

Kent and Sussex Courier

11th January, 1907

Mr. Francis J. Foote's Choir
The weekly rehearsals of BACH'S PASSION MUSIC (ST. MATTHEW) will be resumed at Mr. Foote's Studio, Opera House Buildings, on Thursday next at 8.15. There are a few vacancies in the Contralto, Tenor & Bass parts. The conductor will be in attendance at the Studio at 7.30 on Thursday evening to interview any ladies and gentlemen desirous of becoming members.

March 8th, 1907

OPERA HOUSE
Wed. 27th March, 1907 7.45
Mr. Francis J. Foote's Choir,
Soloists, choruses and Orchestras of over 170 performers.
GRAND BACH CONCERT
including The Passion of our Lord
Chaconne for Solo violin
Concerto in D minor for 2 violins
Solo violin Herr Hans Wessely
Leader of the 1st orchestra Mr. Spencer Dyke
Leader of the 2nd orchestra Mr. Rowsby Woof
at the organ Mr. G.D. Cunningham
Conductor Mr. Francis J. Foote

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28 March 1907

MR. FRANCIS J. FOOTE'S CHOIR.

BACH CHORAL
AND INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT.

LAST NIGHT.

Mr Francis J. Foote's Choir, now numbering some 120 members, which was formed in the Autumn of 1904 for the purpose of studying and performing the masterpieces of musical literature, gave another convincing proof of excellent training at the Opera House last (Wednesday) evening, before an exceedingly large and thoroughly interested audience. The concert in question was devoted entirely to John Sebastian Bach, that appertaining to the choral portion, being "The Passion of Our Lord according to St. Matthew" (annually given for many years past on Tuesday in Passion Week in St. Paul's Cathedral, with large chorus and full orchestra), the great master's famous "Chaconne" for solo violin, and his "Concerto in D Minor" for two violins, forming the instrumental feature. In mentioning the construction of the "St. Matthew" Passion we take the liberty of referring to the analytical notes embodied in the programme, which deal with Herr Spitta's exhaustive work on this great composer, so admirably arranged by Mr. C. H. Strange, the Honorary Secretary. The author goes on to say that the grandeur and breadth of the poetical matter are adequately met by the musical means made use of. Bach has arranged it for double chorus and given to each chorus its own orchestra and its own organ accompaniment. He has made a truly astounding use of these two main masses of sound, both to emphasize all that has poetic value, alike from the lyric and dramatic point of view, and to express in music the many elements which compose the mighty picture. In the unanimous utterance meant to char-

acterize the vehemence of the fanatical persecutors of Christ, the choruses commonly sing together in polyphony, only coalescing in a compact four-part structure at the culminating points of their passion. In less emotional portions, Bach was satisfied to employ only one choir, as when the servants of Caiaphas address Peter "Surely thou also art one of them." The disciples are represented only by the first choir; but in all the chorales, except where supplementary lyrics are interwoven, and except in the deeply significant dramatic choruses "Truly this was the Son of God," the choirs combine in one mass of sound. In the grand "madrigal" tone-pictures at the beginning and end, and towards the close of the first part, they work together as a double chorus with a grandiose progression of parts, and in the opening number a third chorus of one part only—soprano ripieno—is associated with them." Of this, the first chorus of the Matthew Passion it may be added, it is generally regarded as the most exalted piece of choral composition ever written. It is in nine distinct parts, and forms what should be a most powerful appeal to Christians to observe the sorrows of their suffering Lord. No description in words can do justice to the wonderful depiction of grief, the anxious enquiries and answers of the people, and the portrayal of our Saviour's patience and love.

The proper environment for the great Cantor's wonderful tone picture is undoubtedly the Church, but under the circumstances no fault can be found for selecting (more especially at this solemn season of the Church's year) so worthy an art occasion for performance. With regard to the orchestration, Mr Francis J. Foote carried out as far as he was able (taking into consideration the fact of many instruments which were in use in Bach's day being now obsolete), the general idea in this respect, and conforming in a very good measure with the composer's intentions. For instance, to tide over the difficulty of the absence of

the string basses, provided the accompaniment in the soprano recit., "Although mine eyes," and the aria, "Jesus Saviour," which follows. It naturally goes without saying that the recitatives and arias in connection with the tenor and bass were sung in the experienced hands of Mr Thomas Gibbs and Mr Percival Driver, respectively, each of whom had arduous duties imposed upon him of an extremely exacting nature.

Appertaining to Bach came his "Concerto in D Minor" for two violins, and string orchestra, which opened the concert; the second and third movements being performed. The soloists were Herr Hans Wessely and Mr. Spencer Dyke, when their individual talent drew forth spontaneous exclamations of delight from all assembled. Then followed another striking success in the marvellous interpretation of the "Chaconne" for solo violin, at the hands of Herr Wessely, the eminent virtuoso, who it may be gratefully stated, evinces the greatest possible interest in the various enterprises of Mr F. J. Foote—so far entered into—by consenting, sometimes at considerable sacrifice, to appear at each concert as solo violinist. Herr Hans Wessely's magnificent performance was naturally received with much enthusiasm.

In closing these few remarks, with reference to a very successful evening, we may add that Mr Francis J. Foote's choir have definitely decided to rehearse several interesting works with a view to their public performance in 1907-8. The practices will begin in the early autumn with Mendelssohn's "Elijah," and afterwards Brahms' "German Requiem," Dvorak's "Te Deum," and Strauss's "Wanderer's Song to the Storm." We also understand that at the request of a number of ladies, who desire to continue their studies of choral works until the summer, Mr Foote has decided to form a ladies' choir, to meet at his studio one afternoon a week, commencing next month, when he will introduce some of the charming works written for female voices by Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikowsky, Elgar, etc., and to perform them with an accompaniment of string orchestra and harps.