(February 10th, 1913.)

Music for the People.

By Mr. Arthur Farwell.*

AT a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club held on the 10th February, 1913, Mr. Arthur Farwell said:—

Mr. President, Mr. Mayor, and Members of the Canadian Club,—It gives me very much pleasure to have the honor to speak to you on this subject which is so near to my heart, of "Music for the People" of our land. I think I can use that term, even if I was waked up this morning at an unearthly hour by an official demanding the keys of my hand baggage, for even if at the border we are reminded of our national differences, it is very fortunate that in many matters our interests are identical.

The subject is a great one, because more than ever before music has become a vigorous and universal art, and more than ever before, perhaps, the people have awakened and are eager to share in the finest and best fruits of modern civilization. Then again the message of music to-day is a great one. It makes for unity of feeling in the midst of our diversity, for joy, peace, uplift, in the midst of our strenuousness, and for the awakening of the spiritual nature in the midst of our materialism.

I do not know much about the condition of music as you have it here in Toronto. I know you have a world-famous choir, and a fine orchestra. The quickest way for me to deal with my subject will be to tell you what we have done in New York. There are general principles connecting music on the one hand with the mass of the people on the other. These principles are of practically universal application, if we can get down to them. So I will plunge right into the midst of New York music affairs, and tell you what is going on, first getting rid of mere data, which are somewhat of a nuisance.

The way in which the present movement started in New York was this: When Mayor Gaynor came into office, the matter of municipal music fell into the hands of commission-

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ers who seriously wished to advance it. The Department of Docks and Ferries and the Department of Parks are the ones under the auspices of which the public concerts are given, and these had money put in their hands to go ahead with music. Charles B. Stover was made Commissioner of Parks, and Calvin Tomkins of Docks. They had about $100,000 from the Board of Estimate and Apportionment for the summer season of public concerts. They called in a committee of citizens; this had never been done before; in fact the work had not been done by the Commissioners in person before this, it had been taken care of by the aldermen. (Laughter.) The committee made certain recommendations, including the appointment of fewer leaders, and arranging for longer periods of service, so that the personnel of the bands could be better kept intact; also the whole was put in charge of a supervisor; that was when I came in. The aim was to take the whole matter off a political basis and put it on a musical basis. (Applause.)

So the activities began, and plans were made. There are several aspects of the work that I can cover quickly. In the first place, in the matter of appropriations: about $100,000 was set aside each summer for a series of ten to fifteen or sixteen weeks; each Department was supposed to be given $50,000 towards this amount. The aldermen were sometimes favorable and sometimes not, and on the degree of favorableness the size of the appropriation depended, being larger or smaller, but the amount was usually about what I have said.

The Dock Department has eight double-decked recreation piers under its control, where people can enjoy the cooler air from the North and East Rivers. There are band stands on these piers, and ample seating capacity, the docks being from three and four hundred to eight or nine hundred feet long. Concerts are given on the upper decks of these piers, which are used for all kinds of purposes through the day; the children play there, and there are refreshment stands; the concerts are given in the evenings. One of the piers now has an orchestral sound-reflecting shell, a recent improvement. Commissioner Stover has increased the number of music centres in the parks to about thirty-five, and they are located from the end of Staten Island to Upper New York, including the boroughs of Manhattan and Richmond, but not including the Bronx or Brooklyn.

We experimented with a symphony orchestra. We experimented with every kind of condition imaginable. As to bands and orchestras: there is really no such thing as a band in New

York; there is a musical union, composed of some four thousand musicians; a person engages a leader, and he goes to the union to get his musicians. As the union allows substitutes, there is a great deal of difficulty in keeping the personnel of a band intact. That is why we give longer engagements. The problem of establishing a permanent municipal symphony orchestra is one of the problems set for the future.

We have three orchestral conductors, Messrs. Arnold Volpe, Franz Kaltenborn and Arthur Bergh. The orchestras are of symphonic size. Orchestral music only is played in Central Park. There are two leaders there, who alternate week by week. Thus there is rivalry between the leaders, which helps to keep the standard up. One of the questions we are dealing with is that of orchestral shells. At Central Park Commissioner Stover has planned to put up a shell of magnificent design, which will probably go up this year. The Commissioner is trying to get $60,000 worth of work done for $40,000; he has got it cut to $50,000, and will probably get the further reductions soon.

The number of concerts is about eighty per week, from ten or twelve to sixteen weeks in the summer. The summer before last we had about eight hundred concerts, one hundred of which were orchestral, the rest band. We have concerts on the recreation piers practically every night, if the appropriation is large enough, and at Central Park every night, and in other parks once a week.

The conditions at the different music centres are varied. One centre is in the Italian quarter; another in the Irish settlement; at Staten Island and other places there is a mixture, and so on. At Tottenville, on the extreme end of Staten Island there is an amateur band, and the farmers drive in from all around to the concert there. Our program policy is varied: from the start it has been to give the best things to the people, and let them become familiar with them. In smaller parks we have bands, and the repertory of the band is limited, so we cannot do so much; but where there is an orchestra, we give the people practically anything. The orchestral programs are semi-symphonic, ranging through Beethoven, Tschaikowsky, Mendelssohn, Wagner, etc. With the bands we give Italian opera nights, German, Slavonic, American nights, etc. Little by little we let the people become familiar with the world's best composers, expand their knowledge, so they have a bigger horizon. Of course on a Wagner night, I do not mean that it is a night of solid Wagner, but that the bulk of that program is Wagner; there is a cer-

tain amount of what you might call popular music of the better class, but not ragtime.

The attendance, taking the figures for the year before last, is about a million. Last summer it was undoubtedly greater, because we gave concerts every day at Central Park, instead of three times a week, and so we had the biggest attendance last summer.

One of the biggest features was the folk dancing for children on the recreation piers. There was a staff of instructors and folk dances; both European and American were taught. At the close of the season we have a folk dance festival in costume on the East 24th Street recreation pier, which is gaily decorated, and all the features are present which could make it a very beautiful occasion.

In all this system, as one is going on, one has very interesting experiences, and sees a good many things which are rather surprising. From the very first I saw many such things, and one was that there was nothing inherent in the common feelings of humanity or in great music that made these things necessarily separate. I have seen a leader, with a brass band of twenty pieces, play to a crowd at Barrow street that never heard of a symphony, both movements of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, and receive a tremendous response. The players never knew what they were going to play till they got on the pier and saw the program. When we engage a good leader, he engages good players. The leader never thinks of telling his men what he is to play till he goes there. That is true of every band concert except the one where there is the amateur band. Not one of them ever rehearses, or needs to, for the kind of band program that is given. Many orchestral concerts are given without rehearsal, but we use all the rehearsals which the union allows.

On the other hand, we meet occasionally an experience such as we had with the "Gopher Gang" at Fiftieth Street, who hit the leader of the band with sticks, and told him to "cut out the good music"—"We're tough, and we want to stay tough," they said. (Laughter.) They were greatly afraid of becoming civilized.

At Central Park the whole city accumulates, from the east side to the west side, from everywhere they gather. They come in great masses even at 4 o'clock for the 8 o'clock concert. The attendance runs from five or six to fifteen thousand daily right along. On the recreation piers, the mothers and fathers sometimes send their children at 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon to hold seats for them when they come in the evening.

These colossal attendances at Central Park are given the very best programs, the great tone poems, and nothing of cheap "popular" music. And the bigger and better the music, the better the crowd likes it.

Now I want to give you a few deductions we have drawn from our experiences. First of all: an orchestra is absolutely fundamental: advance must be through the symphonic orchestra. What the great master music souls have had to say to the world, from Beethoven's day to now, they have said through the symphonic orchestra; it is concentrated there. We have great chamber music, and great choral music, but the great word for humanity in music has been spoken in the music of the symphony orchestra, from Beethoven to now. How, then, can we bring the greatest in music to the people without doing it through that medium. With the band you give a translation,—an adaptation. If you use a band, it bears about the same relation to the original thing the composer has to say as a photograph to an oil painting. So I say, there is no way except by centreing this movement in the symphonic orchestra, and bringing up the other musical organizations as well as possible.

The summer before last we had a million people attending the concerts. There were eight hundred concerts, seven hundred band and one hundred orchestral. But as to attendance, half of the total, or five hundred thousand people, attended the *orchestral concerts which were merely one-eighth of the total concerts.* So you see the tremendous influence of the orchestra. Old regime influences, political and otherwise, that in the past controlled municipal music, tried to work against the orchestra. But the test of the pudding is chewing the string, and when we see this tremendous influence of the orchestra, we have the answer to the question as to whether the orchestra is the thing to use. The people come to realize that, too. That is the first of my deductions.

The next is the question of the popular response to great music, the question of "uplift," as against "giving the people what they want." There is in reality no such question. It is all a matter of theory. "Uplift" is what someone thinks they should have, and that is theory. "What the people want" is what someone *thinks* they want, and that again is theory. We don't know these things. How do people know whether they want good music until they know what it is? Of course there is a response to the music of the hurdy-hurdy. If the people hear their familiar street music, of course they will respond. But that does not mean that they

will not respond ten times as hard to music which is ten times as great, if they hear it under proper conditions! (Applause.) That is true: we have found it so in New York. It is not a question of theory, of "uplift" or "what the people want;" it is a question of conditions, not theories. And the whole question resolves itself into one of horizon—what is needful is to expand the horizon of the people. The millions will respond, if they see what the world contains, and most of them are as appreciative, when you give them a chance to hear it, as anyone else. Music becomes to them not what they would call before "high-brow," but human, and they feel it. So we find them responding to the concerts in Central Park.

Let me read you one of the programs:

This one was given in Central Park under conductor Kaltenborn.

Berlioz—Rakoczy March.
Beethoven—Overture, Lenore No. 3.
Beethoven—5th Symphony—Last 3 Movements.
Liszt—Symphonic Poem—Tasso.
Herold—Overture—Zampa.
Mendelssohn—Andante for Violin Concerto.
Strauss—Waltz—1000 Nights.
Wagner—Song of the Rhine Daughters and Arrival of the Giants; Song of Bricka, Loki Passing through Nibelheim, and Entrance of Gods into Walhalla—The Rhinegold.
Wagner—Ride of the Valkyries.

Or listen to this one, conducted by Volpe:

Bach—Choral and Fugue.
Haydn—Finale—Symphony No. 13.
Mozart—Overture—Magic Flute.
Beethoven—Overture—Lenore No. 3.
Wagner—Prelude to Die Meistersinger.
Wagner—Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire from Walkure.
Tschaikowsky—Overture 1812.
Wagner—Walther's Prize Song—Violin Solo.
Tschaikowsky—Waltz—from Sleeping Beauty.
Wagner—Ride of the Valkyries.

Such programs as that we gave frequently in Central Park, and as I say, they awaken the most colossal response from the people.

That is the second deduction or principle, that the people respond to great music with absolute spontaneity. But they must know it, and become familiar with it. The whole matter is one of practical demonstration, of steady practical progress in this, till you see the response there, and it comes quickly. We have seen in three days a change take place in the people's mind, bringing them from the old realm to the new, out of the mere fondness for brassy rhythm, mere noise, into the love of color—the manifold tone-colors found in orchestral music.

Coming to the third deduction—there is musical evolution with regard to *music*, and musical evolution with regard to *humanity*. There is a solution of the latter problem through what I may call the "mass-spirit," that general something in a crowd which responds in mass to a thing to which there is no chance that any individual could possibly respond alone. The individual in a crowd responds very differently from the way the individual responds alone. I know very well individuals who could not be interested in a page of Beethoven's music, but put them there in a mass, in a great crowd, and their enjoyment is something tremendous. That is, if it is conducted by someone who understands it, and if the thing is magnificently done, as it must be. I call that the "mass-spirit," the over-soul. It is the most responsive thing in the world. It seems to contain the same elements everywhere; the consciousnesses of all who are present rolled into one. A cross-section of it anywhere is identical with a cross-section of it anywhere else. It is a particular condition brought about under particular circumstances—a human thing. It is infinitely responsive. And it is that thing, and not a mental or educational idea, that we seek to reach. There is no actual knowledge of music in those people's heads, they don't know anything about it. It is through this channel of the mass-spirit that the great master minds speak to the people. They have not written to be forever studied, but to be heard, to appeal to the heart and soul of the people; and they are effectively heard only when you give the people the music under conditions where this mass-spirit can be awakened. This can be accomplished by persistence, and regularity, especially under gala conditions, making the affair a kind of festival, something pertaining to them—the people, so that their minds are made favorable to it. Thus, given a good conductor and good music, very favorable conditions for this thing can be brought about. So I speak of this mass-spirit as one of the most fundamental things: we cannot go forward without it—it will be only dry bones.

That brings me to the educational question. I am a believer in education; I am very grateful for the education I have received; but there are certain things that education

cannot seem to do. These people do not go to the concerts from the education they have received in the public school, or any other kind of education they have; they go because they are hearing music. Education is given, but we find it too slow; it is eternal; like the poor it is always with us, and ought to be. The Theosophists tell us that we go around in a circle of reincarnations on this low earth-plane until we have learned our lesson and are ready to be taken up onto a higher plane, at last being absorbed into Brahm or something of that kind. But with the people we short-circuit the educational process with a spiritual process, and we jump that bridge at once. (Applause.) And it works! Please don't think I have anything against education; it is one of the grandest institutions in the world. But the people get along without that in this matter.

We have begun to provide short annotated programs, with the meanings of the selections. All of that has happened, and the necessity of it has been felt, since the interest in the music itself was established. I think it was Schopenhauer who told us that the will precedes the intellect. And I think that intellect can often stand in the way of the real progress of the soul.

The last general principle is the matter of leaders. It is not easy to awaken the mass-spirit without having the right leaders. They must be competent to reveal the full spirit of the music. I have seen a bad leader give the most popular music imaginable to a crowd and awaken no response whatever; while a good leader would give a wholly unknown composition to the same people, and you would see them strongly responsive. So one can put it down as an axiom, that we cannot know, it is impossible to know, whether people will like a given composition until it is given to them by a thoroughly competent conductor. Under the old-time regime, when there were a good many politicians among the leaders, the result was not always what could be expected under proper conditions because the people will never respond to music when the leader has not been able himself to see anything in it. So it is a cardinal principle, that the leaders must be good: they must be musical, not political, appointees. (Applause.)

This mass-spirit, as I say, is very important in all this matter. I will indicate certain events in the United States which involve an appeal to it. In the United States some extraordinary things are happening. There is, for instance, the Forest Festival, or "Midsummer High Jinks" of the Bohemian Club, of San Francisco, which takes place at the

club's grove of giant redwoods, and presents original music-drama of Wagnerian proportions. And it has been created out of the community, by the community, and the community knows what it means; it is mixed up with the commercial life of the city; but that life comes into this spirit of the grove, which is almost like a cathedral, and feels its spell. It has grown up during the past thirty or forty years, out of a little lark in the summer, with music, into a great mythological drama, which through the art of poet and composer exalts this great crowd of San Franciscans to their highest appreciation of the noble presentation. No one previously dreamt that they could possibly accomplish such results; but it produces a spirit that is not only receptive but creative. Not only does the composer feel that mass-spirit, which he sees is greater than his little solitary studio moods, but through it he rises into a far higher creativity, and is lifted by this big vision far more than by his little aristocratic musical culture.

So also in the festival organized by Mr. Carl Stoeckel, at Norfolk, Conn. There is the spirit of music felt among all the people, and the man who drives you from the station will likely be singing Elgar's "Caractacus" to you the same evening. The same is true of the Bach Festival at Bethlehem, Pa. Then there is also the great movement for pageantry.

There is something in all these things which is bigger than the ordinary music festival, or than "Culture" with a capital "C." But superimposed upon this mass-spirit is a *something else,* something which gives *form* and local application to it. In ordinary festivals there are the quarrels between visiting orchestral leaders and local conductors; there are the artists brought there because of certain réclame; there is the local "society" aspect, far from the real spirit of music. But these things are different: they are born out of the community itself, and they all evoke the mass-spirit; but another element besides, which is just as important, and that is—*definition form,* a thing which takes this universal thing and brings it into definite shape. The Omaha Indians have a word for the Great Spirit, Wa-kon-da, meaning "the power, which goes forth, and *forms.*" These newer activities are doing something far beyond those little aristocratic culture activities which have little to do with the life of the people. It is unkind to say hard things about culture, the result of centuries of effort; but there are times when we have to break out of it. Sir Hubert Parry says that when musical art becomes awakened through over-refinement, it always seeks new strength from the people. As it is now we have on one side

the little aristocracy of culture and on the other the great musically unregenerate mass of the people, that is supposed to know nothing about music, nor to be able to appreciate and understand it. Is it any wonder that a person reared in this atmosphere of "culture" becomes pessimistic? Some become philanthropic and take the "educational" position; others recede into the isolation of their over-refinement. The present-day culture-world of music is too smug, with its round of symphony orchestras, managers, artists and press réclame; it has nothing to do with the great big national issues that touch the soul of the people. The composers themselves are taught nothing about the great national issues—they are taught that a sonata should be constructed so and so; they go abroad and come back and write one symphony and go into oblivion. They get wound up on the bobbin of their own over-refinement, and lose the power to think bigly. The composer must break through that fatal condition, and this big movement is pointing the way to it. In the United States it has come to the point where a composer would rather accomplish a few bars of "atmosphere" in music, than compose the National Hymn! If he is not going to his ruin, he must stop, and blow his slug-horn, like Childe Roland at the Dark Tower.

The task that faces us in the future is to *form this mass-spirit,* through creative minds and souls bringing out the great thoughts and impulses of the people, and putting them before the people—through creating the people's own institutions and giving them to the people. We must take a step in evolution, and bring these things from the affairs of private citizenship to the municipality itself. In the United States this is really beginning to happen, and we are beginning to find out how best to do it. Local conditions of course will determine the forms to be used, whether they shall be concerts, or other forms, pageants involving music, etc.

I understand that here in Toronto you have much musical activity; I know only comparatively little about it. But you have certainly much to go upon. I thank you very much for the honor you have done me in asking me here to speak upon this subject. I wish you every kind of success in this movement, which I believe is tremendously uplifting to humanity to-day. (Long applause.)