

I NOTES IN PASSING . . .

The Foundation's program advisory services will be expanded this season, thanks to the generous gifts of several domestic and foreign publishing houses which have made available reference copies of choral works in their catalogues. Material of all categories of choral composition is now available for examination at the Foundation's office. . . . The second mailing of chorus survey forms will take place on October 15th. Results of the first survey have been of great help in ascertaining the situation of choral groups in our country and determining Foundation projects. We would like to thank especially individuals who participated in the study. Any groups that would like to be included in future reports should send us their names and addresses. Information received is, of course, kept confidential. . . . On September 8th rehearsals began for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus, a group that was organized by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with the help of the Foundation. This season the chorus will perform with the orchestra in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Honegger's *Christmas Cantata*, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* and Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*. . . . Choral workshops will be held in cooperation with the Foundation in the following localities during the coming year: Carbondale, Ill.; Kokomo, Ind.; Decorah, Ia.; and Albermarle, N.C. Margaret Hillis, Music Director of the Foundation, will lead the workshops and choral festivals in Des Moines, Ia. and Downers Grove, Ill.

II FIRST REPORT ON SURVEY OF CHORAL GROUPS

Results of the first year of survey activities confirm many opinions held by experienced musicians in the choral field. Choral singing in the nation is essentially an avocational activity, and most choral conductors seem to have a thorough professional training. Of choruses contacted only six (2.3% of all groups) are composed entirely of professional choristers, and only 8.9% occasionally engage professionals.

On the other hand, most choral conductors report a good deal of academic training: 55.8% hold graduate

degrees and 89.6% are qualified teachers in high schools and colleges. The majority of soloists are chosen from their respective groups and are also non-professionals. Only 14.6% of the groups reporting engage soloists regularly from artists managements, though an additional 23.8% do so occasionally.

The need for detailed information on a variety of subjects is the most striking result of the returns. No less than 76.5% of conductors and managers are interested in publications including articles on the choral repertoire, performance practice, and management and administrative techniques for choruses. Choral workshops are deemed desirable by 65.3% of groups, and 68.8% are interested in utilizing a rental library of choral music.

The conductors' and administrators' remarks on the last page of the survey form were particularly helpful in explaining the "whys" of many statistics. With regard to the choral repertoire one conductor wrote that "as I have directed festivals and talked to music directors, I find that there is a great need for information about repertoire materials. . . . There are many lists of music but few conductors know how to select from these lists for . . . [their] organization". The need for an association of choral conductors was also emphasized. A choral conductor in a college felt "there should be a Choral Directors' Association. We are the only group of musicians to not be organized". The necessity for maintaining standards was not overlooked in the organization of such a group: "how much we could gain . . . would depend on [its] excellence . . . the challenge there is to organizations which sponsor such activities".

Other problems broached were those of attracting audiences to concerts of choral music and raising funds for the support of choral groups. A conductor of a civic chorus wrote that "We need to find means of increasing our audience while maintaining the highest standards in the quality of music programmed. We are told that audiences are losing interest in choral singing". Another conductor of a civic group expressed the opinion that "How to interest the city in culture [-of any kind] is . . . a fundamental problem. If we had compiled data we might keep after them, but none of us have time or know-how to get facts as to what other cities are doing".

The form distributed included questions on the con-

ductors' professional activities as well as the budget, repertoire, administration and needs of respective groups. In future issues of this Bulletin each of these topics will be discussed with special reference to the statistics obtained from the survey.

III THE FOUNDATION'S BIBLIO-CENTER

During the past few years the Foundation has expanded its advisory services to choral conductors, notifying them of the publishers of scores and parts of choral works and reference tools and describing to them the instrumentations, tessituras and so forth of specific compositions. On occasion, inquiries have been received about music and books which are probably available for examination in libraries located within the conductor's home state. Unfortunately, most libraries cannot publish catalogues of their music collections, and no inventory of musical resources has as yet appeared for all college and public libraries in the nation.

The Foundation staff has for some time considered solutions to the problem of the coordination of its services with those of college and public libraries. Several plans were proposed, considered and then rejected because of administrative difficulties and/or excessive costs. The plan for coordination that was finally adopted has as its main virtue convenience to the conductor and incorporates the best features of all those considered.

Beginning October 12th, a listing of twenty-four reference tools and of one hundred choral compositions will be sent to forty-nine libraries, one in each state of the union. The books and compositions chosen will represent "basic" collections with which the Foundation staff believes choral musicians should be familiar and about which it has received the most inquiries. Librarians will be asked to indicate those compositions and books held by their institutions on a checklist prepared by the Foundation staff. On receipt of the completed checklist the Foundation will assign a number from "1" to "49" to the library.

At the same time the Foundation distributes its checklists, file cards will be prepared and printed for each composition and book with full bibliographical information. The numbers of those libraries which have the items will be printed on the backs of the cards. Sets of the cards will be made available to members of the Association of Choral Conductors as a privilege of membership.

In the future additional checklists will be prepared and libraries contacted to determine their holdings. Thus, not only will the conductor have a list of "basic" reference tools and compositions but, wherever he maintains his residence, a description of the reference and musical resources of the community.

IV THE ASSOCIATION OF CHORAL CONDUCTORS

As was announced in the first issue of this Bulletin, the Foundation is organizing an association of professional, college and church choral conductors as its major project during the current year. Meetings are planned this Fall in New York and Chicago at which local conductors will be asked to form regional steering committees to aid the Foundation in planning specific activities. The purposes of the regional committees are to plan conventions at which choral conductors and administrators can discuss all phases of repertoire and administrative problems, to serve as clearing houses for information and to keep choral conductors informed of services offered by other organizations.

Privileges of membership in the Association include receipt of the Bulletin of the Foundation, use of the rental library of the Foundation (for which catalogues may be obtained) and special advisory services. The bibliographic and repertoire cards described above will be issued to members of the Association as they become available.

Membership fees in the Association will be \$15.00 per year. An application blank is provided below for membership in the Association.

V ADDRESS BY DR. ARCHIBALD T. DAVISON First Annual Tripos Award Dinner

I have been asked to say something about the choral life of this country, as I know it, and I am asking you to forgive me if I read my very few remarks.

In point of time my experience of choral singing has been a long one. In extent, it has been relatively limited being confined almost entirely to young men and women of college age. I seem to have been born to thrive in that area of activity because my interest in music has, for many years, been strongly educational. Dealing with singers of college age one has the opportunity and the privilege of training the taste of young people; and that, I will confess, has constantly been paramount in my thought. The Biblical injunction to call nothing common has been a guiding precept, for while I felt sure that the majority of my charges would never attain striking proficiency as singers, I was yet persuaded that they had a right to claim that happiness which grows out of active, first-hand contact with great music. Provided the will to sing was there, I gladly welcomed them all to membership. There was the boy, who, when I asked him what part he sang, said "I sing center", meaning, as I later discovered, that the range of his voice lay near the center of the keyboard; and there were the two sisters who were monotones and who, after being rendered harmless by their loca-

tion in an acoustical pocket, sang through a series of great choral works with the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and there were numbers who would have defeated the efforts of any physiologist to identify the source of their vocal efforts. At the other extreme was the tenor, so self-effacing, that we sometimes wondered if he really was a bona-fide first tenor, who a few years after graduation became the leading lyric tenor at the Opéra-Comique in Paris; and a bass from the Business School who rose to the distinction of singing minor roles at the Met. And in between the very bad and the very good were those hosts of average voices which, when submitted to discipline, produced an ideal tone in which no single voice stood out above the others; a tone always expressive and sometimes even beautiful, to which I used to refer in highest praise, as "homogeneous mediocrity".

While I have seen many choruses die from aesthetic undernourishment, those which have been concerned with the highest manifestations of the choral art have increased in number and have handed on a fine tradition to later generations. While I recognize the stimulus that comes from performance, I have felt that rehearsals were the most profitable undertakings. I have never inveighed against mistakes—and except careless ones—in fact I have welcomed them as providing the opportunity to sing over and over passages whose beauty could only be made articulate through long familiarity. The correct reading of the notes of the B minor Mass represents only a superficial experience; one must, literally, *live* with the music in rehearsal after rehearsal until the score has become an instinctive part of his thinking and feeling. When that has taken place, performance becomes secondary; for the singer has acquired not only an experience of beauty but also a lasting resource of life itself.

Some years ago I visited a former singer of mine in Arizona. He was nearing the end of his days and he

explained to me that he had two lives, a living life and a dying life. Spread out before him on his bed were all the programs and memorabilia that he had assembled during his singing years; and these, he said, represented his living life. I can never forget his words to me as I left him: "When I come to the end," he said, "among the thoughts I shall have will be those of overwhelming gratitude to the Harvard Glee Club." I knew it was not the glamour or the excitement of the concerts of which he was thinking, but of the indestructible power of beauty which had grown up in him during his life as a choral singer.

The cause of choral music is being notably advanced in this country thanks to the efforts of organizations like the American Concert Choir and Choral Foundation, and this growth is most significant and heartening. If you feel, as I do, that it is not the *singer* but the *song* that is of primary importance, then we will scan the programs with a severely critical eye, for it is by quality that the battle will be won. A famous architect once remarked that nothing is easier to lower than a standard, and nothing is so difficult to raise again. The responsibility for maintaining the standard of choral music is threefold; it is first on the composers, second on the performers, and third on the audience.

In closing, I can think of nothing more fitting to this occasion than President Eliot's dictum that art and music are essential in the life of every human being who means to be "cultivated, efficient, and rationally happy."

VI IN THE NEXT ISSUE

. . . A working bibliography for the choral conductor will be published. . . Minutes of the meeting of the New York steering committee of the Association of Choral Conductors will be reproduced. . . Survey statistics on the budgets of choral groups will be analyzed.

This Bulletin will be issued four times a year.

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