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## A NEW FORM OF CHORAL COMPOSITION.

BY S. ROYLE SHORE.

There were no parochial musical problems in pre-Victorian days. There was a well-established tradition which had nothing but custom to recommend it. It was not inspiring, its ceremonial surroundings were squalid, no one wants to revive it, and it has gone for ever. In 1841, at the consecration of Leeds Parish Church, came the first parochial application of the Cathedral service. Three or four years later witnessed at the Margaret Street Chapel (now represented by the stately Church of All Saints) the revival of plain-chant for the Canticles and Psalter, after about a century of complete disuse,—for the Anglican Chant, a child of the Restoration, it has been conjectured did not entirely supersede its Gregorian parent until about 1730 or 1740. The adoption of the Cathedral form of service was but gradual at first, and met with considerable opposition. Later it grew to be very general, and even popular. In the improvement of the parochial service it became in fact an axiom that the cathedral in matters musical should be the model for the diocese. It is common knowledge how thoroughly this has been exploited, and how diocesan choral associations have assisted in encouraging and organizing things. It is outside the scope of this article to refer to the vicissitudes of the music in those churches that adopted the revived plain-chant, and the unfriendly relations which were set up between the two systems, the memory of which hampers Church music reform until this day. This might well be dealt with in these columns at some future date.

It is quite certain that a great reaction has set in. What was once a good working principle, a sheet anchor for the average Anglican place of worship, and an ideal for organists, their pupils and singers, has been seriously discredited for the majority of our parish churches, and some reconstruction must take place. The former is frankly recognised in the recent Report of the Archbishops' Second Inquiry on the Worship of the Church, but on the latter, the reconstruction side of things, it is not particularly helpful. It is necessary, however, to remind ourselves of what the adoption of the ideal has done for us in improving musical taste, encouraging skill in our organists, choirmasters, and singers, and developing that particularly British institution, the singing-voice of the boy. Whatever takes place in the future, these things must be jealously safeguarded, and encouraged in every way possible.

In the interests of simplicity, and that development of congregational singing which is largely the true reformer's objective in matters parochial, nothing has suffered more than the Canticles at Mattins and Evensong, for the set services formerly in use, in emulation of the cathedral tradition, have been very generally displaced in favour of the Anglican chant. The present writer is not one of those who take up the hostile attitude assumed by so many towards this overdone maid-of-all-work. There is nothing necessarily unrighteous in singing the Psalms in vocal harmony on either ancient or modern lines. A tradition which goes back at least to Josquin Després in the 15th century, the beautiful literature of Continental faux-bourbons of the 16th century, and our own Tudor and pre-Rebellion harmonized chants, about which the present writer was privileged to discourse in these columns in the autumn of 1912, should forbid indiscriminate condemnation. He is at one with those who would like to see the best made of it, and its liberation from certain features, and trusts

that the efforts now being made to arrive at some permanent reform, with general acceptance, will be successful. The earnest and costly experiments of so many enterprising musicians of recent years should bear fruit from the examples or warnings that they give.

However inevitable the Anglican chant may seem to be for the Psalms in most churches, something more dignified ought to be devised for the Canticles. The solemn form of the tones of plain-chant for some of the same Canticles partly points the way. Extended forms of modern chants could certainly be popularised for the Canticles, with some occasional embellishments in faux-bourdon. Where the Te Deum is concerned it is universally admitted that the Anglican chant breaks down completely from its want of elasticity and the shortness of so many of the verses. Here an extended chant is of no help to us. It aggravates the evil. A chant which allows of being shortened to fit short verses is possible, though perhaps hazardous. The present writer has experimented. A special short form of chant does not seem to suit the dignity of a great hymn which clearly calls for special treatment on the lines of a service setting.

The purpose of this article is to urge the composition of settings to the Te Deum and Canticles for parochial and even wider use, containing both choral and congregational features, on a new method. The Communion Service is capable of being treated in a similar way. There has been hitherto a kind of working compromise on the basis of the cathedral model. A certain number of settings have been composed, simple in form and low in pitch, so that the congregation, besides following, can reproduce the top part when they have succeeded in picking it up from frequent repetition. This is unsatisfactory and unfair to the choir—who are an entity in themselves, and are not only leaders of the congregation—because the trebles and generally the other choralests are singing in the ineffective range of their respective voices. It is also inartistic, inasmuch as the treble part will be doubled in octaves with overwhelming force if the congregation are doing their duty, and all pretence of a choral balance will be at an end. The problem really is how to combine artistically the voices of a congregation singing in octaves in the limited range of from about D to D with the harmony of a choir singing in the effective range of the respective voice parts. It is now intended to show how this can be solved. Hitherto no music of this character has been known to the writer as existing in this country outside some chant settings, with a small reservation about to be noted, and certainly none has enjoyed any vogue. As a matter of history, when the Latin rites were in use the Canticles in our cathedrals were rarely set in full, and the polyphony of the day alternated with plain-chant. The congregational principle was still respected, although the lay people probably did not sing in the service, but the clergy almost certainly joined in the plain-chant. At the Reformation composers felt no call to consider anyone but the choir, and the complete settings as we know them were the result. In the 18th century, however, 'Chanting Services,' as they were called, were composed by Hawkins, Kempton, and Langdon. These consisted of an Anglican chant alternating with figured music, and apparently were an attempt to revive at Ely Cathedral, where these composers were organists, the ancient model, a tradition possibly inherited from the Italian, Ferrabosco, through his grandson, their predecessor. The following is an example from a 'Chanting Service' of Kempton (d. 1762) from a transcript from the Ely books by the

Rev. Walter Slater, and kindly placed by him at the writer's disposal some six years ago :

thro'-out all KEMPTON.

thro'-out all, thro'-out all, all, all, all,

all gen - er - a - tions.

Chant.

He hath shewed, &c.

He hath put down the, &c.

There are two ways in which service music can be laid out to comply with the conditions above indicated : the antiphonal, according to ancient forms,\* and reflected to some extent in the 'Chanting Services,' or with more or less continuous strains for unison-singing, with overlapping optional choral harmony for the choir at certain points. The germ of such a composition on antiphonal lines may be found in the well-known Cathedral service of Walmisley in D minor, from which the following is extracted :

FULL. Boldly. WALMSLEY.

and my spi-rit hath re-joic - - ed

FULL. Boldly.

*f* Prin. & Sw. coupled.

*Ped. sempre.*

in God my Sa - viour.

\* E.g., The Evening Canticles, edited by Francis Burgess and S. Royle Shore. (Novello & Co.)

For he hath re - gard - - ed the &c.

Choir Org. *sen. Ped.*

The custom or the polyphonists in laying out passages and movements for the higher voices, without basses, and the beautiful resulting effect of detachment from things terrestrial, are well known. Walmisley to some extent reproduces on simple lines this effect, admirably contrasted with the unison of the basses and tenors, but the bass of his accompaniment, though without pedals, keeps him somewhat anchored to the earth.

If the popular parochial evening service of Bunnett in F had been provided with more independent choral relief, in passages sometimes overlapping the unison strains and going above them, it would form a very fair model of what is in view for the other kind of composition. To the following extract the present writer has ventured to add a choral passage for the harmony singers of the choir, adapted from the organ harmonies. This will help to illustrate his meaning :

BUNNETT.

*p* *f*

*p* and ho - ly, ho - ly is his Name.

me

and ho - ly, ho - ly is his Name.

Without Org.

The concluding five bars illustrate clearly the new choral effect in service music of a strong melody proceeding in octaves in the mezzo-soprano and baritone ranges amidst a framework of vocal harmony, in place of the too-familiar weak alto part, which

could frequently be dispensed with entirely, the chorals proper merely adding three-part harmony to the inside octave melody. The 'Tenor Tune Book' \* shows how this effect can be realised in hymn-singing, by a judicious use of the means it so effectively provides.

Whilst nothing has come down to us in a non-antiphonal form, an interesting model may be found in a composition of the well-known French organist, Ch. M. Widor, probably a 'Pièce d'occasion,' in the shape of a Mass written for performance in the Church of St. Sulpice, Paris, for two choirs, one of two hundred Seminarists singing mainly in unison, and the other of forty chorals proper, with two organs. The method of scoring for the large organ in detached chords, as against the sustained chords of the little organ and chorals, and the solo work of the former in the symphonies and interludes, should be noted. Whatever may be thought of the music according to our ecclesiastical standards of taste, the marked effectiveness of a great body of men's voices singing in unison, and telling out in the midst of, and coming through, a mass of choral tone soaring above, faux-bourdon-like, is something of which we have had little or no experience.

In one of our great cathedrals a large body of soldiers had their parade service just before the usual Sunday choral office. The effect of the great unison hymn-singing of these men was impressive to the last degree, as was the contrast it presented to the choral harmony of the choir at the succeeding service. How much more impressive it would have been had the two effects been combined in the same service! Yet this has never apparently occurred to any of our cathedral organists, though they have had their Walmisley in D minor at their elbows to point the way. The new form of choral service music now being advocated has its message to the cathedral at times as well as the parish church.

The following example is taken from the opening of the Kyrie after an eight-bar organ symphony, and eight bars of the unison choir. To the latter the first eight bars of the example from A are the complement:

Messe à deux chœurs et  
deux orgues—Kyrie. CH. M. WIDOR  
(Op. 36).

*Moderato.* A

BARYTONS. (ff)

1<sup>er</sup> CHŒUR. 16

2<sup>d</sup> CHŒUR. 16

PETIT ORGUE. (ff) 16

GRAND ORGUE. (ff) 16

\* The Faith Press.



Ky - ri - e  
Ky - ri - e e . . .

e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e, Ky - ri - e  
e - - le - i - son,

e - le - i - son.  
le - i - son.

e - le - i - son.  
e - le - i - son.

*ff*

*ff* 8 bars Interlude.

[A copy of this Mass will be available for inspection at 160 Wardour Street, by the kindness of Messrs. Novello.]

In the concluding portion of this article examples will be given from recent compositions published, or, in course of publication, more or less illustrating the principles advocated by the writer.

(To be concluded.)

### ELGAR'S NEW CHAMBER MUSIC.

One of the most interesting musical events of the year has been Sir Edward Elgar's entry into the field of chamber music. His Violin and Pianoforte Sonata was dealt with in our issue for April. It has already been widely played, and has won golden opinions wherever heard. Since its appearance a String Quartet has been published, and a Pianoforte Quintet is in the press.

The first performance of the two latter works took place at Wigmore Hall on May 21, the players being Messrs. Albert Sammons, W. H. Reed, Raymond Jeremy, Felix Salmond, and William Murdoch. The concert was devoted entirely to Elgar's music, consisting of the two new works, and the Violin and Pianoforte Sonata. Although our concern here is mainly with the novelties, we cannot refrain from alluding to Sammons's and Murdoch's playing of the Sonata. Wonderfully fine throughout, with all the mingling of the rugged and the tender called for by the music, it reached its highest point in the Romance. The delicate and expressive playing of the final section seemed to lay a spell on those so fortunate as to hear it. Not often do we enjoy such perfection.

The first movement of the Quartet has many poignant moments, and is full of characteristic touches. It opens simply, but is on the whole restless and questioning. The slow movement—*piacevole*—is a lyrical gem. From its opening—in simple three-part harmony—to its close, it is a stream of beautiful, expressive music.

The *Finale* is tremendously vigorous, with many passionate moments. A striking feature is a bustling semiquaver subject which comes on the scene early, and has a great deal to say during the rest of the movement. The Quartet was splendidly played, save for a few passages in the *Finale*, which sounded a trifle rough.

The Quintet strikes a new note for Elgar. On first acquaintance we observe less of the characteristic minutiae of the Elgar manner—the musings and whisperings that so often carry his argument from page to page—and more effects of emotional colour. We feel, too, that the composer's handling of the pianoforte is rather less distinctive and original than his treatment of the strings. The first movement has a mixed atmosphere, often hinting at southern countries, and suggesting at times a programmatic basis. The *Adagio* is an essay in beautiful sustained sonority. The *Finale—Allegro nobilmente*—will probably come to be recognised as the finest of its three movements. It is passionate and highly-coloured, and has an acute harmonic interest.

The works had an enthusiastic reception, the players being recalled many times. The composer was present, and at the end of the concert received an ovation.

We hope to deal more fully with the Quartet and Quintet in a future issue.

In regard to Elgar's success in the writing of slow movements, we quote the following from Mr. Robin Legge's report of the concert in the *Daily Telegraph* of May 22:

It is particularly curious, moreover, that in all the three works, works written at much the same time a year or so ago in the country, the slow movement is that in which Elgar seems to express most poetically, and in most lovely phrase, the thoughts that arise in him. In the whole history of chamber music the slow movement has invariably been the test; in the whole history of Elgar the slow movement has proved, abundantly, his great gifts. In all the three slow movements heard on this occasion there is a beauty and a poetry and, above all, a spontaneity and inevitability that is astounding by its very rarity.