

Lady Violinists

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## LADY VIOLINISTS.

Who was the first lady violinist? This interesting interrogation must be treated as a riddle and—given up! Certainly no attempt will be made to answer it in this chit-chat on fair fiddlers, nor is it proposed to exhaust a subject that so largely concerns the feminine mind. From the historical point of view it may suffice to begin with the time of Mr. Pepys. An extract or two from his entertaining Diary often furnishes useful information, and invariably provokes a smile. On June 6, 1661, Mr. Pepys records:

Here came two young gentlewomen to see Mr. Holland and one of them could play pretty well upon the viallin, but, how these ignorant people did cry her up for it! We were very merry. I staid and supped there, and so home and to bed. The weather very hot, this night I left off my wastecoat.

Here we have an early instance of an amateur lady violinist (or viallinist *pace* Mr. Pepys), and a little outburst of the Diarist's temper, with his inevitable 'to bed' reference, and the information, by inference, that he was in the habit of sleeping in his 'wastecoat.' Three years later—September 28, 1664, the Diary has the following reference to Mrs. Pepys's 'woman,' or lady's-maid to adopt present-day parlance:

At home I found Mercer playing on her Vyall which is a pretty instrument, and so I to the Vyall and singing till late, and so to bed.

Not only did Mr. Pepys and Mrs. Pepys's maid perform on the vyall, but in 1666 one Gregory instructed the spouse of the eminent Diarist in the art of playing on that instrument.

We may now turn from the amateurs of the 17th century to the professionals of the 18th. In this connection Dr. Burney ('History of Music,' iv. 647) gives us a vague and tantalizing paragraph which reads:

This and the preceding year [1721-22] Mrs. Sarah Otty frequently performs solos at concerts on three several instruments: harpsichord, base-viol, and violin.

The worthy doctor might have given a more detailed reference to a lady whose name is absolutely unknown. However, a little research among old newspapers at the British Museum has resulted in unearthing the following advertisement from the *Daily Courant* of February 17, 1723.

## FOR THE BENEFIT OF MRS. SARAH OTTEY.

At the Theatre Royal, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on Tuesday, being the 27th February, will be perform'd a Comedy call'd Love makes a man, or The Fop's Fortune. In which will be perform'd several pieces of Musick on the Bass-Viol, Harpsichord, and Violin by Mrs. Ottey (being the last time of her appearing in Publick). With several entertainments of Dancing.

Tickets to be had at Mr. Williams's Coffee-house in St. James's Street, and at Mr. Ottey's at the Carpenters Arms in Honey-Lane-Market.

Here we have an instance of three-fold skill—a lady performer on a trio of instruments. Whether Mrs. Sarah Ottey's performances were sandwiched between 'Love makes a man, or The Fop's Fortune' and the 'several entertainments of Dancing,' or otherwise, is a matter of speculation. As to whether Mr. Ottey was the landlord of the

'Carpenter's Arms,' or whether he only temporarily resided at that hostelry, may be left to the investigations of some future writer, as may also Mrs. Ottey's first and earlier appearances as a bass-violist, a harpsichordist, and a violinist.

The venue may now be changed to Dublin, where, it will be remembered, Handel's 'Messiah' obtained its first hearing on April 13, 1742. In the same year, and only four months after Handel had left the Green Isle, a Miss Plunket, a lady violinist and a pupil of the celebrated Matthew Dubourg, then resident in the Irish capital, gave her first concert in Dublin on December 6, 1742, which is thus advertised in *Faulkner's Journal* of November 20:

By subscription, for the Benefit of MISS PLUNKET, at the Musick-hall in Fishamble-street, on Monday the 6th of December, will be performed a Concert of Musick; in which Miss Plunket will perform several new Solos and Concertos on the Violin. Each Subscriber to pay One Guinea for four Tickets. Single Tickets Three British Half-Crowns. Subscriptions are taken at Mr. Neal's in Christ-churchyard, and Mr. Manwaring's Musick Shop in College-green, and by Miss Plunket, at Mr. Dubourg's House in Henry-street.

On the day following the concert, *Faulkner's Journal* thus noticed the event:

Yesterday evening Miss Plunket had her first concert at the Musick Hall in Fishamble Street, at which there was a most polite and numerous audience, who were all charmed with her Performance on the Violin, and gave her universal applause.

Mrs. Storer sang three songs in the same concert, and gave general satisfaction to all present, who were highly pleased with her singing.

Miss Plunket returns her humble Thanks to all the Ladies and Gentlemen who pleased to honour her with their company.

Miss Plunket found her way to London—she appears to have added an extra 't' to her name during her passage across the Irish Channel—and gave 'A concert of musick' on February 27, 1743. The advertisements of the day thus announced the event:

At the particular desire of several persons of quality For the Benefit of Miss Plunkett at the New Theatre in the Haymarket, on Monday, February 27, will be perform'd a concert of musick with several solos and concertos on the violin by Miss Plunkett.

Tickets to be had of Miss Plunkett's Father's lodgings, the Bow-lamp in Pulteney Street.

Boxes Half-a-guinea. Pit and gallery 5s.

It would be interesting to know if Handel heard Miss Plunkett's performances, either privately at Dublin, or publicly in London, and to have his opinion on female fiddlers, as probably he would designate them.

Whatever fame can be placed to the credit of Mrs. Ottey and Miss Plunket, it is small compared with the wonderful achievements of Madame Mara, one of the greatest of vocalists who, however, began her triumphant career as a girl-violinist. As the story of the early years of her life is well recorded in the *Harmonicon* of February, 1828, no apology is needed for a quotation from that interesting musical journal:

Gertrude Elizabeth Mara was born at Cassel, the 23rd of February, 1749. She was the only child of Johann Schmeling, a musician of that place, and lost

her mother shortly after her birth. Owing to his very limited means, her father was unable to bestow upon her the cares necessary at her tender age. His duties called him much from home, and, in his absence, the little Gertrude usually remained shut up in her solitary apartment. Thus cut off from the sports of childhood, she was obliged to seek amusement within herself. She recollects that there was an old family clock in the room, and one of her customary recreations was to sit and watch the vibrations of the pendulum, beating time to its motion with her head and hand. This had the effect of impressing her mind with a certain pleasing perception of rhythm, so that the first time she heard

a performer upon the guitar, who was playing in the street, she ran to the window, mounted on a stool to get a sight of the musician, and beat the time on the window-ledge with a feeling of delight which was never after effaced from her mind. From this moment may be dated her love and disposition for music.

Her father had learned from an Italian the art of repairing musical instruments, and he converted this knowledge into a means of bettering the subsistence of himself and daughter. She used to seat herself on a high stool and watch him attentively while at his work. One day, he had just finished mending a violin, and then going from home, left it on his work-bench. The



MADAME MARA (*née* SCHMELING).

curiosity of a child led her to examine the instrument ; she was pleased with the sounds she drew from it, but, in a rather too violent *pizzicato* movement, broke one of the strings. Her father returned ; he scolded the presumptuous *virtuosa*, and threatened to punish her if ever she touched the instrument again. For some days the threat had its effect ; but her desire of hearing the pleasing sounds soon prevailed over the sense of duty, and again the delinquent was caught in the act of trying her hand upon the violin. The father approached her in a menacing attitude, as she stood trembling in a corner. "So," said he, "you have again disobeyed me ; now, as a punishment, I will make you learn to play that instrument." But what was his astonishment, when he saw her run, and, seizing it with eagerness, draw from it tones of a soft and pleasing kind ! The violin was now left at her free disposal, and, in a very short time, the assiduous scholar was able to run through the greater part of the scales with ease and correctness ; and but a few weeks more had elapsed, when little Gertrude was able to join her father in playing some easy duets.

The poor wee child, deprived of a mother's care, suffered from rickets, due, it is said, to her father's custom of securing his daughter in an arm-chair while he attended to his affairs. Even in her fifth year she could not stand without support, and she was obliged to be carried to the place where she had to play. At a fair held at Frankfort the clever little maiden's performances on the violin excited great wonder and admiration, so much so that a subscription was set on foot in order that she might receive a better education. At the age of nine, her health having greatly improved, Fräulein Schmeling went with her father to Vienna and gave some concerts there. The English Ambassador was so struck with the child's genius that he advised Schmeling to take her to England, and at the same time furnished him with letters of introduction to influential friends in London. The little lady seems to have made her first appearance in England as one of a quartet of prodigies, judging from the subjoined advertisement from the *Public Advertiser* of April 23, 1760.

By Particular Desire.

At the little Theatre in the Haymarket.

This Day, April 23, there will be a Concert of  
Vocal and Instrumental Music.

The vocal parts by Signor Tenducci, Signora Calori,  
and by Signor Qualici.

The Solos by young Performers, who never appeared in Public, as a solo of Signor Giardini's on the Violin by his Scholar Master Barron, thirteen years old ; a Lesson on the Harpsichord by Miss Burney, nine years old ; with a Sonata of Signor Giardini's accompanied by a Violin ; a Solo on the Violoncello by Master Cervetto, eleven years old ; a Duet on the Violin and Violoncello by Master Barron and Master Cervetto ; a Quartetto by Miss Schmeling, Master Barron, Master Cervetto, and Miss Burney. With several full Pieces by a select Band of the best performers.

The doors to be opened at five o'clock. To begin at seven.

Pit and Boxes laid together at Half-a-guinea. Gallery, Five shillings.

Tickets to be had at Arthur's, St. James's Street ; at Mr. Walsh's music-shop, Catherine Street ; at Mr. Johnson's music-shop, Cheapside, and at the Theatre ; where Ladies are desired to send their servants to keep places.

English dames of 'quality' in those days did not consider the violin to be suitable for ladies, so little Miss Schmeling forsook the career of an instrumentalist and became a queen of song. In that capacity she made a great name and plenty of money.

A lady violinist of quite a different stamp was a Mrs. Chazal, by birth an Italian lady. In Grove's 'Dictionary of Music and Musicians' (1st edition vol. i., p. 580*b*)—the name is absent from the new edition) we read, above the signature of the late Julian Marshall :

*Gambarini* Signora, sang the part of 1st Israelitish woman in 'Judas' April 1, 1747. She was a soprano, but her name does not occur again.

(This was the first performance of the oratorio.) After her marriage the genius of Signora Gambarini appears to have considerably developed. Not only did she continue to sing, but she composed, played the organ, and—the violin ! An advertisement in the *Public Advertiser* of May 14, 1764, testifies to the combined accomplishments of this remarkable lady :

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MRS. CHAZAL.

At the Great Exhibition Room, Spring Gardens, this day the 14th of May, will be performed MRS. CHAZAL'S (late Miss Gambarini) GRAND CONCERT of vocal and instrumental music, by the best performers ; the first violin and a solo by Mr. Barthélemon ; to conclude with a Ball.

Act I. Overture with French Horns ; Ode on the occasion of Peace, composed by Mrs. Chazal. Grand Concerto on the organ, by Mrs. Chazal. Act II. Solo on the violin ; Italian song and Lesson on the Harpsichord, by Mrs. Chazal ; Concerto with Hautboys. Act III. Ode on the Accession to the Throne, composed by Mrs. Chazal ; Concerto on the organ by Mrs. Chazal ; Grand Concerto with French Horns and Kettledrums. The whole to be conducted by Mrs. Chazal.

☞ Tickets Half-a-guinea to be had at Mrs. Chazal's, the corner of Castle Court, opposite the new Exchange Buildings in the Strand, where are to be seen and sold, a capital collection of pictures from ten in the morning till four in the afternoon every day.

As Mrs. Chazal would make the entertainment as agreeable as possible to those who will honour her with their presence, she has engaged the following two celebrated singers : Signora Cremoni, and Signor Gustinelli.

In the study of any subject connected with art, the letters and journals of observant and trustworthy travellers are often of interest and value. Horace Walpole is a case in point. In 1769 he visited at Saint-Cyr, near Versailles, the home which the Marquise de Maintenon established for poor girls of good family, and he thus records his impressions in a letter dated September 17, 1769 :

The young ladies who were playing at chess, were ordered to sing to us the choruses of Athaliah ; in another room they danced minuets and country-dances, while a nun, not quite so able as St. Cecilia, played on a violin.

It should be remembered that Racine wrote his 'Athaliah' for the young ladies at Saint-Cyr.

In 1770 Dr. Burney was in Venice, of which he says ('Present state of music in France and Italy') :

The city is famous for its *conservatorios*, or musical schools, of which it has four—the *Ospedale della Pista* the *Mendicanti*, the *Incurabile*, and the *Ospedaleto a S. Giovanni e Paulo*, at each of which there is a performance every Saturday and Sunday evening, as



MADAME GAUTHEROT.

well as on great festivals. I went to that of the *Piùta* the evening after my arrival, Saturday, August 4 [1770]. The present *Maestro di Capella* is Signor Furlanetti, a priest, and the performers, both vocal and instrumental, are all girls; the organ, violins, flutes, violoncellos, and even French horns, are supplied by these females.

Burney was so charmed with this feminine orchestra that he paid a second visit to the *Piùta*, and says :

The girls played a thousand tricks in singing, particularly in the duets, where there was a trial of skill and of natural powers, as who could go highest, lowest, swell a note the longest, or run divisions with the greatest rapidity. They always finish with a symphony; and last Wednesday they played one by Sarte, which I had before heard in England, at the opera of the *Olimpiade*. The band here is certainly very powerful, as there are in the hospital above a thousand girls, and out of these there are seventy musicians, vocal and instrumental.

At the *Mendicanti* a concert, which lasted two hours, was specially prepared for the benefit of the musical historian, who says :

It was really curious to see, as well as to hear, every part of this excellent concert performed by females—violins, tenors, basses, harpsichord, French horns, and even double-basses—and there was a prioress, a person

in years, who presided; the first violin was very well played by Antonia Cubli, of Greek extraction. . . . It was here that the two celebrated female performers, the Archiapate, now Signora Guglielmi, and Signora Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, who have received such great and just applause in England, had their musical instructions.

Another distinguished traveller, who visited Venice ten years after Burney, may be quoted. This is how William Beckford, of Fonthill, records his impressions of the lady orchestra at the *Mendicanti* institution in the year 1780 :

The sight of the orchestra still makes me smile. You know, I suppose, it is entirely of the female gender, and that nothing is more common than to see a delicate white hand journeying across an enormous double-bass; or a pair of roseate cheeks puffing with all their efforts, at a French horn. Some that are grown old and Amazonian, who have abandoned their fiddles and their lovers, take vigorously to the kettle-drum; and one poor limping lady, who had been crossed in love, now makes an admirable figure on the bassoon.

Lord Mount Edgcumbe, in 1784, records a similar experience at the same place, when he had 'not only the pleasure of hearing a delightful selection of music, but the almost incredible sight

of an entire orchestra of female performers . . . I have met with more than one female player on the violin who had received their instruction in them [the musical academies at Venice]. One of these 'female performers' was Maddalena Laura Lombardini de Sirmen (or Syrmen), born at Venice in 1735, and educated at the *Conservatorio dei Mendicanti* there. She subsequently studied with Tartini at Padua, who took a very great interest in his pupil. Not a few letters are extant in proof of this, one especially which gives to the fair player detailed advice as to her technical studies. This letter, though very long, we give in Burney's translation, because of its educational value to violin students :

Padua, March 5, 1760.

My very much esteemed Signora Maddalena,

Finding myself at length disengaged from the weighty business which has so long prevented me from performing my promise to you, I shall begin the instructions you wish from me, by letter ; and if I should not explain myself with sufficient clearness, I entreat you to tell me your doubts and difficulties, in writing, which I shall not fail to remove in a future letter.

Your principal practice and study should, at present, be confined to the use and power of the bow, in order to make yourself entirely mistress in the execution and expression of whatever can be played or sung, within the compass and ability of your instrument. Your first study, therefore, should be the true manner of holding, balancing, and pressing the bow lightly, but steadily, upon the strings, in such manner as that it shall seem to breathe the first tone it gives, which must proceed from the friction of the string, and not from percussion, as by a blow given with a hammer upon it. This depends on laying the bow lightly upon the strings, at the first contact, and on gently pressing it afterwards ; which, if done gradually, can scarce have too much force given to it—because, if the tone is *begun* with delicacy, there is little danger of rendering it afterwards either coarse or harsh.

Of this first contact, and delicate manner of beginning a tone, you should make yourself a perfect mistress, in every situation and part of the bow, as well in the middle as at the extremities ; and in moving it up, as well as in drawing it down. To unite all these laborious particulars into one lesson, my advice is, that you first exercise yourself in a swell upon an open string—for example, upon the second, or *la*: that you begin *pianissimo*, and increase the tone by slow degrees to its *fortissimo* ; and this study should be equally made, with the motion of the bow up, and down ; in which exercise you should spend at least an hour every day, though at different times, a little in the morning, and a little in the evening ; having constantly in mind that this practice is, of all others, the most difficult, and the most essential to playing well on the Violin. When you are a perfect mistress of this part of a good performer, a swell will be very easy to you—beginning with the most minute softness, increasing the tone to its loudest degree, and diminishing it to the same point of softness with which you began ; and all this in the same stroke of the bow. Every degree of pressure upon the string, which the expression of a note or passage shall require, will, by this means, be easy and certain ; and you will be able to execute with your bow whatever you please. After this, in order to acquire that light pulsation and play of the wrist from whence velocity in bowing arises, it will be best for you to practise, every day, one of the *allegros*, of which there are three, in Corelli's solos, which entirely move in semiquavers. The first is in D, in playing which you should accelerate the motion a little each time, till you arrive at the greatest degree of swiftness possible. But two precautions are necessary in this exercise. The first is, that you play the notes

*staccato*, that is, separate and detached, with a little space between every two, for though they are written thus :



they should be played as if there was a rest after each note, in this manner :



The second precaution is, that you first play with the point of the bow ; and, when that becomes easy to you, that you use that part of it which is between the point and the middle ; and, when you are likewise mistress of this part of the bow, that you practise in the same manner with the middle of the bow. And, above all, you must remember, in these studies, to begin the *allegros* or flights sometimes with an up-bow, and sometimes with a down-bow, carefully avoiding the habit of constantly practising one way.

In order to acquire a greater facility of executing swift passages in a light and neat manner, it will be of great use if you accustom yourself to skip over a string between two quick notes in divisions like these :



Of such divisions you may play extempore as many as you please, and in every key, which will be both useful and necessary.

With regard to the finger-board, or carriage of the left hand, I have one thing strongly to recommend to you, which will suffice for all, and that is the taking a violin part—either the first or second of a concerto, sonata, or song (any thing will serve the purpose)—and playing it upon the half-shift ; that is, with the first finger upon G on the first string, and constantly keeping upon this shift, playing the whole piece without moving the hand from this situation, unless A on the fourth string be wanted, or D upon the first ; but, in that case, you should afterwards return again to the half-shift, without ever moving the hand down to the natural position. This practice should be continued till you can execute with facility upon the half-shift any violin part, not intended as a solo, at sight. After this, advance the hand on the finger-board to the whole-shift, with the first finger upon A on the first string, and accustom yourself to this position, till you can execute everything upon the whole shift with as much ease as when the hand is in its natural situation ; and when certain of this, advance to the double-shift, with the first finger upon B on the first string. When sure of that likewise, pass to the fourth position of the hand, making C with the first finger, upon the first string : and, indeed, this is a scale in which, when you are firm, you may be said to be mistress of the finger-board. This study is so necessary, that I most earnestly recommend it to your attention.

I now pass to the third essential part of a good performer on the Violin, which is the making a good shake ; and I would have you practise it slowly, moderately fast, and quickly ; that is, with the two notes succeeding each other in these three degrees of *adagio*, *andante*, and *presto* ; and, in practice, you have great occasion for these different kinds of shakes ; for the same shake will not serve with equal propriety for a slow movement as for a quick one. To acquire both at once with the same trouble, begin with an open string—either the first or second, it will be equally useful : sustain the note in a swell, and begin the shake very slowly, increasing in quickness by insensible degrees, till it becomes rapid, in the manner following :



but you must not rigorously move immediately from semiquavers to demisemiquavers, or from these to the next in degree; that would be doubling the velocity of the shake all at once, which would be a skip, not a gradation; but you can imagine, between a semiquaver and a demisemiquaver, intermediate degrees of rapidity, quicker than the one, and slower than the other of these characters. You are, therefore, to increase in velocity, by the same degrees, in practising the shake, as in loudness, when you make a swell.

You must attentively and assiduously persevere in the practice of this embellishment, and begin at first with an open string, upon which, if you are once able to make a good shake with the first finger, you will, with the greater facility, acquire one with the second, the third, and the fourth or little finger, with which you must practise in a particular manner, as more feeble than the rest of its brethren.

I shall at present propose no other studies to your application: what I have already said is more than sufficient, if your zeal is equal to my wishes for your improvement. I hope you will sincerely inform me whether I have explained clearly thus far; that you will accept of my respects, which I likewise beg of you to present to the Princess, to Signora Teresa, and to Signora Clara, for all whom I have a sincere regard; and believe me to be, with great affection,

Your obedient and most humble servant,

GIUSEPPE TARTINI.

After her marriage to Luigi de Sirmen—a violinist and chapel-master at Bergamo—Tartini's pupil visited England in 1771. At the Lenten Oratorios given in Covent Garden Theatre she played, between the parts of 'Judas Maccabæus,' a violin concerto of her own composition and was 'received with uncommon applause.' At her benefit concert in the same year—April 15, 1771—she played a pianoforte concerto, and two years later she appeared as an opera singer at the King's Theatre. In spite of her Tartini pupilage and great gifts, Madame Sirmen failed to hold her position as a violinist and she ultimately became a concert-singer at the Court of Saxony. Eitner (*Quellen Lexikon*) gives a list of her various compositions: six concertos for harpsichord; nine concertos for violin; six trios à deux violons et violoncello obligé; six duets for two violins, dedicated to the Duke of Gloucester, &c., some of which were published in London and one title-page describes the composer as 'élève du célèbre Tartini de Padone.'

Special interest is attached to the next lady in our survey by reason of her connection with Mozart and the creation of one of his most beautiful sonatas for pianoforte and violin. Born, in 1764, at Ostiglia, near Mantua, Regina Strinasacchi justified her name by becoming a queen of violinists. She received her education at one of those Venice music-schools already mentioned—the *Conservatorio della Pietà*, and at Paris. Good looking, attractive in manner, and a brilliant performer, the fair damsel won great admiration wherever she went. After having travelled through Italy she made her way to Vienna, and at the National Court Theatre in the Burg gave two concerts, on March 29 and April 24, 1784. She was then a girl of twenty summers. The young artist was most anxious to obtain a new piece for performance at her concert

that would give distinction to the event and that she might play in conjunction with an artist worthy, by his reputation and talent, of such an honour. To whom should Miss Strinasacchi go but to Mozart? No one could so well satisfy her artistic vanity, and no name would look better than Mozart's by the side of her own in the programme. She therefore asked Mozart to compose a sonata for pianoforte and violin specially for the occasion, and to play it with her at her concert. Mozart, good-natured man, appears to have been unable at any time to refuse requests of this nature, quite regardless whether the favour asked of him was by one worthy or unworthy. And then no thought of remuneration entered his mind: he worked gratuitously for those who could not or would not pay, notwithstanding the fact that these repeated demands on his good nature were often inconvenient, not to say actually disagreeable. However, nothing but the most generous feelings animated the master in acceding to the wish of the fair young violinist. In a letter dated Vienna, April 24, 1784, Mozart said to his father:

We have here at the present time the celebrated Strinasacchi, from Mantua, an excellent violinist. Her playing is remarkable for taste and expression. I am composing a sonata, which we are to play together on Thursday, at her concert in the theatre.

Mozart's father endorsed the opinion of his son as to the young lady's interpretative gifts. He wrote from Salzburg (in 1785):

Every note is played with expression, even in symphonies, and I have never heard a more moving *adagio* than hers; her whole heart and soul is in the melody she delivers, and her power and beauty of tone are equally remarkable. I believe, as a rule, that a woman of genius plays with more expression than a man. (*Otto Jahn's Life of Mozart*: English edition, ii. 336.)

Could there be higher praise, and that from a father and son so eminently qualified to judge?

To return to the sonata. In the first place its composition required greater care than the odds and ends which Mozart threw off for the nonentities who pestered him for 'something from his pen.' Regina was an exceedingly fine performer, and was not Mozart himself to share her triumphs at the concert? It could surely not be any distrust in his own powers that caused him to delay putting pen to paper; but who knows, that terrible bugbear of procrastination, which so often sterilises the brain of the creative artist, be he musical or literary, may for the moment have atrophied his brain. At all events, he kept putting off the task of composition from day to day, until, at last, the morning before the concert arrived, and not a note had been written! Directly Regina learned the state of affairs she rushed in a state of desperation to Mozart. She fortunately found him at home, and, putting down her pretty foot, told him that she would *not* leave the house until she had, at least, obtained the violin part of the promised sonata! The master thereupon set to work, and as so often happens under such circumstances, with the most satisfactory results.

Having actually dragged the violin part out of the dilatory composer, the young lady began most diligently to practise her part, as she had only that evening and the following morning to prepare the work for public performance. Mozart, busy man that he was, forgot all about the rehearsal that had been arranged! but he happily appeared at the concert. To reproach him for not having rehearsed the work would have been useless, the best had to be made of a difficult situation—one that was fraught with great danger, considering the nervous tension of the girl violinist.

The performance of the specially-composed sonata began. The audience, ignorant of the conditions under which it was being presented, were lost in admiration at the wonderful manner in which the two artists interpreted the music and executed the most difficult passages. The Emperor, who occupied the Imperial box, scrutinised the performers through his glass, and in so doing thought he discovered that one of the pair of players—it is not difficult to guess which—had nothing but a sheet of almost blank paper on the music-desk. His Majesty was not mistaken. Mozart, having created the entire sonata in his wonderful brain, had not found time to write down the pianoforte part. The Emperor (Joseph II.) asked to see the music, only to find nothing in the pianoforte part but bar-lines and the violin notes. 'What! have you again let it come to this?' asked the Emperor. 'Yes, your Majesty,' replied Mozart, 'but not a single note has been omitted.' The sonata in question is the beautiful composition in B flat (Köchel No. 454, and No. 15 in the Peters edition). The autograph shows that Mozart afterwards filled in the complete pianoforte part in ink of a slightly different colour from that which he first used. Thus the state of the MS. at the first performance of the sonata can readily be seen.

Signora Strinasacchi interpreted the music of Haydn with great charm, its gay strains perfectly harmonizing with her vivacious temperament. She played his quartets at the Viennese Court and elsewhere with peculiar naïveté and humour, and was much applauded for her delicate and expressive rendering of a solo in one of them. Haydn made the acquaintance of Regina Strinasacchi at the lodgings of Michael Kelly, during the Irish actor's sojourn at Vienna. She—who is also said to have been an excellent performer on the guitar—married Johann Conrad Schlick, a distinguished violoncellist in the ducal chapel at Gotha, and died in 1823. Unlike nearly all lady virtuoso violinists, before and after her, she does not appear to have visited England.

No French artist has so far been introduced in this gossip on lady violinists. An interesting representative of the school was Madame Louise Gautherot, who, strangely enough, is not noticed by either Fétis or Grove, though her name appears in the 'Dictionary of Musicians' (1824). Mendel states that her birth-name was Deschamps and that she first appeared in 1783 at a *Concert Spirituel*

in Paris. A pupil of Viotti, she doubtless profited greatly by the tuition of that great master. In 1789 Madame Gautherot visited England and made her first appearance at the first Professional Concert of the season given at the Hanover Square Rooms on February 9, 1789. The advertisements of the concert state that 'The Ladies' tickets are Black, and the Gentlemen's Red.' The *Morning Post* thus records the French lady's English début:

A Lady named Madame Gautherot appeared for the first time at this Concert, and exhibited very great abilities on the violin. Her style of performance was expressive, and displayed very great execution. The *connoisseurs* spoke of her in high terms.

Her second appearance was at one of the oratorio performances given during the season of Lent at Covent Garden Theatre. 'Oratorios,' says W. T. Parke in his 'Musical memoirs,' 'unexpectedly started up this season at Covent Garden Theatre at play-house prices.' It was at a 'Messiah' performance—February 28, 1789—that Madame Gautherot performed, when she played her solo between the parts of the oratorio. The *Morning Post* said:

Madame Gautherot's concerto on the violin was equal to any performance on the same instrument by the first musical master of the present times. The audience were enraptured with it, and the applause lasted for a long continuance.

We are also told that 'the band was uncommonly strong.' Parke, the oboeist (already quoted from), says that while Madame Gautherot played 'a concerto on the violin with great ability, the ear was more gratified than the eye by this lady's masculine effort.' Again, referring to the same performer, he makes the anti-feminine remarks:

It is said by fabulous writers that Minerva happening to look into the stream whilst playing her favourite instrument, the flute, perceiving the distortion of countenance it occasioned, was so much disgusted that she cast it away, and dashed it to pieces. Although I would not recommend to any lady playing on a valuable Cremona fiddle to follow the example of the goddess, yet it strikes me that if she is desirous of enrapturing her audience, she should display her talent in a situation where there is only just light enough to make 'darkness visible.'

The year 1808 is given in the 'Dictionary of Music and Musicians' as that in which Madame Gautherot died. It should be added that she played a violin concerto at the first concert conducted by Haydn in this country—at the Hanover Square Rooms, March 11, 1791.

The two portraits which illustrate this article are from the collection of Mr. Arthur F. Hill, who has kindly allowed their reproduction. That of Madame Gautherot (p. 665) is one of Bartolozzi's lesser known works and was published in 1791: it is the earliest known portrait of a lady violinist.

F. G. E.

(To be continued.)