

MUSIC

THERE is one advantage in writing a monthly review: events have time to assume their correct proportions. We discover, when the flash of immediate enthusiasm is past, when the days slip into weeks, which of the many events or functions have left most impression upon us, and how much has lodged itself in our memories as unforgettable.

To hear Melba sing, and Bernhardt speak, and Paderewski play, these were surely the chief "worth whiles" of the season, since the marvellous liquid notes of the songstress, the vibrant, seductive, pleading voice of the actress, and the masterful touch of the musician, linger in our memory always.

Yet, enjoyment as great, and possibly higher in degree, came to many in the brilliant audience assembled in the Massey Hall on that late March evening when "The Messiah" was rendered with Albani as the prima donna soprano, and for her aides that sweet-voiced contralto, Madame Green, and Messrs. Jarvis and Salmond.

"The Messiah" is beyond criticism to those who love it. Like the 23rd Psalm or the 14th chap. of St. John, it ranks among the reverences of the reverent, and from the poorest rendering some degree of pleasure, arising from association of beautiful music and inspiring words, must be extracted.

But to listen while it was sung that night with the support of sweet and capable soloists, a vast, full-voiced chorus, and the beauty of the Easter season close upon us, was an inspiration not to be forgotten.

Whether it was the presence of the famous artistes, the brilliancy of the beautiful hall, the sense of power in the great chorus, the near approach of the sacred season, or that all of these worked their spell,—certainly it seemed as though the rich passion and triumph of the music swept through singers and hearers lifting them up into mood exultant, into sense of victory untold. There were no jarring notes that night, no strain, no sense of weakness. Solo responded to solo in those beautiful recitatives, and the great choir caught up the strain in grand acclamation.

Possibly the inspiration of the evening lay in the sense of power, of ability to interpret without falter or strain the magnificent music of the composer; solo followed solo, each ringing sweeter as the splendid voices which had lifted the beautiful familiar airs through years of oratorio singing, caught up the strain; but certainly chorus after chorus seemed each fuller and richer than the last, until that splendid "Unto us a Child is born" rang out in a mighty shout of exultation which moved and thrilled the people.

The accentuating point came with the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' when, with the first exultant word, the audience rose and remained standing through all the pæan of praise.

It was possibly as brilliant and inspiring a scene as the Toronto musical world has known,—the beautiful arc-lit hall; the stage with its mass of white-gowned singers, its orchestra, and the tinted robes of the two prima donnas; the vast, brilliant standing audience; the strong, exultant chords of the triumphant chorus, carried higher, higher, speeding in grand repetition, pausing, and swelling out into a full last strain. It was a magnificent tribute to the national anthem of the King of kings.

A new generation of singers is rising among us, fresh-voiced young songsters who are preparing to take the place of those whose tones time touches a little harshly or wearily. There is nothing more pathetic than that uncertain note or hard strain in the voice once fresh as a bird's.

It has been my pleasure to listen to a number of the on-coming young singers in Toronto during the past season. I spoke of one, Miss Bonsall, last month. Recently I heard another, Miss Alice McCarron, a very sweet mezzo-soprano.

This month we give portraits of the Verdi quartette; four young singers under the tuition of Miss Norma Reynolds, who have met with warm acceptance at church and parlour concerts during the winter months.

They sing with expression and in excellent form, showing evidence of careful training and work.

Miss Elda Idle has a flexible high soprano, which she has well under control. Her execution is excellent. Miss Mima Lund has a contralto of splendid lower range; while Messrs. Johnson and Stutchbury give good



promise for the future, since in each case the voices are very pure in tone and full of music.

These young people are all under twenty-one. They sing high-class music, and are altogether an attractive quartette.

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To have seen and heard Paderewski, this man who has set all the musical world astir, and moved the unmusical world, that yet loves sensations, to hero worship, is something. But to attempt a criticism of Paderewski, after the pages that have been devoted to an analysis of his genius and his unique personality, were absurd.

Massey Hall was dimmed somewhat on that evening to suit the pianist's fancy. The arched ridges of bell lights above the platform twinkled and went out in obedience to the electrician's touch, throwing the great stage into shadow and giving an added touch of isolation to the solitary little figure at his instrument.

Such an odd little figure it was, seated in a low-cushioned chair in front of the big Steinway, whose size, together with the vastness of the shadowed stage, served to accentuate the slender young form with the tossy mop-head and the cameo face.

It really bears absurd likeness to a ragged chrysanthemum, that profile shaded with the shaggy forelock and crowned with the

curiously tinted mop, every hair of which seems charged with the electricity that creeps out and down into the finger tips.

We recall the Samson episode, and mischievously long for scissors, if so be that we may discover whether Paderewski shorn be yet Paderewski; or is that wonderful mop an electric dynamo charged with musical genius? All manner of such absurd conceits drift through our thought, while surely and more surely the great player is drawing us beneath the spell of his marvellous gift.

And, then, it is his hands that attract us; wonderful hands are these, firm, well developed, a study of gracious curves, and, verily, instinct with life. They are master hands, that control even as the hypnotist controls his subject. They dominate the great instrument; pouring into it and evoking again from it the interpreting genius of their owner.

That last fancy carries further. Paderewski does not 'play'; one never thinks of discussing his 'execution' or 'tone.' He pours his own spirit into the instrument, he dominates and controls it as *Svengali* did *Trilby*, and it responds perfectly.

That is why those graceful, strengthful hands are so marvellously expressive, even to the lingering uplifting beneath which the last tone drops into sleep.

For the rest,—to see that young form so slenderly fashioned, with the foreign spirituelle face, the bizarre hair, the magnetic hands, the absent, indifferent manner, seated in his low chair, playing on and on for long hours with never a note or scroll before him; playing as though he were creating, improvising, dreaming these gems of the masters rather than interpreting; to listen as those wonderful hands call out the bird song, ring out sweet bells, sound the pæan, storm defiance, swell in triumph, breathe in far-off peace, run the entire gamut of emotion, human and divine,—this is worth while, and this is Paderewski.

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The members of the choir and Sunday-school orchestra of the Church of the Redeemer intend giving this year, as heretofore, a grand combined concert. The principal number on the programme will be Macfarren's cantata "May Day," which will be given by the choir with orchestral accompaniment. The beauties of this work are many. The choruses are stirring, tuneful and harmonious, while the orchestral accompaniment is all that could be desired. In addition to this, a miscellaneous programme of part songs, orchestral selections and solos will be given.

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The announcement that the "Stabat Mater" is to be given early in June, with the best possible resource of foreign artistes, aided by the Toronto Philharmonic and an especial orchestra, has excited great interest in musical circles, professional and amateur. Rossini's magnificent work is all too little heard; yet few of us have not been uplifted by the "Inflammatus," and to hear this inspiring solo carried by the silvery voice of Nordica high above the splendid supporting chorus and orchestra will be something to dream over.

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A pretty lullaby, "Mother's Precious," by Flora Arthur, a young sister of our gifted Canadian actress, has just been published. The soothing and melodious music is very creditable to the youthful composer and announces for her a bright career for the future in the musical world. The words are written by Julia Arthur.

AMATEUR.