

The Importance of the Accompanist

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SIR,—I should like to record that I gave a vocal recital in a West-End concert-hall in 1907, but I cannot put my hand upon a programme. Recognizing that too many alto solos would be monotonous, from my repertoire of about a hundred solos I selected and sang thirteen as varied in character as possible, interspersing these with help from Miss Constance Waters (soprano), Miss Violet Sinclair (pianoforte), Miss Muggeridge (violin), Mr. George West (bass, of St. James's Church Choir, Piccadilly), and Mr. Arthur Helmore, who contributed humorous recitations. We spent a pleasant evening.—Yours, &c.,

HAYDN GROVER
(Temple Church Choir).

303, Portland Road, S.E. 25,
December 19, 1919.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ACCOMPANIST

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me through your columns to draw the attention of concert-givers to the necessity for providing the best accompanist possible. What a great wrong it is to allow Mr. — or Miss —, because he or she happens to be a relative or friend perhaps of people interested, to sit on the pianoforte stool and try to pass as the 'real thing.' What an insult to the art, the artist, the audience. What a wrong to the 'real thing,' who is probably sitting at home instead of being in the deserved position. And what a poor incentive is thus given to the really gifted accompanist. Yet this sort of travesty is an everyday occurrence. A great deal rests in the hands of the artists—let them object, and object *strongly*, to being insulted in this way, and they will soon see the effect of such a universal movement. But it seems a fact that only the very few have the pluck to stand by their convictions. Let us pull ourselves together and show that we must have the best accompanist obtainable in the district if we are expected to do our best. That is all we ask—the best accompanist in the district.—Yours, &c.,

CHARLES TREE.

29, King's Road, Chelsea.

CHORAL SOCIETIES

SIR,—It was exceedingly refreshing to read Mr. W. McNaught's remarks on the choral problem in this month's issue of the *Musical Times*.

I am uncharitable enough to say that the new conditions are a manifestation of general decline of musical feeling due no doubt to the increasing demands of a materialistic age. As every choral conductor knows, it is a comparatively easy matter to get plenty of sopranos of a type, but it is quite another matter to get singers for the remaining parts. Needless to say the latter require a certain amount of musical intelligence; the majority of the former, however, are able to get along without. To meet the new conditions that Mr. McNaught refers to, it is suggested that this majority should be eliminated from all choral societies that aspire to any artistic productions. Doubtless it would be a very heroic operation in view of a more confined general interest, to say nothing of other considerations, but it would be worth while. To listen to a choir that does not blend is something like eating chaff.

Alas, that the public should be deluded by the mere window-dressing that numbers provide!—Yours, &c.,

Kingston-on-Thames.

J. J. ROWDEN.

January 14, 1920.

TO BRITISH COMPOSERS

SIR,—Kindly allow me the courtesy of your columns to draw the attention of British composers to the invitation of Mr. Appleby Matthews, the well-known conductor, who is desirous of performing some modern orchestral music at his forthcoming series of concerts at Birmingham. British composers who desire to avail themselves of this opportunity should send particulars of their works to Mr. Appleby Matthews at 59, Corporation Street, Birmingham.—Yours, &c.,

A. EAGLEFIELD HULL

(Hon. Director, British Music Society).

19, Berners Street, London, W.1,
January 8, 1920.

'CONCERNING CUTS'

SIR,—I am much indebted to Mr. Lionel Ovenden for his letter 'Concerning Cuts,' for it gives me valuable help in proving my case. He says 'no conductor would dream' of leaving out any passage of Schubert's C major Symphony. The late M. Safonoff did actually do so: so also does Sir Henry Wood. As regards the Symphony in question 'emptying a concert hall,' I can only wonder whether Mr. Ovenden has ever been at a London concert at which the Symphony has been the last number in the programme. As for emptying the hall in the metaphorical sense, I well remember a case when the Symphony was announced and the booking was deplorable; another work was substituted and the hall was well filled. Result, a great many who would have liked to hear the work were deprived of the pleasure. Were it of reasonable length, they would probably have the pleasure oftener than they do. Which is the better way? As to the artistic crime of playing a detached movement, is Bach's Chaconne an independent piece? And what will Mr. Ovenden say to Mr. Lamond, who, at the Queen's Hall concert on January 11, played the *Scherzo* from Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 31, No. 3, a thing which Mr. D'Albert often did before him. Yet we protest that we never 'cut!'—Yours, &c.,

A. KALISCH.

MEYERBEER AND HIS EXECUTORS

SIR,—The interesting letters of Mr. Tom S. Wotton and Mr. Arthur Herve in your issues of last October and November concerning Meyerbeer's unpublished compositions may require some explanation from me. During the year 1913 my much lamented friend and faithful collaborator on my long delayed 'Dictionary of Writers on Music,' the late Lieut. Louis Arthur Klemantaski, was informed by a prominent member of Meyerbeer's family that 'no further musical compositions, authorised autobiography, diary, and collection of letters of the Master will be printed and published.' This was settled at a family gathering held at Berlin many years ago. The decision is evidently final.—Yours, &c.,

ANDREW DE TERNANT.

36, Somerleyton Road, S.W.9.

A LESSON FROM PARIS

SIR,—It was noted in the *Musical Times* for November (page 608) that Elgar's first Symphony was to be played at a Lamoureux Concert in Paris on October 26, under Mr. Landon Ronald. The remark was made editorially that the verdict was awaited with interest. The verdict is now to hand.

Our French friends do not like Elgar. M. Florent Schmitt says that the opening melody 'stripped the mystery and caused all hopes to fall flat.' He seems to think that the work is Elgar's last symphony, and prays that it may prove to be literally so. In the course of his critique he refers to Gerald Berners (*sic*).

I wish to make a brief comment on one of M. Schmitt's remarks, and to point an obvious moral. I wish also to indicate why so many Englishmen find modern French music so exceedingly (may I use the word?) tiresome. The remark is this: 'For the next forty minutes we had time to remember Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky, who had little enough to say for themselves, but who managed to say it in their own way, using a vocabulary which, if limited, was still their own.'

My comment is of general character. In the conduct of life and art, companionship, and association with things of interest, it is better to be in contact with what reminds us of something else rather than with something that reminds us continuously and exclusively of itself only. The best companionship is of course that which carries us both out of ourselves into a large and universal world, making us conscious of things external to ourselves, yet at the same time identifying us with them and demonstrating that we are part of them. By such companionship we discover what we actually are, which is the end and object of life. But since this best is not always available, the less good must be accepted; and of the two minor alternatives it is more grateful and tolerable to be