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Choir and Choral Music (The Music Lover's Library)

Arthur Mees

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“Choir and Choral Music” author, Arthur Mees once stated that the two branches of musical study most neglected in this country are the study of unaccompanied choral music for mixed voices and the works of mediaeval composers. This volume is primarily a history of choral music, and, at the same time, a critical study of composers of that department of music. In the preface the author states that his book is not a compendium for the professional, but a book for the amateur which will tell him something about the beginnings and the course of development of chorus singing; something about the origin of choirs, their constitution, and the nature of their activity at different periods; something about the history of the most important choral forms, particularly the Mystery and the Oratorio, about their essential characteristics, and about the first and other notable performances of the best known of them. It opens with an account of the development of music among the Greeks and Hebrews, the inheritors of the Egyptian and Assyrian theories, out of which grew the tone art of the early Christian, which has resulted in the choral of to-day. Then follows a history of music in the early and medieval church, during the period of the Christian mysteries, with a sketch of the great composer of the Passions, Johann Sebastian Bach; and a history of the Oratorio under its famous exponent, George Frederick Handel. A chapter devoted to choral culture in this country reviews the conditions which led up to the organization of our singing societies, and the circumstances under which the choral institutions that were conspicuously instrumental in elevating the standard of chorus singing were established. The volume closes with some interesting observations on the qualities necessary to the efficient chorus singer and chorus conductor, and a plea for the encouragement and promotion of choral culture in America. The book has an unusually accurate index.

—*The Dial*, Volume 32

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