

Review

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Second Suite for the Pianoforte. First Ballade for the Pianoforte. Composed by York Bowen.

[Novello : Avison Edition.]

Few of our young composers have as fluent and romantic an imagination as Mr. York Bowen, and still fewer have his ability to dispense with the aid of orchestral colour in giving point to their ideas. The monochromatic tones of the pianoforte, which are a barren field to the inexperienced modern composer, are employed by Mr. Bowen in the above works without any sacrifice of picturesque effect. The Suite is in four movements. The opening Prelude is mainly built upon one significant and arresting musical idea, and its style is akin to that of the old-time Toccata. The Intermezzo is a long stream of pure melody wrapped round with ingenious harmonies. Then follows a Barcarolle, similarly melodious. The final movement, entitled 'A romp,' is an exhilarating piece, and hugely effective. From beginning to end of the Suite the interest never flags. Mr. Bowen's individual harmonies are themselves sufficient to keep it alive. A chord of the augmented eleventh (described by Mr. Frederick Corder in the *Musical Times* for December, 1909, as the 'favourite modern chord') appears in many guises, often in its outlandish second inversion. In the Barcarolle tonic triads and dominant sevenths rarely appear without a submediant attached. Such devices and mannerisms are employed, however, only to decorate a solid sub-structure and not to disguise its absence. The melodies and the design of the pieces are excellent, and the basis of the harmonic system diatonic.

The Ballade is of less concentrated interest than the Suite. It contains some broad and brilliant passage-work between varied statements of a principal theme, and can be made highly effective in the hands of a capable executant. The 'favourite' chord is not neglected; of the other harmonic peculiarity described above the following is a typical instance:



The composer of these works is a pianist of brilliant technical powers; yet the care he has taken in the 'laying-out' of his music shows his practical sympathy for the less proficient player.

Songs. By Charles Kennedy Scott. Words by various authors.

[Breitkopf & Härtel.]

The first aim of the composer of these songs is to find adequate and beautiful musical expression for the meaning and spirit of the poems. In his quest he pursues paths of his own choosing, which at times lead merely to the abnormal, but more often reveal an attractive individuality. He achieves his effects usually by harmonic means, and always heightens the interest of his songs through the medium of the accompaniment. In the latter respect he avoids the common error of purposeless elaboration. 'Three songs for high voice' (Beatrice E. Bulman) comprise 'Soul seasons,' a highly expressive song slightly marred by peculiarities of accentuation, 'Spring rapture' and 'Finis.' 'To Joyce' and 'Dream quest' (Laurence Housman), for tenor or high baritone, are published in one cover; the latter contains some striking and forceful ideas. Of similar range is the melodious 'She walks in beauty' (Byron). 'A sea dirge,' for low voice, is a remarkable impressionistic setting of Shakespeare's 'Full fathom five.' 'A lullaby' (A. M. Lucas), for mezzo-soprano or contralto, has undeniable charm, but approaches the conventional. Two fairy songs for soprano, 'The lost fairy' and 'A wish' (Beatrice E. Bulman), have a simple, ingenuous vocal part and a light fantastic accompaniment. The words of 'The child and the clouds' are by the same author; the music is of striking, if not completely spontaneous, originality.

Love wakes. An analogy. The mad dog. Hang fear, cast away care. That very wise man. Orpheus. Part-songs for male voices. Composed by C. Hubert H. Parry. Words by various authors.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Sir Hubert Parry is assiduous in his attention to the needs of choral societies and quartet parties to whom knotty problems of execution are not an end. In these part-songs he works both his serious and his humorous veins for their benefit. From the former source comes his smooth and melodious setting of Scott's verses, beginning with 'Love wakes and weeps while Beauty sleeps.' Similar characteristics are shown in the music of 'An analogy,' the words of which are a poetically expressed comparison between the evening of a man's daily toil and the evening of a man's life. Goldsmith's 'The mad dog' gains much in humorous point from its present musical setting, in which simplicity and effectiveness form a rare combination of virtues. 'Hang fear, cast away care' adds to its verbal exhortation the persuasive power of a swinging rhythm. Æsop is 'That very wise man,' and Dickens the versifier who appeals to his authority in favour of an occasional tittle; the music vies with the sentiment in its appeal to popular favour. That 'Orpheus was a man of note' is doubly incontestable. The author of the description is Sir Hubert Parry himself, who, in the last part-song in the above list, is poet and composer in one. He proceeds to hint that in an important particular the famous musician resembled Mrs. Harris. The reassuring remark that 'The world will know there's an Orpheus now, and no mistake this time,' is set to music that gives plenty of scope for modern rivals of the ancient bard to prove their claim.

All the above part-songs are for alto lead. They are dedicated to the Gloucester Orpheus Society.

Pianoforte Works. By F. della Sudda.

[Ries & Erler, Berlin.]

The composer of these short pieces for the pianoforte is evidently an earnest-minded musician of individual views and aspirations. The thought and care which he has expended in the harmonizing of his melodies and the varying of his rhythms reveal a true artistic sense. A 'Mazurka' and 'Mazurka-Caprice' are published together. Both are elegant and fanciful, and reveal some power of thematic development. A second book contains a charming 'Wiegenliedchen,' a highly emotional slow movement entitled 'Resignation,' and a short 'Ballade' of considerable originality. No piece in this collection presents any considerable technical difficulty.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Office for the Holy Communion. With music by Merbecke and others; edited by Sir Frederick Bridge. Pp. 34. Price Sixpence. (London: Bosworth & Co.)

English Church Composers. By W. A. Barrett. New edition. Pp. vii. + 179. ('The Great Musicians' series.) (London: Rea & Inchbould.)

Communion Service. Set to music in the key of E flat; by Claude W. Parnell. Pp. 16. Price Sixpence. (London: Novello & Co., Ltd.)

Die Walküre. By Richard Wagner. Vocal Score by Otto Singer; with English translation by Ernest Newman. Pp. 334. Price 3s. 6d. (London: Breitkopf & Härtel.)

A successful performance of Coleridge-Taylor's 'Hiawatha' trilogy was given on July 1 by the Wellington (N.Z.) Musical Union, under the direction of Mr. Robert Parker. The work has been heard here on several occasions since its introduction in 1903, but that its popularity is quite unimpaired was shown by the large audience which assembled in the Town Hall on the present occasion. The soloists were Mrs. Hudson, Mr. Charles H. Stephens and Mr. Barry Coney. They, as well as the band and choir, entered heartily into the spirit of the different scenes, with the result that the picturesque music made its usual marked impression.