

Concert: London Philharmonic Debut, 1844

St. James's Chronicle

"Philharmonic Concerts." St. James's Chronicle (London). May 28, 1844.



PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS

The violin playing of the youth Joachim filled every body with admiration and amazement. The concerto (Beethoven's, in D major) which he performed, is usually shrunk from by men of the most eminent standing, and has only been ventured in public, we believe, by Mori, Blagrove, and Eliason, and then with no very complete success. We are not speaking too extravagantly of little Joachim, when we say that he distances all three—even the first of them, great and wonderful as he was. That a boy of 13 or 14 years of age should play with considerable dexterity, is in these days of precocious acquirement, no great marvel; but that his dexterity should wear every aspect of perfection both as to style and to intonation—that there should be a tone prevalent remarkable for its purity and equality of character—that at the extremest distances under circumstances the most trying should be hit with a never-failing readiness and precision—that there should be superadded to these attainments masterly feeling and a perfect comprehension of music the most elevated and ideal—that all these things should be, we say, united in a child, are facts which both puzzle and confound! The presence of the lad in the orchestra, with his smiling, ingenuous face, his collars turned down upon his shoulders, and his pockets, in all probability, stuffed with marbles and whipcord, is no doubt a sight to stagger the grey heads. But there he stands, grasping his fiddle with the ease and confidence of a Paganini, taking the lead of the Philharmonic professors, and giving them their cues, as if the whole process were but a trifle—a mere boyish pastime. Joachim's performances may be measured by any standard; his style is pure and unaffected; his execution perfect; his feeling artistic and intense. The cadenzas which he appended to the slow movement, and the finale of the concerto, contained passages of the greatest difficulty; but yet he accomplished them without a speck of error. We understand they are his own invention; and they are so consonant with the prevalent

character of the music to which they are annexed, and have such an air of symmetry and proportion, that they might almost be supposed an integral part of the composition. This performance, of course, was received with the strongest manifestations of pleasure, in which the orchestra evidently shared; and there were few present, we suspect, who did not confess it to be the most extraordinary instance of early talent and attainment they had ever encountered. The effect was produced by the most legitimate means: it was fair, honest playing—the executancy of a master, the intelligence and sensibility of a musician! The jacket and trousers were utterly forgotten.

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