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## Musical in Leipzig.—A Gewandhaus Concert. —The Ninth Symphony.—Operas and Concerts.

[We are permitted to print the following extracts from a private letter, dated Leipzig, March 11, 1877.]

Thursday evening I heard the grandest musical composition in the world, performed by the finest orchestra in the world—the Ninth Symphony at the Gewandhaus. It was the only Gewandhaus Concert I have attended, and will be the only one of the regular winter series I shall be able to hear, as I shall be at Dresden next Thursday, when the last is to be given. It is quite unnecessary for me to tell you much about the Gewandhaus Concerts, for everybody who knows anything of the history of music knows all about them, how Mendelssohn was long the manager of them, how almost every one of the great German composers has been in some way connected with them, how they have always been identified with what is highest in musical composition and execution. The Gewandhaus Concerts are strictly independent of the Conservatory, though it is almost always the case that the director of the Concerts (now Reinecke) is one of the Conservatory professors and that most of the Gewandhaus performers are connected with the Conservatory. The Concerts are supported by the state, the receipts for tickets going but a little way towards meeting the expenses of the great orchestra, almost any member of which would be a concert master outside Leipzig, and many of whom have been such. The Gewandhaus saloon is small and with the adjoining room not able to hold more than a thousand people. Nearly all the seats in the large saloon are held by regular subscribers—the F. F. L's—who are as sure to be at the concerts regularly as at dinner. I meet people who have not missed a Gewandhaus Concert for fifteen years. The only seats sold to the public are at the end of the large saloon and in a small saloon which opens by folding doors into the large hall. But every seat is perfectly good; the acoustic properties of the place are as phenomenal as the poor ventilation, and the concert is as if in your parlor. The concerts are given on successive Thursday evenings, twenty each winter, ending at Easter. The rehearsals take place on Wednesday mornings, and as they are almost as good as the concerts themselves and the expense of attending them is but half as great, they are always full. It is not easy to get tickets for the concerts when the programme is specially attractive. I got my own for Thursday only through the good offices of an acquaintance who lives with the Secretary of the Conservatory, an American, by the by, who has passed the highest examination in a class of seventy, in the Conservatory.\*

\*It is worth noting that quite half the Conservatory students are Americans or English.

The Ninth Symphony was the second part of Thursday's programme. The first part consisted of a new concert piece, called *Zion*, for chorus, baritone solo and orchestra, by Gade—its first performance—and an air from Mozart, sung by Fran Pescha-Leutner, which was new to me. Gade's work has many extremely fine parts, it was evidently received with great interest by the musical people, was much applauded, and is sure to find its way to America. Madame Leutner's tones are as strong and pure as her vocalization as wonderful as when she visited us.

I had heard the Ninth Symphony twice before—once given by the Harvard orchestra and the last time by Theo. Thomas. I feel unwilling to make any comparison of Thomas with the Gewandhaus, because my musical knowledge is so unscientific, and especially because I see that the real reasons for the great difference in the effect of Symphony on me, in my different hearings of it, are almost entirely subjective. Only upon hearing the different orchestras on successive evenings or at times near together could I make a comparison worth anything to myself or worth following out for you. This said, it is right for me to say that I have never heard music rendered in a manner that seemed to me so absolutely perfect as on Thursday evening—so delicate in shadings, so just in proportions, so precise in intelligence, so immediately the expression of the composer's thought. I shall not attempt to discuss detail, though I was tempted to speak specially of the marvellous execution of the second part. The truth is—though of course the truth is more of Beethoven than of orchestra—that perfection seemed ever to be growing more perfect from first to last, becoming most oppressive just as the first premonitions of the chorus appear in the instrumentation. Surely in all music there is nothing so great as this fourth part of the Ninth Symphony. The theme has been perfectly worked out, completely exhausted,—yet the great soul is still surcharged with feeling, and only innovation upon ordinary symphonic form can give expression lofty enough. The orchestra is almost still under the new demands. The great thought struggles for life, and yet is all complete. It is soft calmness, it is deep trembling, it is soaring—we know not in which the highest joy consists. The melody takes perfect form, it rises to full strength, and now the strings all tremble, almost shriek, in the height of inspiration and the glory of vision. And yet more, wood and iron, trumpet and viol, there are not enough. Man must speak immediately, and above the orchestra the full chorus pours, to end—as such could only end—in love and God:—

“Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!  
Brüder, ü ber'm Sternenzelt  
Muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.”

Was it not a stroke of the highest genius—

call it divine inspiration, if you like—that led Beethoven to choose this song of Schiller's for this place? And who but Beethoven was worthy to use the song for music?†

The lady who was with me at the Gewandhaus remarked that the symphony filled her with sadness, and that this was true not only of this particular symphony, but of almost all great music, whatever its character. This I quite understand, and the feeling is one which to a great extent I share. I was even myself oppressed by a subtle sadness amidst the grandest bursts of gladness in the symphony. But why is this so? It is through nothing objectively real in the music. To the Greek this feeling could never have come from the Ninth Symphony. He could have been moved by it only to joy, could have responded only to the symphony's objective truth. The feeling is rooted in that great undercurrent of subjectivity which has come into the world chiefly through Christianity, which has turned the heart of man into a theatre for spiritual tragedies, made life a consciousness of great antitheses, filled the soul with an oppressive sense of imperfection and of infinite possibilities unrealized and hardly apprehended. This part of life, the real life of all of us who feel and think, is stirred by everything, almost alike by blackest sin and highest beauty. All excellence in art intensifies spiritual longings. As great as the poem is, the picture, the statue, the symphony, so steep is the slope to satisfaction. We leave the Laocöon in sadness unutterable, we rise from Faust in a trance, we turn from the Transfiguration in tears, and our hearts are still when Beethoven sings of God. And nature, too, moves us in the same way. The stillness of morning, the robin on the elm, the brook in the woods, the air of summer noon, the forests of autumn, the falling snow, the Atlantic and Niagara, the mountains in the west, the glow of sunset, the procession of the stars, all are charged with melancholy, all speak of our sins and our sorrows, all tell of what we are not and know not. Yet do they this first and chiefly? And is this all-absorbing subjectivity the ground of highest manhood? It is more than first, it is second, but it is not third. There is surely “a more excellent way.”

While speaking of music, I must not forget to tell you that I have heard the “Magic Flute” twice within ten days. This has been a great treat. I do not remember that the opera was given at all in Boston during my years there.

\* Fifty-one years ago this month, the Ninth Symphony was performed at the Gewandhaus for the first time. The Leipzig newspaper said, the next morning, that the work was worthless, though the author was unquestionably a great composer. It allowed merit in the 2d part, but said it was completely neutralized by the length of the part. The 4th part was at best only the mockery of devils over human joy!

† Last week I visited the house at Gohlis, just beyond the Rosenthal, where Schiller lived and where he wrote the Ode to Joy.

and my only acquaintance with it was through concert pieces. It is a charming work, full of sweet and graceful melodies. It is admirably rendered here, and it and Gluck's "Armida," have been the events of the season at the opera. Every Saturday we hear the famous Thomas Choir, at the Thomas Kirche. This is a large choir of boys and young men, known to every musical student as having once been under Bach's management and as being superior, far, to all organizations of similar character. It devotes itself to the highest class of sacred music. On Saturdays it gives two pieces (generally without even organ accompaniment), and on Sundays it sings alternately at the Thomas Kirche and the Nicolai. The Saturday concerts are one of the Leipzig notions, and the church is always full.

On Tuesday evening the "Elijah" is to be given here, the Gewandhaus orchestra doing the instrumental work. The amount of good music one hears here can hardly be told, and the cheapness of it takes a Bostonian's breath away. The student's seats at the opera—corresponding to the English pit or the last ten rows of seats in our parquette—cost *twenty cents*, and an oratorio or a Bach concert, with the Gewandhaus orchestra, costs only a mark—say 25 cents. The Thomas Choir concerts are free. The Gewandhaus Concerts are all that are at all expensive, and these cost but three and four marks—the rehearsals but half that sum. What would not all this be to a dozen musical students whom I know at home? And my own appreciation of my privileges is surely very real and my gratitude great.

For Dwight's Journal of Music.

### Travelling Concert Troupes as Educators.

BY JOHN C. FILLMORE.

However discouraging to Eastern music-lovers may be the fact that artists are not well supported even in New York and Boston, who live in the West ought to be able to feel that we may greatly profit by the necessity of travelling which seems to be laid on the members of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, and similar organizations. At least, those of us who love music, who believe in the power of the best music to make its way among the people, wherever it is properly presented, and who are laboring with all our strength to bring whosoever we can to a real love and appreciation of the best composers, would like to feel that, whenever a company of Eastern artists comes among us, they will give us really artistic renderings of the best music, to our real edification. We certainly do feel that we have a right to expect this. There are teachers scattered all through the West, who do their best to lead their pupils to Beethoven, Schumann, and all that noble company, and who really succeed in doing so, in a multitude of cases. They give their pupils the best music to study; they cultivate a taste for it; they seek to develop an intelligent, discriminating love for it. The greatest lack they feel is the almost total want of opportunity to hear great compositions interpreted by artists who make it their business to interpret them. The teachers are generally overworked, and in no condition to do justice to anything beyond a very small repertoire: the performance of their pupils is, of course, for the most part inadequate. They look therefore to the travelling artist to meet their needs, and that of their pupils, and, it must be added, of the music-loving public; for, wherever pupils study great

composers, parents at home gradually acquire a love for good music, and soon find, to their own surprise, that trash does not please them as it once did. The travelling artist, therefore, has it in his power to render a great service to Art; to supplement the work of the laborious, conscientious teacher, to reinforce his teaching by example, and to kindle enthusiasm for the best music. Nothing can be of more importance to musical culture in America at this juncture, than that travelling violinists, pianists and vocalists shall be real artists and art-lovers, shall have an earnest purpose to educate their audiences and be helpful to them, and shall be above the vulgar temptation of stooping to clap-trap. Of course it must be admitted at the outset that the path of virtue, in musical matters as elsewhere, is a difficult one. The travelling musician plays to miscellaneous audiences, composed largely of uncultivated people, totally ignorant of good music, and, what is worse, totally void of any desire to know it, or to improve themselves in any way,—people who go to a concert-room simply to be amused, and to whom any other conception of a concert than that of an "entertainment" would be utterly strange. In playing to such people, the really earnest musician labors under a two-fold embarrassment, and has a double temptation to give them only what they will like best, regardless of what will benefit them most;—he has taken to travelling because he was not well supported at home, and must please his audiences in order to make a re-engagement probable, and he finds it terribly uphill work to play good music to an unsympathetic audience. He remembers an excellent and authoritative saying about casting pearls before swine, and since, whenever he plays the best music, he is not applauded, or the applause is, at best, but faint, he concludes, in disgust, that the public are swine after all, and must have nothing but swill. Far be it from me to underrate the difficulties which such musicians have to meet, or to fail to put myself in their place, or to condemn their shortcomings too severely. But I firmly believe that, in many cases, the discouragements are, after all, more apparent than real: that artists only need to respect themselves and their art to make others respect both; and that noisy applause, or the lack of it, is no index to the pleasure of the audience or the permanent effect produced. I have been for nearly nine years a music teacher in a western town, one so small that I know personally a large proportion of its concert-goers. I have carefully studied this public; have been instrumental in getting outside musicians here, and have watched the effect of their concerts. I think my experience warrants me in holding some positive opinions on this subject; and I have thought that a statement of the results of that experience might be useful. The most important concerts given here within the past three years have been two by the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, one by Mme. Urso, one by Miss Julia Rive, and one, a few weeks ago, by the Boston Philharmonic Club. Let me briefly state the character of their programmes, and their effect upon the public.

The Mendelssohn Quintette Club played, on both occasions, good programmes; the second being much better than the first. The first was played to an overflowing house, (owing largely to accidental circumstances), and was in all respects, apparently, a most encouraging success. The second was played to a very moderate-sized audience, and was, to all appearance, much less warmly received. I think the Club were much discouraged by their second reception; that they regarded it as decisively against their superior programme, and felt that they could not safely repeat the experiment. The public too, I think, regarded this second concert as a

failure, comparatively, and I felt this more keenly than anybody else, since it was on the strength of my representations that the Club had ventured to play a much better programme than usual. I had found, to my surprise, that the strictly classical compositions, which the club had played in their first concert, had made the best impression on the public, and I was satisfied that a programme more largely made up of these elements would be successful. Further observation and reflection, and an increased knowledge of the public, has only confirmed me in the opinion I then held. I do not believe that any great part of the apparent ill success of the second concert was due to the classical character of the programme, but mainly to two facts:—first, that there were too few solos, and second, that Miss Kellogg, who sang some Schumann songs, and who had before made an excellent impression, was in very bad voice, had to give up entirely the next day, in fact,—and so disappointed the public. At any rate my conversation with average people, of no musical training, has forced me to believe that they enjoyed the best music most, (though they did not applaud noisily, because they did not feel like it); that the Club is thoroughly respected and believed in here, and that they would be well received and supported here now. The only thing which prevented their engagement this season was a previous engagement with the Boston Philharmonic Club, the date of whose concert would have conflicted with theirs. On the other hand, this last-named club played a programme, a large part of which was sheer trash, and hardly any of which was of any musical significance. For example, Mr. Weiner's flute solo was a medley, containing "Home, sweet home," "Yankee Doodle," and "O Susannah." I was curious to know how this would impress the thoughtful part of the public, some of whom had complained that artists would not play simple things which they could understand. I believe I speak the exact truth when I say that the feeling with which all the better portion of the audience regarded this performance was one of mingled disgust and contempt. They had become familiar with the notion that artists were above that sort of thing; a no artist had done it here before, and the incongruity of it was keenly felt. I took pains to ask men who had grumbled at classical programmes whether they liked this concert as well as those of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, and I invariably got a negative answer. It is not too much to say that people felt that the playing of such a programme by artists involved degradation of themselves and contempt of their audience. Moreover, they find it hard to believe that a man who is willing to play "O Susannah" in a concert is not a quack rather than an artist,—one who prefers playing claptrap for the sake of the applause of the small boys in the gallery to playing good music for the edification of intelligent people.

Mme. Urso played last year a respectable, but not a classical programme. It was well received. Miss Rive played two whole Sonatas of Beethoven, the *Appassionata*, and the one in E $\flat$ , Op. 27; three pieces by Chopin; the Marche Funebre, the Scherzo in B $\flat$  minor, Op. 31, and the Rondeau in E $\flat$ ; three by Liszt: Spinning Song, Tannhäuser March, and 2nd Hungarian Rhapsody, and Tausig's arrangement of "Man lives but once." This is as good a programme as she would have played in Boston, and it was thoroughly enjoyed. People said to me afterwards, "I never got much out of Beethoven before, but I thoroughly enjoyed the Sonata *Appassionata*." Moreover it was felt to be a compliment to her audience that she would assume that they desired to hear such things, and people like to be complimented. I am sure the public here entertain