

Review

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his day; a Fantasia by Francesco Antonio Bonporti, an Imperial Counsellor of Austria and (according to Grove) one of the earliest instrumental composers of importance; and an Allegro vivamente by the justly-esteemed violinist Pietro Nardini. Each piece is, in its way, of interest; but the Allegro of Nardini is likely to be the one most in request.

Violinists in search of an effective concert solo, without accompaniment, may be advised to turn their attention to Max Reger's *Präludium und Fuge* in B minor. It is well worthy of consideration, and is difficult without being by any means inordinately so.

Valse Etude, by D. Alard. Arranged and with pianoforte accompaniment composed by Spencer Dyke.

Rezinka, for violin and pianoforte. By Franz Drdla.

[Bosworth & Co.]

Mr. Spencer Dyke has composed an admirable pianoforte accompaniment to a Valse Etude by Alard, with the result that the piece is transformed into a fine violin solo with accompaniment, one that is well fitted for a concert performance.

Few violin composers of the present day have advanced more rapidly than Franz Drdla (pronounced, by the way, as *Derdla*), born on November 28, 1865, at Saar, in Moravia, on the borders of Bohemia. One of his latest works, '*Rezinka*,' is in the form of a Mazurka, and gives a fairly characteristic example of the style of many of Drdla's compositions. Brillancy in the violin part, originality of themes, many tenderly persuasive passages, and attractive pianoforte accompaniments, all these combine to make the composer a favourite among violinists.

SONGS.

Odelette. The Dance. Chrysilla. Anacreontic Ode.

Composed by E. M. Smyth.

Eight Songs (Op. 14). Composed by Brahms. English words by W. G. Rothery.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

All the originality of Miss Ethel Smyth's style and methods is employed in the composition of her songs. The four latest examples from her pen are designed for and conceived with a view to orchestral accompaniment, and their full merit is not revealed by a glance through the pianoforte score. The orchestral colours not only show the harmonic scheme in a more vivid light, but help to intensify the mood. However, all the virtues that depend least upon the instrumental setting—the ingenious harmonies, the beautiful melodic ideas, the deep expression and pathos, and general strength of conception—all these will meet with their full appreciation through the medium of the pianoforte arrangement skillfully devised by the composer.

The songs are of elaborate design and considerable length. Modern—but not ultra-modern—in style, they belong to some extent to the impressionist school; of '*The Dance*,' this is especially true. There is, however, little trace of the influence of any other composer. The '*Odelette*' and the '*Anacreontic Ode*' are particularly strong and individualistic. '*Chrysilla*' can be had arranged for a violin obbligato, with which many charming effects could be obtained. French and English words are provided in all the songs. In three cases the French text is by H. de Régnier and the English version by Alma Strettell. In the '*Anacreontic Ode*' the French version is by Leconte de Lisle and the English by Miss Smyth. In all cases the English text is worthy of the original. The range of the vocal parts is that of a mezzo-soprano or baritone voice.

Mr. Rothery's translations continue to provide an element which is bound to exert its influence in popularizing and spreading a knowledge and an appreciation of Brahms's songs. The examples comprised in Op. 14 are mostly Volkslieder. The first book contains '*At the window*' ('*Vor dem Fenster*'), '*The wounded youth*' ('*Vom verwundeten Knaben*'), '*Murray's lament*' ('*Murray's Ermordung*') and '*A sonnet*' ('*Ein Sonett*'); the second selection contains '*Parting*' ('*Trennung*'), '*So secretly*' ('*Gang zur Liebsten*'), '*Serenade*' ('*Ständchen*') and '*Longing*' ('*Sehnsucht*'). '*Murray's lament*' is a song of mourning for 'the bonnie Earl,' assassinated in 1592, and is described as coming from Herder's '*Stimmen der Völker*.' '*A sonnet*' is described as '*Aus dem 13ten Jahrhundert*.' The '*Serenade*' is well-known for its simplicity and beauty.

PART-SONGS.

Day-dreams. The throstle sings. Composed by Max Meyer-Olbersleben.

By woodland and wayside. When the world is gay. Composed by Ewald Franz.

The nightingale in moonlit glade. The birds are singing. Composed by Hans Sitt.

English words by W. G. Rothery.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Only pleasant dreams are recorded in Mr. Meyer Olbersleben's '*Day-dreams*.' The music reflects the glow and not the languor of the noon-day sun and, preserving a swinging rhythm and a graceful melodic style, it provides a pleasant and singable part-song. The same composer's '*The throstle sings*' displays similar characteristics. Melody and gratefulness in the vocal parts are the first consideration. In both part-songs the effect is heightened by the simplicity of the means employed.

The feature of Mr. Ewald Franz's '*By woodland and wayside*' is the variety of its rhythm. The beat is continuous, but its divisions constantly vary between triple and duple or quadruple. The interest is also upheld by the assigning of a small section to solo voices alone. Abundant expression marks supply a guide to the proper method of interpretation, and if not exaggerated in performance, make for lightness and delicacy. Mr. Franz's '*When the world is gay*' is a species of vocal dance. The tenor and bass parts supply a guitar-like accompaniment in the opening sections of each of the four verses, while the soprano and alto voices sing a dainty tune. The tripping rhythm so established is continued when the four voices blend into closer harmony. Accidentals are very few and elementary, and there is an entire absence of anything approaching difficulty.

In '*The nightingale in moonlit glade*,' Hans Sitt has devoted his attention and his skill to imparting smoothness and interest to the vocal writing. There is no squareness of construction, the flow of the music being at once varied and carried along by the treatment of the lower parts, which are more than an accompaniment to the melody. Choralists will find many attractive qualities in this part-song. '*The birds are singing*' is simpler in the design of its part-writing but is more varied in tonality. Its harmonies are, however, by no means difficult in execution. These two examples of Hans Sitt's writing would go well together in a choral society's programme.

PART-SONGS FOR MALE VOICES.

Walpurga (Op. 30.) By F. Hegar. English words by Rev. Canon Gorton.

Nine Part-songs for men's voices (with tenor lead). By Robert Schumann. English words by W. G. Rothery.

The piper o' Dundee. The Laird o' Cockpen. Pibroch of Donuil Dhu. By Granville Bantock.

Bushes and Briars. The jolly ploughboy. Folk-songs, arranged for male-voice quartet (tenor lead). By R. Vaughan Williams.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

The vigorous English versions provided by Canon Gorton have been the means of familiarising Friedrich Hegar's male-voice choral ballads in England, especially in the North, where they are frequently used as test-pieces at competition festivals. Their intense dramatic force—of which a well-known example is found in '*The phantom host*'—is again typified in '*Walpurga*.' The original German words, which Canon Gorton has translated with conspicuous ability and art, are a Ballade by Carl Spitteler. They describe the ill-starred attempt of a headstrong young knight (Roland) to tame the fiery spirit of Walpurga, a virulent wood-pixy, and to win her affections. Plentiful opportunity is therefore provided for vivid musical treatment, of which the composer has fully availed himself, for his setting abounds in light and shade and quick changes of mood. All parts contain something to interest the singers and to display their ability. The highest part is for tenor voice.

The care which Schumann expended upon the composition and perfection of his smaller works of every description is evidenced in this collection of nine part-songs, belonging to Op. 33, Op. 62, and Op. 65. The songs differ in character and in happiness of invention; the most elaborate are 'Life's crown is love,' 'The bells of Spring,' and 'The night watch,' in all of which charming ideas are embodied. Other extremely effective examples are 'The lotos-flower,' and 'Blossom or snow.' The latter is written for three tenor solo voices in addition to the chorus part. All are unaccompanied and written for tenor lead, and are published separately.

No composer excels Mr. Granville Bantock in humour, and the latest examples of his exploits in that field, 'The piper o' Dundee' and 'The laird o' Cockpen,' will not fail to be appreciated. Both are suitable for solo quartet singing, and in the hands of clever artists will display considerable laughter-provoking qualities. Considered as music, however, they are in no way inartistic, while the way in which the tunes are bandied about from pillar to post—or, to speak more technically, from part to part—is in the highest degree ingenious. The 'Pibroch of Donuil Dhu' has many similar characteristics, but is in more serious vein, being a warlike exhortation to the Clan-Conuil in which the martial spirit and Scots idiom are blended with elaborate and conspicuous success.

The modal characteristics of the Essex folk-song 'Bushes and briars,' are well preserved in Dr. Vaughan Williams's quartet arrangement. Here, and in the Sussex folk-song 'The jolly ploughboy,' the proper restraint has been observed in the choice of harmonic and other devices, and the result that both quartets are perfectly simple and appropriate.

ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL OF MUSIC.

Al fresco surroundings, sunshine tempered by a gentle breeze, good company, and beautiful music, all combined to provide a most enjoyable afternoon on July 8, in the pleasant grounds of Kneller Hall. The occasion was an 'At Home,' upon the invitation of the Commandant (Colonel A. G. Balfour) and Officers of the Royal Military School of Music, to meet the Master (The Lord Mayor of London), Wardens, and the Court of Assistants of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, and a most successful garden party it proved to be.

On all hands it was admitted that the chief attraction was the magnificent playing of the band of the Royal Military School of Music, which charmed all those whose good fortune it was to be present, with the following selection of music:

1. Grand March .. Coronation .. Percy Godfrey.
2. Overture The land of the mountain and the flood
Hamish MacCunn.
3. Gipsy Suite Edward German.
4. Prelude to Colomba Mackenzie.
5. Song.. .. The better land Cowen.
6. Selection from the works of Sir Edward Elgar
Specially selected and arranged by Captain A. J. Stretton.
7. Glees .. { (a) Image of the rose .. Reichardt.
(b) Hail, smiling morn .. Spofforth.
Played by 30 trombones.
8. Marching song .. Follow the colours .. Elgar.
9. Symphony in B minor, The Unfinished .. Schubert.
10. Two characteristic dances (Op. 22) .. Coleridge-Taylor.
11. Selection Ivanhoe Sullivan.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

It will be observed that, with two exceptions, the programme consisted of British music. The players, placed on an orchestra erected under a group of fine old elms, looked very picturesque, their bright uniforms providing a pleasant contrast to the foliage of the trees. They numbered 180 performers, including 50 clarinets, 10 oboes, 16 flutes, 20 cornets, 10 trombones, 12 euphoniums, 8 double-basses, &c.

The following regiments were represented in the pupils under training and who played in the band—Royal Artillery, Guards, Royal Engineers, Dragoon Guards, Hussars, in addition to a large number of infantry regiments. British regiments were also similarly represented by the students—the future bandmasters of the Army—who are under training at Kneller Hall. Eight of these students showed their conducting skill on this occasion—Messrs C. E. Caulfield, R. Cahill, S. J. Freeman, K. S. Glover, A. D. Hancock, C. Hartmann, E. J. Macdonald, and R. P. O'Donnell. In this connection it should be stated that Mr. H. L. C. Finucane, the recipient of the medal given last year by the Musicians' Company to a Kneller Hall student, is now in India with his regiment, the 2nd East Lancashire; also that Schubert's Unfinished Symphony was played in honour of Colonel T. B. Shaw-Hellier, a former Commandant of Kneller Hall, who was present on this occasion.

To give detailed criticism of the manner in which the several pieces were performed would be to write down a succession of eulogies. Suffice it to say that the entire renderings reflected the greatest credit upon Captain A. J. Stretton, the director of music, who conducted two of the pieces. Even the most critical listener could not fail to appreciate and admire the beautiful non-blatant tone of these 180 excellent performers, no less than the wonderful precision, the depth of expression, and especially the delicate phrasing which characterized the entire performance. Special mention must, however, be made of the playing of 'Hail, smiling morn' by thirty trombones, a combination only possible at Kneller Hall. This was a veritable triumph of artistic interpretation from the first note to the last—blending, precision and shading being perfect.

Among the company present were the Lord Mayor, Master of the Musicians' Company, and many of the members of the Company; also Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and Sir George Martin. After the performance of No. 6 on the programme—a remarkably successful and popular-sounding selection from the composer's works—Sir Edward Elgar advanced, bareheaded, to the orchestra and addressed the players as follows:

I am greatly indebted to Colonel Balfour for giving me an opportunity to thank you for your playing, and to tell you how much I have enjoyed listening.

The occasion is to me exceptional in more ways than one. First, I have never before heard so large a body of military instrumentalists, and I am delighted with the great sonority of the tone you produced; secondly, although the band is so large the delicacy and refinement of phrasing was wonderful. I thank you, gentlemen, most sincerely for the artistic way in which you performed my music, and it was specially interesting to observe that students of the School stepped down from their places in the band and took the baton with such success.

You are evidently in the best possible hands. What I have heard foretells very excellent things for the future. I congratulate Captain Stretton very warmly on his work, and I congratulate you as warmly upon having such an admirable musical guide.

In like manner, after No. 4 had been played—or rather repeated in order that the composer might hear his music, he having arrived later in the afternoon—Sir Alexander Mackenzie, after complimenting Captain Stretton and thanking the band for their fine performance, said: 'I did not know that I had written such a nice piece until I heard you play it.'

The afternoon's music furnished full proof, if proof were wanting, that the Royal Military School of Music is one of those institutions of which the country has reason to be proud. In regard to the practical working of the School and the services in the Chapel, it may be mentioned that an illustrated article on Kneller Hall appeared in the *Musical Times* of August, 1900.