

**THE ESSENTIALS OF
CHOIR BOY
TRAINING**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649743308

The essentials of choir boy training by Walter Henry Hall

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WALTER HENRY HALL

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CHOIR BOY
TRAINING**

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CHOIR BOY TRAINING

BY

WALTER HENRY HALL

ORGANIST AND CHOIR-MASTER OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH, NEW YORK

[Reprinted from the New Music Review]

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THE H. W. GRAY CO.
SOLE AGENTS FOR
NOVELLO & CO., Lt.
21 EAST 17TH ST., NEW YORK

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of a series of papers written for the NEW MUSIC REVIEW. It has been published in the present form in response to many requests from readers of the original papers.

At first sight it would seem that there are already works enough on the subject. The general condition of church music in America, however, has not yet reached that stage which may be said to render further suggestions superfluous. Besides, men see things from different standpoints, and a method of procedure which would be useful in one case might easily be found less "workable" in another. "Many men, many minds."

It will be noted that issue is taken with those who demand that head tones shall be used throughout the entire compass of the voice. The general law that it should be used "almost exclusively," as laid down in the first chapter, is afterwards considered from a wider standpoint. Unless possessed of a fine ear and ample time it is perhaps safer to adhere to the head-tone theory entirely, but with keen discrimination and a trained ear the results to be obtained by judicious blending of tones are incomparably greater.

Another point in which this book differs from others is the importance given to Interpretation. Stress has been laid on the necessity of a searching analysis of the *words* as well as the musical content. The climax of respectable dulness in many services is reached at the Anthem, whereas the inspiration

Dow. Summer Session. 1922

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which comes from a subtle knowledge of the text would often vitalize a dull performance into a helpful ministration.

After all, it is just this idea of ministration that we all need to consider. To one man who requires help from a Method of Training there are fifty who need a higher sense of their responsibility as church musicians. Impelled, possibly, by a not unnatural desire to please their congregations, men are in danger of turning themselves into purveyors of Sunday entertainment, whereas their true function is as ministers of music.

The author will be glad if anything in this book shall help students in the art of choir training; he will be better pleased if some get more earnest views of their calling.

ST. JAMES' CHURCH,
NEW YORK CITY.

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TRAINING CHOIR-BOYS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

At this late day it is difficult to write anything new on the subject of choir training. With few exceptions, however, the work of choir-masters would seem to indicate the need of an investigation on their part of methods of training, and an awakening in them of that due sense of responsibility which their work entails. The gifts of an ideal choir-master are many and various; it is doubtful if any one man possesses them all. There are certain fundamental requisites without which no one should attempt to train a choir; a correct method of training boys' voices; adequate musical knowledge, and devotion to the work for the work's sake. With these qualifications a good start is assured.

The devotion may generally be counted on, as, without it, few would endure the labor involved, or exercise the patience required in training boys. In many instances, also, there is adequate musical knowledge; and yet without the first requisite the other two are of little avail. The truth of this is constantly being exhibited in our churches by the failure of many otherwise excellent musicians, who upon the strength of their *general* musicianship endeavor to train a choir of boys; the results prove alike the earnestness and the uselessness of their efforts.