

# TONKÜNSTLER FESTIVAL IN DRESDEN.

DRESDEN, July 8, 1907.

The great annual meeting of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musik Verein (founded by Liszt) was held in Dresden this year for the first time since the society's foundation. On the eve of the festival the oratorio of Albert Fuchs, "Blessed Are the Dead," noticed at length in THE MUSICAL COURIER of January 16 last, was performed in the Kreuz Kirche before the members of the Verein and a large audience, under the direction of Johannes Biehle, of Bautzen, with the original chorus of the R. Schumann Singakademie, enlarged by the members of the different Vereins of Bautzen, which greatly enhanced the general effect of the chorus throughout. It was a magnificent performance, and the work appeared to great advantage in every way. The artists who took part were Gabriele Müller (daughter of Dr. Müller, the well known vocal teacher, of Dresden), who now is at the Royal Opera of Hannover; Frau Boehm van Endert, the Messrs. Plaschke and Rains, all of the Dresden Royal Opera; Hans Buff-Giessen, and Charlotte Huhn, of the Cologne Opera. All were excellent in their parts. Willy Olsen, of the Philharmonic Orchestra, was the violin soloist, and Alfred Sittard, the organist of the church, was at the organ.

The festival proper began with a concert of chamber music in the Vereinshaus, with works by Middelschulte, a passacaglia, in D minor, for the organ, by August Reuss, a quartet in D minor and a serenade, op. 14, by Sekles, for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two violins, viola, cello, bass and two harps, performed by members of the Royal Orchestra, under the direction of Schuch, also another quartet by Hans Pogge, in one movement, for violin, cello, clarinet and piano, performed by the Petri Quartet, with Percy Sherwood at the piano. Space is lacking to describe these works in detail. Suffice it to say that while all possess certain claims to be heard; I shall dwell on the really great events of the meeting only. One of these was the beautiful serenade of Sekles, just mentioned, a work of modern trend, in five movements, which met with immediate recognition for its beauty of musical impulse, spontaneity and invention. It was magnificently performed by the orchestra under Schuch's inspiring beat.

Percy Sherwood's performance of the piano part in the Pogge quartet received more than an ordinary meed of praise, likewise the Petri Quartet. The second chamber music concert in the Vereinshaus presented a string quartet in one movement (over an hour in length), by Arnold Schöneberg, a friend of Mahler, which may account for its acceptance by the Verein. Notwithstanding the impeccable performance of the work by the Rose Quartet, of Vienna, it was received at its close with hisses and prolonged and general marks of disapproval, probably owing to its apparently endless length and tediousness, from which mere mechanical cleverness can never save a work. Order being restored, the songs of Water Courvosier were then sung (the composer at the piano) by Chavanne, Plaschke and Wedekind, all of the Royal Opera. To be noted especially were "Gode Nacht," "Die Taube" and "Spanisch," exquisitely interpreted by Wedekind, who was in especially fine voice, the songs showing moments of high inspiration. Next came the trio for piano, violin and cello, in F minor, by William Rohde, for some time resident in America, performed by

the Bachmann Trio, Bachmann at the piano. This was pronounced another "event" of the fest, a work signalled by the critics for its genuineness, earnestness, its perfection of form—after Brahms—and its true musical beauties, both as to invention and depth of feeling. Bachmann, it is needless to say, did himself and the work ample justice. The King and Crown Prince, with Prince Friederich Christian, Princess Johanna George and suite, were all present at the concert, also Schuch, Graf, Seebach and other notabilities. I see that I had almost omitted to mention the beautiful songs of Kienzl, the popular composer of "Evangelimann," sung in matchless manner by Burrian. Especially pleasing and worthy of all praise was the one entitled "Meine Mutter," which thrilled every heart present. The composer was at the piano—an interesting moment.

"Salome" was performed at the Opera before the members of the Verein, for some of whom it must have been a first performance. This has been the subject of so much discussion and fierce contention that it will not be necessary to add anything here. Owing to the fine performance by Schuch and his faithful orchestra, and to a cast composed of "stars" only, the audience was given an unexcelled opportunity to judge of the merits of the work. At its close the whole audience rose as one man to acclaim the wonderful orchestration, the unheard of "unification" of keys, the richness of characterization, the polyphonic cleverness and unsurpassed tonal effects of which, today, Strauss alone is capable.

"Moloch," by Max Schillings, was another opera chosen for the fest. Schuch and his forces, with a cast composed of Krull, Von Bary, Perron, Scheidemantel and Chavanne, rose grandly to the occasion. With such interpreters the opera ought surely to meet with success, and yet the parôle has gone forth that the work is tedious, "langweilig," et al. Thus, in portraying the telling situations which such a case involves, the music has often necessarily to take on a philosophical and abstruse character. This is not a criticism; it is merely a personal impression of the work. The opera was received with such enthusiasm as to seem to justify its retention in the repertory of our Dresden Opera. Schillings and Schuch were called before the curtain many times.

The first orchestral concert gave us the prelude and fugue in C sharp minor, by E. N. Reznicek; the song cycle, "Erstes Lieben," after Gottfried Keller, composed and sung by Ludwig Hess, of Berlin; the "Kaleidoscope" of Noren; Pfitzner's "Christelflein"; two ballads, "Ein Lied" and "Der Knabe am Moor," by Julius Weissman, sung by Perron, and the "Symphonic Festal March" of Ludwig Thuille, which closed the concert. Most of the foregoing did not reach the high water mark nor give striking promise of life in future generations. "Kaleidoscope," by Heinrich G. Noren, was an exception, however. The simple and plaintive theme is put into many different forms, representing various picture or moods. We are led from one scene to another, until finally we meet Richard Strauss, and the familiar first theme of "Heldenleben," in a marvellously clever combination with a counter theme. It is safe to say that, except Noren, not a composer since Strauss has given greater rein to his fantasy or shown an easier mastery of

form with a more skillful hand, yet remaining strictly within the precincts of musical law. The work was several times interrupted with applause, and at the close the whole house burst into one overwhelming acclaim of the work. Noren's name being then called from every direction of the house, he appeared many times, congratulated by Schuch and the orchestra. A word, too, for "Christelflein," for its wealth of invention, its naiveté, its warmth and tenderness.

The second orchestral concert, the last of the fest, presented nothing especially interesting or worthy of note, except, perhaps, the symphonic poem of Scheinpflug, "Frühling, Ein Kampf und Lebenslied," which, in spite of the beautiful "Frühlingstraum" and glorious "Frühlingsland," nevertheless abounded in bizarre combinations, where seconds blown by trumpets, and intentional consecutive fifths were too much in evidence to please even the most tolerant musician. The work was received with mingled marks of applause and disapproval. The exquisite little, unpretentious idyll, "Waldfrieden," by Professor Sommer, of Braunschweig, should also be recorded. It proved to be a most refreshing change, after such a "Kampf" as preceded. As to the "Ouverture zu einem Drama," by Georg Schumann, and the songs by Ehrenberg and F. Moser, they failed to convince and carried off no decided victory, though the last named might have succeeded but for the too heavy orchestration, which obscured the beauties of the song, and above which not even Scheidemantel could soar. The fest closed with an orchestral performance of "Mazzeppa," showing that master hand of Liszt, which so few have been able either to imitate or to surpass—a fitting close to the fest. After the concert, a farewell reception was given to the musicians by the city of Dresden, in the Belvedere, to which your correspondent was invited; of course, a brilliant event, in which shone all the musical lights of Dresden and the Verein.

E. POTTER FRISSELL.

Telephon 12801.

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