

Reviews of 1st concert, 5th April, 1899

Yorkshire Post, April 6th 1899.

YORK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

Since Mr. Tertius Noble came to York as organist of the Cathedral he has devoted what spare time his multifarious duties have left him to a phase of music that has hitherto been but intermittently cultivated in the city. It cannot, however, in truth be said that York is conspicuously behind other and far larger towns in its comparative neglect of orchestral music, which has long been the Cinderella of musical England. Happily, there are signs that Cinderella is in the way of coming into her own, and such a sign may be seen in the "York Symphony Orchestra," which made its first public appearance last evening.

The band consists of some fifty members, a very large proportion of whom are amateurs. In the strings, indeed, only the leader, Miss Knocker, and two of the double basses are professional artists. It is, of course, more difficult to get amateurs to take an active interest in wind instruments, but even in this section of the orchestra there is a fair proportion of the amateur element. The brass, it may be added, is particularly good.

The programme was wisely confined to music which, either because of its familiarity or its intrinsic simplicity, made no very exacting demand on the performers. It opened with the "Figaro" overture, which was capital in spirit and true in intonation, and only lacked a little more crispness and brightness to be thoroughly satisfactory. The most sustained effort of the orchestra was in Haydn's well-known Symphony in D, one of the best of the series which he wrote for London audiences. The performance was a most creditable one; so good in general intention and evidencing such careful preparation that all one can suggest is a greater attention to details such as phrasing and precision of execution.

Another piece of more than common interest was the overture written by Mr. Noble for a Cambridge performance of "The Wasps" of Aristophanes, a bright and melodious composition, concise and effective in construction, which pleased so well that it had to be repeated. Mr. Elgar's beautiful Serenade for strings, and Mr. German's pleasant Gipsy Suite, furnished further illustrations of contemporary English music. In Mr. Elgar's music the strings played not only with great refinement but with more tone than we should have been inclined to expect from hearing them together with the other sections of the band.

Far from the least exacting of the tasks that fell to the band was that of accompanying an Adagio for the violoncello by Bargiel, which was most artistically played by Mr. Jack Groves, who also showed good tone and considerable executive powers in a Sonata by Marcello. There were two vocalists, of whom Mrs. Burrell deserved well for introducing selections from Mr. Somervell's recently published cycle from Tennyson's "Maud." Though not in her best voice, she sang them with excellent expression, and made their exceptional power apparent. A share of credit belongs to Mr. Noble for his clever manipulation of the elaborate pianoforte part. Mr. Dawson sang a concert version of the "Evening Star" romance from "Tannhauser," and made a still greater popular success in a dashing song by Benedict. Mr. Noble conducted with very marked ability and close attention to every detail. For the less conspicuous but still more important work of preparation, however, he deserves even greater credit, and he may truly be congratulated on what he has made of the material at his command. If he has done nothing more than kindle a love for orchestral music in York he will have done well,

but it is to be trusted that his labour will have a more direct and practical result.

Yorkshire Herald, April 6th, 1899.

YORK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FIRST CONCERT

It would appear that the main constituents of a symphony orchestra already existed in York and only required bringing together. Mr. T. Tertius Noble, the Minster Organist, has united the parts, and produced an orchestra which clearly proved its efficiency before an audience in the Festival Concert Room yesterday evening. Unfortunately it cannot be said that the attendance was a large one, but as it is evident that Mr. Noble and his supporters have plenty of enthusiasm as well as undoubted ability there is every reason that the public support will be forthcoming. Mr. Noble had not only to collect his forces, he had to accustom them to concerted playing, which is almost always a stumbling block to amateur executants. The really creditable performance given by the orchestra last night forms the best possible evidence of the conductor's success. With two or three exceptions the whole of the strings were amateurs, but professional assistance was necessary for the woodwind, a section which is not as popular in the home circle.

The early studies of a newly-formed orchestra would naturally comprise some works by Mozart and Haydn, whose influence played so prominent a part in the development of instrumental music. From the models which they settled, succeeding composers have built up the more modern styles of orchestration. Mozart was represented by his "Figaro" overture, which the performers played admirably. There was not even a hint of that timidity or hesitancy which would have been pardonable in the case of a first public rendering. Haydn's Symphony in D, one of the Salomon series, which are the most familiar of the 125 symphonies which he composed, presented few difficulties to the players. They evidently found his genial, smoothly-flowing phrases eminently agreeable. Yet, while giving due appreciation to the characteristic charm of Haydn's instrumental writing, his works are to sound prim and somewhat formal when brought into too sharp contrast with the more florid and expanded harmonic outlines of later years. To the audience one of the most interesting, and also, judging by the applause, one of the most attractive items was the overture composed by Mr. Noble for the Cambridge production of the "Wasps" of Aristophanes, in which the composer has exhibited a happy turn for quaint orchestral conceits. The strings alone had their opportunity in the three movements of a serenade by Edward Elgar, and they deservedly won hearty applause. The subsidiary strings are of a more distinctive character than usual. Three movements from Edward German's delightful Gipsy Suite (Valse, Allegro, and Tarantella) were given with obvious enjoyment by the executants. Two vocalists supplied an element of variety. Mr. W. H. Dawson, who was in excellent voice, gave Wolfram's song "O Star of Eve," from Taunhauser, but took it just a trifle too slow, with the result that his rendering appeared a trifle laboured. In Benedict's "Rage thou angry storm" Mr. Dawson had the advantage of orchestral accompaniment, and he delivered the dramatic phrases of the song very expressively. In reply to an encore he gave "The Yeoman's Wedding." Mrs. Barrell's voice, too, was also at its best. She first gave five songs from Arthur Somervelle's cycle of songs from Tennyson's "Maud." The composer's settings are highly imbued with the poetic spirit of the lines, and Mrs. Barrell's singing was not lacking in sympathy. Mr. Noble played the somewhat pictorial accompaniments with delicacy and feeling. Mrs. Burrell also gave with equal taste two songs by Maud Valerie White, "A Memory" and "When the swallows homeward fly." Mr. Jack Groves, a cellist of exceptional ability, contributed an adagio by

Bargiel, to which the orchestra supplied a judicious accompaniment, and a sonata in F by Marcello.

Yorkshire Gazette, April 8th, 1899

**YORK
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.**

INTRODUCTORY CONCERT

An excellent concert - the first by the York Symphony Orchestra, which has been produced by Mr Tertius Noble - was given in the Festival Concert Room, on Wednesday night, when a fairly numerous and appreciated audience assembled. Mr. Noble conducted, and the orchestra of ladies and gentleman numbered sixty performers. The principals who took part in the concert were Mrs Burrell, Mr. W.H.Dawson, and Mr Jack Groves (violoncellist). The orchestra was evenly balanced, and its performances were generally satisfactory. The "Nozze di Figaro" overture (Mozart) formed a brilliant opening number, and the overture which Mr Noble composed for the Cambridge production of the "Wasps" of Aristophanes, which introduced the second part of the programme, was very favourably received, an encore being awarded. Mr. Dawson sang "O Star of Eve" ♦ the lovely air from Tannhauser - and Benedict's song, "Rage, thou angry storm," with orchestral accompaniment. The boldness of style and the dramatic power displayed in the latter had the desired effect, and the singer on being recalled rendered "The Yeoman's Wedding." Mr Jack Groves played an adagio by Bargiel with great feeling and expression, and was heartily applauded. "Sonata in F" (Marcello) was also charmingly played. A cycle of songs, seven in number, from Tennyson's "Maud" (A. Sommerville), were given by Mrs Burrell, who was in capital voice, and sang with correct taste and with pleasing grace and style. The airs are short and are constructed with classical beauty; the delicate rendering they received so pleased the audience that an encore resulted. Mr Noble supplied the pianoforte accompaniments, which were admirably played. Later on, Mrs Burrell sang two bracketed melodies by M.V. White ♦ "A Memory" and "When the swallows homeward fly." Their smooth melodic progression, their quiet beauty of expression and gentle pathos, won very marked approval. Haydn's "No. 2 in D" Symphony received a most brilliant rendering, and Elgar's "Serenade for Strings ♦ Allegro, Larghetto, Allegretto," was skilfully performed. The concert concluded with a spirited interpretation of German's "Gipsy Suite," comprising valse, allegro, and tarentella.

The London Musical Courier , April 13th, 1899

YORK

April 10th

An interesting concert was given on the 5th inst. at York, where the newly-formed "Symphony Orchestra" (composed almost entirely of amateurs), numbering between fifty and sixty members, made its first public appearance under the direction of Mr. T. Tertius Noble, the Minster organist. The programme was wisely chosen, being well within the powers of the executants. The "Figaro" overture, with which the concert opened, was very spirited and true in intonation, and only lacked somewhat in crispness, owing perhaps to a little nervousness which one might expect at the commencement. The symphony chosen was Haydn's No. 2 in D

(Salomon set); it received a brilliant rendering, the last movement being full of the humour which so characterises the composer. The overture written by Mr. Noble for a Cambridge performance of "The Wasps" of Aristophanes was most effective with its bright and striking melodies. The audience proved their appreciation by such vigorous applause that it had to be repeated. Mr. Elgar's beautiful Serenade for Strings was quite a feature of the evening; the second movement was a masterly example of tone-colouring, heightened by the evident enjoyment with which the executants performed it. Amateur orchestras, as a rule, do not shine in accompanying soli, either vocal or instrumental, but the one in question proved an exception to the rule; while accompanying an Adagio for the violoncello, which was played in musicianly style by Mr. Jack Groves, who afterwards showed his executive powers and good tone in a Sonata, by Marcello. The vocalists were Mrs. Burrell and Mr. Dawson, the first of whom sang an interesting selection from Somervell's cycle from Tennyson's "Maud," the elaborate pianoforte part being played by Mr. Noble. The society was formed last June, and after hearing what Noble, the conductor, has accomplished in so short a time we can wish his enterprise success, with all confidence that the wish will be fulfilled. York may congratulate itself upon having an excellent teacher of the violin in Miss E. Knocker, who studied with Joachim at Berlin. She led the orchestra on this occasion with conspicuous ability.

Musical News , April 15th, 1899.

YORK. — Since Mr. Tertius Noble went to York Minster, he has shown his skill and zeal in the cause of music in several ways, notably in the formation of a complete orchestra, which, under the title of the York Symphony Orchestra, gave its first public performance on April 5th. The band numbered 50 members, nearly all amateurs, and these are not exclusively confined to the string department, for several of them played wind instruments. The programme was an interesting though wisely not an ambitious one, and it is notable that English music found a due representation in the scheme. Mozart's " Figaro" Overture was well played, not an easy feat considering its speed. Haydn's Symphony in D, No. 7 of the Salomon set, was the main work set forth, and, on the whole, it was capitally rendered, and showed that diligent rehearsal and intelligent appreciation of its text had taken place in advance of the performance. The programme included Mr. Noble's clever and melodious Overture to "The Wasps" of Aristophanes (which was encored), Elgar's Serenade for Strings, Mr. German's pretty Gipsy Suite, and an Adagio for the 'cello by Bargiel, excellently played by Mr. Jack Groves, who also showed his skill in a Sonata by Marcello. Vocal music was contributed by Mrs. Burrell, who sang Somervell's cycle from Tennyson's "Maud," and by Mr. Dawson, who sang "O Star of Eve" from "Tannhauser." Mr. Noble conducted his forces with all possible ability. It is to be hoped that, under his guidance, orchestral music will no longer be neglected in York.

Musical Times , May 1st, 1899.

On the 5th ult. a very interesting venture was started in the shape of the York Symphony Orchestra, which has been founded by Mr. T. Tertius Noble, the very able and enthusiastic organist of the Cathedral. A Haydn Symphony, Mr. Noble's very pleasant "Wasps" Overture, and Mr. Elgar's fine Serenade for strings were played in a way that showed what a competent and painstaking conductor can make of not very promising materials by thorough preparation. The general result was certainly far better than might have been expected from the individual abilities of the players, the large majority of whom were amateurs.