

GERMAN-AMERICA HISTORY

GERMAN MUSIC AND SONG - PART II

It did not take long for the conquering power of music and song to make it felt even in New England. A Handel and Haydn Society were started in 1786 in Stoughton, Mass. In June 1815 a similar one in Boston, organized by GOTTLIEB GRAUPNER, a German musician, who founded also the first orchestra, the Philharmonic Society, followed it.

Societies with like purposes were formed in New York, Baltimore, Cleveland, Cincinnati and other centers of German life. New York had the Euterpean Society, founded in 1799; the Sacred Music Society, founded in 1823; the Choral- and the Harmonic Society. To these early clubs came in 1842 the famous Philharmonic Society. Her members, mostly Germans, aimed not for financial gain, but to reach in their art perfection. From 1842 to 1865 U.C. HILL, GEORG LODER, H.C. TIMM, THEODOR EISFELD and KARL BERG-MANN alternated as conductors; from 1865 to 1876 Bergmann conducted exclusively and led the society to her triumphant position.

Bergmann was also a pioneer in another direction. He had come to America as a member of the Germania Orchestra, which consisted of fifty political refugees of 1848. Being elected as its conductor, Bergmann boldly began to make concert tours with this orchestra, visiting many eastern cities.

After his resignation LEOPOLD DAMROSCH became his successor as conductor of the Philharmonic Society. At the same time he founded the Oratorio Society and the Symphony Society of New York, which under his leadership gave, during May 3d to 7th 1881, a grand festival in the armory of the 7th New York Regiment. It was a musical event of the highest order. The chorus consisted of 1200 select voices, which were supported by 1000 young ladies of the high schools of New York and by 250 boys of the choirs of several churches. The orchestra numbered 250 instruments. The most important works of the program were Handel's Messiah and Te Deum, Rubinstein's Erection of the Tower of Babel, Berlioz's Missa Solemnis and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The artistic success as well as the financial results of this festival surpassed all expectations.

Now came a period of great conductors, among them THEODOR THOMAS, KARL ZERRAHN, GEORG HENSCHEL, WILHELM GERICKE, ANTON SEIDL, WALTER and FRANK H. DAMROSCH, EMIL PAUR, FRANK VAN DER STUCKEN, ERNST KUNWALD, FRANZ H. ARENS, LOUIS KOMMENICH, FRITZ SCHEEL and others, under whose able leadership many of the musical societies reached highest perfection. Several of these conductors have won, by their genius, an everlasting place in the history of music in America. This is especially true in regard to the Damroschs, Thomas, Zerrahn and Seidl, all of which were born in Germany.

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