well in tune in this country, and the oddly-dressed choir at the Lyceum was no exception," the writer adds, "It however gave the finales of the first and last acts accurately and forcibly." Inasmuch as the finale of the first act contains no chorus whatever, except the Prisoners' chorus, it is difficult for an ordinary mind to reconcile these statements, or to see how, if the chorus was sung out of tune, the finale to the first act could have been given "accurately." In the same article we meet with the remarkable statement that Beethoven "has not exclusively allotted to the orchestra the 'Thematischer Leitfaden' to individualise characters." In his anxiety to throw a stone at Wagner, the critic has here sadly got out of his depth with his German. "Leitfaden" is a "guiding thread" or "clue;" and what is meant by Beethoven's not allotting a "thematic clue" to his orchestra the writer in the *Athenæum* only knows. We are not quite clear, also, as to the sense of the following: "Nothing can be more marked and characteristic than the distinctive notation the composer employs to picture Marcellina, Jacquino, and Rocco, than that he uses when delineating Leonora, Florestan, and Don Pizarro." We should like to know what edition of the score the writer had before him in penning these lines; in all that we have ever seen the notation employed is the same for all the characters.

REVIEWS.

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

Sing to the Lord. Anthem. Composed by Henry Smart.

THIS very elaborate composition, occupying twenty-eight pages, was written for the recent Festival of the Church Choir Association at St. Paul's Cathedral; and few who were present on that occasion will forget the great effect which, in spite of a not altogether faultless performance, it produced. We have no hesitation in expressing our opinion that it is not merely one of Mr. Smart's very best

works (which is saying not a little), but one of the most important contributions to our Church music which has been produced for many years. It is in five movements. The opening chorus, "Sing to the Lord a new song," in B flat, $\frac{3}{4}$ time, has much of the genial vigour and majestic swing of Handel's Church music in it. After a broad introduction, a masterly fugue is introduced at the words "Let them give glory unto the Lord," which at length gives place to the return of the first subject, the massive chords at the close being very effective. As the entire Anthem is far too long for use in ordinary choirs and on general occasions, we would suggest the expediency of publishing this opening movement separately. It is quite complete in itself, and, being by no means difficult, would certainly be extremely popular. The second movement—a bass solo with semi-chorus of trebles and altos in four parts, "All creatures serve Thee" (E flat, common time)—is, to our mind, the gem of the whole. The exquisite flow of the melody and the charming effects of the occasional choral entries are alike noteworthy. The organ part in this movement is written on three staves throughout; and it is difficult to avoid the idea that Mr. Smart had an orchestra in his mind when he conceived this accompaniment. In reading the movement we seem to hear violins in the semiquaver figures marked for the choir, while the soft wind is plainly indicated in the chords for swell reeds, which are from time to time introduced. At the end of the movement the full chorus, in eight real parts, enters with grand effect on the words "There is none that can resist Thy voice." The orchestral feeling of which we have spoken also pervades the two following movements. The chorus, "The Lord maketh a way in the sea," has an accompaniment somewhat recalling (though without plagiarism) Mendelssohn's "The sea saw and fled," in the 114th Psalm. The whole of this number is most impressive; and the abrupt close on the diminished seventh of D $\sharp$, followed after a bar and a half's silence by the $\frac{4}{4}$ on E flat, introducing the quartet "Yet Thou art merciful" in B flat, is of peculiarly happy effect. After the bold and dramatic chorus just noticed, the contrast of the sustained harmonies of the solo voices, with a clarinet solo in the accompaniment, is charming; the quartet leads at once into the final chorus, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," which is less amply developed than some of the earlier movements, but contains a capital little fugue on the "Hallelujah," and concludes with a very spirited *coda*. It is long since we met with a piece of Church music which has given us so much pleasure as this Anthem. It is an honour alike to its composer and to the occasion for which it was written; and we most cordially recommend it to organists and choirmasters for performance at choral festivals. It will amply repay them for the trouble taken in getting it up.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in F. Composed by Ebenezer Prout.

THIS Evening Service, was composed for the like the Anthem noticed above, Festival of the London Church Choir Association. Not the least among the benefits resulting from such festivals is the stimulus they give to composers of church music. This work, Mr. Prout's third setting of the same Canticles, will no doubt be found generally useful, not only on account of its intrinsic merit, but also because its length will not preclude it from frequent performance. Though not strictly original in detail, this service, like all Mr. Prout's compositions, is very cleverly wrought, and, what is of paramount importance, is always in true keeping with an intelligent reading of the words. The first chorus, which includes the first three verses of the Magnificat, is followed by a short quartet or verse part, which is soon merged into the chorus at the words "He hath shewed strength." Commencing at the words "He hath filled the hungry," a quartet of a most interesting character carries us through the remaining portion of the words. The "Gloria Patri" contains some close and spirited imitation *fugato*, and from the breadth and solidity of its style forms a fine conclusion to the Canticle.

The *Nunc Dimittis* opens with a melodious theme which is treated skilfully and at some length, but its character is so smooth and suggestive of calm rest that no feeling of unnecessary elaboration is produced. The music of the "*Gloria Patri*" as given to the *Magnificat*, is repeated at the close of the *Nunc Dimittis*, and brings to a close a setting of the Canticles which will hold a high rank in that comparatively small number which may be called both good and easy. We feel inclined to lay great stress on the simplicity of this work, as there seems to be a growing tendency amongst a certain class of parish choirs to attempt the performance of works far above the strength of their resources. Perhaps the publication by our weekly contemporaries of the music to be performed at various churches tends to foster this evil, by offering the strong temptation to ambitious choirs of appearing very proficient—on paper. How many of those persons who read these weekly music lists take the trouble to make an expedition in order to find out how far such fair promises are fulfilled? Perhaps if more did so, our praise of Mr. Prout's service as being both good and easy would have a special force.

The Order of Service for the Fourth Annual Festival of the Church Choir Association, held in St. Paul's Cathedral, 26th October 1876.

THESE few sheets, which we notice immediately after Mr. Smart's Anthem and Mr. Prout's Service, deserve a few lines, because they suggest some important questions as to the composition of Psalm Tunes and Chants. The pamphlet contains, besides the *Preces* and *Responses*, the following pieces, written expressly for the Festival: Two Processional Hymns, by W. S. Hoyte; three Chants for the Psalms, by E. H. Birch, Mus. Bac., Oxon.; a Hymn Tune, by Dr. J. F. Bridge; and two Recessional Hymns, by John Blockley, jun. These various compositions differ in character almost as widely as is possible. Mr. Hoyte's tunes are, we think, models of what psalmody for congregational use should be—broad and dignified in melody, simple yet not bald in harmony. The same praise may be extended to Dr. Bridge's tune, with the slight reservation that he goes rather too far away from his original key at the end of the second line. We congratulate the Church Choir Association on having caused the production of tunes of such sterling merit. On the other hand, we think they have been far less fortunate in the Chants by Mr. Birch, and the Recessional Hymn Tunes by Mr. Blockley, jun. In the first place, they are written in that "pretty" semi-secular style to which, in common with many other musicians, we entertain a rooted antipathy, as being quite incompatible with the dignified character appropriate to Church music; and we therefore regret that compositions of this class should be put forward on a special occasion as representative of our musical art. This, however, is a matter of taste on which opinions will doubtless differ. We have a more serious charge to bring against these pieces. If we may judge from the music itself, neither Mr. Birch nor Mr. Blockley appear to be able to write a correct four-part harmony. Both seem to have a special fondness for consecutive fifths, Mr. Birch's *penchant* being the more pronounced, as he twice gives them between extreme parts, with an effect which, to our ears at least, is simply horrible. Let our readers judge:—

If a "Mus. Bac., Oxon." indulges in such harmonies as these, very grave questions are raised as to the value of musical degrees, and we are reminded of Handel's uncomplimentary remarks on the subject when asked why he did not take his degree. We are curious to know whether these fifths are approved or tolerated by the Oxford examiners.

Mr. Blockley's fifths are less obtrusive than Mr. Birch's, but are even more clumsy. Here they are:—

In both cases it would have been perfectly easy to avoid them; indeed, in the second Mr. Blockley seems absolutely to have gone out of his way to introduce them; for, if not, why did he not leave the C in the tenor for the second minim? We hope these pieces will not fall into the hands of any foreign musical critics; they will certainly form a low estimate of the state of musical education in England.

Benedicite omnia opera. Set to chants by F. Walker, W. Winn, and J. Stainer.

Benedicite omnia opera. Set to chants by R. de Lacey, F. Champneys, A. Gibbs, and J. Stainer.

THE use of the "*Benedicite*" during the seasons of Advent and Lent is becoming more general as the true beauty of its structure is better understood. When the three great divisions into which it naturally falls are carefully examined, it ceases to be a meaningless catalogue of "things in general," and becomes a poem built on a true philosophical basis. All that belongs to the extra-terrestrial universe is first called upon to bless the Lord—angels, heavens, sun and moon, showers and dew, frost and cold, lightnings and clouds; then the mind is directed to all that is beautiful on the terrestrial universe—the earth, seas and floods, fowls of the air, and lastly the greatest of God's works—Man himself.—"O all ye children of men, bless ye the Lord." But at this point the existence of a *spiritual kingdom* is brought before the poet's vision, and he calls on the true Israel, on priests, servants of the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous, holy and humble men of heart, and lastly, on the three holy children themselves, to bless the Lord and praise Him for ever.

This division of the poem is admirably pointed out in the settings before us, both of which consist of excellent chants, well arranged, and with the words *printed* and *pointed* immediately under the music to which they are to be sung, thus preventing the possibility of any mistake. We cannot too strongly recommend these settings, not only because of their musical value, but also because their low price (three-halfpence each) renders the "stocking" of a choir a very cheap process.

Angels singing, Church Bells ringing. Christmas Carol for Children. Words by C. F. Hernaman. Music by the Rev. Sir F. A. Gore Ouseley, Bart.

We cannot say that there is anything particularly striking in this Carol; but the music expresses the words with appropriate simplicity, and a good effect is gained by the questions and answers between the Decani and Cantoris. In a new edition some omissions in the Alto part (two bars from the end of line 3) should be rectified, and we imagine that the G in the treble at the end of bar 2, line 4, should be A. In the coming season so unpretentious a composition should find a welcome with those whose desire for novelty extends even to Christmas Carols.

Fourteen Songs; Set to poems by Robert Burns, by Robert Franz. Edited and adapted by Natalia Macfarren.

Those who know but little of this composer's works will do well to possess themselves of this cheap edition of these charming songs, all of which are melodious and sympathetic with the feeling of Burns's poetry, and some, indeed, veritable gems. No. 2, "*My bonny Mary*," has not only a theme of remarkable beauty, but the character of the accompaniment is so varied as to give importance to a really simple song; No. 4, "*My heart is sair*," commencing in A minor and ending in C major, is an exquisite colouring