

GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

GERMAN MUSIC AND SONG - PART III

There could be no adequate sketch of the grand orchestra that did no pay a tribute to THEODOR THOMAS, practically speaking the great missionary of the orchestra in America. He did not create it, but he introduced and developed and extended it, and above all, he made it intelligible to the public, spreading abroad the understanding of and the taste for orchestral art, patiently teaching its rudiments and by exposition making clear its principles.

Thomas conducted five music festivals in Cincinnati (1873, 1875, 1878, 1880, 1882), one in Chicago (1882) and one in New York (1882). In 1891 he was called to Chicago, to organize a symphonic orchestra, which he conducted with great success. He also distinguished himself as musical director at the Columbian Exposition of 1893.

A position similar to that held by Thomas in the middle States was held by KARL ZERRAHN in the New England States. He conducted not only for many years the Philharmonic Orchestra and the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, but also the concerts of the Oratorio Society in Salem and the famous Worcester festivals in Worcester, Mass. Of him Elton in his work "National Music in America" said: "Zerrahn was the bridge, by which New England traveled to its modern goal in classical music."

The names of LEOPOLD and WALTER DAMROSCH are connected with the brilliant history of the Oratorio- and Symphony Societies of New York, the names of KARL BERGMANN, ANTON SEIDL, GUSTAV MAHLER and JOSEPH STRANSKY with the history of the unsurpassed Philharmonic Society of New York.

GEORG HENSCHEL, WILHELM GERICKE, ARTHUR NICKISCH, EMIL PAUR and KARL MUCK have been the leaders of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, that pride of the Hub and America generally.

No greater encomium could be framed for these orchestras than that the greatest leaders and virtuosos of Germany were glad to come here and as guests take part in performances of genuine worth. They, who by the masterly rendition of the works of great composers helped in paving to music, the most pleasing and elevating muses, the way to victory.

To-day almost every considerable city has its symphony orchestra, voluntarily organized and maintained not for profit but supported by public subscription as a public educator. The orchestra is a feature of American city life, and the cities that have orchestras feel in them steadily increasing pride and interest and give to them steadily increasing support.

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