

BELFAST MUSICAL FESTIVAL

MORNING CONCERT.

Judged solely by the character of the selections and the merits of the performance, the concert given in the Ulster Hall yesterday morning was in no respect less excellent than that of the previous evening; and there were some few items in the programme which gave this, the second concert of the series, a superiority over the first. It was hardly to be expected that the hall would be crowded, and there were many rows of seats quite unoccupied; but still the attendance was large, and the number of persons present could not have been accommodated in any of the other concert-rooms in Belfast. The delicate tinting and rich ornamentation of the pipes of the grand organ that are made subordinate to what may be called its architectural effect can be much better appreciated by day than at night; and the immense proportions of the instrument struck with astonishment many visitors from the country, who had not previously formed a just conception either of the hall itself or of the organ that Mr. Mulholland's liberality has placed within it.

The concert commenced with Auber's ever-welcome overture to *Masaniello*, which was performed by the band with such attention to light and shade as can only be given by the most practised performers, guided by a competent conductor. The march told with masterly effect, and the finale was incomparably excellent. The other overtures were the popular but crashing *Zampa*, by Herold, and Beethoven's classical composition, *Prometheus*, which was not, however, heard as it deserved, for it brought the concert to a close, and its first notes were the signal for nine-tenths of the audience to rise and stream out, thus losing one of the gems of the programme. Had the *Prometheus* been accorded an earlier place, *Zampa* would have answered remarkably well for "playing out" the impatient majority.

After the first overture, Mr. Horatio Chipp played on the violoncello Hausmann's fantasia on Scotch airs. The performer is evidently a very finished player; but he might with advantage have selected something more classical and less "catchy." The object of the fantasia is, for the most part, to imitate a Scotch bagpipe, and, of course, the result is disagreeable in proportion to the excellence of the imitation. Mr. H. Chipp succeeded to admiration in giving a vivid notion of a very bad bagpipe doing its best to be sentimental, and only able to go pathetically out of tune.

Mr. W. Cooper sang Donizetti's *Una Furtiva Lagrima*, and was much more effective than on the previous evening. He had evidently got the range of the hall better, and his voice had more volume and not less sweetness than on Wednesday night. He afterwards sang, with Mr. Thomas, the *Sul campo della gloria* of the same composer, and in the second part he gave Macfarren's song from *Robin Hood* – *My own, my guiding star*. Mr. Thomas sang in the first part Schubert's *Wanderer*, accompanied on the organ by Dr. Chipp, and was encored – a compliment paid not more to the singer than to the instrumentalist. The accompaniment was never meant for the organ; but Dr. Chipp made it completely his own, and played with charming softness and expression.

Madame Sherrington sang in the first part a not very effective song, *The Blind Boy* (J. Lemmens). In the second part she gave, with Mr. Cooper, the duet from *Linda* – *Da quel di*, the exquisite and familiar finale of the opera. It was executed with very great ability, and the closing theme, "a consolarmi," was particularly admired. She afterwards sang *Rode's Air*, with variations, and quite took the audience by storm with a succession of sparkling passages, rapid roulades, and chromatic

scales. Her performance of it is second only to that of the *Shadow Song*, which she has made her own. Miss Palmer sang Gluck's *Che Faro*, from *Orfeo e Euridice*, in the first part, and interpreted very skilfully the noble music of a fine old writer, who is too seldom heard in our local concert halls. In the second part, she gave Hatton's pleasing ballad of *The Sailor's Wife*. The quartet from *Dinorah*, by four soloists, was a very great treat in the second part.

Dr. Chipp played two solos on the grand organ – the first, Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 2; and the second, Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmith*, arranged by Dr. Chipp. The allegro and fugue in the sonata were particularly fine. The *Harmonious Blacksmith* was introduced by some passages in which the "tuba mirabilis" stop, the pipes of which stand out almost at right angles from the ornamental front of the organ, played an important part. The theme was then played, with a softness and simplicity that contrasted with the thunders and complications of subsequent variations, in many of which the air was performed by the pedals alone. One variation, which formed a canon on the air, was particularly noticeable; and that with which this splendid performance was brought to a close was marvellous, not only for the great power which was embodied in it, and which made the house vibrate again, but for the sharp distinctness of every note and the exquisite blending of the numerous stops which were in action. The Bradford chorus-singers sang two part songs so admirably that they were both encored. The concert, which commenced at one o'clock, did not terminate until four.

EVENING CONCERT - "THE CREATION."

The Musical Festival was brought to a most successful termination last evening. The previous concerts were of a miscellaneous character, including selections from the works of many eminent composers; but, relying on the immense resources at their disposal, the committee wisely resolved to produce one of the great oratorios, with a completeness never equalled in Belfast. The work selected for the occasion was *The Creation* – the masterpiece of Haydn, and on which the illustrious composer spent more than two years of his life, in the hope that it would share with *The Messiah* of Handel the admiration of the public.

The choice was a very happy one. The members of the Classical Harmonists' Society have more than once performed *The Creation* in a very effective manner: and it is no reflection on them to say that, last night, when our two great musical societies were joined under the conductorship of a gentleman who stands in the first rank of his profession, and when the solo parts were taken by such distinguished vocalists as Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Cooper, the full beauties of the music were brought out in a style such as they had never been before in this town.

Judging from the crowded audience last night, the interest of the public in the Festival was maintained until its close. Long before the hour at which the hall was opened, large crowds had collected around the entrances, and ere Dr. E. T. Chipp took his place in the conductor's rostrum, every seat in the body of the hall had been occupied, and very few were vacant on the gallery. It was said that among the audience, at two, at least, of the concerts, was the celebrated Dr. Stewart, of Dublin, whose fame as a composer and organist is not confined to his native land, and who came to Belfast specially for the purpose of listening to Dr. Chipp.

Miss Palmer, whose pleasing *contralto* elicited such applause at the first two concerts, was compelled to leave Belfast yesterday evening, for the purpose of fulfilling an engagement this day, so that Madame Lemmens-Sherrington had to undertake a very large number of the solos. That lady, however, was, as usual, in excellent voice; and to say that she succeeded, and succeeded admirably, does not convey the faintest idea of the warm applause with which, contrary to the rule in such cases made and provided, the audience insisted upon rewarding her brilliant vocalisation.

The gem of her part was, of course, the beautiful air, *With verdure clad*. The most difficult passages in it were sung with an easy, witching manner, which held the audience, as it were, spellbound. The softest notes were heard as distinctly at the farthest end of the hall as by those who sat close to the platform. Not a note was lost; and, from the energy with which the auditors used their hands and their voices when it concluded, we think they would have been delighted if it had been repeated.

Madame Sherrington's rendering of the other airs, *The marvellous work* – a testing composition – and *On mighty wings*, in the second part, were scarcely less satisfactory, and in the trios and duets which occur in the second and third parts, her splendid voice was heard to the utmost advantage. The soprano recitatives were fully as deserving of praise as the airs. Madame Sherrington's distinctness of articulation forms by no means the least of the charms which have won for her the good opinion of every audience before whom she has appeared.

With respect to Mr. L. Thomas, it is but simple justice to say that, though he has often appeared at concerts in this town, the favourable impression he produced at the first has been deepened by each successive visit. It is very doubtful whether a more effective *basso* than he is could have been engaged for the festival, and certainly there is none who would be listened to with more unmixed pleasure. His voice is full, round, and of great compass, and he sings as one who fully understands his part, and who had made music the subject of careful study and assiduous cultivation. His recitatives were faultless, and in the trios and airs, and particularly in *Rolling in foaming billows*, he took the audience completely by storm, and made it forget that the sacred character of an oratorio forbids any applause.

Mr. W. Cooper (tenor) had a large share of the programme, and got through it admirably. He has a remarkably sweet and pleasing voice – not, perhaps, of the strongest, but very well trained, and of good range. If we were to particularise any of the pieces in which he succeeded best, we would mention the recitative *In splendour bright*, and the air *In native worth*, the last of which was vociferously encored.

The chorus and orchestra included about 250 well-skilled and carefully-selected performers. The orchestral accompaniments throughout were all that could be desired. *The representation of chaos*, with which the oratorio opened, was executed very finely, and the same may be said of the “introduction” to the third part. The choruses form one of the strongest points in Haydn's great work, and they were sung with great precision. It is very doubtful whether *The Creation* has ever been presented more worthily in this respect anywhere out of London and the great musical centres of England. Mr. J. R. Edeson ably presided at the grand organ, and Mr. H. Loveday acted as “principal violin.”

Dr. Edmund T. Chipp, to whose unwearied efforts so much of the success that has attended the festival is due, has “won golden opinions from all sorts of men” on this side of the Channel, as he had already done in England; and it is a subject of congratulation that Belfast has been able to secure the services of one so able to assist in extending among all classes a refining taste for music.

The way in which Dr. Chipp discharged the onerous and responsible duties of conductor show that, in addition to being a first-class composer, he has great talents for organisation. During the intervals between the second and third parts last evening, he performed on the grand organ an extempore introduction and fugue in D Major (J. S. Bach) with extraordinary ability, and kindly repeated it when the audience insisted on an encore. The oratorio was concluded shortly after eleven o'clock, and thus ended the Musical Festival, which will long be remembered in connection with the name of Andrew Mulholland, Esq., whose munificence has been thus publicly commemorated.