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MUSICAL QUESTION BOX.

Professor J. Alfred Pennington, director of the Scranton Conservatory of Music and organist of Elm Park church, has consented to reply in the Saturday Tribune to questions concerning music and musical topics asked by Tribune readers. Every reader interested in music is at liberty to ask for information. Questions may be addressed to "Musical Question Box, care of Tribune," or they may be addressed to Professor Pennington. Only the writers' initials will appear in connection with the answers to their questions. They may sign fictitious initials if they desire to remain entirely unknown.

Q. C. T.—Saint Cecilia is always represented in pictures as playing upon an organ and is called the patron saint of music. Will you please give me some information regarding her in the Question Box?

Answer.—Saint Cecilia was a young Roman lady of noble birth, who, being educated in the Christian faith, vowed to lead a life devoted entirely to the service of religion. She was, however, compelled by her parents to marry a young Roman noble and a Pagan, whom she persuaded, along with his brother, to accept the Christian faith. They were seized and brought before the Pagan authorities and commanded to abjure their faith. On their refusal to do so the brothers were decapitated and Cecilia was placed in a dry bath, with fire underneath. This failing to terminate her existence as rapidly as her persecutors desired, they had her beheaded. According to most writers these events occurred at Rome about 222, although others put the date sometime between 178 and 189. Her house at Rome, where she was put to death, was converted into a church, or a church was built over it, to which, in 821 her remains, along with those of her husband and other martyrs, were removed.

It is not known how or when Saint Cecilia's name first began to be associated with music. Early writers make no mention of her skill in music. There is a tradition that an angel by whom she was visited was attracted to earth by the charms of her singing, but when it originated is equally unknown.

November 22 is called Saint Cecilia's day, and it is customary in many places to have a musical festival in her honor on that date. At Paris, for example, in the ancient church of Saint Eustache, it is customary to have every year on that day a solemn mass sung with organ, full orchestra, and soloists and united choirs. The mass is usually a new one which has just been composed by some eminent composer. An admission fee is charged exactly as if it were a concert, but the religious ceremony of the mass is given with the music precisely as if it were a regular church service.

W. F. G.—What is the best method of learning how to extemporize on the organ?

Answer.—The only way to learn to extemporize, or improvise, is to make an exhaustive study of harmony and musical form. Extemporizing at any length is an extremely difficult thing to do, and only those should attempt it who have mastered the theory of chords and chord relations, the formation of musical phrases, sentences and periods. Moreover, he who would ex-

temporize in public must, or at least should, practice in private to such an extent that his fingers can instantly execute the musical thoughts evolved by the brain, but he should be sure that he thinks musically; that is, that when his thoughts are transferred to the keyboard they should be worth hearing. Every organist needs to be able to extemporize sufficiently to connect one part of the church service with another, but further than that very few should attempt. There are so-called organists who never think of attempting to learn set pieces which have been written by capable composers, but string together a lot of unmeaningless chords in the crudest manner, without rhyme or reason, and as destitute of musical ideas as the desert of Sahara is of water; the result they offer as voluntaries, offertories, postludes. This they do not only occasionally, but every Sunday throughout the year. It is difficult enough for one with ample time and deliberation to write something worth hearing, but the work of the usual extemporizer has not been lightly termed by Mrs. Partington, in a letter to her son John, "macadamizing on the organ."

Those who make a practice of extemporizing throughout a church service do so for two reasons; either they have not the ability to learn set compositions or they do not take the time to learn them, or, if I should add a third reason, they consider their weak and formless extemporizations of greater interest than the carefully written compositions of acknowledged masters.

It is interesting to know that the master of masters in the difficult art of extemporization, Alexandre Guilmant, of Paris, very rarely extemporizes in a church service, but plays invariably from his own printed compositions or from those of other composers. I do not by any means disparage the practice of extemporization in private. It should be constantly practiced, providing it be founded, as I have said, upon a thorough and practical knowledge of harmony and musical form. There are times when a certain amount of extemporization is a necessity.

E. F.—Who is Berthold Tours, the composer of church music?

Answer.—Berthold Tours was born Dec. 17, 1835, at Rotterdam, Holland. He studied music in Leipzig and Brussels, making the violin his specialty. In 1861 he settled in London, where he resided until his death, which occurred a few years ago, the exact date I am unable to give. In 1878 he became musical adviser and editor to the famous music publishing house of Novello, Ewer & Co., London. He wrote a

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large number of songs and compositions for the piano and other instruments, but his best work is to be found in his hymn tunes, anthems and services for the English church.

Question.—How is the word "baton," the name given to the stick used by a conductor in directing a chorus or orchestra, pronounced? Is "bat-on" the proper pronunciation?

Answer.—"Baton" is a French word meaning stick, and is pronounced according to the rules for French pronunciation. It is impossible to exactly indicate the pronunciation on paper. Pronounce it "bat-ton." The "a" as in cat. The "on" is a French nasal sound. Start to vigorously pronounce the word "long" and stop before giving the "ng" sound. Now lose the "ng" and you have the French "on." Both syllables in baton have about equal emphasis. The word is sometimes anglicized and if you are doubtful of your French pronunciation you may pronounce it "bat-ton" with the accent on the last syllable, and "on" just as it is in English. The pronunciation you have indicated is not correct.

MUSICAL GOSSIP.

Hector James, of South Sumner avenue, has organized a choir of male voices from among employees of the

Delaware, Lackawanna and Western machine shops and rehearsals are already under way. The choir will compete in the extended which the young people of the First Welsh Congregational church will conduct in the church Jan. 2, 1898. The competitive piece is the "Sailor's Chorus," by Parry, for which a prize of \$12 is offered.

Miss Susie Black, solo soprano at Second Presbyterian church, sang at the Simpson Methodist Episcopal church concert on Thursday evening and delighted the audience by her artistic work. Miss Black is one of the most promising young vocalists in this vicinity and will doubtless be heard from elsewhere in the future.

The national edition of the "Musical Courier" is out, and is undoubtedly the handsomest musical publication of the year. It contains an interesting history of opera in New York which will be most convenient as a work of reference, and contains portraits and sketches of many of the principal American musicians as well as much other interesting matter.

The current number of "Music" contains as frontispiece a full-page portrait of David Bispham, and an article by him. Mr. Bispham, besides singing with the Metropolitan Opera house company, recently gave a very inter-

esting song recital at Mendelssohn hall, New York.

Among the novelties proposed during the current season of opera at the Metropolitan is a revival of Balfe's "Bohemian Girl" in English. This would make four languages in which opera will have been sung there this winter. The first production of "Faust," which cannot now be long delayed, will almost certainly be in French—the language in which the opera was first sung, and the native language of the composer Gounod. We have already had his "Roméo and Juliet" in French, and Wagner's "Tannhäuser" in German and Rossini's "Barber of Seville" in Italian. Next week "Die Walkure," "Carmen" and "Lohengrin" will be presented, but no singers not already heard this season will appear.

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