

School of English Church Music

QUARTERLY NEWS SHEET

Edited by a Committee appointed by the CHURCH MUSIC SOCIETY and issued from the office of the SCHOOL OF ENGLISH CHURCH MUSIC, 105, GOWER STREET, W.C.1

No. 2.

JULY, 1928.

THE SCHOOL AND AFFILIATED CHOIRS.

It is too early as yet to estimate the result of the Appeal or to issue a list of subscribers, but it is most gratifying to be able to record that Her Majesty The Queen has sent a handsome donation as an indication of her personal interest. The list of contributors is already large and includes such distinguished names as that of the Prime Minister.

The Affiliation of Choirs is proceeding most satisfactorily; many Choirs have already enrolled themselves, and everywhere there is a ready response to the suggestion that they should do so. It is increasingly evident that affiliation will afford a main source of income to the School, but its value to the individual Choirs lies in the fact that it will bring them into direct touch with the central organization, and so is likely to prove the surest means of making the work of the School practically effective.

Every Choir in the country is urged to become affiliated. This implies that the members definitely stand for the cause of worthy Church Music, and that they are prepared to enter into a corporate effort to promote the cause.

Those Choirs that are not enrolled are earnestly invited to apply to the Office of the School (105, Gower Street, W.C.1) for full particulars of Affiliation. Such an application in no way commits them; but the details of the scheme, which have now been fully worked out, cannot be explained in a mere summary, and at least demand the careful consideration of every Choir in the country.

This number of the "QUARTERLY NEWS SHEET" is being sent to all who have expressed any interest, but future numbers, for obvious reasons, can only be sent to affiliated Choirs, to Subscribers, or to Members of the Church Music Society.—SYDNEY H. NICHOLSON (*Warden-Elect*).

THE NATURE OF THE APPEAL.

In April a general appeal was issued for funds to establish the School of English Church Music. It was announced that:—

1. The Provisional Council has found premises which are ideal.
2. These premises are now used as a Boys' School, and could be adapted for the proposed purpose without difficulty or undue expense. The provision of a permanent Chapel could be deferred, as a building suitable for temporary use is in existence.
3. The property is splendidly situated adjoining Wimbledon Common; it comprises 3½ acres with good main road frontage, and is freehold.
4. £50,000 is the immediate need in order to acquire the property and found the School.

The property is not yet bought but is still available. Subscriptions both large and small are needed, first to acquire the premises, then to complete the Foundation Fund of £50,000.

THE USE OF PLAINSONG.

BY A PARISH CHURCH ORGANIST.

Those who are anxious to bring about a general reform in our Church Music are agreed that the music for the Sanctuary, while being of the very best, should have a special character of its own. It should be devotional and uplifting in style, and usually so simple that all the worshippers can follow it and most of them join in the singing of at least the more important parts of the Service.

In many places one way—though of course not the only way—of bringing about these ideals might be to turn for help to the Plainsong system and to a gradual introduction of some amount of this kind of music into the Services, especially the Choral Celebrations of the Holy Communion. The writer therefore ventures to address a few words to those who may care to consider this possibility. He feels himself to be on difficult ground, as so many people frankly dislike this form of music. Like or dislike of Plainsong is probably to some extent a matter of temperament. There are some to whom after taking due trouble to understand it, it still makes little appeal. On the other hand there are many who cannot endure it—and the writer in his younger days was of their number—simply because they have never experienced it properly presented, and so do not in the least know what it really is. There must surely be something of prejudice in the matter, as in most Churches in the ordinary routine of their Services *some* Plainsong—harmonized, perhaps, but still fundamentally Plainsong—is sung in the usual Ferial Responses without complaint under the sanction of custom, and in the writer's own experience it has been found possible to introduce a Plainsong Service in which the Choir became quite interested simply because he refrained from telling them that it was Plainsong!

Most of those who have had the privilege of hearing simple Plainsong properly sung find it a new experience in uplifting and religious music. They feel that it really gives true expression to religious feeling; it stands apart from much of the music which they so often hear in Church, which is merely a repetition of outside secular music, in that it seems to be really fitted for the Sanctuary. It is hallowed by antiquity, but yet lives to-day as fresh as ever in its beauty of vocal phrasing and expression.

Many modern composers are tending to use the scales of the old Modal system in order to express themselves. They find that there is greater scope for melodic variation in the eight scales of the Gregorian system than in the two of the modern one. In the light of this fact the time has surely gone by when Plainsong can be sneered at as archaic and obsolete. It is a fact that to-day Choirs who have come under the influence of Plainsong properly taught are able to sing other music—especially unaccompanied Tudor music—with greater intelligence in the matters of phrasing and accentuation than those who have not had this training. There is a wonderful insistence about these old melodies when one has been at pains to master them. A modern Service will often be very attractive at first, but after a time interest in it will pall. With the Plainsong melodies this is not so. They may seem strange at first, but after they have once been learnt they seem more fresh and vigorous each time they are sung. Plainsong melodies as a rule lie in an easy range of voice for all singers, and so a very real objection often urged

against unison singing does not often apply in their case. Further, easy part-music in character with the Plainsong style can be used along with this if only the more important numbers, such as Creed, Gloria and many verses of the Canticles, be left to a Plainsong setting. The following "Notes" show how this combination may be made.

NOTES ON SERVICE MUSIC.

The following notes are written by members of the Committee who are themselves choirmasters. The inclusion of a work implies that it is considered to be good music of its kind. Suitability to choirs of differing types is suggested by the use of initials.

L.—Large urban choirs where a repertory more or less of the Cathedral type is maintained.

S.—Small urban choirs to which such things as the division of voice parts and the use of extreme compass of voices may prove difficult.

V.—Village choirs.

COMMUNION SERVICES.

L.

E. FRANCIS R. WOOLLEY. S.P.C.K. 8d. An unaccompanied setting of a quiet, devotional character, not difficult, but needs a choir accustomed to sing in freely-moving parts. A few bars of treble solo in the Gloria. Contains nine-fold Kyrie, Creed, Benedictus and Agnus Dei. Bar-lines are sparingly used, chiefly to mark phrases. Compass: Soprano C to G, Alto A to C, Tenor C to G, Bass F to C.

C. HYLTON STEWART. In G ("Missa Roffensis"). Faith Press. 6d. S.A.T.B. unaccompanied. Quite easy, although the voices divide a good deal, and the Sanctus is for double choir (8 parts); nine-fold Kyrie, Benedictus and Agnus Dei, but no Creed. A few bars of Soprano solo and of solo quartet. Compass: Soprano G, Alto C, Tenor G, Bass D. Organ accomp. is given only to the Responses to the Commandments.

V.

GEORGE OLDROYD. "Missa Parochialis." Faith Press. 6d. A very easy unison setting, but with an optional Descant in places for Sopranos. Contains nine-fold Kyrie, Benedictus and Agnus Dei, but no Creed, Merbecke or Plain-chant being recommended. Compass: C to D. Very easy accompaniment.

H. DAVAN WETTON. In C. Curwen. 6d. A very easy setting, mostly in unison, with occasional passages of optional harmony. Contains three-fold Kyrie, Creed, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, also Sursum Corda. Compass: C to D.

SYDNEY H. NICHOLSON. In C. Faith Press. 8d. A very easy setting for S.A.T.B. and organ, which could easily be sung (and is in fact intended to be) by the congregation. There is a good deal of Descant for Boys' or Women's voices, but this is optional. The organ part is the same as the vocal harmony, and, if desired, the whole Service can be sung in unison, with or without the Descant. Nine-fold Kyrie, Benedictus and Agnus Dei.

MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES.

L.

MAGNIFICAT and NUNC DIMITTIS. J. Blow (edited by H. Statham). O.U.P. 6d. Moderately difficult four-part polyphonic Service. Transposed up a tone. Altos and Tenors divide for two chords only. Voice parts are within a small compass, for example the Alto is from B below treble stave to 8ve above. Should be sung unaccompanied, organ merely doubles the voices.

SOLEMN TE DEUM in C. Martin Shaw. Curwen. 6d. Moderately difficult, four-part, trebles divide for three chords only. Optional verse for S.A.T.B. Alto compass from B below treble stave to C (3rd space). Free organ accompaniment of moderate difficulty, possible on two-manual organ.

S.

MAGNIFICAT and NUNC DIMITTIS. P. W. Whitlock. In G. S.P.C.K. 4d. Moderately easy Service, in unison, three and four parts. Free organ accompaniment occasionally. Modal in style. Average compass for all voice parts. A below the treble stave is the lowest Alto note.

TE DEUM (6d.). BENEDICTUS (6d.). JUBILATE (4d.). MAGNIFICAT and NUNC DIMITTIS (6d.). Curwen. Martin Shaw. In E flat. Moderately easy, for S.A.T.B. with free organ accompaniment. No division of voices, and a good sprinkling of unison passages. Optional four-part verse. Average compass of voice parts. Alto from G below treble stave to D on 4th line.

MAGNIFICAT and NUNC DIMITTIS. Set to 2nd and 8th Tones with Faux Bourdon. J. Holmes (edited by F. Burgess and Royle Shore). Novello. 4d. The Faux Bourdon is written in easy four-part harmony, to be sung with or without accompaniment. An accompaniment is provided for the alternate Plainsong verses. Very small compass for all voice parts. Alto ranges from D below treble stave to its 5th (A) above.

V.

TE DEUM and BENEDICTUS. Geoffrey Shaw. S.P.C.K. 6d. A simple unison setting, with optional Faux Bourdon for the choir. The versicles and responses at the end of the Te Deum based on Tallis Festal Responses. Small compass for all voices. Alto from B below treble stave to A on 2nd space.

MAGNIFICAT and NUNC DIMITTIS. S. H. Nicholson. In G. Faith Press. 8d. If sung in easy four-part harmony, S; if sung in unison, V. No parts divide. An optional four-part verse. Compass of the voices is small. B below treble stave is the lowest Alto note. Moderately easy organ accompaniment.

TE DEUM. C. Hylton Stewart. In C. S.P.C.K. 3d. A short and simple setting suitable for V and for congregational use. The compass of the voice part is small. It is in unison throughout. The three divisions of the Te Deum are observed, and the final section is treated as versicles and responses. The organ part is very simple, it can be played on any type of organ, and is written in free rhythm.

SHORT ANTHEMS AND HYMNS.

V.

Anthems Suitable for Harvest Thanksgiving.

"SING PRAISE TO GOD." J. S. Bach. (Schemelli's Hymn Book.) S.P.C.K. and O.U.P. 1d. For Unison voices (Compass C to E flat). Strong, flowing and melodious. Organ accompaniment, with or without pedals, is rather more elaborate to play than the ordinary hymn tune. Time about 2 minutes.

"A PEOPLE'S HARVEST MUSIC." Put together by E. Gregory. Consists of five Hymns, one Hymn for Solo voice, one for Choir alone, one arranged alternately for Trebles, men, and all together, one Psalm. S.P.C.K. (Church Music No. 33). 4d. 1st Hymn, "We Plough the Fields" (followed by First Reading); 2nd Hymn, "Father of Mercies" (followed by Second Reading); 3rd Hymn, "Lord Thy Word Abideth" (with Descant by Alan Gray); Hymn for Solo voice and Hymn for Choir only; 4th Hymn, "Praise, O Praise our God and King"; Hymn for Choir only, "Lord of the Harvest"; Psalm 67, "God be merciful unto us," set to a simple tone with an easy Faux Bourdon by Viadana; 5th Hymn, "Come ye Faithful People" (to "St. George," by G. T. Elvey). Hymns 1 to 5 may be sung in unison or harmony. All of them set in low keys for unskilled voices and to well-known tunes.

L. and S.

Two Hymn Anthems.

"IN THEE IS GLADNESS." Music by C. V. Stanford. Stainer & Bell. 2d. For S.A.T.B. First page in unison; second and third pages in four-part harmony. In the form of a hymn. Two Hallelujahs without organ. Independent organ part can all be played on one manual. Requires straightforward pedal playing. Time (Andante) less than 2 minutes. Three pages in all.

"PRAISE TO THE LORD, THE ALMIGHTY." Music by C. V. Stanford. Stainer & Bell. 3d. Slightly more difficult than the last, but this is chiefly in the organ part. This can all be played on one manual, but requires pedals (in crotchets or minims throughout). Five bars are for voices in harmony without organ. The first three pages are partly in unison, partly in harmony. The fourth page (the last) is entirely unison. Time (Allegro) is less than 2 minutes.

"JESU THE VERY THOUGHT IS SWEET." Melody from Piae Cantiones. Arranged by Charles Wood. Faith Press. 2d. 23 bars long in slow 4 beats in bar (about 2 minutes). Set for S.A.T.B. Unaccompanied voices in simple four-part polyphony (no ledger lines used in any part). Full of expression. Requires voices able to sing without organ support.

V or S.

Two (Unison) Hymns for all Seasons.

"MY FATHER FOR ANOTHER NIGHT." Music by P. C. Buck. Words, H. W. Baker, from Hymns A. & M. Year Book Press. 2d. Morning Hymn for unison voices, preferably Treble voices. Compass C to E. Organ accompaniment. Pedals optional. For a few bars the organ part moves freely round the melody, but quite simply. Time about 2 minutes.

"MY EYES FOR BEAUTY PINE." Words by Robert Bridges. Music by Herbert Howells. O.U.P. 3d. An independent organ part of very moderate difficulty, with pedal part which may be omitted and played on manuals instead. Fairly slow throughout. Requires clear smooth playing. Time 2 minutes. Three bars only are set in four-part harmony for S.A.T.B. but this may be all sung in unison if necessary. Compass C to E.

CHANTS FOR SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS.

This selection of well known Anglican chants, both single and double, is published (S.P.C.K.) so that Choirs who sing the "Select Psalms" put forward by Authority for use at Morning and Evening Prayer may have chants suitably arranged for each Sunday and Holy Day of the year. The chants chosen by Mr. S. H. Nicholson and Mr. E. T. Cook have been allotted to the series of "Select Psalms" by the Rev. A. Ramsbottom, who writes a short preface. It is explained therein that "good chanting depends largely on a smooth melody. It consists, at least in part, in allowing the natural rhythm of the words to govern the rhythm of the melody, and this is less easily allowed the more disjunct the melody." The book contains no new chants, but the printing of all the chants without bar-lines should be a valuable aid to the attainment of a smooth and supple style in chanting. It deserves the attention of choirmasters.