

BACH CHOIR SINGS THE B MINOR MASS Gives Finest Performance in Its History of Bach's Greatest Choral Work

PERFECTION IN TRAINING

By a Staff Correspondent

Bethlehem, Pa., June 8.—The Bach Choir of Bethlehem concluded the fourth festival of its history on Saturday with the twelfth performance of the gigantic Mass in B minor, the work that disputes honors as the greatest choral composition of all time with Beethoven's "Messe Solenne," the Ninth Symphony and Brahms's Requiem. It will be noticed incidentally that three of these four are works based on religious subjects.

The Mass is largely a choral composition, requiring little solo work as compared with the cantatas presented on Friday, but what solo work there is must be of the highest order. The soloists for the Mass were Florence Elzkie, soprano; Merle Alcock, contralto; Nicholas Douthy, tenor, and Captain Charles Trowbridge Tittman, bass. Miss Hinkle's voice was high, flexible and of beautiful quality, although at times there might have been more volume. Miss Alcock is one of the finest sopranos as to voice and artistry that has yet been presented at the Bach festival.

The "Kyrie" sung by the "Christie Elzkie" in the "Kyrie" with Miss Elzkie and of the "Agnus Dei" was especially beautiful. Mr. Douthy repeated his success of Friday. He did not seem to be in such good voice as on the previous day, but displayed the same artistry of interpretation and delivery, the same keen understanding of Bach and deep religious feeling, which made his performance a notable one. Captain Tittman also sang well, again showing his remarkably fine upper register, although there was here and there a tendency to sing off the key in the middle and lower notes.

Augmented Orchestra

The orchestra required for the mass is larger than that for the cantatas, and was therefore augmented by eight or ten men, all in the strings. The members of the orchestra were obviously familiar with the music of the mass and played with a precision and a unity that added much to the beauty of the performance. Of special merit was the violin obligato played by Emil F. Schmidt; the oboe obligato to the contralto solo, played by Marcel Tabuteau; and the French horn solo in the Gloria, played by Anton Horner. This latter is especially difficult, as it lies very high and contains a trill, a very unusual and difficult effect on an instrument ordinarily used only for melody or orchestral color.

However, these were incidentals, but in a great work like the B Minor Mass every element must be perfect to insure a satisfactory performance. As has been said, the mass is distinctly a choral work and it is therefore on the chorus that the main burden lies. As was the case on Friday, the choir showed that this year it is better balanced and has more fine voices than ever before in its history. There is no weakness in any section, and the tenors, of which there is usually a scarcity in a large volunteer choir, are especially fine in quality. The choir sang well with the other voices, which are generally much easier to secure.

As to the training of the choir, it is perfection itself. From the first rehearsal cry, in the Kyrie, to the last sustained note at the close of the Agnus Dei, there was not a semibreve of error. The choir's intonation, release of notes or intonation, while the shading was nothing short of phenomenal. The Bach choir knows the B Minor Mass as well as it is possible for any large musical organization to know an extended composition.

Entry is Difficult

Bach had as keen a knowledge of the value of contrasts and as fine an instinct for dramatic values as any composer who has ever lived. This is shown repeatedly in the mass, and Doctor Tabuteau has identified these things with the ear which he bestows on all the works of the Leipzig master, and brought them out with tremendous effect. One of the finest moments in the entire work is at the very beginning, where the full chorus and orchestra enter on the concluding note of the choral played outside by the trombone choir of the Moravian church. The entry is difficult, as it is taken very loud, but the chorus responded beautifully, and the effect was overpowering.

Still another is in the Credo, at the close of the "Credo." At the burial of the Christ, the chorus (unaccompanied) sang in pianissimo so incredibly soft, for a body of more than 200 singers, that it could scarcely be heard at the end of the church, and yet the notes of the chords were all perceptible. Immediately followed one of those titanic contrasts which Bach knew so well how to employ. With full voice of the entire chorus and orchestra came the "Et resurrexit," in a vigorous allegro narrating the resurrection again with enormous effect.

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DR. RALPH D. KILLEN Captain in the medical corps, graduate of Central High School and Haslemann Medical College, who is doing his military service in France on the transport Madofita. He has been overseas since August, 1917. His home is 5117 Hazel avenue

contrasts in shading and musical feeling with which the B Minor Mass abounds. They are exceedingly affecting but require an immense amount of time and rehearsal to bring them to the point of perfection achieved by the Bach choir.

Choir Holds Last Chord

At the very close of this wonderful performance, however, was an effect which to some came in the nature of an anti-climax. On the last word of the "Dona Nobis Pacem," the orchestra stopped and the choir alone held the last chord. It died away to a pianissimo, and then swelled out in a mighty crescendo and then died away in the softest of tones. It was a tour de force of what can be done with a choir trained as Doctor Wolfe has trained the Bach choir, but the chord was held so long that the final result was anti-climatic. However, the performance of the B Minor Mass at the fourteenth Bach festival will go down as the finest that this great choir has yet given.

ADVERTISMENT



To look in the window pictured above is always an esthetic treat, for Fritz & La Rue's, 1124 Chestnut street, has for many years been in the art of window dressing. For thirty-three years they have been in the same neighborhood, at first doing both a wholesale and retail business in Rugs, and, though they now carry the better grades of domestic rugs, it is in Oriental Rugs that they specialize. All the finest weaves of the mystic East, marvelous in coloring and design, antique and modern, are to be found in their wonderful collection, and those who patronize the shop with the absolute assurance that they are dealing with experts whose long experience and success in selecting and whose undoubted reputation for probity is far-famed.

Deborah Saah

COOL as a mossy bank on the edge of a tinkling brook looked the green window dressing at Fritz & La Rue's, 1124 Chestnut street, when I paused to look at them on a sizzling day last week. True, there were many other shades to please one, but somehow nature's own color called to mind more forcibly the summer cottages and seashore bungalows that they would eventually adorn. Among the cotton rugs, the Palatines and Pilgrims come in charming Nile green, one with floral border ends of effective pastel shades, the other finished off with the most delicious blue and hand-branded cretome rug assume darker tones, the latter intermingled with old-fashioned black-and-white checks, while the plain or striped Log Cabin Rugs run from deep to light greens, as fancy dictates.

FRUITS during the recent hot

spell were the only "cents" that struck the right spot, and, luckily, Henry R. Hallowell & Son, Broad below Chestnut street, had, and has, the most delicious there are California Cherries—splendid, big, dark red Bing, each a small meal; the Royal Anne, immense, so-called, "white" cherries, though they are really a beautiful blend of cream and roses, and the Lambert, dark red; all struggling to reach their maximum size through hot Canby, and from the Imperial Valley, that famous district of California which is 500 feet below sea level, stand next and are the most highly flavored and desirable fruit for breakfast that grows at this time of year, unless you prefer Georgia Peaches, which are now arriving considerably bigger and are quite large enough to slice.

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CAPITAL DOUBTS CRISIS ON BORDER

Suspicion in Washington That Border Scare Is Cooked Up for Profit of Cities

WANT TROOPS MOBILIZED

Washington, June 9.—War Department officials were inclined to accept with some skepticism the reports of Governor Hobby, of Texas, and other Texasians that the Mexican situation again is approaching an alarming stage, justifying the mobilization of large numbers of American troops along the border. In the absence of official reports from the commanding officers of the border forces or from the State Department, representatives at various points on both sides of the Rio Grande, that the revolt led by General Angeles and Villa involves danger to American lives and property on American territory, there was disposition here to regard Governor Hobby's appeal as having been inspired largely by the people of Texas cities, who depend materially upon army activities for revenue.

It is said that Texas has grown rich within the last four years due to the concentration of large bodies of troops, and that the people of San Antonio, Fort Worth, El Paso and other towns are not going to permit their revenues to dwindle if there is any chance of having soldiers kept there. Army officers who served on the border both before and during the spring and summer of 1917 are convinced that the last thing Villa would do would be to attack American property or threaten American lives, either in Mexico or in the United States. As told in a Washington dispatch to the Pacific Ledger on May 31, it has been established pretty definitely that Villa is to submit to the American people through Congress of the United States a proposal to have no connection with the Columbus raid, and both he and General Angeles are counting upon the support of a considerable public opinion in this country in their effort to overthrow President Carranza. Agents of General Angeles in Washington have no hesitancy in saying they will try to force an investigation by Congress into the Columbus raid, to establish, if possible, that the Wilson administration "picked the wrong horse" in its recognition of Carranza and was forced to "make Villa the goat."

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