Review

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Reviews.

The Form and Order of the Service to be performed at the Coronation of Their Majesties King George V. and Queen Mary. Edited by Sir Frederick Bridge.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Though not altogether unique, the experience of acting as Director of the Music at two Coronations has fallen to the lot of few. We believe Sir George Smart acted in that capacity on three such occasions. But the rapid advance of musical culture both by composers and performers has rendered Sir Frederick Bridge's task a far greater one than ever. That he has succeeded in providing an entirely adequate scheme for the great event to which all are looking forward, no one will deny. He has selected works which may be taken as representing no fewer than five centuries. For pure unaccompanied singing Tallis's Litany is a fine example, to which may be added Gibbons's Amen, and in more modern fashion that by Sir John Stainer. Of the larger works four should be mentioned, viz.: Sir Hubert Parry's 'Te Deum' and his anthem 'I was glad,' Sir Frederick Bridge's 'Homage Anthem,' and Sir Charles Stanford's setting of the 'Gloria in Excelsis.' In his preface to the Coronation Service Book, Dr. Alcock says of the Te Deum, 'the broad lines in which it is cast, with the elaboration of figure and development, combine to render the setting a real achievement.' The use made by the composer of three principal themes ('St. Ann's' tune, the 'Old hundredth,' and the Intonation to the Creed) is sufficient support for this contention. The anthem 'I was glad,' which was specially composed for the coronation of King Edward, is fortunately to be repeated, with, of course, some slight alteration of the middle section containing the acclamations by the Westminster scholars. The orchestral introduction is also new, which, possibly from old associations, we cannot help regretting, fine as the new section undoubtedly is. It may be hoped that the anthem will be generally used, for the subject is suitable for many seasons of the Church's year, and the nobility of the music, its lofty conception and the knowledge of effect it exhibits, make it a notable addition to our repertoire of sacred music. It should be added that the middle section containing the 'Vivats' can be omitted.

Sir Frederick Bridge's 'Homage Anthem' well illustrates the employment of simple means for the securing of great effect. The composer has no doubt kept in mind the circumstances under which his music will be heard, and we do not question the result. The use of the chorale 'Ein feste Burg' was a happy idea, and could only ensure that stately and powerful appeal which the occasion demands. The choice of words is of equal importance, and the use of the Bible version has secured a stronger interest than that conveyed by the Prayer-book version. Sir Frederick's anthem will no doubt find a wide acceptance.

In his setting of the 'Gloria in Excelsis,' (in B flat) Sir Charles Stanford again shows that consummate mastery of detail and technique which characterizes all his church music. In the thematic material, no less than the working out, he has produced a work which is not only entirely worthy of the occasion which called it forth, but which may well rank with his best achievements of the same character.

The remaining new works comprise Sir Edward Elgar's 'Offertorium' and the 'Sanctus' by Dr. W. G. Alcock. The former is characterized, as the preface truly points out, by 'that spiritual intensity' which is so conspicuous in the composer's work, and 'is exactly what it should be—a reverent supplication.' The 'Sanctus,' while on simple lines, contains material of sufficient interest for so short a work, the chief effects being obtained by a passage of modulation at the words 'Heaven and earth,' and the 'fanfare' introducing an enharmonic change which leads naturally enough to the conclusion in A major.

Sir Frederick Bridge has adapted the exquisite music of Purcell to the words of the Introit, 'Let my prayer,' which their mutual suitability more than justifies. Sir Walter Parratt's Confortare, 'Be strong, and play the man,' is again included in the scheme, and with every good reason, for it exactly suits the occasion and the moment. Handel's

'Zadok' needs no description, but it may be said that it has claimed a place at every coronation since that of George II. and Queen Caroline, for which Handel indeed composed it, and has thus proved its worth.

Sir George Martin has enriched John Merbecke's venerable Creed with an accompaniment for brass and organ, which shows his command of the resources of those instruments no less than his reverence for tradition.

The whole selection is worthy of the great ceremony at which it will be used.

Those haunting eyes. Fountain song. By Ernest Austin.

[J. H. Larway.]

In these songs we find perfect agreement between poet and composer, for not only are they one and the same person, but Ernest Austin the composer shows singular adaptability and sensibility to the rhythms and sentiments of Ernest Austin the poet, for he unmercifully breaks up the continuity and balance of his musical phrases to give full weight of accentuation and expression to the verbal phrases. It is a method he has always favoured and often practised, and in the present instance he certainly employs it with confidence and effect. In 'Those haunting eyes' there are time-signatures to indicate the changes, but that antiquated device is ignored in 'Fountain song,' where even the bars are inserted, as if apologetically, with dotted lines. The former song is agreeably sentimental and the latter is dainty. Their musical ideas, if below the level of Mr. Austin's best inspirations, are at least interesting and out of the common rut.

Summer Sketches. For the Organ. By Edwin H. Lemare.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

This very attractive work consists of a suite of five short movements, obviously intended for performance in their printed order, viz., 'Dawn,' 'The Bee,' 'Cuckoo,' 'Twilight,' 'Evening.' The first three are suitable, however, as separate numbers. Mr. Lemare's knowledge of organ registration and its possibilities is well known, and he here exhibits that knowledge most happily. An organ of modern construction, possessing at least three manuals, is necessary if the pieces are to make their effect, while some demand is made upon the technical resources and musical intelligence of the performer. But these are becoming more general, and the Suite will, we believe, be very widely used by those to whom music in this free, and none the less attractive, style makes an appeal.

The effect of increasing brightness and movement in 'Dawn' is exceedingly well obtained, and the droning of the bee is faithfully suggested in the second number. Of the remaining movements we particularly like, 'Evening,' for its peaceful character and dreamy atmosphere, which come as the natural consequence of the movement preceding it.

Ich möchte weinen. By Willy Lehmann.

[Breitkopf & Härtel.]

This is a setting of Heine's sonnet 'Ich möchte weinen, doch ich kann es nicht.' An English version is added, of which 'to the base earth must I cling, where foul and hissing wormbrood round me creep, foul wormbrood round me creep' is perhaps not the best specimen sentence. The composer yearns to be deeply expressive, and the melodic contours and choral progressions are moulded with this object in view; but mere yearning does not bring its attainment. For all its Wagnerian harmonies, its seriousness, its artistic design and finish, the song does not carry conviction, although it is capable of picturesque effect when sung with orchestra. Some marks on the pianoforte score indicate that the accompaniment was originally conceived as orchestral music.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Keyboard Explained, with some account of a system of 'tonic' notation and other matters. By Immo S. Allen. Pp. 32. Price 6d. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.)