

The Register July 30th 1898

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THE ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

PROTEST BY LOCAL MUSIC TEACHERS.

At the meeting of the Council of the University held on Friday afternoon the following protest from several of the leading local teachers of music against the procedure so far adopted at the Elder Conservatorium of Music was presented:—"We the undersigned members of the musical profession in Adelaide respectfully desire to make our united protest against the present course which is being pursued by your Council and Senate in the conduct of the Elder Conservatorium of Music. The grounds of our objection are as follows:—1. That although the late Sir Thomas Elder made no express stipulation as to the disposition of his legacy to the Chair of Music, it may reasonably be inferred his intention was to promote the cause of higher education over and above agencies already existing. 2. That the Conservatorium has as yet made no step in this direction, but, on the contrary, is distinctly bidding for the popular support—(a) by adopting a low standard of entrance examination; (b) by giving 'popular concerts' of the slightest educational value only; and generally (c) by engaging in a class of work which (vide musical examiners' reports) has for many years been efficiently done outside. 3. That such methods are fairly equivalent to lowering, say the Arts and Science Departments of the University to the level of an ordinary Collegiate School. 4. That a policy of this kind is entirely foreign to established University traditions, which in all other faculties constitute Senior Public Examination an entrance qualification, thereby undertaking only the highest branches of education, and so refraining from entering into direct competition with outside teachers. — (Signed) C. J. Stevens, Albert Fairbairn, W. R. Pybus, E. H. Wallace Paeker, John Williams, Lucy Stevenson, Lulu Gillespie, E. Harold Davies, Mus. Bac., A.R.C.O., Florence W. Campbell, Mus. Bac., William B. Chinner, E. E. Mitchell, Edward Howard, E. A. Fyvie-Dench.

Professor Ives, the Director of the Conservatorium, replied to the complaints of the signatories in the following report, which has been handed to us for publication:—

The letter is, I presume, intended to be a protest on the part of certain teachers of music against the course adopted by the Council of the University for utilizing the bequest of the late Sir Thomas Elder to the University School of Music. Briefly stated, the signatories find that the successful inauguration of the Conservatorium has interfered with their private interests. This is, to a certain extent, unavoidable, and, much as we regret it, we owe it to the late generous donor to make the best possible use of the handsome bequest he made. The course adopted by the Council is an outcome of the advice given by those heads of the musical profession in Europe whose experience, attainments, and positions entitle their opinions to at least equal value with those expressed by your petitioners. I am convinced that the best interests of higher musical culture is being considered in the effort made at the Conservatorium to impart a solid foundation of musical knowledge, both theoretical and practical. The report of examiners during the past few years have shown that while the theoretical branches of musical education have been highly satisfactory, there is much cause for regretting that the teaching of practical subjects (piano-forte, singing, violin playing, &c.) has not been proceeding on satisfactory lines. And while this may be said generally of all grades of practical studies it applies with especial force to the junior grade, where bad habits and wrong methods are being acquired, and the musical tastes and characters of students are being permanently formed. It would be impossible for the Conservatorium staff to produce good singers and players if their teaching powers were only to be exercised upon students of advanced years, whose methods, styles, and characters are already fixed. This fact has forced itself so strongly upon the notice of the authorities of the principal institutions in England that only quite recently the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music have found it advisable to establish an elementary division of music study. The Conservatorium is certainly bidding for popular support, and rightly so too. I should be sorry to see it become exclusive. It is under obligation to its munificent founder to place its advantages within the reach of all, and to do that which may most judiciously foster and assist in the development of a taste for good music among all classes of the community. It is felt to be wise, at the Popular Orchestral Concerts, to begin at the stage where previous concerts have left off, and to raise the standard gradually instead of suddenly. The petitioners have evidently overlooked the fact that Chamber Concerts have been instituted in connection with the Conservatorium, at which the best music is performed. The analogy it is sought to show between the Arts and Science Departments of the University and Collegiate Schools is a false one. There are no institutions in Adelaide conducted on similar lines to the Conservatorium—no institution where all branches of practical and theoretical music-ship can be systematically studied. Incorrect also is the suggestion that the Senior Public Examination is an entrance qualification to University lectures and classes. It may be essential for those seeking to obtain degrees (and this remains so in music), but I believe I am correct in saying that any one can attend lectures and classes in most of the subjects taught on payment of the prescribed fees, and without passing an examination. Upon the question of what is foreign to established University traditions, the Council of the University will probably feel itself competent to form its own opinions, but I cannot help mentioning that on a recent occasion Sir John Stainer, Professor of Music at the time-honoured University of Oxford, publicly lamented the absence of funds for the establishment of that which we now possess—a practical school as an aid to his theoretical work; and it is somewhat significant that during the past few years,

in response to an evidently felt want, quite a number of Conservatoriums or Colleges have been established in various parts of Great Britain, at which all practical subjects of music are taught. And, if the authorities of the University of Adelaide have shown a sufficient sense of the necessity of moving with the times, it is a matter upon which they may be congratulated. The complete success of the Conservatorium is a sufficient proof that it is being conducted on such lines as meet the requirements of our surroundings. I would again express my regret if, in the establishment of our Conservatorium, some of those who in the past have done good work in the field of musical education find their personal interests temporarily affected. I say 'temporarily' because I feel sure the effect will not be permanent, for I look to the Conservatorium to create a new and widened interest in music study. When I first came to South Australia there were hardly any pupils studying the theory of music. Now, as a direct result of the establishment of the Chair of Music at the University, there are hundreds of pupils studying the subject and presenting themselves for examination at the University each year. I have no doubt that similar results will attend the establishment of our school for practical subjects. Its influence will extend beyond the walls of the Conservatorium, and I am sure good teachers will always find pupils."

We understand that the Council considers this to be a complete and satisfactory answer to the complaints of the local teachers, and do not at present propose to take any further steps in the matter.

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THE ELDER CONSERVATORIUM—REPLY TO PROFESSOR IVES.

To the Editor.

Sir—In reference to the memorial presented to the University Council on Friday last, Professor Ives has submitted a report which, we are assured, furnishes "a complete and satisfactory answer to the complaints of the local teachers." At best it wears a plausible face, and doubtless many who read it will feel as satisfied as the Council do; but, none the less, the arguments used are specious, and the main contention of the memorial remains untouched. It may be well, in passing, to note the initial error with which Professor Ives sets out. He says:—"Briefly stated, the signatories find that the successful inauguration of the Conservatorium has interfered with their private interests." Speaking for myself and, I believe, for most of the other signatories, he is entirely mistaken in this. We protest from no immediate sense of personal injury, but on the far higher ground of right principle. Let it be repeated, Sir Thomas Elder's bequest is being utilized to promote a class of education which is beneath the legitimate sphere of University work, and which properly belongs to competent teachers outside. We contend that it should more properly have been applied in furnishing musical advantages not already available to students.

Professor Ives's ingenious plea for undertaking primary education will not bear a moment's analysis. The prevalence of bad habits, wrong methods, and vitiated musical tastes among students, which we all deplore, is due to the existence of a large class of unqualified teachers, who seek a livelihood by giving lessons at the most nominal charges. The Conservatorium, with its comparatively high fees, will not—cannot possibly—remedy this evil, for which the better class of private teachers must be held blameless.

The Professor's further attempt to justify the institution of an elementary division by referring to the practice of the Royal College and the Royal Academy is equally futile, seeing these are not University schools and cannot at all be regarded as affording a precedent for University usage.

Again, in vindication of the adoption of a low standard of entrance examination, Professor Ives affirms that the "Senior Public" is not insisted upon as essential to attendance at University lectures and classes (except in the case of students seeking degrees). Be it so, but this does not affect the petitioners' argument, inasmuch as it does not in other faculties involve any lowering of the standard of instruction given. We still claim, and it cannot be denied, that the University exists solely for the highest branches of study, and any departure from this is a departure from its best traditions. By its present determination to give junior and elementary instruction in the art of music the Council is not only lowering the prestige of the University, but is at the same time entering into an unfair competition with efficient agencies already existing. Moreover, to be logical, if such real is being shown for laying a sound foundation in the principles of music the Council should certainly embark on similar enterprises in every other department. Finally, it may be admitted that no exception is taken to the foundation of a practical School of Music at the University, and Sir John Stainer's desire for such a school in connection with Oxford, which Professor Ives mentions, is altogether commendable. Can we, however, by any stretch of imagination, picture the Professor of that ancient University undertaking the instruction of boys and girls in the elements of the art of playing? Our minds recoil at the thought.

I am, Sir, &c.,
E. HAROLD DAVIES,
Mus. Bac., A.R.C.O.

CONSERVATORIUM ORCHESTRAL CONCERT.

One of the most important instrumental programmes yet heard in this city was presented by the Conservatorium Grand Orchestra at the Town Hall on Saturday evening before a large audience, who evinced warm appreciation for the performer's efforts. The chief attraction was Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony, which was heard for the first time in Adelaide. This fine work, consisting of but two movements—an "allegro moderato," in the key of B minor, and an "andante con moto," in the key of G major—is novel in many of its features, rich in melodic grace and orchestral colour, and remarkable for its brass effects. The first movement opens with a broad melody for the 'celli and bassi, of eight bars, followed by four bars giving the figure of the accompaniment, which is for strings only. The first subject in the key of B flat is announced by the oboe and clarinet in unison, and after a brief, modulating passage we have the second subject, which is by far the more striking, announced by the 'celli, against a syncopated accompaniment. A peculiar feature of this second subject is that it is in the key of G major, thus exhibiting an unusual modulation for a first movement. A striking and unexpected effect is obtained in this exposition by the introduction of a bar's silence in what is apparently the middle of a melodic phrase, and followed by a discord given out fortissimo. The second movement contains two subjects of a broad, flowing character, yet well contrasted, which are cleverly and effectively worked out. The most striking features of the orchestration are the effective pizzicato passages for the 'celli and bassi, and the numerous unisons of the different instruments whereby the subject is made to stand out clearly amidst its formal surroundings. Just at the close of this movement we have a curious piece of orchestration, a pianissimo passage being given to the clarinets, bassoons, and bass trombone, the latter instrument having the true bass. The rendering of this symphony by the orchestra may be set down as a thoroughly creditable effort to give a worthy presentation of an orchestral masterpiece, and one which reflects infinite credit upon the conductor and the members of the orchestra. We hope to hear the work again at an early date. Liszt's second "Hungarian rhapsodie," which has become a favourite number in the orchestra's repertory, went with fine precision and finish, the playing of the strings and wood wind being particularly commendable. Beethoven's massive "Prometheus" overture was done ample justice to, and the arrangement of Weber's favourite "Invitation to the waltz" was rendered with unusual brilliancy. Two movements from Delibes's "Coppelia" ballet music, the "Dance des automates" and the "Valse" were given with due regard to their quaint effects, and Mendelssohn's well known "War march of the priests" was played impressively and powerfully. Two string quintets, Schumann's beautiful "Abendlied" and Tausert's piquant "Liebesliedchen," were interpreted with taste and artistic finish, and the latter was heartily recalled. Miss Jule Layton sang "The Gift" (Behrend) with sympathy and taste, and in response to a pronounced demand for more further favoured her hearers with "Ye banks and braes." A similar compliment was paid to her rendering of Dolby's pathetic song "Out on the rocks," and she responded by repeating the last verse. Mr. Oscar Teuber sang Seargeant's setting of the lines "Blow, blow, thou winter wind," with vigour and good effect, and as an extra added "The yeoman's wedding" (Poniatowski). He was also heard in a capital presentation of "The outpost's vigil," which was warmly applauded. Mr. A. H. Otto played the pianoforte accompaniments to all the vocal numbers with taste and discretion, and deserves a word of praise for his brilliant rendering of the accompaniment to "Blow, blow, thou winter wind."

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THE NEW INSPECTOR OF EXPLOSIVES.

Mr. E. F. Turner, the newly appointed Inspector of Explosives and Analyst to H.M. Customs Department, will take office to-day. Mr. Turner was born in Liverpool, and at an early age became apprenticed to Dr. J. Campbell Brown, Professor of Chemistry at Victoria University, Liverpool, who was public analyst for that city, and Customs and Board of Trade Adviser. After five years he, under medical orders, left, with his brother, for Australia, and on arriving at Adelaide took the first berth that offered, which was an assistantship to Mr. F. F. Hustler, of Port Adelaide. There he remained two years, and after a further four years with Messrs. Faulding & Co., met Professor Rennie, who was wanting an assistant to take the place of Mr. Fuller, who was temporarily incapacitated. In October, 1884, he was formally appointed. During the thirteen years Mr. Turner was engaged at the University his experience in analytical work was extensive, and when Dr. Rennie took up the work in connection with explosives he carried out a large share of the work, and in Dr. Rennie's absence at times carried on the whole of it. In March, 1895, he received a letter from the President of the Marine Board expressing the appreciation of the Board of the manner in which the work in connection with the Derwent had been carried out. With the management and inspection of magazines, and the testing of explosives, Mr. Turner is familiar, and in March, 1896, he was appointed by the Marine Board Assistant Inspector of Explosives.