

Handel Festival

Author(s): Joseph Bennett

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To return to Costa's arrangement of the National Anthem, he not only conceived and planned certain characteristics of his own, but he arranged them in a certain defined order. His arrangement does not *depend upon* any one of those characteristics, it *consists of* the whole of them. No one else may do as he did. Each one of his characteristics may or may not of itself be sufficient to entitle him to monopolise it, but united they must stand as Costa's, and no one else's. Alterations in Costa's arrangement do not affect the question, but new features must not be engrafted upon what is copyright without them. We doubt whether any other arrangement of the National Anthem exists which contains so many essentially distinguished features as Costa's. To assert then that Costa's arrangements are not capable of copyright is tantamount to asserting that there can be no copyright arrangement of the National Anthem. This, again, is tantamount to a statement that there can be no copyright in the arrangement of any non-copyright melody, which is absurd.—*Q.E.D.*

It is only fair to add that Dr. Coward has told us that he never saw Costa's arrangement, but that he merely wrote down what he has heard performed, and what he has himself conducted, on many occasions. His statement, of course, concludes that point. No doubt, without knowing it, he has both heard and conducted Costa's version. But no one is entitled to reproduce or publish a publication, every note of which he knows by heart, if it happens to belong to someone else. Like yourself, we do not in any way reflect upon Dr. Coward's action, in face of his assurance above referred to, and we hope that he will acquit us of any other motive than the natural wish to protect what to us is a very valuable property.

Your obedient Servants,

June 9, 1897.

NOVELLO AND CO.

HANDEL FESTIVAL.

ONCE again has the machinery of the Handel Festival got into motion, and ground out its great results with unfailing regularity. We have been so accustomed to this during hard upon forty years that the possibility of a breakdown never occurs to our minds. It exists, of course. There comes a moment to every human enterprise when its promoters learn that nothing on earth is immune from collapse and disaster. That moment, however, has not yet come to the Handel Festival, and we must all hope that it is a very long way in the future. At present the Crystal Palace authorities have only to touch a button and the wheels go smoothly round. One thinks of the late Count Moltke and the telegraphic word which, in 1870, transformed the peaceful, laborious German people into a congerie of armies. I am told that the operation which triennially places 3,500 singers and players upon the Handel orchestra is not exempt from change—that, for example, it involves more and more Londoners, and, consequently, fewer and fewer provincials. I cannot say, of my own knowledge, that this is actually the case; but Londoners, being close at hand, are less costly than their brethren from the country, and perhaps more easy to obtain. The balance of temptation is decidedly in favour of such a modification of the original plan as that referred to. Turning to a cognate matter, of course I see with my own eyes that the orchestra of the festival is more and more largely made up of female performers. With all due respect to feminine executive talent, I have a rather poor opinion of woman as an orchestral player. She is not devoted enough to her task to keep from looking about her when attention should be absorbed by the music, and if she were she does not possess the power and promptitude in attack which, as a rule, the men display. Were I in Mr. Manns's place, therefore, I should say to the feminine element, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther," especially after experience of the recent festival, with its falling off in the volume and energy of the strings. The exceptions just pointed out allowed for as such, the Handel

machinery worked as before, and placed upon the orchestra a body of performers which, if not the finest of the series, was capable of grand effects, and worthily sustained the character made traditional by forty years.

The general rehearsal (11th ult.) was attended by about 15,000 persons—no doubt a large audience, but certainly a smaller one than usual, and thus early appeared ominous signs that the festival would lose rather than gain by nearness to the Jubilee celebration. It was natural, and, at first thought, not unreasonable to suppose that the crowds gathered in the metropolis for the national event would be glad to fill up the time of waiting by such an effective diversion as attendance upon the festival. But some not very recondite reflections indicated a different result. The Jubilee was certain to prove an expensive affair for its visitors, most of whom would be prompted by prudence to save in one direction what must necessarily be spent in another. Moreover, observers know full well that the public cannot serve two impulses at the same time. They yield to the stronger and neglect the weaker. All things considered, the 15,000 visitors to the rehearsal should have occasioned surprise that they were so many rather than disappointment that their number fell short of the attendance on previous occasions when the Handel Festival practically had the field to itself.

The programme drew largely upon that of Selection Day, but did so less for purposes of preparation than for the entertainment of the public. Miss Ella Russell, Madame Nordica, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Barton McGuckin, Mr. Andrew Black, and Mr. Santley were safe in the familiar airs assigned them for the Wednesday performance; while, as there were only eight choral numbers, all well known, the rehearsal, as such, of the selection pieces need not have lasted long. Nor, indeed, did it occupy the usual space of time, Mr. Manns being desirous of taking his freshly-gathered host through the arduous choruses of "Israel in Egypt." Already that work had been given an extra rehearsal, but Mr. Manns was not justified in letting slip any opportunity of guarding against such a disaster as that of 1894, when a chorus had to be stopped and recommenced. The result of further trial proved satisfactory enough for reasonable assurance, but the rehearsal, as a whole, did not come up to expectation. The chorus appeared lacking somewhat in confidence, often singing timidly and being backward in attack, while the tone of the sopranos struck me as singularly weak in volume and poor in quality, save when familiar music was in hand. No fault could be found with the basses and tenors, who were quite up to the old mark, and the altos were much as usual. From "The Messiah" only the "Hallelujah" was tried, but, to be in harmony with the hour, we had the National Anthem, followed by "Zadok the Priest" and the prelude to the "Occasional Oratorio"—most pompous of festal overtures. The orchestra further tested its own quality in a Minuet and Bourrée, and in the Organ Concerto in B flat, (No. 2 of the second set), with Mr. Walter Hedgcock at the solo instrument.

"The Messiah" occupied its old place in the scheme, and, on the 14th, drew together an audience numbering 17,101. Again a smaller number than ordinary, but by that time everybody was prepared for a falling off. Madame Albani, Madame Marian McKenzie, Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. Santley undertook the solos in the familiar work, discharging their task after a fashion which it would be waste of time to describe. So with the chorus, because if a choir of English men and women cannot sing "The Messiah" well, they can do nothing else even decently. No Handel Festival is ever likely to come to that. The greater examples of choral writing in the work were received as enthusiastically as ever, and general satisfaction prevailed, save when the eye marked the shrinkage of attendance from the customary standard.

On the 16th (Selection Day) the fall in numbers was still more serious, but this may, perhaps, be explained by the fact that the general rehearsal had presented most of the selected works at cheaper rates. But even then, the soloists, of whom four were *prime donne*, could scarcely consider themselves complimented by the unusual array of empty places. The performance was a decided improvement upon that of Friday. Chorus and orchestra alike showed greater confidence, and a more marked *esprit*

de corps seemed to prevail. Hence such fine choral numbers as "Immortal Lord of earth and sky" and "Zadok the priest" came out with satisfying results. So, too, did "Envy, eldest born of hell," although a greater effect should have been made in the tremendous passage, "Hide thee in the blackest night," where the "additional accompaniments" proved most uncommonly reticent. The soloists were those who took part in the general rehearsal, plus Madame Albani, who, I believe, does not attend on such occasions. The successes of these artists were most decided in "Sweet bird" (Madame Albani), "Let the bright Seraphim" (Madame Nordica), "Ombra mai fù" (Miss Clara Butt), "Sound an alarm" (Mr. Lloyd), "Waft her, angels" (Mr. McGuckin), "Honour and arms" (Mr. Black), and "O ruddier than the cherry" (Mr. Santley). Particulars are quite uncalled for owing to the familiarity of the chosen pieces and the absolute knowledge that each artist was equal to the task appointed. Mr. Manns set his face like a flint against encores, and found that process easy when the audience had discovered that he could be firm. Only stern resolution is needed to crush the encore nuisance everywhere.

"Israel in Egypt" attracted an audience 16,777 strong, and when those figures came to hand we, of course, knew the full answer of the public to the Handelian appeal. The result was almost worse than anticipation. Only once before—in 1865—had the numbers dropped so low, and now there is much leeway to make up in 1900. The largest attendance stands on record as 87,796—this was in 1886. The smallest is said to have been 59,434. That of the present year will go down to posterity as 67,378. It was all the fault of the Jubilee, and it is consoling to know that Jubilees are not triennial. Some observers, it may be—more especially those who depreciate all composers save the idol of the hour—will try to see in the statistics of the late Festival an indication that the public are wearying of Handel. Well, if they like to build upon a false foundation they must. Time will teach and correct them. I grant that the attendance has been declining since 1888. Here are the figures:

1888 — 86,337
1891 — 80,796
1894 — 76,406
1897 — 67,378

But a search farther back shows that a fall is followed by a rise, and that the average remains about the same, while, with regard to the present drop from the figures of 1894, the special conditions under which the Festival took place rob it of all significance.

The closing performance, as might have been expected, proved more successful than any other, although the formidable obstacles presented by "Israel in Egypt" stood in the way. As already pointed out, much depended upon this effort. A disaster in 1894 had to be atoned for, and the public once more reassured on the point that the greatest of choral oratorios is safe at Sydenham. These considerations, we may well believe, were not without influence upon the conductor and his forces, putting them in the mood for special exertions and more than common heedfulness along every inch of a course abounding in pitfalls. The result was victory. Only once as the oratorio proceeded did signs of indecision arouse apprehension, but they quickly passed and the most difficult choruses, or some of them, were the most remarkable for executive merit. One was bound to admire above all the magnificently steady singing of the tenors and basses, whose progress showed all the qualities of the very best choral singing. They were ever "on the spot" and the majesty of their entrance after a "rest" satisfied even those who could compare the chorus with the very best of the series. It is superfluous to dwell upon particulars—to tell how the "Hailstone" raged, and how "He sent a thick darkness," most suggestive of musical pictures, made us feel the terrors of the Egyptian gloom. Again delightful was the change to "But as for His people," and jubilant the effect of "The horse and his rider," which, at the close, crowned the success of the day. I would wish the festival of 1897 to be remembered by the rendering of "Israel in Egypt." In it all concerned "triumphed gloriously" and proved that, if not better, they were at least as good as their fathers in Handelian singing. The solos, entrusted to Miss Ella Russell,

Madame Clara Samuelli, Miss Butt, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Andrew Black, and Mr. Santley were in execution on a par with the choruses. The American soprano gave the long-drawn strains of *Miriam* in admirable style; Mr. Lloyd stormed through "The enemy said" with as much vigour as *Pharaoh* showed in his pursuit, and with more success, while the delivery of "The Lord is a man of war," by Messrs. Black and Santley, stands unsurpassed by any of which my memory retains knowledge. So was the festival worthily rounded off, and the audience sent away charged with pleasant recollections of an event which in character, as in dimensions, is approached nowhere else.

I must speak highly of all the arrangements. They worked with the utmost smoothness. Especially must I compliment Mr. Manns upon the result of his arduous and responsible labours. All the lustre of worthy achievement was reflected upon the conductor, whose energies are as unflagging as his musical resources and skill are adequate to all emergencies.

JOSEPH BENNETT.

ROYAL OPERA, COVENT GARDEN.

WITH the exception of the revival of M. Bruneau's lyric drama "L'Attaque du Moulin," which was mounted on May 29, the performances at Covent Garden have been chiefly concerned with the appearances of well-known artists in familiar parts and the *début* of a few vocalists new to England. The principal singers in "L'Attaque," Miss Esther Palliser, Miss Brema, M. Noté, M. Scaramberg, and M. Bonnard, were very much in earnest, but, save by Miss Brema, who impersonated *Marcelline* with her usual dramatic intensity and power, the spirit of the work was not caught, and the interpretation in its entirety was deficient in the *verve* and *finesse* which this opera imperatively demands. M. Flon conducted.

The presentation of "La Traviata," on the 4th ult., was a curious substitute for Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde," in which M. Jean de Reszke was to have appeared; but it enabled Madame Saville, who sustained the title rôle, to deepen the favourable impression she had previously made.

The performance of "Tannhäuser," on the 8th ult., merits notice for the excellence of Mdlle. Pacary's assumption of *Venus*, and for the completeness of Mr. David Bispham's personation of *Wolfram*. The parts of *Tannhäuser* and *Elizabeth* were respectively sustained by M. van Dyck and Madame Emma Eames, whose assumptions were noticed at the previous performance.

An excellent rendering in German was given on the 12th ult. of "Die Walküre." Miss Susan Strong gave a charming and most able reading of *Sieglinde*, Miss Brema's embodiment of *Brünnhilde* was superb, both vocally and histrionically, and M. van Dyck's personation of *Siegfried* was manly and convincing. Madame Schumann-Heink as *Fricka*, Mr. David Bispham as *Wotan*, and Mr. Lempière Pringle as *Hunding* completed the cast. At this performance, in place of the magic lantern representation of clouds and flying horses in the last act, there were substituted life-size horses which ran down a sloping board behind a set piece, but although more realistic the result was not so suggestive as the former device.

M. Jean de Reszke appeared as *Tristan* on the 14th ult., and again presented an ideal reading of the part. *Isolde* was impersonated by Mdlle. Sedlmair, a new-comer, and who, although somewhat deficient in vocal power, proved a most sympathetic and accomplished artist. Miss Brema, as *Brangäne*, and Messrs. Bispham, Pringle, and Simon were also excellent in their respective characters. The two last-named operas were conducted by Herr Seidl, who again showed consummate skill in securing due balance of tone between the voices and the orchestra.

Concerning Herr Dippel and Herr Brucks, who made their first appearance here on the 17th ult. in the respective characters of *Lohengrin* and *Telramund*, it may be said that both made successful *débuts*, but further criticism may be deferred until they have been heard in other parts.

The pleasurable anticipated first appearance in England of M. Jean de Reszke in the German version of the title rôle of "Siegfried" took place on the 21st ult., and it may unhesitatingly be said that the performance of the work was the finest ever witnessed in London. M. Jean de