



The Bach Choir: The First Hundred Years

Basil Keen

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This study of the Bach Choir provides a much-needed overview of one of the major choral societies in London. Dr Basil Keen examines the background that led to the formation of an ad hoc body to give the first performance in England of J.S. Bach's B minor Mass. The musical and organizational effects of a permanent choral society drawn from one social group are traced during the first twenty years, after such time the pressures of social change led to a complete review followed by a restructuring of the methods of recruitment and internal organization. The rebuilding of the choir at the opening of the twentieth century, the expansion of the repertoire, the upheaval resulting from the First World War and the impact of these events on preparation and performance, are all considered.

The book is essentially structured around the tenure of successive Musical Directors: Otto Goldschmidt, Charles Villiers Stanford, Walford Davies, Hugh Allen, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Adrian Boult, Reginald Jacques and David Willcocks, since their varied tastes and interests inevitably had a decisive influence on policy. Keen draws upon previously unpublished material, including minutes and correspondence of the Bach Choir, interviews with relatives and descendants, and examination of family records and correspondence.

To date, there has been no survey of a major London choir that encompasses the full history of the organization in context. In this study, Dr Basil Keen provides a thorough examination of the Bach Choir, including the response of the choir to social changes; the influence of conductors and officials; changes in musical taste; relationships with composers and composition; major national and international events; and the effect of these matters on organization and repertoire.

Contents

Preface; Prologue; The Mass in B Minor; A permanent choir; The Stanford years; A choir in crisis; Recovery and renewal; New directions; A composer member at the helm; Boult fills the gap; Jacques gets the vote; New horizons; Appendices; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

Basil Keen

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