Mr. M. Hamilton Hodges

Sarah A. Allen


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One marvel of the last two decades has been the wonderful development of the musical talent with which many Afro-Americans are happily endowed. The first colored musicians to gain world-wide fame were the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Their success was as remarkable as their mission was unique. In seven years of travel, which included England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Switzerland and Germany, they raised one hundred and fifty thousand dollars net in money, and secured books, paintings and apparatus to the value of seven or eight thousand dollars more, by the use of their marvellous, God-given voices.

From that period until the present time, the Negro has developed rapidly along musical lines, easily floating into the best society and accumulating a competency in foreign countries by his musical gifts.

Years and experience have shown the Negro, too, the value of study and cultivation of the voice, and so to enhance the marketable value of his talent he is gradually seizing all opportunities for advancement, and as a result we have Samuel Coleridge-Taylor among the foremost composers of modern times. Singing the role of Hiawatha in Coleridge-Taylor’s masterpiece, “Hiawatha,” in far-away New Zealand, Mr. Hamilton Hodges, a colored artist, has covered himself with laurels and gained undying fame as an artist possessed of a remarkable organ, highly trained.
Moses Hamilton Hodges is the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hodges of Boston, well known and highly respected by the best people, white and black, of the city.

Mr. Samuel Hodges is a man of means, and well known in church circles. For many years he was one of the trustees of Charles St. A. M. E. church, of Boston. Mrs. Margaret Hodges is also prominent in social affairs and very popular in the church.

Hamilton Hodges was reared in the atmosphere of a refined home, and when his parents realized that their son was possessed of uncommon musical ability, they spared no expense to develop his remarkable vocal organ. From one degree of success, Mr. Hodges has passed to another, until we find him now located in Auckland, New Zealand, where his career as a vocalist and teacher is phenomenal. The *Musical Times* of London, Jan. 1, 1904, says of this remarkable colored singer:

> The Third New Zealand Musical Festival, held in the capital of the colony, was brought to a most successful issue during the last week of October. The primary object of its promoters was to commemorate fittingly the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mr. Robert Parker’s local musical work as organist and choir-master of St. Paul’s Pro-Cathedral. A well-balanced and efficient chorus of two hundred and seventy-five voices was enrolled, and the Orchestral Society furnished a band of about sixty performers.

> The Festival opened with “Elijah,” and closed with the “Messiah.” Mr. Hamilton Hodges, now of Auckland, but formerly of Boston, U. S. A., took the part of the “Prophet.” In Mr. Hodges the Festival Committee was singularly fortunate in securing an ideal representative of the part, for, with the single
exception of Mr. Santley, no one in New Zealand has come anywhere near the excellence of his rendering.....

The concert on Monday, October 26, was eagerly anticipated, and the house was sold out several days before the performance, the attraction being Coleridge-Taylor’s “Hiawatha,” of which Parts I. and II. were given. The principals were Miss Amy Murphy of Dunedin, Mr. James Searle, and Mr. Hamilton Hodges, who, like the composer of “Hiawatha,” is a colored artist, and who sang the “Farewell, Minnehaha,” in a manner which will long be remembered in Wellington.

The Opera House was jammed to the doors every night. No doubt our great success financially was due to the magnificent singing of Mr. Hamilton Hodges, a colored gentleman with Indian blood in his veins. He claims direct descent from Hiawatha on his mother’s side. I feel sure Mr. Hodges would create a great sensation in London if he could be plumped down there.

From the Evening Post, New Zealand:

Mr. Hamilton Hodges’ interpretation of his part (Hiawatha) was simply perfect. He captivated his audience, and carried his hearers with him into the scene, and gave such a rendering of the farewell song of Hiawatha as will not soon be forgotten. The power, fervor and pathos of his singing are beyond all praise--indeed, words would fail one in the attempt.

The miscellaneous concert at the Opera House on Saturday night was one of the most brilliant given in Wellington. Undoubtedly its greatest feature was the refined and artistic singing of Mr. Hamilton Hodges in the cycle of four
“Freebooter Songs,” written and composed by William Wallace. There was a stirring scene when Mr. Hodges concluded. He was twice recalled, and even then the cheering continued. The exquisite “Cradle Song,” “O Son of Mine,” was a revelation of the use of the mezzo voce, whilst in the last song the force and impetuosity of his call to battle roused the audience to the utmost enthusiasm.

Mr. Hodges, last night, after the performance, addressed the chorus and orchestra, and remarked that as one who had had opportunities of hearing choral societies in many lands, he could say that what he had heard during this Festival was equal to anything of the kind he had heard anywhere.