Review

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 46, No. 750 (Aug. 1, 1905), p. 540

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/904301>

Accessed: 25-12-2015 20:32 UTC

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Reviews.

HARVEST FESTIVAL MUSIC.

A Song of Thanksgiving. Cantata for Harvest and General Festival use. Words by Shapcott Wensley. Music by J. H. Maunder.

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

Mr. Maunder's cantata is laid out for soprano, tenor and bass (or contralto) solo and chorus, well-known hymn-tunes being added to be sung by the congregation. The composer has a peculiar talent for securing broad and attractive effects by simple means, and we know of no work better calculated to meet satisfactorily the requirements of the majority of church choirs at harvest thanksgivings. Mr. Shapcott Wensley has provided an excellent 'book,' and its jubilant and devotional spirit is happily expressed in Mr. Maunder's music. The solos are melodious and, in common with the choral-writing, easy to read and sing. The simple omission of the hymn 'We plough the fields and scatter' makes the cantata suitable for general use, and an alternative *Finale* is provided for concert-room performances.

Thou shalt keep the feast of Harvest. Composed by Frederic H. Cowen.

Praise to God, Immortal praise. Composed by John E. West.

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

Any composition from the pen of Dr. Cowen commands attention, and his new harvest anthem will certainly reward those who study it. The composer has manifestly written for a well-trained choir, the members of which are capable of taking up entrances with precision on any beat or half-beat of the bar. If this is the chief difficulty the anthem presents, the part-writing is most melodious, the intervals, with one or two exceptions, being easy to read. The exceptions, however, are justified by the harmonic effects which contribute to the significance of the music. Structurally the work consists of a dignified opening chorus in C, which leads into a short solo in A flat for a soprano voice, the singer being presently supported by the altos, tenors and basses. A brief recitative for basses in unison followed by a terse choral passage and an organ interlude effectively prepare the way for the final portion, which consists of a fugatto based on a virile subject, preceded and followed by sections in solid four-part harmony of imposing character.

Mr. West has set a portion of a hymn by Anna Lætitia Barbauld (1743-1825), and in a manner that testifies to keen apprehension of what is effective in choral-writing. The anthem contains no solos, but the respective sections of the choir are made to answer each other in a way that provides ample variety and secures good contrast with the portions in close harmony. In two places the sopranos and altos are divided severally into two parts, but the vocal-writing, although requiring a crisp attack, presents few executive difficulties.

A Method of teaching Harmony based upon Ear-training. By Frederick G. Shinn, Mus. Doc. Part II. Chromatic Harmony and Exceptional Progression.

[The Vincent Music Company, Limited.]

The first part of this work, dealing with diatonic harmony, was reviewed in our issue of September, 1904. Dr. Shinn in this new section boldly carries his ear-training plans into the subtle atmosphere of the most modern harmony. If he asks too much from the average harmony student, at least it may be said that no pains have been spared to provide ample and well-organized material for study. No student who plods through the course herein designed could fail to gain valuable knowledge and practical skill in harmonizing, and probably an awakened ear. We regret to note that Dr. Shinn, in his theoretical explanations, talks of 'generators' (which generate sounds out of tune!), and that he even goes so far as to support the least tenable assumption of the Day theory that the presence of certain

discords as part of the harmonic or partial series excuses 'preparation,' a word which, if it means anything, means the sounding of a note *before* it is discordant. Dr. Shinn is far happier in his interesting chapter on exceptional progression, wherein he shows by numerous examples from good composers that the so-called 'rules' of harmony are advantageously set aside under certain circumstances. Many students, we fear, will only too eagerly attend to this chapter.

Trafalgar. Ballad for chorus and orchestra. Words by Francis T. Palgrave. Music by Hugh Blair.

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

The battle of Trafalgar took place on October 21, 1805, therefore it is with singular appropriateness that in this centenary year Mr. Hugh Blair should have set to music some of the most stirring lines of Palgrave's poem celebrating Nelson's great naval victory. The music is laid out for chorus and orchestra only, and in a manner that is productive of good effect. Chorus singers will find their full declamatory opportunity in the rendering of these stirring strains. The music is full of virility, and moreover it has the merit of being melodious, not difficult to sing, and not spun out as modern works too often are. Mr. Blair's 'Trafalgar' abounds in contrasts—from the strenuous unaccompanied phrase 'England expects every man will do his duty' to the tender music of 'Features that ne'er can be gazed on again till the death pang is o'er.'

This refreshing work, which occupies fifteen minutes in performance, is one that, if we mistake not, will be welcomed by choral societies, not only for its spirited subject-matter and skilled musicianship, but for the healthy character of its strains.

Six Morceaux de Salon. Pour Violon et Piano. By Carl Bohm.

First Steps for the Violin (first position only). By Emil Kreuz, Op. 53. Part I. Violin only. Part II. The pieces for violin with pianoforte accompaniment. (Nos. 65 and 65A of Novello's Music Primers.)

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

Among the present-day writers of music for the violin Carl Bohm holds an enviable position, teachers and amateurs alike regarding him with high esteem for the skilful and delightful solos his resourceful brain and facile pen abundantly provide for them. His latest work, 'Six Morceaux de Salon,' will not only go far towards retaining the affections of his old friends, but will bring him many a new admirer.

With the exception of the last number, the pieces under review are written in various dance rhythms; nevertheless, they are most creditably free from the usual hackneyed type of such things. Thus No. 1—'Rigaudon,'—gives us a solemn, impressive theme (*Molto moderato, quasi Adagio*), in place of the lively, even skittish little airs often associated with the Rigaudons of the old French composers of the 17th century. Apart, however, from the title—which perchance may cause some surprise—the solo, with its elevated harmonic accompaniment, lends itself to effective solo playing, with a possible good display on the G string.

The Bourrée and Gavotta (Nos. 2 and 3) are more conventional in form, but none the less pleasing. The Gavotta, with its bright, joyous theme may indeed possibly become the favourite of the set. Strong and majestic in character is the Sarabande (No. 4), a piece that requires a somewhat masculine handling to give it its full measure of success. The Valse Etude (No. 5) departs from the usual beaten track of the mere waltz. Skilfully constructed on an arpeggio foundation, the subject-matter furnishes good scope for excellent legato practice. No. 6, a flowing *Capriccio Finale*, demands nimble fingers for an adequate performance, but young people—for whom these pieces are more especially designed—should give a warm welcome to a pretty strain written in a form in which they have doubtless had many a dry study to practise: