

"Kapellmeister" for the coming Saengerfest

Direction of Orchestra and Children's Choruses will be under Professor Theodor Rudolph Reese

PROF. Theodor Rudolph Reese will conduct the festival orchestra and the local choruses.

In view of his wide experience there was no other choice to be considered for this particular task.

Prof. Reese is conductor of the great festival orchestra and children's chorus of 2,000 voices of the saengerfest to be held in Omaha next week. He is conductor of the local choruses. He has been supreme conductor of the great mass male chorus at several national saengerfests. He feels it is fitting a younger man should do that this year.

"Music's golden tongue" Prof. Reese speaks with the fluency acquired by many, many years of musical activity.

He told the interviewer about it in short, sharp sentences after the interviewer had succeeded in gaining the great musician's ear. It was at his commodious home on North Twenty-eighth avenue.

The interviewer called. Mrs. Reese called the professor, who was in his studio, very busy. In fluent German the professor protested that he could not take time to talk. Mrs. Reese smilingly explained to the interviewer—that is, to the would-be interviewer—that the professor was always very, very busy and maybe she could tell what was wanted. The interviewer was adamant. No one but the professor would do.

At this critical moment came a fair young diplomat in the person of Miss Elsa Reese, one of the professor's daughters.

Upstairs she ran and there was a little exchange of German verbal artillery. Then downstairs she ran and after her came her father.

Prof. Reese not only looks the part of a real conductor, but he acts the part. Of heavy build, he has the nervous movements of great artists, a quick manner of speech. But this is tempered by frequent smiles that are charming and reveal why he is worshiped by every member of the great choruses under his tuition.

His hair is white and stands up in the pompadour style. A tiny grey moustache and flashing, restless eyes help to make up a striking countenance.

Though he has been in this country for thirty-five years, so immersed has he been in the realm of music that he still lacks fluency in speaking English. Often Mrs. Reese or Elsa would help him out with a word. So the ground work of his life was learned—born in Magdeburg, Germany, father didn't want him to be a musician, ran away and entered the great Berlin conservatory, where he studied under Prof. Stern, engaged in the German opera at Hamburg in 1881, came to New York in German opera for two years, organized orchestra of his own and toured this country, finally disbanded at Davenport, Ia., and determined to settle in Omaha, where he has been ever since.

As leader of the great mass chorus of the national saengerfest, Prof. Reese has reached the highest rung in conductor fame among the German people of America. And his methods of drilling great choruses of skilled singers, finished vocalists, who both by birth and by environment have been moulded spontaneously into musicians, are worth listening to.

There are many different kinds of conductors. Some rage like lions before their choruses and orchestras; others dreamily weave lovely arabesques in the air; some leap about in what seems to be an exhibition of ground and lofty tumbling; others merely motion with military stolidity; some use batons a yard long; others use no batons at all.

Prof. Reese is in none of these classes. He is class by himself.

His power lies rather in the affection which he inspires, in the genuineness of his musical knowledge, in his earnestness and singleness of purpose and in his unflinching seal and indefatigable industry.

Of course, he didn't say this himself. But one of his chorus said it.

"He is pleasant to the men," said this singer. "He doesn't get excited. He doesn't scold. Prof. Reese is none of that. He is very modest, too, although we know he would have good reason to be very proud. He is a very clever composer and he knows music from A to Z. He is very much liked by all the singers."

"Whom do you consider the greatest composer?" the professor was asked.

"Beethoven, Wagner and Johannes Brahms I think the greatest composers," he said.

"Do you do much composing?"

The professor laughed and made a gesture that indicated he did, indeed, do much of that sort of work, and his wife and daughter put his gesture into words. He is busy all the time. For the saengerfest, of course, arranging the music for all the different instruments and voices is a work at

herculean magnitude. Then he composes for various other occasions, for people in neighboring states, for Ak-Sar-Ben, ah, for so many things.

The professor stopped laughing and, counting on his fingers, reeled off the days of the week and his activities for each day. And in between times he composes.

"How do new melodies come to you?" asked Friend Interviewer.

"Oh!" cried Elsa, "sometimes he wakes up in the middle of the night and has to get right up and write down something that has come into his head, in his dreams, I guess."

And Mrs. Reese said that sometimes on the street car or on the train these vagrant melodies come wandering into his mind from the world of music and he hastens to write them down.

This is the well-loved "Kapellmeister" of Omaha in this fifteenth year of the twentieth century. For the conductor of great saengerfest choruses and orchestras today is the outgrowth of the "Chapelmaster" attached to the courts of music-loving Germany back in the early eighteenth century.

And how great has the modern conductor grown compared to that humble servitor of little kings! Thousands of batons have beaten since old Sebastian Bach used to plod along to the Thomas Schule to try a new cantata that he had written since breakfast.

In those days when ladies wore hoop skirts and when coaches were hung on straps the kapellmeister of his serene highness, the grand duke of Pumpernickle (let us say), was organist in the court chapel and wrote most of the music he played; he was choirmaster and composed most of the cantatas, masses and anthems; he was leader of his serene highness' orchestra and the symphonies, overtures and suites heard at the evening concerts of that music-loving court were mostly the offspring of his fertile brain.

Between times this busy but humble genius taught the fiddle, clavier and harpsichord to the children of his patron, and wrote music for special festive occasions.

Behold a typical day of that prototype of the great modern conductor of great choruses and orchestras. He hops out from between his feather beds in the dim light of dawn to set music to a new ode written by the court poet upon the greatness and glory of his serene highness; then calls his musicians and singers together to rehearse it for the evening concert.

Evening arrives and the kapellmeister, surrounded by his musicians and singers, seats himself at the harpsichord, waiting for the serene nod. Then, beating time with his right hand and filling in the accompaniment with his left on the instrument, he reveals to the distinguished court circle the wonders of his latest masterpiece.

It is such musical geniuses through many generations who have produced the great "kapellmeister" of today.

Not an humble individual is the modern kapellmeister. The little court with its dignity and condescension has given place to a mighty auditorium, filled with a multitude of well-dressed people.

Songs the Children Will Sing

Die Wacht am Rhein.

Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall,
Wie Schwertgeklirr und Wogenprall,
Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein,
Wer will des Stromes Hueter sein?

Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,
Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein.
Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein.

Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein.

Herr Heinrich.

Herr Heinrich sitzt am Vogelherd gar froh und wohlgemut!
Aus tausend Perlen blitz und blinkt der Morgensonne Glut;

In Wels' und Feld, in Wald und Au'
Horch, welch ein süsser Schall,
Der Lerche Sang, der Wachtel schlag,
D's süsser Nachtigall.

Der Staub wallt auf, der Hutschlag drockant,
Es naht der Waffen Klang!
'Dass Gott! Die Herr'n verderben mir den ganzen Vogelfang.

El nun, was gilt's?"
Es halt der Tross vor'm Herzog ploetslich an.
Herr Heinrich tritt hervor und spricht:
'Wen sucht ihr Herr'n? sagt an.'

Roeslein.

Sah' ein Knab' ein Roeslein steh'n,
Roeslein auf der Heiden,
War so jung und morgenschoen,
Lief er schnell, es nah' zu seh'n,
Sah's mit vielen Freuden,
Roeslein, Roeslein, Roeslein rot,
Roeslein auf der Heiden.

Und der wilde Knabe brach's
Roeslein auf der Heiden;
Roeslein wehrte sich und stach,
Half ihm doch kein Weh und Ach,
Musst' es eben leiden.
Roeslein, Roeslein, Roeslein rot,
Roeslein auf der Heiden;

Alle Voegel.

Alle Voegel sind schon da, alle Voegel alle,
Welch' ein Singen, Musizieren,
Pfeifen, Zwitschern, Tireliern,
Fruehling will nun einmarschieren,
Kommt mit Sang und Schalle.

Was sie uns verkuenden nun, nehmen wir zu Herzen
Wir auch wollen lustig sein,
Lustig wie die Voegelein,
Hier und dort, feld-aus, feld-ein,
Singen, springen, scherschen.

A hush falls upon the great audience as the conductor appears and then there are thunders of applause as he takes his place. A bow and then a quick rat-tat-tat with his baton on the music stand and the great orchestra and the mighty chorus burst into song.

Tenor and alto, soprano and bass and the entire army of virtuosos which will gather for the saengerfest will bow before Prof. Reese as they have bowed at the six saengerfests at which he has been supreme leader of the mass male chorus.

Prof. Reese is known throughout German musical circles in this country as a musician of profound learning and broad culture. He has a predisposition toward the austere rather than that which is merely gracious. He has little sympathy with the brilliant but vacuous formalities of Saint Saens or the equally vacuous sentimentalities of Massenet.

"Beethoven opened the new era in music," he said, "but not with him did the advancement stop. Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner added instrumental color. Today, in our German saengerfests we reap the benefit of all the great musicians of the past and both in the orchestra and in the vocalization we get melodies of which our ancestors did not dream.

"In conducting the choruses Prof. Reese is very serious," said one of the men singers, "but he is not a man of quick temper. He is masterful rather than sensitive. He is reserved, but intensely dramatic. His beat is severe, precise, but electrical. And his personality is so pleasant that he gets the greatest co-operation from all those in the chorus."

As the interviewer rose to go his little dog "Tatters" gamboled playfully about. Brandishing a rolled up newspaper and with harsh German words the professor stormed after him in most terrifying manner. But "Tatters" merely ran up the stairs two or three steps and sat down with a "smile" on his face.

Even "Tatters" knows that his "bark" is worse than his "bite" and loves him, as do his ten children and the choruses which he leads.

"The old way we can get papa real mad," said Elsa, "is by playing the French national hymn on the piano. Then he comes downstairs and threatens to do all kinds of things."



When the Conductor goes into Action