



CONCERT REVIEW

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THE MONNIER HARPER CONCERT

The concert given last night in the Ulster Hall by Mr. Monnier Harper, the brilliant young Irish violinist, was very well attended, and proved highly successful. This was Mr. Harper's second appearance in Belfast, having previously played at one of the recent Philharmonic concerts. On that occasion he came with a great reputation, which was fully justified by his performance, but last night he had perhaps greater scope for his undoubted abilities. Mr. Harper, it may be stated, is still in "the teens," but has had a musical experience such as few youths have been favoured with.

Born near Shane's Castle, on the shores of Lough Neagh, he showed at a very early age such undoubted musical talent that he was sent to the Brussels Conservatoire, where he had the advantage of being under the instruction of M. Cesar [*sic*] Thomson, while he also studied composition under that brilliant member of the young Belgian School of Composers M. Paul Gilson. At the age of fifteen he was first violin in the orchestra of the Kursaal at Ostend, and it was while in that city that he approached that greatest of living violinists M. Ysaye in regard to further studies.

Under M. Ysaye the young pupil made rapid progress, and his appearances at various concerts in Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp and Ostend established him as a favourite with audiences which, though sympathetic to youth, were decidedly critical. It was a matter of sincere gratification to musical Belfast to have another opportunity of hearing Mr. Harper, and if possible of more fully appreciating his brilliant masterly playing. The concert, as already mentioned, was well patronised, but, though the audience might have been larger, it could hardly have been more representative of musical taste in the city, nor could it have been more enthusiastic. A most cordial reception was given to the young violinist, and after each of the pieces played he was heartily recalled.

He first gave Vieuxtemps's concerto in A minor, "Allegro," and in this the audience had an admirable example of his brilliant technique, his beautifully clear tone, and his great power of expression and sympathy. He enters thoroughly into the spirit of the music he plays, and interprets with a student's reverent love [for] the works of the great masters. Mr. Harper appears to have nothing to learn as far as technique is concerned, and the facility of his execution is only equalled by the beauty of his tone. The audience expressed their appreciation in no undecided fashion, and, although he twice bowed his acknowledgments, he had to concede Bach's "Fugue" in G minor as an encore. This well-known piece was given unaccompanied, and was very much appreciated, though owing to the snapping of a string Mr. Harper had to finish abruptly. The success achieved by the rendering of these two items was further enhanced by the admirable way in which he dealt with Ysaye's arrangement of Saint-Saens's "Valse Caprice." Every difficulty was overcome with the greatest ease, and the beauties of composition well brought out.

Mr. Harper next joined another brilliant young local player, Mr. George A. Vincent, in Bach's concerto for two violins in D minor. Both performers acquitted themselves in this exacting composition in way that evoked loud applause. Not less praiseworthy was Mr. Harper's treatment of the adagio and finale from Max Bruch's concerto in G minor, in which his execution was faultless. The auditors signified their approval by a warm recall, and in reply he gave a fragment of the opera

“Eros and Psyche.” His concluding item was “Zigeunerweissin” [*sic*] (Sarasate), an item of great brilliancy, and one calculated to test severely the capabilities of even a master of the violin. Mr. Harper came out of the ordeal with flying colours, and was once more heartily recalled.

The other portion of the programme was miscellaneous, and was most attractive. Mr. R. M. Patterson, who was in capital voice, sang effectively Tosti’s “A Neapolitan Song,” and was even better suited in that idyllic trifle, Blumenthal’s “An Evening Song,” of which his rendering gained an encore, to which he responded with “The Minstrel [*sic*] Boy.” Madame Daisy Creeny, who is always popular, gave an artistic rendering of “The Nights” (Edward Murray) and “Love’s Garden” (Chaminade). The latter number so delighted the audience that they insisted on an encore, to which the vocalist sang “Kate O’Shea.” Madame Dorothy Bayly was successful in two songs of Martin Roder’s (a) “Stay, Nightingale, thy Singing” and (b) “The Gipsy.” Her other item, “Who is Sylvia?” (Schubert) was also admirably rendered. The accompaniments were supplied most efficiently by Mr. J. H. McBratney.