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MOZART BEETHOVEN HAYDN

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THE LIGHT OF LIFE

(LUX CHRISTI)

A SHORT ORATORIO

FOR SOLI, CHORUS, AND ORCHESTRA

THE WORDS WRITTEN AND ARRANGED BY THE

REV. E. CAPEL-CURE

THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY

EDWARD ELGAR.

(Op. 29.)

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THE TIMES.

The oratorio, which is divided into sixteen numbers, including solos for all the principal voices and an orchestral prelude entitled "Meditation," occupies only the half of an ordinary evening's programme, and therefore has one attribute which makes for popularity. But it has many other besides. It is undeniably the work of a composer not only well cultivated and trained in his art but also gifted in no small degree. . . . On a first hearing the most impressive pieces seemed to be the first chorus, "Seek Him," and that entitled "Light out of darkness." In both of them the handling of the orchestra is masterly, and in the former, and again in the short fugal number, "The wisdom of their wise men," the composer is seen at his best as a writer for chorus.

DAILY TELEGRAPH.

It seems to me absolutely a fact that Mr. Elgar is a composer with whom we shall all have to reckon. He is still a young man. His residence far from London keeps him outside the most vigorous musical life of the country, yet the work under notice bears the unmistakable stamp of distinction, and affords proof of exceptional resources. . . . Mr. Elgar's power in dealing with the orchestra is, for one thing, of extreme value, and we know that he can conjure up melodies from their lurking places. . . . Much might be said in praise of details, but the "Light of Life" will be heard again, and afford another opportunity of discussing it. Enough now that the oratorio, while more valuable as a promise than as an achievement, is as an achievement that which makes promise well nigh as good as assurance.

STANDARD.

Mr. Elgar has not adopted any special style of composition, and he seems to be able to write fluently and freshly in any way he chooses. The vocal part-writing should be agreeable to the singers, and the orchestration is masterly without being too ambitious. In short, "The Light of Life" is a work of great merit.

DAILY CHRONICLE.

His instrumentation is ingenious and picturesque, without being unduly intricate; his solos are extremely grateful to the interpreters, and his choral writing is fresh and spirited. These are great recommendations for a work of this description.

SUNDAY TIMES.

The young Malvern teacher has uncommon talent . . . his sense of proportion and tone colour, and his knowledge of effect are quite exceptional, and albeit his themes are not always original, they impress in almost every case by their appropriateness of character and expressive force. . . . The best number in the work is the chorus "Light out of darkness," and this is of such excellence that I cannot help looking to Mr. Elgar for a really fine work when he comes across a "book" which appeals in every sense to his strong artistic temperament.

THE QUEEN.

His work excited considerable interest. Taken as a whole, we may without flattery say that the high anticipations formed were fully realised. . . . Mr. Elgar has set the libretto to music melodious in the extreme, and in which skilful orchestration is by far the most prominent feature.

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KING OLAF

BY

H. W. LONGFELLOW & H. A. ACWORTH, C.I.E.

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BY

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DAILY TELEGRAPH.

Mr. Elgar knows how to write effectively, both for vocal solo and chorus, and, as a matter of fact, he shows a peculiar sensitiveness to the effects which can be produced by such means. This is, perhaps, the most important revelation made by the new work, because found in connection with a rare gift of writing for the orchestra. . . . To sum up a necessarily hurried judgment, "King Olaf" is a work of high importance, one which should turn expectant eyes upon its composer as a musician within whose reach, apparently, lies no common distinction. . . . Almost every number was applauded fervently, and, at the close, composer, soloists, band, and choir were privileged to divide amongst them the honours of an enthusiastic demonstration.

STANDARD.

Mr. Elgar has not only dealt with his subject in an extraordinarily spirited manner, but has written music full of energy, melodic beauty, and modern feeling in methods and general construction. . . . The music flows on with delightful freedom from laboriousness, the part-writing, both for voices and orchestra, is luminous, though certainly not easy, and if Mr. Elgar knows his Wagner, which unquestionably he does, there is no suspicion of plagiarism.

DAILY NEWS.

The choruses are, as a rule, very effectively written, particularly that devoted to the challenge of the god Thor, the two choral ballads, and the chorus in which the death of Olaf is described. The tenor solo descriptive of Olaf's return and two duets for soprano and tenor are also amongst the more important numbers. Mr. Elgar himself conducted the cantata, which had a splendid reception. . . . When the final chorus had been sung the audience, choir, and band simultaneously burst into enthusiastic applause and continued cheering loudly after the composer had left the platform.

DAILY CHRONICLE.

I have no hesitation in pronouncing it the most notable addition to native productions the year has hitherto afforded. . . . Mr. Elgar throughout his latest work makes considerable use of representative themes. He knows their value, and happily in his hands they are not dangerous tools. The ingenuity with which he employs them is remarkable, and as the majority are simple and well defined they are readily recognisable at any stage of the story. Great reliance is placed upon the orchestra for the expression of ideas growing out of the dramatic situation, the instrumentation being always vivid and bold in colouring. Of the grateful nature of the work for the chorus I have already spoken. To sum up, "King Olaf" is a work deserving another hearing as soon as possible.

ATHENÆUM.

Musicians spoke in praise of Mr. Edward Elgar's short oratorio "The Light of Life," produced at Worcester recently, and the Malvern composer has far surpassed his previous achievement in his latest work performed on Friday morning. The writing is from first to last luminous in design, picturesque in the orchestral colouring, and extremely felicitous as regards the vocal parts for soli and chorus.

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