

THE GREGORIAN CONGRESS OF 1904

Introit: Sacerdotes Dei (G&T 054762). Kyrie of Mass VIII (054751). Gloria VIII (054752). Alleluia, Amavit eum Dominus and Alleluia, Justus germinabit (054763). Sequence: Alma cohors (054761). Credo III (054753-54). Offertory: Veritas mea & Communio: Fidelis servus (54786). Sanctus IX and Agnus Dei IX (054760). *Roman Schola conducted by Don Antonio Rella*. Introit: Gaudeamus omnes (054768). Alleluia, Assumpta est (54787). Communio: Optimam partem. *San Anselmo Choir conducted by Dom Joseph Pothier*. Responsory: Hodie nobis (054766). Hymn: Puer natus in Bethlehem (54782). Introit: Viri Galilaei (54784). Sequence: Veni Sancte Spiritus (54783). Tract: Absolve and Antiphon: In paradisum (54785). *Augustinian Choir conducted by Baron Rudolph Kanzler*. Introit: Sacerdotes Dei (054764). Alleluia, Amavit eum Dominus and Alleluia, Justus germinabit (054765). Offertory: Veritas mea & Communio: Fidelis servus (054767). *San Anselmo Choir conducted by Dom Laurent Janssens*. Introit: Sacerdotes Dei (054770). Introit: Resurrexi (054769). Gradual: Haec dies (54789). Alleluia, Pascha nostrum (54790). Alleluia, Fac nos innocuam (054771). *Choir of French seminarians conducted by Dom André Mocquereau*. Speeches by Fr. Angelo de Santi, S.J. (054774), Dom Joseph Pothier, O.S.B. (54791; 054775?), Dom André Mocquereau, O.S.B. (054776), Baron Rudolph Kanzler (054772), and Don Antonio Rella (054773). DISCANT RECORDINGS DIS 1-2, £12.00 postpaid (Discant Recordings, 2/19 Victoria Park Road, Exeter, Devon).

This is an historical document to rank with such reissues as the Columbia 1903 Grand Opera Series. To appreciate the significance of the year 1904 in this context, a bit of background is in order. The liturgical music of the Catholic Church (Gregorian chant) developed through oral tradition between the fourth and tenth centuries. Written notation was gradually perfected while the music continued to evolve. During the Renaissance the chants were corrupted; the melismatic melodies were curtailed, the texts of the hymns were rewritten, and when the Medicean Edition was published in 1614 (to remain standard until 1903) the chants were far inferior to their earlier form. In the middle of the 19th century the Benedictine monks of Solesmes in France began restoring the chants to an earlier form by comparing the earliest manuscripts. They were opposed by the publisher which held a monopoly on the 1614 edition, but in 1903, after many maneuvers, the Pope approved the use of the Solesmes editions for the whole church.

In April of the following year the 13th centenary of the death of Pope Gregory the Great (still regarded at the time as the composer of all these chants) was celebrated with a congress of church musicians in Rome. Of the names listed above, Rella and Kanzler were choirmasters teaching in seminaries in Rome, Janssens was the rector of the Benedictine abbey of San Anselmo in Rome, Pothier was abbot of St. Wandrille (in Normandy) and until 1893 the leading research scholar at Solesmes, and Mocquereau was his successor there. For a Solemn Mass in St. Peter's Basilica celebrated by Pope Pius X on April 11, Rella directed

1,200 singers from choirs and seminaries of Rome singing the Ordinary of the Mass, while Janssens directed 150 Benedictine monks from San Anselmo singing the Proper of the Mass. All the music was sung according to specially printed Solesmes editions, of course.

For the recording horn Rella directed all the music which had been sung at the papal Mass, while Janssens made duplicate recordings of the Proper parts that his choir had sung (all except the Sequence). The San Anselmo monks also made several more sides under Dom Pothier, all from the feast of the Assumption (the *Communio Optimam partem* is not listed in the G&T catalogue but I suspect it followed the Alleluia on 54787). Kanzler's Augustinian seminarians recorded a variety of pieces from several feasts. Dom Mocquereau, with a choir of French seminarians in Rome, made a third version of the Introit used at the papal Mass as well as the Proper of the Easter Sunday Mass which they had sung a few days earlier in their own chapel.

The recordings, originally issued on 16 12" and eight 10" sides, have now been transferred to three LP sides. The fourth side is occupied by five speeches also recorded at the same time. Pothier's speech was issued on a 10" and a 12" side; if they were not duplicates, only the shorter part is included here. ARSC members should be delighted to read of the importance attached to recorded sound at that early date. Baron Kanzler speaks of "how the Gramophone may be used to spread and to transmit the tradition of Gregorian chant." Referring to the introduction of Roman chant into the Frankish empire by Charlemagne in the eighth century, he continues: "It would certainly have been very different if Charlemagne had had the gramophone at his disposal! Not just two [St. Gall and Metz], but innumerable chant-schools would have been founded all over the world." He goes on to say that the Gramophone Company "has assembled technicians and equipment in Rome so that we can use our Congress as an opportunity to make a collection of recordings of various schools." And most interesting: "The Gramophone Company proposes, in addition, to house these recordings in authentic scientific record libraries, so as to make them available to scholars."

Such foresight was equalled as early as 1891 by a writer in a French journal, Musica Sacra, who suggested (long before papal approval had been won) that the Benedictines of Solesmes make phonograph recordings of Gregorian chant to provide a practical demonstration of singing it; the other edition might also be recorded by those who preferred it. Dr. Mary Berry used this anecdote to introduce a marvelous article, "The restoration of the chant and seventy-five years of recording," in the British quarterly, Early Music (VII, 1979, 197ff.). She described the present recordings in some detail, and she has now adapted part of her article to form the annotation for this album (she also reviewed it in Gramophone last June). Another article on the same subject is in the latest issue of Early Music (July).

The recordings are well worth hearing. Although the music was printed especially for the occasion, the Solesmes editions had been well

established by this time, and a comparison of Mass VIII in the 1904 edition of the Liber Usualis shows the same version that appears in more recent editions. Hence it's surprising that the performances here show such obvious discrepancies as are heard in the Kyrie of Mass VIII, and in the rest of the Ordinary to a lesser extent. Besides the textual departures, we can also hear more subtle differences of interpretation in the duplicate recordings of the five Mass Propers as well as a third version of one of them. Dr. Berry has already shared her insights into these variations in the article cited and the album notes. The transfers were done partly by EMI, partly by Antony Howell. I'm disappointed at what appears to be careless choice of playback styli, since we seem to be hearing a lot of groove-bottom swish. Other than that, the original sound is clear (for the time) and clean, and the transfer is good. The pressings are excellent.

The discographic documentation leaves a lot to be desired for a reissue of this importance. No matrix numbers are given, and I had to find the G&T issue numbers on my own at LC. Perkins, Kelly, and Ward in The Record Collector (XXIII, 1976, p. 80) show that W. S. Darby went from Milan to Rome and back to Milan during the month of April 1904, using 90 matrices in Rome (2182h to 2228h and 269i to 311i). Polyphony directed by Moreschi, Perosi, and Kanzler also seems to have been recorded during this trip, since issue numbers overlap. Dr. Berry's equivocal references to the recording of the speeches and the Mass (matched by the language used in the original G&T catalogue) leaves some room for assuming that the events were covered live. There is no doubt that both the speeches and the chants were delivered for the recording horn. Jesuit Fr. Angelo de Santi's actual inaugural address to the congress must have been punctuated by frequent applause and cries of "Bene" and "Evviva," and the sophisticated way in which the spirit of that occasion was recreated before the horn is an additional testimony to the value placed on the gramophone by these participants.

While I don't recommend these recordings for casual listening, they are a priceless resource for any archive or library, as well as for any individual studying this phase of music history. The stage which the restoration of the chant had reached when Vatican approval came is documented here, and the subtle gradations of interpretation which five choirmasters exercised (before the gramophone did its work of spreading a uniform interpretation almost too well) can be heard firsthand. Full texts and translations of the chants and speeches are included. My comprehensive Gregorian chant discography, now at last in the works, will be graced by the presence of these entries in its list. To Dr. Mary Berry, who is probably largely responsible for this reissue, we owe a debt of gratitude. I'd only ask Discant to find some sturdy mailing cases; my discs came by boat in a thin envelope without cardboard (the double-fold sleeve is also quite thin) and arrived dished, though playable. This is recommended as an authentic document of permanent significance.

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