

# **THE HISTORY OF THE CHORUS IN THE GERMAN DRAMA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649434978

The History of the Chorus in the German Drama by Elsie Winifred Helmrich

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Cover @ 2017

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GERMANIC STUDIES

67

THE CHORUS IN THE GERMAN  
DRAMA

COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
SALES AGENTS  
NEW YORK:  
LEMCKE & BUECHNER  
30-32 WEST 27TH STREET  
LONDON:  
HENRY FROWDE  
AMEN CORNER, E.C.  
TORONTO:  
HENRY FROWDE  
25 RICHMOND STREET, W.

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IN THE GERMAN DRAMA

BY

ELSIE WINIFRED HELMRICH, Ph.D.



New York  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

1912

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By COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Printed from type. August, 1912

832  
H48



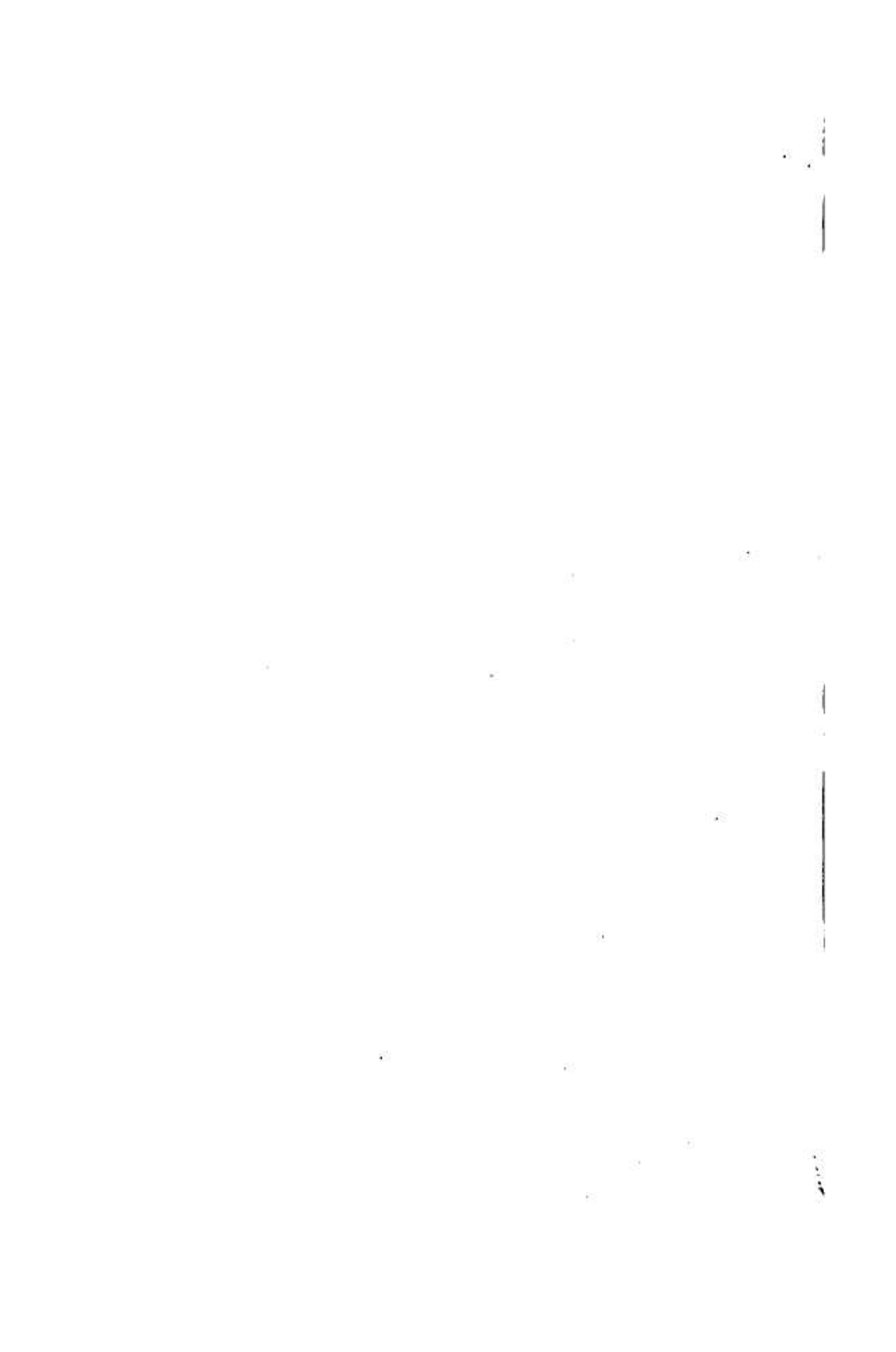


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*Accepted for publication on behalf of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures of Columbia University.*

CALVIN THOMAS

*New York, May 15, 1912.*



*Winkler Request*  
2-12-81

## PREFACE

A chorus of some kind occurs with more or less frequency throughout the whole history of the German drama. The great mysteries or pageants of medieval Germany had their origin in a church chorus, and for a considerable period of their evolution were vitally connected with this chorus. In the sixteenth century enthusiasm for the New Learning was brought from Italy into Germany and gave rise to the era of the Latin school-comedy and the Reformation drama with choral odes between the acts. In the seventeenth century the Renaissance drama of France and Holland was introduced, and the Senecan chorus became an essential part of the drama. With this century the chorus as a recognized part of dramatic technic passed out of existence, but admiration for all things Greek led, in the eighteenth century, to a renewed interest in the chorus. Its value and significance for the drama were discussed by many dramatists, and in a few cases it was used by way of experiment. During the Romantic period the chorus, with the exception of a few sporadic instances, again disappears, only to reappear, in the middle of the nineteenth century, in a new form, that of the orchestra in the music dramas of Richard Wagner.

Although the chorus is found in every period of German literature it is not possible to trace a definite line of development. The chorus of one century did not evolve out of the chorus of the preceding century, but in each case the chorus was brought into Germany under the direct influence of some foreign literature.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the chorus as used by the German dramatists; to point out the important differences in the method of treatment in the works of authors of different periods and under different literary conditions; and in the light of these investigations to account for the failure to make the chorus an essential part of the technic of