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EASTER MUSIC

By Fred M. Gee, Organist and Choir-master, St. Stephen's Church, Winnipeg.

Easter comes early this year, and the question uppermost in the mind of the choir-master and organist just now is the Easter music. The choir is always expected to provide special music at least three times a year, namely, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. The last named festival gives the choir a greater opportunity than either of the others.

Not only is there an abundance of beautiful music written for this occasion, but most choirs are at their full strength and are in better singing form towards the end of the winter than at Thanksgiving time or even Christmas. The advantage of having sung together for seven or eight months without interruption is obvious, and choir-masters know how difficult it is to get a choir in shape to sing pretentious music soon after the summer holidays, as happens in the case of harvest Thanksgiving.

In this western country, where the personnel of a choir continually changes from year to year, owing to removals to other cities and districts, and latterly owing to army enlistment, the choir director finds himself faced with the problem of training a new body of singers almost every year. This has been the case in Winnipeg with many choirs. Taking my own choir as a case in point, I have only three men with me who sang in the choir last season, the remainder have either gone overseas or have removed to other parts of Canada.

Assuming that Mr. Choir-master has his choir well organized and ready for the last and best effort of the season—Easter—I have thought it might be of benefit to suggest suitable music. Many who read this are well informed on this subject, but in a constituency so wide as Western Canada, where so many musicians are far from large centres of musical activity, it is hoped that some information and suggestion may be helpful.

Eastern Anthems

There are no finer Easter anthems obtainable than those written by the great British cathedral organists of the nineteenth century, such as Goss, Stainer, Barnby, Tours and Martin. A few contemporary writers have also produced very effective anthems. Some of our more modern composers are inclined towards extreme harmony, and much of their work is very difficult for the average choir to learn, and is hardly worth the labor involved. There are some notable exceptions, such as E. C. Baird, several of whose anthems are published by Novello & Co. Baird's anthems, while more modern in style than the composers above mentioned, are full of beauty and are worthy of a place on any festival occasion.

"Sing Ye to the Lord" and "The Promise Which Was Made Unto the Fathers" are Easter anthems. His "Save Us, O Lord," is not specially written for Easter, but in the writer's opinion is one of the most beautiful anthems written. To revert to the older writers, Sir John Goss' "O, Give Thanks Unto the Lord" is a fine example of the broad cathedral style. It is a "full" anthem. There is no solo part, and for the choir not possessing a soloist, is therefore specially useful. "Christ Our Passover," by the same composer, is much easier, and has a short solo suitable for medium voice.

Sir Joseph Barnby, one of England's greatest composers of sacred music, has written several fine Easter anthems of moderate difficulty, notably "Break Forth Into Joy" and "Awake Up, My Glory." Both are eminently suited to a festival service as regards music and words. There are no solos in these anthems. In mentioning Barnby, I must refer to his Ascension Day anthem, "King All Glorious." This number is of moderate difficulty and requires a good tenor soloist and accompanist to do it justice.

Berthold Tours is represented by one of the most frequently sung Easter numbers, "God Hath Appointed a Day." I can heartily recommend this anthem. The tenors and basses open

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Dated at the City of Winnipeg, this 9th day of February, A.D. 1917.

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