

# 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*

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### A YEAR'S WORK.

The first objective of the School of English Church Music is now reached: a property has been acquired and the College of St. Nicolas, Elmstead Lane, Chislehurst, will be opened almost immediately.

This most important step has been taken by the Provisional Council largely as a venture of faith, and because they believe that the interest in the aims and objects of the School, which has been shown in all parts of the Country as well as in the Dominions overseas, is no mere matter of good wishes but will result in the practical support needed. It must however be clearly stated that the financial support which has actually been given so far is not nearly sufficient to place the affairs of the School on a sound footing. Many have doubtless been withholding their subscriptions and affiliations till they could see "whether anything would come of all this talk": it has now come!

An urgent appeal therefore is made to all who are interested in the welfare of Church Music to come forward without delay and help to bear the burden. Those choirs that are already affiliated are asked to try and get others to follow their example: they are the accredited leaders of music in their Churches, and they should learn to regard the School as their own, and to feel that each individual member of each affiliated choir has an interest and an obligation in making its activities as widespread as possible.

Space will not permit the printing of a list of affiliated choirs in this issue, for it is already a long one; but it includes several of the leading choirs of the Country, such as those of St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, York Minster and many other Cathedrals, as well as of parish churches from large towns and remote villages.

The net-work is widespread, but the meshes must be made smaller.

The College is established at a property formerly known as "Buller's Wood," and is approached by a private road from Elmstead Lane, Chislehurst, about 10 minutes' walk from three stations, Chislehurst, Elmstead Woods, and Bickley, served by a frequent service of electric trains.

By the principal entrance gate is a large building which is now being converted to a hostel for students. It was originally intended to use this for the Choir School, but alternative plans showed the present arrangement to be preferable. The students will be provided with separate bedrooms of varying size with ample bath-room accommodation. The Secretary, Mr. H. L. A. Green, will be in charge of the hostel. The building is capable of easy extension when the accommodation required exceeds that which can be provided immediately. The hostel will be entirely ready for students by Easter, but a few might be accommodated sooner.

A short distance from the hostel is the main college building. This is a very fine house designed by the eminent architect, Ernest Newton, and built about 1900. The situation above a terraced garden is most attractive.

The large room on the right of the entrance hall is being fitted as a temporary Chapel, for which it will be most suitable. There will be space for about forty or fifty people besides the choir; the small organ, given by Mrs. Cleverly and rebuilt by Messrs. Harrison & Harrison, will be at the "West End." The Altar will be furnished with specially designed Cross and Candlesticks which have been given by "Those who served Westminster Abbey as Choristers from 1918 to 1928."

Adjacent to the Chapel is a music room, with two grand pianos, which will also serve as a music library and vestry.

On the other side of the hall is the dining room, which is to be hung with very fine old French tapestry, presented by Sir Charles Nicholson.

Beyond this is the billiard room, furnished with a full-sized billiard table.

On the first floor is a large reading room for quiet study, with the nucleus of a good musical and general library.

The eastern wing forms the resident Choir School, the provision of which has been made possible through the generosity of Mrs. E. B. Wright, in memory of her husband, the late Precentor of Chester. Here ten or more boys will live with their master, Mr. E. H. Barnes, and on a lower floor they will have a delightful common room, changing room, etc., approached by a separate entrance. The boys will receive their general education at Bickley Hall Preparatory School, close by.

In the western wing is the Warden's "flat," and underneath this the general office of the School, which will be removed from the temporary premises so kindly lent hitherto by Mr. A. K. Nicholson, at 105, Gower Street.

The grounds consist of about 11 acres, largely woodland; but there are an excellent tennis-court and delightful gardens, besides a small farm. The lodge in the lower part of the grounds will be used as a Guest House, unless it is found advisable to sell some of this portion of the property and to build elsewhere.

It will not be possible at first for the Chaplain to be permanently resident, but the post has been accepted by the Rev. G. H. Salter, Precentor of Winchester Cathedral, and until provision can be made for him to devote his whole energies to the work of the College, the Dean and Chapter of Winchester have most generously allowed him to spend as much of his time there as his Cathedral duties will permit.

A start will be made about the middle of January, and the first arrivals will be the choristers. Several of them have been at the late Duke of Newcastle's Choir School at Clumber Park, which is being closed at Christmas, so they will start with a school and choir tradition ready formed. The trustees of the Estate are kindly sending much of necessary furniture and equipment for the use of the boys in their new surroundings.

As the centre of the College life is to be the Chapel, it is intended that regular daily Services shall be instituted at once; the Bishop of Rochester has authorized the Warden to take ordinary Services in the absence of the Chaplain or other Clergy; but it is hoped that it will be possible to arrange for one Celebration of the Holy Communion each week.

By Easter we hope to be in full working order, and that all vacancies for students will be filled up. Full particulars cannot be given here, but a Prospectus can be obtained on application to the Secretary. Briefly, however, it may be said that the fees have been kept very low, and for permanent residents will be from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  guineas a week, to include board, lodging and tuition.

Residence is open not only to those students who are devoting their whole time to music, but also to the many who, while engaged in business, would like to gain practical experience in Church music as well as living in congenial surroundings.

Non-resident students (men or women) can be received as soon as the College begins work in January.

It is hoped that in the summer, when all is in full swing, there may be an official opening ceremony, to which all friends of the School will be invited.

### THE BADGE.



The Badge of the S.E.C.M. has been most kindly designed by Mr. G. E. R. Smith, of 105, Gower Street, W.C., and represents the figure of St. Nicolas: at his feet is a kneeling figure of a Chorister.

The selection of St. Nicolas as Patron Saint of the College was suggested by various considerations. By a pure coincidence the original meeting, at which it was decided that the School should be founded, was held on St. Nicholas Day, 1927. St. Nicholas, who was Bishop of Myra in the fourth century, is one of the most popular Saints of Christendom, and has been chosen as Patron of many different classes of the community, ranging from sailors to pawnbrokers.

His patronage of students and scholars is probably connected with the miracle by which he restored to life three youths who had been murdered and cut in pieces by a wicked inn-keeper who was anxious to replenish his stock of "salted pork"!

His connection with choirboys is found in the ceremonies of the "Boys' Bishop" which were commonly held at Cathedrals and Parish Churches in the middle ages. On St. Nicolas Day, Dec. 6th, the Choristers were allowed to choose one of their number, who bore the title and actually exercised the functions of a Bishop till Innocents' Day, his comrades meanwhile taking the place of the Canons and other dignitaries. Younger members of the fraternity of Choristers may be glad to recognise their Patron Saint in their Christmastide friend, Santa Claus.

The Badges are to be obtained on loan from the School by members of affiliated choirs (or subscribers). A deposit of 6d. for each badge must be forwarded with the application, and this will be refunded when the badge is returned, should affiliation cease. The badges are in bronze and are supplied with a blue ribbon (the "colour" of the College) attached, and are intended to be worn in Church over the surplice. It is hoped that all affiliated choirs will be supplied with at least some badges, and that they will be worn as a sign of fellowship in a great undertaking in which even the smallest choirboy has an important share.

### MR. NOEL PONSONBY.

Church music has suffered an irreparable loss in the sudden death on Dec. 10, of Mr. Noel Ponsonby, Organist of Churst Church, Oxford. The cause which this paper represents suffers in a peculiarly intimate way. From the first, Mr. Ponsonby threw himself heart and soul into the project of the School of English Church Music. He was a member of the Editorial Committee of this *News Sheet*, and almost his last act was to write some notes on music for *Passiontide* which appear in this issue. He was one of those in whom Art and Faith were one. *Requiescat in pace.*

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of the School was held on St. Nicholas' Day, December 6, at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, with the Dean of Westminster in the chair. After the minutes of the last meeting had been read, the Dean reminded those present that exactly a year ago Dr. Nicholson had first explained his scheme for the foundation of a School of English Church Music; they would learn with surprise and pleasure what great progress had been made during the past twelve months. Dr. Nicholson then reported on the progress of the School. (The first article in this number of the *News Sheet* contains the substance of what Dr. Nicholson said at the meeting.) The Dean of Windsor (Dr. Baillie) after speaking on the ideals of Church Music, moved the adoption of the report and Mr. Noel Ponsonby, of Christ Church, Oxford, seconded the motion. The Hon. Treasurer, Col. A. D. Acland, presented the accounts to the meeting and said that it was still necessary to urge upon everyone the importance of the financial position. The total amount received up to the period ended 31st October, 1928, was £2,317 5s. 10d. and the total expenses amounted to £659 12s. 6d., and since that date further sums, totalling £430 14s. 1d., had been received. It was estimated that a capital sum of £20,000 would be required to complete the task in hand and a regular annual income of, say, £3,000 in addition. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the Hon. Auditors, Messrs. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. for auditing the accounts. The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Dean of Westminster for presiding.

### CHURCH MUSIC AND THE B.B.C.

The B.B.C. has invited Dr. Sydney H. Nicholson to broadcast a talk on Church Music. This will be given on the Feast of Epiphany (Sunday, Jan. 6, 1929) from 8 to 8.45 p.m. The choir of All Saints, Margaret Street, will sing illustrations.

## NOTES ON CHURCH MUSIC.

### Music for Lent and Easter.

L.

Mention should be made of Charles Wood's Passion music, and the Passion according to "St. Luke" (attributed to J. S. Bach), published by Patterson. Both these works take an hour or thereabouts to sing. Of the two, the "St. Luke" Passion is a good deal simpler and more immediately appealing than Charles Wood's work. Both works need a full and fairly efficient Choir of S. A. T. B., and a few solo voices are required. Both assume a good organ and skilful organist.

L.

"LET MY PRAYER BE SET FORTH." By Hubert Middleton. This remarkable little motet was reviewed in the *Guardian* as follows: "A work of the very first importance has now crept among us almost unnoticed in its quiet little fourpenny sheet form, and it comes from the hand of the present organist of Ely Cathedral, Mr. Hubert Middleton. "Let my prayer be set forth" is a motet for double choir, in which two choirs—all four parts—move in strict canon throughout at the distance of one bar, and in so doing achieve music of an extremely high order of beauty. The subject matter for each choir is of course a complete entity, of considerable polyphonic interest. Brought into combination, the choirs weave a quiet Phrygian web of an almost sumptuous richness and rare nobility, poised at the end on a *pianissimo* unison. This is undoubtedly a remarkable piece of workmanship, the more so since it is very far from being limited to an academic interest, and it stands in direct line with the great English masters. It presents surprisingly little difficulty, and it is to be hoped that in parish church or cathedral, wherever a double choir can be contrived, this lovely little work should be heard."

#### For Holy Week or Good Friday.

L.

"O HEART SUBDUED WITH GRIEVING." By J. Brahms. Novello, 3d. (Novello's Octavo Anthems, No. 880). The voices are of rather wide range: Sopranos, to G; Altos, B Flat to E Flat; Tenor to A Flat and bar down to low E Flat. It is marked *lento* (slow) and requires sustained smooth and cantabile singing. Independent organ part, not difficult. Four bars of unaccompanied singing.

#### For Lent and Holy Week.

"A LITURGICAL SERVICE FOR GOOD FRIDAY." S.P.C.K. Church Music, No. 47. Price, 2s. net. This book is suggested for use as a Three Hours' Devotion. It should be noticed that pages 4—26 may be sung separately. They are the *Passion music according to St. John*. The music for the choir of this setting may be had separately: it is No. 618 of Novello's Octavo Anthems, price 6d., and is known as "Turbarum Voces" (voices of the crowd) because the Evangelist sings the Gospel, and the choir sing those parts which were said by the people. For instance: Evangelist (Priest or Layman) sings "They answered Him"; Choir: "Jesus of Nazareth," etc. The music itself is by William Byrd, written for S. T. B. (*i.e.*, three parts only). If it cannot be sung without organ, the organ part is given—but this should only be used of necessity. The Evangelist's part wants some understanding of recitative and free rhythm, and is only given in the "Liturgical Service" (S.P.C.K.) itself, not in the Novello edition. With only three voices to a part (nine voices in all) this might be made a beautiful form for Good Friday. The range of voices in "Turbarum Voces" is moderate save that the Tenor rises to A.

#### For Easter.

S. and V.

See the sixteen CAROLS in the Cowley Carol Book. Some of these, sung as Introits or Anthems, or even as a Post-Communions are as suitable as anything could be. See in particular: "Christ, the Lord, hath risen," No. 43; "Hail, Easter Bright," No. 46; "This Joyful Eastertide," No. 51. Most of them may be sung in unison, or in harmony, with or without instrumental accompaniment.

### MORNING AND EVENING CANTICLES.

L.

"TE DEUM IN G." R. Vaughan Williams. Oxford University Press. 6d. Written for the enthronement of Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang as Archbishop of Canterbury and sung in Canterbury Cathedral on Dec. 4, 1928. It is an impressive and dignified setting, modal in style and difficult. Any choir used to sustaining broad phrases, accustomed to free rhythm and unexpected changes of key, will quickly overcome its difficulties. All parts divide frequently, and Decani and Cantoris (each in four parts) are used antiphonally with good effect. Alto lowest note is B below treble stave, and Soprano highest note is A above the treble stave. Tenors have one high A Flat, an octave above the top line of the bass stave. There is a free organ accompaniment, which can be played on a two or three manual organ. This work is an important addition to the repertory of English Church Music. It should be widely used where the means are adequate. It is essentially a work for a Festival occasion rather than for the Daily Office of Matins.

"MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS." (Founded on Psalm melodies.) C. Wood. Faith Press. 6d. A moderately easy setting. In the Magnificat, verses in unison, alternate with verses written in four-part harmony. The *Nunc dimittis* is written in four-part harmony throughout. With very few exceptions, all parts move together. For one verse of the *Magnificat* the Tenors divide, but the second Tenor part can be sung by Baritones. All parts are within a moderate compass. Alto lowest note is A below the treble stave. There is a small misprint in the *Gloria* of the *Magnificat* on the first word "world" in the bass part; no division of parts is required here and the note for the lower Bass only should be sung. The organ part is slightly more difficult than the voice parts. It can be played on a one-manual instrument.

S. or V.

"TE DEUM AND BENEDICTUS IN D." (Founded on Morley's Chant in D minor, and old hymn melodies.) Martin Shaw. Curwen. 6d. This service may be sung (a) unaccompanied by S., (b) unison throughout by V., the organ playing the harmonies, (c) harmony and unison, as desired by S. or V., the organ playing the harmonies. The service is simple, whichever mode of performance is selected. If sung in harmony there is no division of parts. The compass of all voice parts is small, the lowest note for the Alto is A below the treble stave. The organ part is easy and merely doubles the voices.

V.

"A SIMPLE BENEDICTE." G. Shaw. S.P.C.K. No. 31. 4d. A very easy setting, which may be sung in unison accompanied, or in harmony unaccompanied, or in unison and four-part harmony accompanied. All voice parts are of small compass, lowest note for the Alto is A below the treble stave. "Praise Him and magnify Him for ever" is not printed in full for every verse, but may be sung if desired.