

# Our Society

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## ARE THE PEOPLE OF HALIFAX REALLY MUSICAL?

This question has been often asked, and without wishing to offend, we must from a musical standpoint give a reply in the negative. There is no doubt that they are *fond* of music, but therein lies the difference; the subject is a very extended one and is worthy of some investigation. We admit that a great deal has been done to elevate the musical taste in the community within the last 15 or 20 years, and great improvement is noticeable in every branch of the art, and our older citizens notice this more in the comparison of the present to the former concert programmes, but this elevation is of a slow growth.

The facilities for obtaining a musical education here are now much better, and the young generation have a fair chance of cultivating their taste to better advantage: a good deal, too, has been done to introduce good teaching talent, and we have now excellent professors resident here, such men as Messrs Porter, Klinglefeld, Doering, Hutchins (and a number of good lady teachers) who exercise an undoubted beneficial influence in their respective spheres; but the true love for the higher class of music or the desire to become acquainted with the literature and works of great masters is as yet at a very low ebb. This was lamentably illustrated by the lack of interest taken in the recent Leipzig Trio Concerts, which were of the highest order and excellence, and well worthy of patronage if not for the love of the music only, but from a desire to give encouragement to the artists. Our audiences are in reality too fond as yet of ballads, negro melodies and comic songs, which are very well in their way; but this sort of music does not advance musical art or musical intelligence. Some excuse may be made that the place is small and opportunities are rare of hearing anything first-class as in larger cities; and this is true, and is greatly the cause for the existence of the present condition.

People who have the good fortune to live in large cities or in places surrounded by a musical atmosphere absorb culture and correct taste naturally and scarcely known to themselves. Hearing fine singers and artists in operas, concerts and large symphonies with fine, large orchestras, is of the highest benefit; it stirs musical sentiment into such action as to produce progressive results. The absence of all these are a serious drawback to our people, which those who have travelled can readily appreciate. In the connection of musical progress in Halifax we must not overlook the valuable services rendered the cause by our friend Mr. S. Sichel, who has been the musical standard bearer of many hard fought battles for progress in this line, the results of which we now enjoy to such a large degree. It is now nearly 20 years that that gentleman has been active in this direction; it was he who first introduced us to first class opera and artists, and who got first-class teachers to locate here. He was always connected with the best musical societies and introduced those fine pianos by Steinways, Weber, Chickering and others, into our market, which created a musical revolution all over Nova Scotia. The building of the Academy of Music is largely due to his energy and influence, and the creation of the Orpheus Club and Hall are crowning edifices of his work for the advancement of musical art in this city.

Other co-workers deserve credit also, most of whom we shall speak of later on. The Conservatory of Music under its competent management is doing good work, not alone to Halifax but to the whole province. And another institution, the Orpheus Club has also done much good by giving excellent programmes of good music to create a more elaborate taste. Our church music has also received an impetus for the better; the old foggy idea which has clung so tenaciously to the old style has had to give way gradually, after a good deal of grumbling, to more progress. Who could have supposed a few years ago that in St. Matthew's Church you would hear a Te Deum, or selections from compositions by Gounod, and have a paid choir? Other churches follow suit in getting new organs and paying for professional choirs to assist the preacher to attract larger attendance, which is all an evidence of musical progress, but to be truly musical requires very much more, and it is to be hoped that we will continue to work up towards that end. Let people understand that music is not alone an amusement but a great science and a very useful one at that, as the earnest student and devotee readily testify.

THERE is a rumour about, that Preeper is down with consumption. If this is the case, surely the boy ought to be released at once.

To those who know the nature of the papers and affidavits forwarded to the Minister of Justice, it has been a matter of great surprise that the order for Preeper's release was not sent down long ago.

We have the greatest contempt for the fashionable custom of making a sensational appeal on behalf of every man or woman who happens to be condemned for murder. But Preeper's case is quite out of the common, in fact, it is simply phenomenal. There are—and have been since shortly after the trial—a dozen people in Halifax who *know* ("Justice" was probably quite right,—we have no doubt that he is one of those who *know*) that Preeper is innocent, and who have seen sufficient documentary evidence, chiefly an affidavit, to clear the boy from all suspicion of being even accessory before the fact.

As most of this evidence has been in Ottawa for several months, it is, as we said above, nothing short of a phenomenon that Preeper should remain in goal. The only explanation is that by some remarkable freak of nature the minds of all those who investigated the evidence here are cast in one mould, while the minds of the officials in Ottawa are cast in another, the two being of such entirely different forms that what appears to the one to be proof positive of a man's innocence does not strike the other as worthy of any consideration whatever.

In any case, the thing is a phenomenon in an English-speaking country.

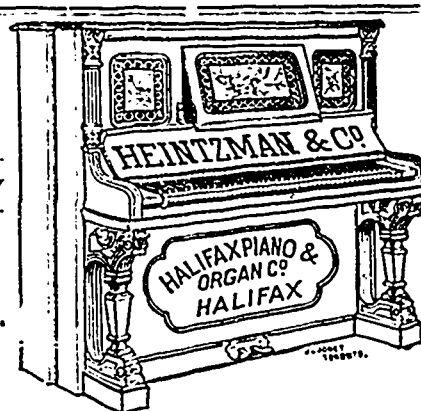
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