

# Dwight's Journal of Music

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## Completion of the Great Organ—A Week of Musical—Festivities.

The "Great instrument," complete now in majesty and beauty, and flooding the Music Hall With harmony, has swept into its strong, sonority currently nearly all the musical interest of the past week or two. The subject is so much more interesting than any other that can just now come unto us, and is at the same time so large, as to almost monopolize our columns. In spite of ourselves, therefore, and at the risk of being called the organ of the Organ, we make this an *Organ number* of our paper. We have first of all to put on record the incidents of the Inauguration, which embraced a whole week of festivities, public or private, musical or social. And this precludes the continuation in this number of our formal description of the Organ, which has already run through two numbers we shall resume that in our next. The first and in some respects the most remarkable of these experiences was

### THE "PRIVATE TEST."

This occurred on Saturday evening, Oct. 31, in the presence of the subscribers and the stockholders of the Music Hall Association, members of the city government and other invited guests, numbering about a thousand gentlemen. Never were hospitable doors besieged with greater eagerness. A huge green curtain was all that met the first inquiring glance toward the stage end of the hall, veiling the great instrument in mystery—shall we be allowed to see the wonder, or is the sense of hearing to be the only test at present? Meanwhile all eyes are wandering with pleasure over the renovated walls and ceiling of the hall, for years so dingy and discolored. Thanks to Mr. William J. McPherson, the well-known decorative painter, it is all clean and fresh and beautiful again, as if touched by magic. The tone of coloring is changed, and for the better. That delicate and rather timid roseate tint, that used to flush the walls with a faint sunset light, was beautiful, but, like the sunset, it had too soon faded out. Now, to harmonize the hall with the Organ, the walls have been made somewhat darker and the ceiling lighter. In the words of tile *Advertiser*,

The groundwork of the diamond paneling in the ceiling has been changed to a sea-green color, with mouldings of buff and cream color, finished with a semi-circular gold-finish moulding, of high reflective power, and knotted, at the intersections, with handsome rosettes of full gilt. The wall panels are finished in brown drab as also is tile niche wherein the statue stands. Heavy gilt mouldings have taken the place of the narrow strips before used and under the brilliant jets from the cornice serve very materially to diffuse the light throughout the hall, Much of the superfluous gilding about the doorways has been changed to the sober, serviceable drab; in this instance as in countless others which occur to the observer, betraying that mixture of good sense and just appreciation of the times to which the hall is to be devoted, with a refined and artistic taste, which places Mr. McPherson's name chief among those of his calling."

The old and excellent system of lighting the hall by Cornice Jet is still adhered to, although a 2½ inch main pipe has been substituted for the 1½ inch in the lighting gallery. The burners are all new, and by the new pipe a supply of gas is at command for the most brilliant display requisite for any occasion. Another and hardly less noticeable feature of the renovation is the reseating of the hall. The loss of room on account of the platform space taken by the Organ is amply compensated by bringing the gallery, which ran behind the first balcony, into the hall. This change, desirable for

more reasons than one, allows the seats at the end of the balcony, heretofore on a steep incline to be placed on a grade uniform with other seats and other rows to be placed along with them. The clock has been removed to the second (upper) balcony—a little change producing a great effect on the general appearance of this end of the hall. The seats have been newly upholstered and covered with dark red enamel cloth. They are numbered by an entirely new set of porcelain plates..... The whole number of seats in the hall is 2654.....

The system of renovation which has bestowed so much care and expense upon the hall proper, has also extended to the entrance-hall, corridors and ante-rooms. New orchestral rooms, very convenient to the Organ, have been arranged and the waiting and cloaking rooms enlarged, newly papered, painted, carpeted and furnished, and the lower rooms immediately connected with the upper by a circular stairway. In a word, every thing about the hall looks clean and fresh. The eye delights to dwell on the new arrangement of colors, especially in the evening, when they reflect the light with such clear splendor. Incongruous as the associations of delicate light coloring and gilt with a massive black-walnut structure may seem, the combination cannot offend the eye. On the contrary, the effect is so pleasing as to excite general admiration, as was the case on Saturday night.

There was no set programme of the music. But while all were wondering and waiting and surveying the improvements in the hall, a soft strain arose behind the curtain—invisible, impersonal, as befits organ music—and rapidly grew into a sublime *crescendo*, and then sank and wandered on in sweet and careless voluntary—no composition, to be sure, but fascinating and exciting for the time, as the first sounds from the great mysterious instrument must naturally have been. For a quarter of an hour or more, the audience sat listening, in the dim light, perhaps studying to make out the two cherub faces, that seemed to have climbed to the top of the screen, and to be looking over upon us, when suddenly the gaslights flashed forth, and the curtain began slowly and majestically to descend, revealing first the full length of the cherubs with their gilded instruments surmounting the domes of the two central towers; then the chaste beauty of the ribbed and rounded domes; then the triple columns of huge silvery pipes, with St. Cecilia throned in beauty on the summit of the arch between; and so little by little the whole breadth and grandeur of the superb façade, with its grand caryatides, its figures, heads, and wealth of carvings. As the rare symmetry and harmony developed into wonderful completeness, a perfect music to the sight, a symphony in wood and metal, the silence of the rapt audience gave way to a murmur of delight; then round on round of applause swelled in a long *crescendo* with each new phase of the disclosure, all rising to their feet unconsciously. In the excitement of the scene, none saw how silently the fallen screen was gathered up upon the platform and conveyed away; it seemed as if it had vanished through the floor. From the work to the author, three cheers were called for, rousing ones, and given with a will, for Dr. J. B. UPHAM, to whose first suggestion, enthusiasm, wise and persistent energy, in the face of one may imagine how much incredulity and worse, for seven long years, the whole enterprise, now crowned with such complete success, is mainly due.

The enthusiasm of that moment was as unique as it was perfect: the like thereof can hardly have been known before. It was a fresh and sudden inspiration; every body was surprised by his own feeling, and knew that every body shared it. The old world has many a great Organ built away into the architectural wildernesses of its great cathedrals; but was there ever an Organ cheered and clapped before in the assembly of the people? This outburst was in strange contrast with the reverent demeanor of churches, where organs hitherto have properly belonged; yet none the less was there religion in it; for was it not in some sense a recognition of the divine, the hailing of a new triumph of our civilization, of a new type and instrument of that ideal harmony of a more free and perfect life, which is the aspiration of our institutions, never felt so keenly by the true American

as in this hour of their peril and the new break of day!

After the applause had subsided, Mr. MORGAN, organist of Grace Church, New York, was introduced and performed the "Tell" overture, giving an appetizing foretaste of the orchestral effects, the variety and contrasts of the many stops in the wonderful instrument; in short, gratifying the general curiosity to know its sounds, which probably was stronger at that moment than any purely musical desire for organ music in the highest sense of Art. Mr. Morgan's mastery of the instrument, even with this short opportunity of studying its peculiarities, was striking and was much applauded. Dr. Upham, as President of the Music Hall Association and Chairman of the Organ Committee, then rendered a most appropriate account of his stewardship, by reading the interesting Report, which we give in full in another part of this paper (with the last revisions of the author), of the seven years labor of the committee, with a history of the whole organ project up to this joyous hour of its completion. By this Report the Instrument was formally transferred to the Music Hall Association, and the tenure of the property defined. The solemn charge conveyed in the closing sentences is indeed an earnest dedication of the instrument to high and worthy uses, and in this spirit should be kept by those who have accepted it. No profanation of so grand an instrument; no un-artistic trifling, no courting of a low popularity, no mere mammon worship, with that which in its whole plan and structure, and by its grand outward presence, always suggests the high and the eternal. Dr. Upham was often interrupted by applause, especially when he referred to persons who had rendered signal aid to the enterprise, and above all to Mr. Walcker, the builder, and his son, who sat upon the stage, who rose and modestly bowed (luring the enthusiastic applause at the mention of his name; also to Herr Sturm, his faithful foreman; to the younger Herter, the designer of the organ house, &c. One of the pleasantest features of the scene was to see this little group of Walcker and his workmen, Herter, &c., seated on the stage, a little apart from the group of Music Hall Directors. The artist spirit shone in the faces of these artisans—that spirit which has reigned in every department, every detail of the work, from the beginning, and which is the surest guaranty that the Organ is a solid success, that it has more sweet and sterling virtues in it than the first week's or the first year's trials can bring out.

After the address, Mr. LANG played a sweet Andante of Mendelssohn, and a part of Rink's flute concerto, tickling the ear of the curious. Cleverly and tastefully he did it; but so far there had been no great organ music, nothing of that in which the organ is supreme. All this skirmishing with fancy stops, orchestral imitations, &c., was well enough for such an informal occasion, when (as we have said) curiosity and not Art was the motive; but, if one thought of it, it was almost in flat contradiction with the earnest closing appeal of the President. One deeply musical soon wearies of all the pretty fluting and mixing of tone-colors, merely to try effects, of all the sentimental solo-singing upon this stop and that stop, making a Vox humana of each one of them, and ear and soul begin to crave the grand, rich volume of the full organ, infinite and satisfying as the ocean, rolling out the great thoughts of God, and swallowing in oblivion all the little wearying personalities of the smaller music. It was a comfort, therefore, when Mr. PAINE unstopped the full organ, and in strong and lusty tones with grand unfathomable basses, (such as those colossal pipes there promise), poured out the roaring, foaming, lifesome tide of Bach's *Toccata* in D minor. Many at first may find the continued sound of the full organ confusing and monotonous but, depend upon it, the ear learns to love and crave such glorious great sonority; it cannot be too great, provided it be musical, its tones all pure, well blended and proportioned, as they here are.

Mr. TRAYER, of Worcester, played a *Marche Triumphale* of his own, and Mr. WILLCOX, with his usual skill, which seems like an instinct, wove together various stops in pleasing combinations, part selected, part impromptu.

The evening ended with a general flocking of the company toward the stage, for a nearer ex-

amination of the beautiful details of the work. They seemed a crowd of worshippers going up to a cathedral; and the bronze Beethoven looking down benignly in the very focus of all that architectural beauty—how beautiful he looked, seemed like the idol of their homage.

We have already described the organ front so fully, that we need only notice a few added details here. The mouths of the tin front pipes have been gilded; those of the six great ones in the towers have quaint, antique-looking singing faces, painted on a gold ground, the whole taking a shell-like shape. The spaces in the end towers (hereafter to be filled each by a large pipe), were covered by an ornamental device for the time being—a series of circular shields containing the opening lines from Dryden's Ode to St. Cecilia:

From Harmony, from heavenly Harmony  
The universal frame began, &c.

The middle space behind Bach, over which the St. Cecilia sits, was dressed with the flags of Wurtemberg and the United States, a gold wreath over Bach's head, &c., but this space will be better filled when its destined pipes arrive. The whole, however, is quite tasteful as it stands. And so passed a most delightful and unprecedented evening. All went away extremely pleased with what they had seen and heard of the great Organ, eagerly hoping to hear more.

#### THE INAUGURATION.

The great occasion, the long expected formal opening, took place on Monday evening, Nov. 2. The tickets at *three dollars* (it might safely have been five) had been rapidly sold, with the understanding that the proceeds should go to the Organ fund; and the Hall was completely filled with such an audience as only fine occasions can assemble, remarkable for character, distinction, beauty, fashion and fine dresses. Organists and music-lovers from almost every State were present. The great green curtain, as before, withheld the desire of all eyes until the appointed moment; nor was the expectation of the ear much piqued or gratified by the weak strains that oozed lazily forth from the veiled oracle. There was no pretense of really playing, or of showing off the instrument, it was simply to fill the time while people waited; had it been ever so good, it would have still been a mistake, because an organ voluntary, before a whole concert of organ music, can only be like eating while one waits for dinner. Silence had been better, until the proper time for music; the rambling and superfluous prelude brushed some of the bloom off from the fine fruit significantly grouped together in the

#### PROGRAMME PART 1

1. Ode, recited by **Miss Charlotte Cushman**
2. Opening of the Organ, by **Herr Friedrich Walcker**, son of the eminent Organ-builder  
E. F. Walcker of Ludwigsburg, (Kingdom of Wurtemberg)
3. (a.) Grand Toccata in F.....Bach  
(b.) Trio Sonata in E flat: for two Manuals and Pedal:  
1. Allegro moderato. 2. Adagio 3 Allegro..... Bach  
By **John K. Paine**, Organist at the West Church, Boston  
and Musical Instructor at Harvard University.
4. Grand Fugue in G minor.....Bach  
By **W. Eugene Thayer**, of Worcester.

PART II.

- 1 Grand Double Chorus: "He led them through the deep." .....Handel  
and Chorus: "But the waters overwhelmed their enemies." from "Israel in Egypt"  
By **George W. Morgan.**  
Organist at Grace Church, New York.
  
2. Grand Sonata in A. No. 3: Con moto maestoso--andante tranquillo-fugue-maestoso .....Mendelssohn  
By **B. J. Lang,** Organist of the  
Old South Church and of the Handel and Haydn Society.
  
3. (a.) Lamentation in Parascève .....Palestrina  
"Kyrie" and "Sanctus," from a Mass.....Palestrina  
(b.) Movement from the Anthem, "O give thanks..." .....Purcell  
By **Dr. S. P. Tuckerman,**  
Organist at St Paul's Church.
  
4. Offertorium in G.....Lefebure Wely  
By **John H. Wilcox,** Organist  
at the Church of the Immaculate Conception
  
5. Hallelujah Chorus.....Handel  
By **G. W. Morgan.**

The Ode "by a lady of Boston" (now understood to be Mrs. JAMES T. FIELDS) came not more providentially than did the gifted, noble woman who recited it, upon the very eve of her return to Europe. Miss CUSHMAN'S delivery was fervent, graceful and impressive, entering heartily into the elevated thought and spirit of the poem. Plainly the Organ load inspired the poem; its "lofty rhyme" was "builded" with enthusiasm, with a fine, if an untutored, sense of the significance and the grand uses of the instrument, fitly connecting it with the social destiny of our free nation. Such an ode would do honor to a much more practiced and distinguished authorship; with all its inequalities occasional weak lines, and so forth, we think, with a writer in the *Transcript*, that it is, "in poetic conception and expression, far superior to the great majority of similar productions in England and the United States," in the qualities of structure and *imaginative poise* and verbal expression of high thought conspicuously excellent." But the best about it is, for that occasion, that the poem finds to much of poetry in the labor which planned and built the Organ, that it appreciates the organ in its wide relations "Circle into circle breaking, Wider circles still awaking," &c; that it demands that it be kept true to the dignity and grandeur of its design, and that only the earnest artist use it in Art's pure, soulful, self-forgetting service.

Let the musician come,  
Fresh from that star where Genius has its home,  
Whose sympathetic soul ways like the wind-swept grain,  
To human-joy or pain.  
And yet no passions trample to their base control.

And thus was this notable instrument once more consecrated by this Ode to earnest uses as it already was by the earnest appeal at the close of the President's report; as it was by the earnest

character of the musical programme of the inauguration; as it is by the grand bust of Bach forever looking earnestly out from the centre of his house, by the earnest style of the organ architecture, by the earnestness of its entire design and of all the thought and labor that have patiently produced it.

The Ode was thus the formal, earnest act of consecration; for true effect, the earnest music should immediately have followed. But the dramatic stir-price, which at this moment intervened, while it was a disturbing element so far as the opening of the stately music was concerned, was interesting in itself, as well as rendered necessary for certain reasons.— After Miss Cushman had sealed herself amid vigorous applause, screened behind the immense bouquet presented by the President, soft strains again rose from within the Organ, swelling louder and louder as the curtain slowly descended in the same manner as before; and there was unbounded demonstration of enthusiasm, ladies waving their handkerchiefs (though it was not in the nature of things that such a pitch as that of Saturday could be reached twice), and Herr Friedrich Walcker was seen seated at the keyboards. Being led forward and introduced to the audience by Dr. Upham, amid most loud and cordial greeting he modestly declined to do more than touch a few chords on the organ, not deeming himself an organist and having been induced to do this little rather in the sense of accepting a just compliment as representing the builder, end of simply drawing a few sounds from the finished instrument in the act of formally delivering it to those for whom it had been made. We are careful to say this, in justice to Mr. Walcker because some of the correspondents of New York newspapers have stupidly and cruelly entered into criticism of his performance, when no “performance” was pretended or intended, more than the modest little that was done.

As Mr. Walcker rejoined the little group of his associates upon the stage, the powerful rays of an electric light were thrown upon the organ front bringing out much of its detail with great clearness. The effect was startling, brilliant, but disturbing to the more important portion of the musical exercises which then came to order. Even the un-screening of the organ at that moment was somewhat fatal to true musical enjoyment, which requires silence and a quiet state of mind. But now all was flutter and excitement, all were wondering and exclaiming at the glorious *sight* so suddenly revealed, pointing out its beauties one to another, and so forth all which would have had its hour and have subsided, had the front been visible from the beginning. But now this dazzling, unquiet, tremulous light was a new and on irresistible distraction, and it lasted long enough to render the larger part of the audience insensible to more than the mere sound of the whole first part of the music, which was all by BACH the master of masters in the true organ music—the fittest of all music to follow immediately upon the Ode in this solemnity, and constituting *par excellence* the musical consecration of the great instrument. Not until that nervous jack-o’lantern got its quietus, did the mass of the audience really begin to listen and appreciate. Such effects should be reserved to the end of a programme; on a *musical* occasion let sight-seeing wait the convenience of hearing.

Amid these disturbing circumstances it was that Mr. PAINE, in his quiet and sincere artist spirit, with reverence for the organ and the master and the task, sat down to play the *Toccata* and the *Sonata Trio*. Those who knew how good it was and therefore listened were pleased and edified. *They* did not find the *Toccata* all a great roaring and fatiguing noise, but felt its mighty inspiration, its refreshing grandeur, its inexhaustible suggestion as of the ocean roiling in upon the beach. Nor did they hearken so indifferently and so obtusely as to confound the *Trio Sonata* in their memory afterwards in one unremitting blare of full organ with the *Toccata*—calling it all “fugue” too—when in fact the *Sonata* was played on soft stops, with alternation and contrast of voices, as well use of tempo in else several movements. The only fugue, strictly speaking, was the glorious G minor played by Mr. THAYER, which made the proper balance and finale to the appropriate *trilogy* (so to speak) of great works of Bach. Both of these young artists acquitted themselves admirably, the latter doing credit to himself and to his teacher who preceded him.

Part II was more miscellaneous, although many of the smart newspaper reporters have complained of the whole programme as "heavy," they betting only on the "light weights." But what was the main design of the programme what was the meaning of the whole occasion? The music was not chosen, nor ought it to have been chosen, with mere regard to the momentary entertainment. The object was to inaugurate the organ, to pledge and consecrate it to its high and noble uses, to sound, as it were, the keynote of its central purpose, of its future influence for good, from which it frequently may modulate to lighter variations but to which it must remain ever loyal and continually return. It was not built for a hand-organ. The programme, therefore, was so selected as to be worthy of the Occasion, interpretative of the true worth of this new possession, and such as might be read with pride hereafter in the story of our Organ. It was not made to amuse, nor to gratify mere curiosity about new sounds and stops, nor to show off the skill of the performers or institute any comparisons between them nor to provoke encores, nor to try to beat the fashionable virtuosos and "monster" concert" givers at their own poor game; but it was made so as to interpret the principal worthy schools of organ music, so far as available organists and time and opportunity admitted of it, and, above all, to reveal something of the proper grandeur and beauty of the Organ in its *impersonality*. And it is much to the honor of the organists on that occasion that they so cheerfully and reasonably consented to merge their own personalities in the unity of that design, forgetting themselves in the Organ and its great mission, not thrusting themselves between it and the people. This they did so truly, that criticism of their individual performances is out of place. Suffice it to say that every one did his work well, and every one gave pleasure, just in proportion as he was truly listened to. One more to one class and one more to another course, according to the various tastes and culture of an audience rather too fashionable to partake of the musical heaven so generally as we sometimes find on more everyday occasions.

Mr. Morgan tolled out the great 32-foot basses with superb effect in those - "Israel in Egypt" choruses, and had to answer to an irresistible recall. This again disturbed the programme and more than it need have done, had he simply responded with another piece of Handel, at once in keeping and in contrast with what he had played—for his part was indeed too short; but the introduction just there of the "Star Spangled Banner" with fantastic variations with the Fourth of July illumination of the flag and the outburst of patriotism in the wrong place made all confused and heterogeneous artistic unity seas gone beyond recovery, fluttered away like frightened birds. And yet again he was recalled and played. No wonder the people were delighted-- brilliant execution; he is the most experienced and clever master of the instrument we have, perhaps and he does all good—naturally and tellingly; it was not *his* fault but the public's, if he had to overstep the proprieties of the occasion. Mr. LANG'S choice of stops in the Mendelssohn Sonata was most appropriate and revealed rare beauties in the organ as well as in the composition; it was richly enjoyed. Dr. TUCKERMAN had for his task to discourse a little of the music of the grand old Italian church school and of the old English school which builds upon it; pieces not written for the organ, but yet in the organ spirit. Although he had just risen from a long illness, his favorite music did not suffer in his hands. The *Offertoire* performed so admirably by Mr. WILLCOX, had more of thought and serious purpose in it than most of the French music and was a very effective specimen of that school. It served well his particular talent for contrasting and combining various stops; the leading melody several times recurring showed how finely characteristic are some of the tones of the new organ, as the flutes, the softer reeds (hautboy and bassoon, Vox angelica &c.), and the firm, ringing quality of the trumpet in the great organ. Mr. W. also was encored. His is the art to mix stops as the painter mixes and tries colors on his palette. What he did was done gracefully and modestly. Handel's "Hallelujah" made a fit and welcome close to an occasion, which, like some other great things, Niagara for instance, will be even greater in the memory hereafter than it was in the actual presence.