



CONCERT REVIEW

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Last evening in the Ulster Hall, before a large audience, the Philharmonic Society gave the third grand subscription concert. The artists engaged were — Mdlle. Lydia Nervil (soprano), Miss Beatrice McCready (contralto). Mr. Charles Bennett (baritone), Mr. Monnier Harper (violinist), Mr. Mark Hambourg (pianist), Mr. Charles Collier (harpist), and Mr. Hamilton Harty (accompanist). The chorus of the Society took part in the programme, but there was no orchestra on this occasion. Dr. Price was the organist, and opened the programme with a spirited performance of Bach's D Major Fugue. It was a pity the prelude was not also given, as it would have made a much better opening. ...

Mr. Monnier Harper, the violinist, is a native of our city, and it is satisfactory to see talent recognised despite the proverb "A prophet has no honour in his own country." Mr. Harper, who is only in his seventeenth year [not so, actually in his nineteenth], first studied in Belfast under M. Duloup, and then, about the age of eleven, went to the Brussels Conservatoire. His master there was Cæsar Thompson [César Thomson] for some four years, but for the last two years he has been studying privately under M. Ysaye. Mr. Harper has played at concerts in different cities in Belgium, and also in the Kursaal Orchestra at Ostend, but last night was his first appearance here.

His first solo was "Fourth Grand Concerto" (D minor), by Vieuxtemps, with organ, harp, and piano accompaniment, and he played this difficult composition with much technical skill and dash. His intonation was always true both in double stopping and octaves, and he gave evidence of careful training and artistic taste that augurs well for his future success. His tone perhaps was not so good as his execution, being rather thin and cold at times, though it is only fair to say he was playing at a great disadvantage. Owing to the piano being tuned to the organ in the morning, when the hall was not heated, and then the latter instrument rising in pitch as the hall got warm, the two instruments were terribly out of tune with each other. The effect was lamentable, and it was a pity when this was discovered that the organ accompaniment was not left out. But, despite this, the violinist played remarkably well, and received a most enthusiastic recall.

Mr. Harper had rather an unthankful task in finishing the concert (after a song like "Angus Macdonald") with two solos — (a) "Le Printemps" (out of an opera from his own pen), (b) "Rondo Capriccioso" (Saint-Saëns). The organ and piano were again used together as accompaniment to the first solo, with the same result as before, but fortunately in the second solo we had piano only, and the solo part was heard to much better advantage. In Saint-Saëns's composition Mr. Harper seemed quite at home, and imparted more warmth of tone and feeling, which made a great difference to the pleasure of the audience. There were also a delicacy and lightness of playing in some of the dainty, sprightly phrases and erratic rhythm of the music which betokened musical taste and ability to experiment. He was loudly applauded, and his career will be watched with interest by many in our city. ...

Dr. Price presided at the organ for the accompaniment, and Dr. Koeller conducted with his usual skill. Mr. Hamilton Harty played the pianoforte accompaniments with taste and judgment. The concert was rather late, not finishing till 10.35, and in consequence the concluding items were rather interfered with by those leaving, but altogether it was a successful one.

[Uncredited review]