

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, COLLEGE OF ST. NICOLAS, ELMSTEAD LANE, CHISLEHURST, KENT.

No. 9.

APRIL, 1930.

FESTIVAL SERVICE BOOK.

The complete book of words and music for the Festival of English Church Music to be held in the Albert Hall on June 27th is now issued. The last *News Sheet*, quoting from the *Daily Mail* (whose generous co-operation has made the Festival possible), gave a brief outline of the scheme. Further information will be found in this issue under the heading "The Work of the S.E.C.M."

The first thing to be said of the Festival Service Book (printed by Novello & Co.) is that on the first page are Directions to the Choir. All choirmasters are asked to study these directions very carefully before beginning rehearsal, and to refer to them frequently during the period of rehearsal. Only so can that unanimity of style be attained (especially in Responses and Psalms) which is the first essential of good church singing.

Evensong is preceded by five hymns with fine old (mostly 18th Century) tunes, and three Processional Hymns, all with equally fine modern tunes. The composers of these last are Martin Shaw ("Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow"), Basil Harwood ("Thy Hand, O'God") and Vaughan Williams ("For all the Saints"). "God Save the King" then follows in Elgar's arrangement. Evensong begins with Tallis's Responses, and the two Psalms chosen are 46 and 91. The first of these will be sung in plainsong (Tone V, 1st Ending); the second is set to an Anglican chant by Goss. After the first Lesson an Office Hymn to a plainsong tune precedes the Magnificat (Walmisley in D minor) and after the Second Lesson the Nunc Dimittis will be sung to the setting of Gibbons in F (transposed into A flat). Groups of anthems, representative of Prayer, Worship and Praise, each group preceded by a Congregational Hymn, follow the Collects; between the second and third groups the Bishop of Winchester will deliver an address. The most varied styles are placed side by side. The 16th Century "Lord for Thy tender Mercy's Sake," formerly attributed to Farrant, is paired with Balfour Gardiner's "Evening Hymn,"; Purcell's "Rejoice in the Lord" and Parry's Coronation Anthem (1902) "I was Glad," with Holst's chorus, "I vow to Thee my Country" (the tune taken from "The Planets"), make the trio of Praise. The inclusion of Bennett's "God is a Spirit" beside Wesley's "Thou wilt Keep him" is possibly the one choice open to criticism, but it is there for a purpose. Bennett's quartet from "The Woman of Samaria" remains one of the most popular of parish church anthems, and the objection is directed more against the usual sentimental interpretation of it than against the music itself. One of the chief objects of this Festival is to help the choirs taking part in it to a purer standard of interpretation, and Dr. Nicholson hopes to show how this favourite of innumerable choirs and congregations may be used and not abused. With the same object the authentic version of Gibbons's Nunc Dimittis (reprinted from Tudor Church Music) and the Church Music Society's edition of "Lord, for Thy tender Mercy's Sake," edited by G. P. Arkwright from the Ely Manuscript, have been chosen to replace the debased versions which have gained currency in print.

These examples emphasize the practical purpose of the Festival. It would have been easier to make the collaborating choirs concentrate on the performance of some big choral work of the kind which gains magnificence from the tone of 1,200 voices, but it would not have been useful. In this service book the choirs have a whole repertory of Church Music which can be sung in their own Churches throughout the year, and by which they may add to the vitality and beauty of their regular services. Some of it most of the singers will know already and will sing the better for their special work on it under Dr. Nicholson's direction. That is probably true of Stanford's noble Te Deum in B flat which after the Blessing will bring the Festival to a close.

THE SCHOOL AND THE DIOCESES.

For some time the Council of the S.E.C.M. have had in mind the desirability of making a closer connection with the choirs affiliated to the School and the general subscribers, and it was announced at the last General Meeting that they had decided to release the Secretary from his office duties and send him out into the Dioceses, in order to get into personal touch with existing members of the School, and also create further interest in the School and its work.

The arrangement took effect from the beginning of the year. The Secretary began his new activities in the Chichester Diocese. This Diocese was chosen, first of all because it had the greatest number of affiliated choirs, and secondly because Dr. Nicholson had recently addressed a Meeting of the Brighton District Organists' Association. Centres were made at Brighton, Worthing, Eastbourne, and Wadhurst, and visits were paid to the Parishes in and around these areas. The work involved consisted chiefly in getting to know representatives of affiliated choirs and those who were already members, and in breaking fresh ground, but at Wadhurst the Annual Church Meeting was addressed on the subject of the School.

A second expedition took the Secretary to Worcester and Evesham. A Meeting of the Worcester Rural Deanery was addressed in the Chapter House of the Cathedral, with the Archdeacon of Worcester in the Chair and Sir Ivor Atkins speaking in support of the work. There are already about half a dozen choirs in the Diocese which are affiliated to the School, but it is hoped to have many more, and Sir Ivor Atkins gave a lead to the Diocese by promising that the Cathedral Choir would become affiliated.

Another Meeting was addressed at Evesham, but unfortunately bad weather and other engagements kept many away, and only four or five Parishes were represented. The weekend was spent in two villages in the neighbourhood of Evesham—Sunday morning at Sedgeberrow Parish Church and the evening at Littleton. The visit to Littleton is an interesting sequel to what happened some time ago. On March 28th, 1929, the Vicar of Littleton wrote to the School, saying that he was interested in what the School was doing, and needed much help in his Parish. What could the School do for him? The Affiliation Scheme was explained to him by letter, and he soon wrote to say that he had been able to persuade the Parish to become affiliated, although he was sorry to find that the School could not then promise him any help with his difficulties in a practical way by sending someone to advise him on the subject. He was convinced, however, that it was up to everyone to throw in his lot with the movement. When, therefore, the Vicar of Littleton was found to be at the Meeting at Evesham, the opportunity of visiting the Parish and giving some practical help was gladly undertaken.

On March 11th Members of the Newbury Ruri-Decanal Conference were given an opportunity of learning more about the S.E.C.M. A big Service of combined choirs will be held at Newbury in May, and more than fifteen choirs will take part.

Dr. Nicholson conducted and gave an address at a Service of combined choirs in the Blackburn Diocese on March 15th, and the Secretary visited the Diocese with the object of looking up those choirs and Parishes represented at the Service.

Plans for the future consist of a long stay in the Chelmsford Diocese, and visits to St. Albans, Rochester, Guildford, Southwark and London Dioceses. Other Dioceses will be visited in due course. Please note "Special needs (1)" below.

THE WORK OF THE S.E.C.M.

FESTIVAL OF ENGLISH CHURCH MUSIC, ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

The arrangements for the Festival are well in hand. The applications from affiliated choirs wishing to send representatives was (even before the last date for entry) considerably in excess of the available seats; the number allowed to each choir had to be severely "rationed" and many of those who applied too late had to be disappointed. They have, however, been placed on a "waiting list" so that if any choirs should fall out their places need not be left vacant.

Sectional rehearsals are being arranged at convenient centres in different parts of the country, and subsidiary rehearsals will augment these, so that every choir will have to be prepared for a qualifying test.

For the convenience of choirs sending representatives to the Festival but desiring to use the music in their own churches a large number of copies were set aside which were obtainable at the very low price of 1/-; these are now all exhausted, and additional copies can only be obtained at the regular price of 2/6 and only from the *Daily Mail* Offices, Northcliffe House, E.C.4.

The distribution of tickets for the audience is also entirely in the hands of the *Daily Mail*, and application should be made to that office; no tickets are available at the College, and for obvious reasons no "free tickets" can be granted except to those actually taking part.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS.

The Columbia Graphophone Company has issued a double-sided record of the two psalms to be sung at the Festival. (Ref. No. D.B.17, price 3/-, from the usual agents, and not obtainable through the College.)

These records are primarily intended as a practical guide for the use of choirs taking part in the Festival: but they are the beginning of a series of records intended to illustrate the musical rendering of every part of the Parish Church service. Further records will be issued from time to time, and a considerable number will be prepared before Easter. The records are made by the choir of St. Nicolas College singing in their own chapel.

CHANTING OF THE PSALMS.

We are often asked about the chanting in our College Chapel and at St. Sepulchre's Church. For plain-song the method we follow is that of the late Dr. G. H. Palmer in his "Sarum Psalter." For Anglican chanting we follow the system known as "Free-rhythm" or "speech-rhythm" chanting. Many excellent psalters have been published during the last few years, based on this system. The book we use is "The Parish Psalter" published by the "Faith Press." The book is issued in a "choir" size in two forms, the psalms being arranged in the ordinary way (price 2/6) and arranged for Sundays and Holy days according to the revised lectionary (price 3/6). In response to many requests a miniature edition for the use of the congregation is now in the press, as well as the "St. Nicolas Chant Book," which contains chants selected for their suitability to the flexible chanting aimed at.

The compiler's rights in these books have now been transferred, so that they are the property of the School of English Church Music.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S CHURCH.

After a good deal of experiment it has been decided that the services on Sunday mornings (Matins or Litany in Procession at 10.30 and Sung Eucharist at 11) shall be regularly sung by the choir of St. Nicolas College, and that the Sunday evening service (at 6) shall be led by the St. Sepulchre's Choir. On Thursdays the College Choir sings evensong at 6.30 (choir practice open to those interested at 5.30), and there is a congregational Sung Eucharist on Fridays at 12.15. Further developments are contemplated, but not much can be done musically till the organ is rebuilt, as the present temporary instrument is totally inadequate.

THE COLLEGE OF ST. NICOLAS.

The College is increasing both in activities and membership; the accommodation for resident students is almost taken up, and further building will have to be contemplated in the near future. Regular lectures have now become part of the College life, and valuable help has been given by outside lecturers such as Dr. E. H. Fellowes and Mr. H. C. Colles to supplement the work of the regular staff.

Three Conferences are to be held in Easter week, on the Tuesday for Diocesan representatives of the School, on the Wednesday for conductors and others interested in Diocesan Choir Festivals, etc., and on the Thursday for Cathedral Organists (the annual conference).

The next full College term starts on May 9th.

SUMMER SCHOOL AT CHISLEHURST.

A summer school of bona fide choirmasters will be held at St. Nicolas College from Tuesday, July 29th, to Thursday, July 31st, both dates inclusive. Professor E. C. Bairstow, D.Mus., Organist of York Minster, has most kindly consented to conduct this school. Men attending will as far as possible be accommodated in the Hostel, and arrangements will be made for women to stay as near by as possible. The "school" will be open only to members of the S.E.C.M. or to those who are choirmasters of affiliated choirs. The fee will be three guineas inclusive, and those who come are expected to stay the whole time. As the number that can be accepted for this intensive course must be very limited, those who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity should apply as soon as possible to the Secretary of the S.E.C.M., who will send further particulars.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

So much has already been accomplished in a comparatively short time that there is a possible danger of overlooking the needs of the future. In order of importance these would seem to be as follows:—

- (1) The creation of an adequate endowment fund. It is clear that the School and College can never be self-supporting, and a hand-to-mouth existence must cripple the work on every side. It is hoped that by the time this News Sheet is issued the School will have become incorporated and so placed on a more permanent footing, and then a real effort must be made to raise such an endowment fund as will place finances in a secure position. Everything else is subsidiary to this first need.
- (2) The second need is to improve the organisation for affiliated choirs so that they may obtain more direct benefit from their affiliation than is at present possible. The rapid increase in affiliated choirs since the beginning of this year makes this ideal much more attainable than it has hitherto been; and plans are under consideration which should give to all affiliated choirs, irrespective of the distance from Chislehurst, valuable and direct help. But we must not rest till the connection between every affiliated choir and the School to which it is affiliated becomes vital and advantageous on both sides.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS.

It has been suggested that if from time to time we made known in the *News Sheet* some of our smaller immediate needs they might possibly be supplied by our friends:—

- (1) We badly need a small car (low petrol consumption) which could be used by the Secretary when touring about the country. His activities are considerably hampered by being dependent on trains or bus services.
- (2) We should welcome the gift of standard books for the College Library, particularly important new books as they are issued. And of older books we want Complete Sets (Scores or Parts) of Boyce's "Cathedral Music," Arnold's "Cathedral Music," or similar collections now out of print; also "The Oxford History of Music."
- (3) We should welcome the gift of pianos in good condition for use in the practice rooms, to take the place of those at present on hire.
- (4) For the Chapel we should like a permanent lectern and two reading desks to correspond with the new choir stalls which have already been promised.

NOTES ON SERVICE MUSIC.

The following notes are written by the members of the Committee appointed by the Church Music Society. Suitability to choirs of differing types is indicated where possible by the use of initials: L (large urban choirs), S (small urban choirs), V (village choirs).

COMMUNION SERVICES.

L.

C. H. KITSON. Communion Service in the Sixteenth Century Style. S.P.C.K., 1/-. This is an essay in strict counterpoint, but it is direct and simple and contains moments of real beauty. Written throughout for S.A.T.B., it opens with Kyrie Eleison, in each clause of which the voices enter on a point of imitation. In Responses to the Commandments, Creed and Gloria in Excelsis the counterpoint is mainly note against note. In Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei expression is secured by well-chosen points of imitation. It is a scholarly piece of work suitable to choirs accustomed to the style it represents. The compass of the voices throughout is moderate. The alto ranges from B up to C (a ninth), but as the high C occurs in a conspicuous lead in the Sanctus ("Heaven and Earth") it may be wise to have the alto part sung in that number at least by second trebles. In the Creed the word "Holy," as given in the text of the 1928 Prayer-book, is provided for in the clause "I believe one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." The organ part is "for practice only."

T. TALLIS. Communion Service in the Dorian Mode. Edited by Ernest Bullock. Faith Press, 1/-. Tallis's Service contains Responses to the Commandments, Creed, Sanctus and Gloria. Dr. Bullock adds a Ninefold Kyrie (English, "Lord have mercy upon us"), Benedictus and Agnus Dei, short movements in a style consonant with Tallis's simple counterpoint and founded on other passages of Tallis's service music. This service is transposed up a tone, and the barring has been freely handled. The passage in the Creed, "Begotten not made . . . And was made Man," is without bars and makes rather difficult reading. In this passage the alto descends four times to the low F sharp and in doing so becomes momentarily the bass of the vocal harmony. Elsewhere the vocal compass is moderate. The comparative difficulty of the Creed prompts the suggestion that this service may well be used with the plainsong Creed. The Editor desires it to be sung unaccompanied, but a light organ accompaniment will not be out of place.

S. or V.

C. HYLTON STEWART. Short and Easy Communion Service. O.U.P., 1/-. This contains Kyrie Eleison, Responses to Commandments, Creed, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei and Gloria in Excelsis. It is in four-part harmony (parts never divide) with some unison passages. The accompaniment of the latter makes the organ part essential. It is laid out for two manuals and pedal. Generally the organ part follows the voices. The vocal compass is moderate throughout (alto range from A flat to B flat, save where alto is in unison with the treble, and the higher notes are therefore optional). This service is written in verbal rhythms and the barring varies with the phrase. Where this principle is thoroughly understood, and all three of the Communion Services here mentioned illustrate it, the use of changing time-signatures is unnecessary and may even add an apparent complication. Apart from this the design is studiously simple, and should be within the powers of any choir possessing four well-balanced parts.

EVENING CANTICLES.

L.

MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS IN C (Transposed to E flat). T. Tomkins. Edited by E. T. Cook. Novello. 4d. Moderately difficult for S.A.T.B. unaccompanied. Contrapuntal in style, to be sung with due regard to the natural flow of the words, but with few repetitions of words. Set for full choir and antiphonal singing, no solos or verses. Treble divides for one bar only, and basses for two beats. Moderate compass for all voices, tenor reaches high G and alto range is from B flat below the treble stave to its octave.

S.

MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS IN E. Goss. Novello. 4d. A moderately easy service. It may be sung unaccompanied, because the organ part merely doubles the voices. For the greater part of the service all voices move together without repetition of words, a few sections are written contrapuntally. No verses. Four-part writing throughout (S.A.T.B.) for full choir and Decani and Cantoris. Compass of all voice parts is moderate; alto from G sharp below the stave to A (a ninth).

V.

MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS (ARRANGED FOR UNISON SINGING) FROM THE CHANT SERVICE IN F. S. S. Wesley. Novello. 2d. A simple setting of a unison chant whose compass is from C up to B flat. Certain verses are sung full, others by Decani and Cantoris. Second half of the last verse and the Gloria of both Canticles are set for S.A.T.B. Organ part is easy, and possible on a single manual instrument.

TE DEUM. KEY OF A MAJOR. Unison Singing with an Optional Descant. Hugo Anson. Stainer and Bell. 4d. Probably written for unison singing in School Chapel. The unison voice part is very simple, and of a very small compass. The optional soprano descant starting at the words "Vouchsafe O Lord," and continuing to the end, is slightly more elaborate, and has the highest note F sharp on the top line of treble stave. The organ part is difficult, and has unexpected progressions and modulations.

ANTHEMS.

L.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAY. Music by John Redford. O.U.P. 4d. A reprint edited by Dr. E. H. Fellowes of a famous anthem (No. 53, Tudor Church Music, Second Series). It is for four unaccompanied voices, S.A.T.B.; written in the polyphonic style, and requiring freedom and careful phrasing in each voice, it presents no great difficulty. It can be recommended as a good starting point for choirs anxious to master the style of the contrapuntal composers. The vocal compass is moderate; the alto lies within the octave of B flat.

FATHER ALL HOLY. Words translated from the Latin by the Rev. G. R. Woodward, music by Charles Wood. Year Book Press. 4d. The plan of this anthem for solo quartet and two choruses (S.A.T.B.) makes it suitable only to large choirs. It offers no great technical difficulty. The compass is generally moderate though the alto part extends from A flat to C. It will make a dignified and noble sounding anthem for Trinity Sunday.

S.

HOW DAZZLING FAIR ART THOU. Music by Charles Wood. Year Book Press. 4d. The words by the Rev. G. R. Woodward after Johann Scheffler make this suitable to a Saint's Day or general festal use. The music is founded on the melody of Psalm I. in the French Psalter. The straightforward four-part harmony presents no special difficulty; it requires only the qualities of good hymn singing. The organ part (especially the variation in triplets with staccato pedal of the second verse) requires accomplished playing.