

IN RELATED KEYS

HERBERT BATES

The most striking feature of last Sunday's recital at the Universalist church was Carl Schubert's "Journes." It had, however, the defect of program music without a program. One knew that a phrase stood for something, but whether it was a quarrel with the driver, or a plunge of the horses, or a gust of wind, there was no telling. Such music needs a guide book. The really excellent part of the composition was the development of the Volkslieder, odd barbaric melodies with an echo of things heard at the World's fair. They inclined to the minor, with an odd foreign rhythm and tonality. They carry one in fancy to far off places, where grim fur capped men, with jarring names, sing plaintive war songs and rejoice in minor strains, in music not morbid, but plaintive with the spacious pathos of the sullen steppes.

Schubert has used good material to advantage. But his own original work seems to lack strength. His composition seems like an excellent collection of "Lieder" with a fair introduction, largely in prose, by the collector.

It is a pity that the Adagio from the Sonata Pathetic was played as a voluntary. The stir of the audience prevented its full effect. A lighter piece should be offered as the first victim. Beethoven should be kept sacred, both from the rustle of entrance and from the jingle of the offertory. And this Adagio is a wonderful thing, wonderful just in its simple melody, a melody that rises in strong lifted lament, not sobbing, like Chopin's. It speaks, quietly, calmly, but with that great wail, "if it could but be!" always springing up, and sinking again into the resignation of defeat.

And this melody that tells us this is as simple as the simplest hymn, an air a child might strum with one finger! It is this that gives Beethoven his supremacy, his power of building from the simplest material the sublimest subjects. He adds much,—harmony, variation, all the intricate elaboration of which a great musician is capable, but the God of the musician is not in these. It is in the grandly conceived musical thought at the heart of them, piteously simple, with the childish strength of greatness.

Another notable number was the last, the Bridal chorus. Mr. Hagenow's arrangement was very effective. It was played, too, in the right spirit, not beaten out as a triumphal march, but made what it should be, a tender consecration of marriage; a prayer and a benediction. That text book of Philistinism, the "Franklin Square Song Collection," makes it a setting to the words "Flag of the Free!" a charming exhibition of unmusical patriotism. It was noticeable, by the way, that the individuality of Wagner appeared very strongly, even at the first notes. It was as if a new and strong speaker had risen to say his few words. The personality compels at once. There is an interesting article by Mr. Goodrich, in the last Musical Courier accounting for this individual impression by showing Wagner's peculiar system of harmonization. It seems that, where there is a "skip" in the melody, he does not, like most composers, harmonize it with a chord containing both notes. He changes the harmony with the second note,—as in the first measure of the Tannehaeuser overture, thereby giving the peculiar effect of pompous richness that marks his work.

Mr. Charles Hagenow played Spohr's second concerto with skill and sweetness. His work shows a great gain in confidence. The Telyn quartet sang

"Lead, Kindly, Light," and "I Am a Pilgrim." They seemed to sing more sweetly than at the Charity concert and with more ease and expression. Mr. Randolph's voice showed to particular advantage, especially in the second number.

The church, as usual, was crowded, steps and gallery. Why not throw open the "annex" to the north? It would surely be filled. As these things are now, one must go very early to get even a fair seat.

The performance of selections from the "Messiah" drew a large audience to the Congregational church, a larger audience, in fact, that could get in. The selections were for the most part from the first part of the oratorio, a foretaste of what is to be expected when the whole shall be given later. The chorus promises well, though rather small, and suffering a little from the fact that their leader did not stand before them. There was a little raggedness, which time should do much to overcome. Of the soloists, Miss Becker and Miss Worley should be commended. Miss Becker's first number seemed a little cold, but the second fully made up for it. Her voice is very sweet, and fitted the pure lyric flow of the aria. The same is true with regard to Miss Worley, who followed in "Come Unto Him," an aria with almost the same flowing subject. Neither voice fitted particularly the more florid numbers, which require operatic training and operatic powers. Mr. Wurzburg and Mr. Smith lacked the volume and confident force needed for such work. The organ, played by Mrs. Raymond, and the piano, played by Mrs. Jones, together with the Hagenow string quartet, furnished the accompaniment. The organ added much to the Hallelujah chorus, though it was rather irritating to see the chorus sitting as passive listeners.

The quartet suffered a little from the absence of Miss Ernsig, but its playing, particularly in the overture and the pastoral symphony was delicate and sympathetic. One cannot but look forward to what is promised later, the complete oratorio, with full orchestra, and it is to be hoped, enlarged chorus.

Apparently Mr. Damrosch may injure his interests in New York by his absence, playing, as one paper pityingly says, in "barren provinces." Well, he has made the desolate places rejoice. Perhaps that may be some consolation. But the barrenness of our musical fields is much like the barrenness of our literal pastures—a matter not of fertility, but merely of irrigation. Give us the money, the prosperity, and see the imprisoned music come stirring to the light.

It is doubtful if, looking at it from a same distance, any musical event has given such stimulus to our music as the visit to Damrosch's company to Omaha. Those who did not go, have felt the nearness of the influence,—the promise of artistic greatness that makes one discontented with smaller ideals. If we would only go on! Can we not, by subscription, in some way, get one concert from the Thomas orchestra? Certainly it is worth the effort.

Mr. Sieveking seems to be raising quite a furor in Boston. They recalled him seven times at one concert, and the girls are talking of him in the same breath as Paderewski. More than that, his pictures are in all the papers. Verily we have entertained a—lion, un-awares!

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