

The Apollo Club

THIRTY-FIFTH SEASON

and

The Morning Choral Club

THIRTY-EIGHTH SEASON

Charles Galloway, Conductor



Odeon

Monday Evening, May the Sixth
Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-Nine

Club Accompanist, PAUL FRIESS

ELIZABETH CUENY, Manager

SCENES FROM THE SAGA OF

KING OLAF

By

H. W. LONGFELLOW

and

H. A. ACWORTH, C. I. E.

SET TO MUSIC

FOR SOPRANO, TENOR AND BASS SOLI, CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

By

EDWARD ELGAR

(Op. 30)



SOLOISTS

MRS. H. M. E. PASMEZOGLU, *Soprano*

KATHERINE COWAN, *Soprano*

JUDSON HOUSE, *Tenor*

BERNARD FERGUSON, *Baritone*

The Apollo Club



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PROGRAM



INTRODUCTION

SOLI AND CHORUS—"There is a wondrous book"

1. RECITATIVE (*Bass*)—"Summon now the God of Thunder"

THE CHALLENGE OF THOR

2. CHORUS—"I am the God Thor"

KING OLAF'S RETURN

3. SOLO (*Tenor*)—"And King Olaf heard the cry"
4. RECIT. (*Bass*)—"Tell how Olaf bore the cross"

THE CONVERSION

5. SOLI (*Tenor and Bass*) AND CHORUS—"King Olaf's prowls at Nidaros"
6. RECIT. (*Bass*)—"Now the child of Ironbeard dead"

GUDRUN

7. SOLI (*Soprano and Tenor*) AND CHORUS—"On King Olaf's bridal night"
8. RECIT. (*Bass*)—"How the Wraith of Odin old"

THE WRAITH OF ODIN

9. CHORUS (*Ballad*)—"The guests were loud"
10. RECIT.—"Sisters, sing ye now the Song"

SIGRID

11. SOLI (*Soprano and Tenor*) AND CHORUS—"Sigrid sits in her high abode"
12. RECIT. (*Bass*)—"Hark! she flies from Wendland forth"

THYRI

13. CHORUS (*Ballad*)—"A little bird in the air"
14. DUET (*Soprano and Tenor*)—"The gray land breaks to lively green"
15. CHORAL RECIT.—"After Queen Gunhild's death"

THE DEATH OF OLAF

16. CHORUS—"King Olaf's dragons take the sea"

EPILOGUE

SOLI AND CHORUS—"In the Convent of Drontheim"

SYNOPSIS



INTRODUCTION

THE bards name and describe the book in which is written the story they are about to relate.

One of their number, who is evidently recognized to be the chief bard or master of the ceremonies, calls upon the members of the company to constitute themselves as representing Thor, the God of thunder, and to repeat his challenge.

THE CHALLENGE OF THOR

The whole assembly, in response to its chief, is here supposed to represent Thor, who arrogates to himself supremacy in the world, and hurling out defiance to the Christian religion issues a challenge to Christ its prototype.

KING OLAF'S RETURN

Another of the bards comes forward and relates how the fugitive Olaf hears and accepts the challenge, and after recounting the youthful Olaf's wanderings and adventures previous to that time, tells of his return home to Norway as King, and of his resolve to establish Christianity in the kingdom.

Their chief here directs the Skalds to tell how Olaf accomplished his mission.

THE CONVERSION

In this scene, the minstrels describe the gathering of Olaf's subjects at the temple of their deity; headed by Ironbeard, they meet the king and his bodyguard of axemen and bowmen.

King Olaf, in the person of the tenor bard, offers the religion of Christ to the people, and Ironbeard—which character is for the nonce assumed by the chief bard—in the name of the people refuses it; whereupon the king, goaded to the act by the defiant words and attitude of Ironbeard, takes up his war-axe and shatters the image of Thor. In attempting to avert the destruction of the idol, Ironbeard is mortally wounded, but defiant to the last, the grim old warrior declares himself staunch to the faith of his fathers. With dying breath he commends his soul to Odin (the chief god of the Norse religion), and claiming entrance into Walhalla, the eternal paradise of heroes slain in battle, expires.

The people are so much impressed by the manifestation of Thor's impotence and the death of his champion, that they elect to embrace the new faith, the peace of which, and its completed sacrifice, the king offers them as an alternative to the ever-recurring sacrifices of blood demanded by the tenets of their religion. Meekly surrendering themselves to the newly-revealed power, in solemn unity they bow before their king, who, with thrilling intensity, invokes upon his kneeling subjects the blessing of the King divine.

The master bard himself tells how, as a blood-atonement, Olaf weds Gudrun, the daughter of Ironbeard.

GUDRUN

The company of Skalds describes how Gudrun, intent on avenging her father's death, steals, on the bridal night, with dagger in hand, to where Olaf sleeps; but Olaf wakes and thwarts her design, and ere the dawn of morn rids himself of the treacherous bride.

The chief minstrel now commands his men to sing of the coming, as an unbidden guest to Olaf's feast, of the spirit of Odin.

THE WRAITH OF ODIN

In the words of a stirring ballad, the assembled bard sings of the strange guest who entertained the company far into the night with his wonderful stories. How the king slept, but woke to find the guest gone; how Olaf, finding no trace of the departure of the stranger, pronounced him to have been the spirit of Odin, and interpreted the visitation to signify the downfall of Odin the Great, and the effectual triumph of the Christian faith.

The chief bard invites the maidens of the company to sing the story of the wooing of Queen Sigrid by King Olaf, of the insult she suffered at his hands, and of her vow to accomplish his death.

SYNOPSIS (*Continued*)

SIGRID

The minstrel maids sing of the Queen of Svithiod awaiting the coming of King Olaf, with the ring, taken by Olaf from Lade's temple, on her knee.—The two characters are again represented by bards.

Olaf arrives, greets the queen, and offers her himself, his land, and his religion.

Sigrid returns the greeting, but will only consent to become his, on condition he swears his love, as Odin once swore it, on the ring. He refuses the condition, and Sigrid, not heeding his appeal, expresses her contempt of "the Southland God," and protests her constancy to the "Norland Gods." At this King Olaf's anger rises, and he strikes her cheek with his gauntlet. King Olaf is warned to fly, and the scene closes with the queen vowing vengeance on the retreating figure.

Attention is commanded by the principal bard for the recital of the story of Thyri—the slighted choice of the Wendland King—and her flight to the North.

THYRI

In a charming ballad, the minstrels sing of Thyri, the sister of Svend, the Danish king, fleeing away from King Burislaf of Wendland, to whom she had been betrothed for the short space of eight days. She comes to King Olaf's court, and Olaf eventually marries her.

After the ballad, two singers advance to represent King Olaf and the beautiful Thyri, his wife. Thyri laments the loss of her lands, which King Burislaf has possession of, and deploras her dowerless condition. Olaf, fresh from the delights of a fair morning in early spring, comes before her with a love offering of Angelicas, but with such thoughts rankling in her mind, the sweet smelling herb holds no charm for Thyri. Her mood leads her to taunt Olaf into consenting to rescue her domains from King Burislaf, upon which, having effected her purpose, she once more smiles on her lord.

The bards join in reciting how Queen Sigrid becomes the bride of King Svend, the Dane—a union which portends evil for King Olaf—and relate how she cajoles the Danish king into setting forth to wreak vengeance on Olaf.

THE DEATH OF OLAF

Full chorus of Skalds, in which are described the putting out to sea of Olaf's war-ships to meet those of the Danes, and the contact of the opposing forces. Vividly portrayed are the deadly combat and the defeat of Olaf, who, ever foremost in the fray, is surrounded and outnumbered, and so perishes in the flood.

EPILOGUE

The bard-chief finally pictures Astrid, the mother of Olaf, in the convent of Drontheim, kneeling at midnight, and listening to the voice of one speaking in the darkness without.

The voice which Astrid heard, purports to be that of St. John taking up the challenge in response to the entreaty of the departed spirit of Olaf.

The saga-men, echoing the words of the saint, signify the ultimate acceptance of the challenge of Thor, and the continuance of Olaf's mission, but this time, in the true Christian spirit of love, and by the power of the Great Spirit Divine, which comes "not as a vulture, but as a dove."

A. S. BURROWS

The recitatives serve to prompt the narration of the Story; so, to emphasize their function and significance, the portions representing them in the above synopsis are printed in *Italics*.

The Apollo Club

CHARLES GALLOWAY, *Director*

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