

# Boston Organization Was Pioneer In the Field of Chamber Music

Gift of Extensive Program Collection to the New England Conservatory Recalls Early Musical History in This Country—Mendelssohn Quintet Made First Tours in the Late Forties

BOSTON, Jan. 1.—A large collection of programs of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club of Boston, the pioneer organization to give chamber music concerts throughout the United States, through the courtesy of the Widener Library of Harvard University, has been given to the library of the New England Conservatory of Music. At the latter repository of musical books and scores it will be added to an already extensive department of programs of historic interest which the librarian, Mary Alden Thayer, has been forming in the past ten or twelve years. The well equipped working library of the music school on Huntington Avenue is now well equipped with programs of major concerts by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Cecilia, Apollo and other musical organizations.

A complete file is included of the student concerts and recitals of recent years, and Miss Thayer, by appealing to the older alumni of the Conservatory, is rapidly filling in the gaps of the series undertaken in the earlier days of the institution, whose first public concert took place in the spring of 1867. The Mendelssohn programs contain especially valuable data to illustrate the history of music in the middle nineteenth century, the time when this quintet of earnest musicians first carried Beethoven and Mozart over the Alleghanies into communities which had previously heard nothing more classical than "Fishers' Hornpipe" and "Old Hundred."

### The Club's Tours

The Mendelssohn programs which the Conservatory has acquired run from 1859, the second year of the organization's existence, down to 1873, after which its character was somewhat changed. They give a practically complete record of the concerts in Boston, Cambridge, Charlestown and other home auditoria, of the first concerts in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, which gave the Quintet national prominence, and a few of those which were presented in the Middle West after the Civil War. As "assisting" the organization, or being assisted by it, they bring in the names of many of the best known nineteenth century musicians: Mlle. Carlotti Patti, Adelaide Phillips, B. J. Lang, J. C. D. Parker, Ernest Perabo and many others. They show a high

standard of musical numbers which were well enough appreciated to make the Quintet Club one of the most successful of its kind.

The story of the Mendelssohn Quintet Club, as many musically inclined people know, has been entertainingly told in "The Recollections of an Old Musician," by the late Thomas Ryan, who was the managing member of the Quintet during its forty-nine years of existence. It was through Mr. Ryan's boyish enthusiasm for Mendelssohn that the name was adopted and retained. Other members came and went, most of them Teutons or Slavs, but this Irish-born clarinetist remained, always efficient, companionable and popular, and in his later years he wrote out a narrative of his career.

At a time when America was filling up with foreign musicians who had run away from their own countries after the revolutionary troubles of 1848 the Mendelssohn Quintet Club was formed to give concerts in and around Boston.

The original members were August Fries, first violin; Francis Riha, second violin; Edward Lehman, viola and flute; Thomas Ryan, viola and clarinet; Wulf Fries, cello. The program of the first concert, given in the Chickering piano rooms in December, 1849, was as follows: *Quintet in A, op. 18, Mendelssohn; La Melancholie, solo for violin, Francis Riha, Prume; Trio for Flute, Violin and Violoncello, on themes from the opera "Zampa," by Herold, Kalliwoda; Fifth Air Varie for Clarinet, F. Berr; Quintet in E Flat, op. 4, Beethoven.*

Of this program Mr. Ryan wrote in his book: "That program was certainly a notable one—fit for to-day's use. We had set our standard high; and we have never lowered it during our almost fifty years of service."

The new organization promptly "caught on." There was nothing just like it in New England or, indeed, anywhere else in North America. Requests for concerts began to come in. "Then for us young men," says Mr. Ryan, "began a kind of belle's life. We were in demand everywhere—not only for single concerts, but for sets of four or more—in places like Salem, Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Taunton, New Bedford, Providence and Worcester." In Cambridge during fifteen consecutive seasons a set of eight parlor concerts was given at houses of professors or other friends of music. The record of these Cantabrigian entertainments is told in the program of the New England Conservatory library.

Toward 1860 the Quintet had begun to give concerts outside of New England.

### Founded "National College"

The war interrupted Southern and Western tours, of course, but after the conflict the Quintet had for some years a heyday in the Western concert field. The organization was the first of its kind to be heard in many communities. Times were good and audiences were large. After a time there began to be followers. The first was the "Redpath Parlor Opera Company," a quartet formed in Boston. They were very successful and in a little while they in turn had imitators.

In 1872 the members of the Mendelssohn Quintet had grown tired of long journeys across the continent and of facing the increasing competition. So they thought of settling down again in Boston, to teach and to give occasional concerts in the neighborhood. Having themselves had many imitators they themselves became imitators through their establishment of a National College of Music, plainly designed to share the popular favor of the New England Conservatory of Music, which had been established by Dr. Tourjee five years before and which already had a very large attendance for that day.

The National College made a brave start, with Vincenzo Corillo, of the Royal Music School, Naples, as principal vocal teacher; B. J. Lang, head of the pianoforte department, and the club members teaching the various instruments. About two hundred pupils were enrolled. Then, however, came the Boston fire and killed the new school, whose faculty perforce took once again to the road. Their travels were now more extensive than ever before, in one year extending to Australia and New Zealand.

The collection of programs at the New England Conservatory library, however, covers only through the National College episode. In the last years of the century Mr. Ryan wrote out his reminiscences of a lifetime of concert giving and dedicated the book to his friend, the late Allen A. Brown, donor of the remarkable "Allen A. Brown collection of musical literature" at the Boston Public Library.

### Interesting Musical Program for Current Week at the Rialto

The Rialto Orchestra, with Hugo Riesenfeld conducting, played "Ruy Blas" by Mendelssohn as the overture to this week's program. A duet from the second act of "Martha" was sung by

Signors Sciarette and Intente. Henriette Mentley sang "Answer," by Dr. A. G. Robyn, organist at the Rialto. "Las Toros" from the "Suite La Feria" by Lacombe was played by the orchestra as an added number.

### TACOMA CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Ladies' Musical Club Sings Carols at Red Cross Benefit

TACOMA, WASH., Dec. 26.—The Christmas concert of the Ladies' Musical Club, given for the benefit of the Tacoma Red Cross in the concert room of the Tacoma Hotel, presented a number of unusual and interesting features. A patriotic program by the club chorus of 60 voices, under the leadership of Frederick W. Wallis, opened with a group of Christmas carols, their manner of presentation a unique tribute to the Red Cross. The concert room was darkened and the chorus marked in, each member gowned in white and wearing the white headdress of the Red Cross nurse, singing the song "O Come All Ye Faithful." The singers carried lighted Christmas candles and each wore upon her breast the scarlet cross insignia. "Holy Night" and Harker's "Calm on the Listening Ear of Night" were sung to piano accompaniment by Mrs. Frederick W. Wallis and harp accompaniment by Margaret McAvoy.

The chorus completed the program with a beautiful Christmas cantata, "List the Cherubic Host." Mrs. Harry Ferneyhough and Mr. Wallis sang the incidental solos to harp accompaniment by Miss McAvoy, Mrs. Wallis giving artistic support at the piano.

The Philharmonic Quartet, Mr. Nason, violinist; W. R. Flasket, flutist; M. B. Mortenson, cellist, and Mrs. J. Marovich, pianist, gave a group of charming numbers. Soloists of the afternoon were Leotta Foreman, pianist; Margaret McAvoy, harpist, and Mrs. Edna Evans Johnson (wife of Capt. Frank Johnson of Camp Lewis), soprano. A. W. R.

### Henry T. Finck to Lecture on Music at Hunter College

The music department of Hunter College announces the addition to its staff of Henry T. Finck, the noted music critic of the New York *Evening Post*. One of his series of lectures, treating music from Bach to the twentieth century, will be open to the general public every Tuesday afternoon from 4.30 to 5.30, beginning Feb. 11 and continuing throughout the entire semester. This course has been especially arranged to accommodate members of music clubs, high school and college students. A registration fee will be charged to all those wishing to take the course, but it will be free to students from high schools and colleges. College credit will be granted.

## JOHN POWELL'S Audience Applauds for Five Minutes

After his performance of the Liszt A-Major Concerto with the New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch, Conductor, at Aeolian Hall, December 16

### A PRESS AS ENTHUSIASTIC AS WAS THE AUDIENCE!

"Mr. Powell's performance of a stupendous work was NOTHING SHORT OF MASTERLY. He brought forward all his powers of technique, vigor and dramatic taste. Its demands on the pianist are tremendous, yet Mr. Powell met them with confidence and interpreted them with SUPERB VIRILITY, DASH and PICTURESQUE DETAIL. HE WAS RECALLED SIX TIMES BY HIS ENTHUSIASTIC AUDITORS."—New York American.

"The pianist gave AN ADMIRABLE PERFORMANCE of the solo part, playing it with EXQUISITE FEELING FOR TONAL VALUES, VIGOR IN STYLE and BRILLIANCE IN TECHNICAL VIRTUOSITY. HIS PERFORMANCE WAS WARMLY RECEIVED."—New York Sun.

"It was a SPARKLING PERFORMANCE, not only on the part of the soloist but also on that of the orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch, and the AUDIENCE SPENT AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES APPLAUDING THE ARTISTS."—New York Herald.

"The soloist of the afternoon was John Powell, who played Liszt's second piano concerto with a BIGNESS OF VISION and A POWER OF PERSONAL EXPRESSION which gave its music a real significance."—New York Evening Mail.

"POWELL PLAYED THE CONCERTO WITH SPIRIT, DEVOTION, CONSUMMATE TECHNIQUE AND A KEEN REGARD FOR STYLE. CERTAINLY THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PLAYING IN MANHATTAN THIS WINTER TO RANK WITH HIS DELIVERY OF THE RICH EMBROIDERY OF THE FIRST PART OF THE COMPOSITION."—Brooklyn Eagle.

MR. POWELL WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR A FEW MORE DATES IN THE SOUTHWEST (TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, LOUISIANA, ARKANSAS) IN FEBRUARY.

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"Mr. Altschuler turned up raw places—raw and bleeding, you might say, for the emotional power was never lost under his reading. If the music aims at disillusionment, this was disillusionment naked and flaunting. It was the exposure of pomp and vanity, interspersed with personal, acute, complaining, physical anguish. THE emotional grip was strengthened by the unrestrained interpretation, THE THEMES WERE MORE HAUNTING, HOUNDING, AND INDELIBLY VIVID THAN EVER. Once more the Pathetic Symphony is sensational melodrama from the grasp of which sophistication and musical refinement will not protect us."—H. T. PARKER in THE BOSTON TRANSCRIPT.

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