

Review

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Reviews.

Prelude on 'Rorate Cæli.' By Anthony Bernard.
Three Chorale Preludes. By John E. West.
Berceuse. By Eric Webster.

Original Compositions for the Organ (New Series),
 Nos. 46, 47, 48.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

In the first of these organ works we have a beautiful treatment of the plainchant of the Advent Prose, 'Drop down, ye heavens.' The composer concerns himself chiefly with the five opening notes:



and so spontaneous is the music, in spite of its admirable texture and harmonic subtlety, that the result strikes one as being a particularly happy example of improvisation. The piece is laid out for three manuals, but can be effectively played on one. It is not difficult for players accustomed to modern harmony.

Mr. John E. West is a welcome addition to the company of English organ composers who are attempting to make our fine old English psalm-tunes the basis of a school of organ music that shall be suitable for the instrument and appropriate for use in connection with divine service, or for recitals in church. He has chosen three good examples in 'Winchester New' (which happens to be of German origin, so hard is it to avoid that source in musical matters!), Purcell's 'Burford,' and 'St. Michael,' *alias* the Old 134th Psalm. For his first prelude Mr. West adopts the well-established form in which the delivery of each line of the *Cantus* by the pedal is preceded by imitative treatment of a motive extracted from it. He knits his music more closely still by using these motives against the tune, thus giving us some fragments of Canon by diminution. An effective Coda, followed by a massive delivery of the last line, ends a strong, well-written work. With the treatment of Purcell's plaintive tune, marked *Lento elegiaco*, we have a pronounced change of style and mood, the melody being played on a Choir or Swell solo stop, with a characteristic and expressive accompaniment on the Great. This is a touching little piece, not the least interesting feature of which is the harmonization, especially in the third line. 'St. Michael' opens with a bold chordal giving-out of the first line, alternating with a brilliant cadenza of which considerable use is made later. A change to twelve-eight time brings us to some flowing counterpoint based on the tune, for a soft Great stop uncoupled, with the melody announced in the tenor register by a Swell reed. Some close capping of the lines over a pedal-point has an exciting effect:

and leads to a Coda recalling the opening section. These three admirable examples of English organ music should be a boon to players, both as recital pieces and voluntaries. They are only moderately difficult, and make no great demands in the matter of registration.

If Mr. Eric Webster's 'Berceuse' strikes a more conventional note, it is perhaps owing chiefly to his choice of topic, since cradle-songs are inevitably almost as much alike as the infants they are supposed to lull to slumber, although composers and parents alike refuse to see the similarity. He has contrived, however, to provide a tuneful melody, pleasingly treated, and the result is an attractive recital piece. It is quite easy.

Grand Chœur. By R. C. Hailing.

St. Cecilia Organ Series, No. 70.

[The H. W. Gray Co., New York.]

Mr. Hailing's 'Grand Chœur' is a moderately difficult piece, of bold and straightforward character, which would serve well as a postlude for festal occasions.

Two Monologues for the Organ. By Harvey Grace.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

These pieces, entitled respectively 'Meditation' and 'Caprice,' are welcome examples of that thoughtful and effective writing which characterizes Mr. Grace's work. The 'Meditation' is coloured by the use of an ancient tonality, and by the introduction of a very interesting old tune, 'Ave Maris Stella.' Written in the Æolian Mode, the piece has no accidentals until the last chord, in which the Tierce de Picardie demands a C sharp. The Hymn Tune is in the Dorian Mode, and forms the middle section, an echo of the first phrase preceding the very interesting and original final cadence.

The Caprice shows a decided contrast both in its rhythmic and harmonic scheme, the latter exhibiting very independent thought in the matter of consecutives, most of which may be admitted as effective and possibly appropriate to modern ears. At any rate, Mr. Grace is evidently determined to think for himself, and having something to say expresses himself with originality and often with decided effect.

Frequent changes of tempo are indicated, and should materially aid the player in giving point to the contrasted sections.

The pieces may be recommended to the many who appreciate legitimate and interesting organ music.

Song of the Soldiers. By F. Wilson Parish.

(The H. W. Gray Co., New York.)

Among the best of the poems called forth by the war is that of Mr. Thomas Hardy, beginning:

'What of the faith and fire within us,
 Men who march away . . .'

The lines seem to call for musical setting, and Mr. Parish may be congratulated on having supplied them with suitably stirring strains, at the same time keeping clear of the blatant conventionality that is too often found in war songs. The music would suit a baritone, and demands a robust style.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis. Set to music in A. For

treble voices. By Charles Macpherson.

Awake, my soul. By Charles Macpherson.

Chorister Series of Church Music, Nos. 49 and 51.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

There is a call just now for music for treble voices, owing to the shortage of choir-men, and Mr. Macpherson's two numbers therefore appear opportunely. Although the Evening Service is set for four voices, the music makes no demands that may not be met where there are boys of good average ability, since there is not a great deal of four-part writing, and none that is not grateful for the singer. The composer has kept his second trebles well away from their lowest notes, and by means of such devices as crossing-parts, unison, &c., has divided the interest very fairly between the first and second groups.

The extract from Ken's morning hymn is set to bright and vigorous music, which with the slight adaptation suggested in a footnote would be equally effective for men's voices.