Some Italian Composers of To-Day. Postludium (Continued)

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spacing counteracts the blurr that might have resulted from the duplication at the distance of a second:

Needless to emphasize the difference between such fifths or seconds in polyphony, and pure colour effects such as those quoted in Exx. 5 and 6 above. Here notes are not combined as pigments on the painter's palette in order to produce some special tone-colour: each of the patterns associated remains distinct. What Kœchlin has done is to re-admit the long-banned fourths, &c., among the intervals available in contrapuntal writing.

However unusual the combinations to which he resorts, it is very seldom that they will not be found perfectly natural, and their results pleasing. Whether a line should be drawn at some of them is very much a matter of personal opinion. To me the following passage, in which the two forms of the whole-tone scale are superimposed in fourths, remains more strange than beautiful:

Among the few passages which actually convey to the eye, and perhaps also to the ear, an impression of polytonality, one of the simplest occurs in the final section of the third Sonatine where the bass ascends from the triad of C major to that of F major in semitones, whilst the treble proceeds from the G triad downwards. I quote a short extract from the passage:

But perhaps it is more accurate to say that we have here an obvious instance of the extension which the principle of passing-notes may receive without the tonal balance being actually upset.

In 'Le Chant du Chevrier,' one of Kœchlin's masterpieces, we have on the one hand a tune similar to those which are played by French goat-herds on their Pandean pipes (it was possible to hear such tunes even in the Paris streets, and still may be), and on the other a beautiful harmonic setting, altogether independent and forming a whole in itself. In the atmosphere created by the simple, deep-toned, long-vibrating chords, the tune naturally

falls into its place as if heard in its natural setting of echoing cliffs or wind-swept hills. The effect is indescribably suggestive, and the whole piece is of surpassing loveliness.

The following quotation will show that here polytonality is real, not only apparent:

This brief survey of Kœchlin's harmonic and polyphonic idiosyncrasies may end with one more quotation (from 'L'Astre Rouge,' second book of songs), showing that in the matter of purely harmonic effects he can be as simple as, and no less telling than, in pure melody:

(To be continued.)

SOME ITALIAN COMPOSERS OF TO-DAY

BY GUIDO M. GATTI

(Concluding Article)

POSTILUDIUM

Having now reached the end of this series of rapid sketches of Italian musicians, it is proposed to conclude, as was forecasted in the introductory article, with a synthetic table of the Italian musicality of to-day. But first—in no particular order and still more briefly than was done in the case of the eight musicians who form the subjects of the articles—mention must be made of a few composers who cannot fairly be passed over. Even with this addition the review will still be incomplete, but it will furnish some characteristic traits and help to outline the complete picture: and in any case we shall appear less unjust to some composers who, even if they have no decided artistic personality, yet contribute in a greater or less degree to raise the tone of our modern musical life.

RESPIGHI

Above all it would be a serious oversight not to mention Ottorino Respighi (born at Bologna,

July 6, 1879), a composer of European renown, who makes up for lack of individuality in his creations by marvellous technical knowledge, especially of orchestration, and by good taste and delicacy of feeling. Respighi is a prolific writer: among Italian composers he is perhaps the one who in twenty years of creative activity has the largest number of works to his credit. Of these may be mentioned, on the one hand, the exquisite vocal lyrics, several of which reach a very high artistic level, some being little masterpieces of intimacy and poetry; and on the other, the many symphonic pages, as, for example, 'Fontane di Roma,' 'Ballata delle Guomidi,' and 'Poema Gregoriano' for violin and orchestra. Respighi is above all a lyrical composer, and it is in this field that he chiefly distinguishes himself. When he wishes to dramatise his expression, as in the Sonata for violin or in the 'Sinfonia Drammatica,' he often lacks true emotion and his technique gets the upper hand, creating an obvious lack of equilibrium between the essence and the form. But even with these reservations the figure of Respighi is one which commands respect; he is a true *maestro*, and his teaching abilities are highly appreciated at Rome, where he is professor of composition at the Santa Cecilia Lycée.

ALALEONA

A teacher at the same institute is Domenico Alaleona (born at Montegiorgio Piceno, November 16, 1881). Alaleona is a solitary who tenaciously pursues some æsthetic ideas of his own, which, though they may be disputable, are still worthy of consideration. So far, he has not given us much: a few vocal lyrics, almost all inspired by poems of Pascoli, and 'Mirra,' an opera composed about ten years ago, but not performed until last spring, at Rome. One of the characteristics of this musician is his direct contact with our 19th century music (to which he alone perhaps of all the modern Italian musicians attributes great value), in so far as concerns his conception of vocal lyrics and opera. Reference is made, of course, in both cases to the general conception of the form and not to the language adopted by the musician, which is modern and often bold. Alaleona is also a valued writer on musical history and criticism. His essays on modern harmony, published in 1911, in the *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, are in many passages truly prophetic, and may perhaps be considered as the first attempts, at least in Italy, to systematise what at that time the advanced composers felt confusedly and practised instinctively.

GASCO

Alberto Gasco, too, lives at Rome (born at Naples, October 3, 1879); he is a composer, and is musical critic to the *Tribuna*. As a symphonic writer Gasco has many admirers. Prominent among his works are the poem 'Presso il Clitumno,' and 'Buffalmacco.' This composer possesses a keen sense of vision, which, joined to

his special fondness for figurative art, frequently leads to his translating into music the pictorial situations of great artists (as, for instance, in the quartet 'Venere dormente' inspired by one of Giorgione's pictures, or in 'Vergine Orsola' for violin, inspired by Carpaccio's celebrated Venetian canvases). A fine musician, he was among the first to make known the French school, with which he is connected, especially through the work of Vincent d'Indy.

LIUZZI

Travelling towards the north of Italy we meet at Florence the interesting figure of Fernando Luzzi (born at Bologna, December, 1884), a composer who, after a silence, lengthy indeed but rich in maturation, has lately attracted public attention. His work, although of no great bulk, is, however, rich in poetry—e.g., the delicious Sonatina for violin and pianoforte and the three lyrics on some popular poems by Tommaseo. These two compositions, if they do not allow us fully to characterise the personality of the musician, yet inspire us with the greatest confidence in one who is still young and full of energy. The symphonic Intermezzi which he is now finishing for the tragedy 'Dafne e Cloe' of the late poet Morselli, arouses anticipatory interest.

PRATELLA

A singular figure of a man and artist we find at Lugo di Romagna in the person of F. Balilla Pratella (born there, February 1, 1880). He had a brief celebrity when he compiled the prospectus of the futurist music and joined Marinetti's company. But as he is anything but a futurist in the ordinary meaning of the word (among other things he has since shown himself to be a devotee of our old music), he soon withdrew from the group, and in great solitude (his chief pleasure being his property in the country and the company of peasants living on it) set about creating a music that should be instinctive expression, simple and emotional, springing from the soul of the people. His works are largely inspired by visions of his own countryside, and often contain local folk melodies. We may mention his symphonic poems, collected under the title 'Romagna,' and several vocal lyrics not without charm. But however his work may be judged, it is an undoubted fact that for the sincerity and warmth which often animates it, it is worthy of notice and merits separate mention.

PERRACHIO

At Turin is working silently, but faithfully and conscientiously, a musician who has published only a small number of compositions, among others nine 'Poemetti' for pianoforte—Luigi Perrachio (born at Turin, in 1883). But those who know his many works in manuscript have great faith in his strong temperament and frank sensibility, and believe that his recognition by a larger public is not far distant.

There are also two composers who live abroad—FRANCESCO SANTOLIVIDO (born at Naples, August 6, 1883) and PIERO COPPOLA (born at Milan, October 11, 1888).

Santolivido, who lives in Tunis, although not possessing a notable individuality and still under the influence of a certain form of impressionism which probably has had its day, has yet given proof of poetic feeling, among other things, in some of his symphonic sketches inspired by the vision of the country where he lives and of which he is enamoured.

Coppola, who lives in London, is of a very different temperament. His music is all nerves, and always has a decisive rhythmic character. A very strong musician, he loves to translate musically certain grotesque and gruesome poses which he succeeds in making very impressive. His compositions of this kind are an undoubted success, from the vocal lyrics written on the bizarre sonnets of Rubino to the opera in one Act, 'Mikita,' which is awaiting its first performance and of which a pianoforte version has filled us with the highest hopes. The above must not be taken to imply that he is lacking in emotion or that he does not know how to express it; in refutation it is sufficient to mention the 'Poema Elegiaco,' which the London public will hear shortly (through the initiative of Eugène Goossens), and the two 'Poemetti dell' anima angosciata e dello spirito burlesco,' performed at Rome, conducted by Tullio Serafin, in 1914.

The young composers of opera have been omitted, as more rarely succeeding in avoiding the field worked by their predecessors. All the same, there are some among them who cannot be overlooked, *e.g.*, RICCARDO ZANDONAI, born in South Tyrol, May 28, 1883, who has not only written operas of considerable value, as 'Conchita' and 'Francesca da Rimini,' but also some good symphonic pages ('Primavera in Val di Sole'); and ANDRIANO LUALDI (born at Larino, March 22, 1887), who, after having proved his worth with a String Quartet and some vocal pages, is preparing to reveal himself more fully in the opera 'La figlia del re,' which will be performed at Turin during the coming Carnival.

PIZZETTI

The reader who is versed in modern European production will have noticed that one of Italy's best-known musicians—Ildebrando Pizzetti—is omitted.

To avoid misunderstanding, this silence must be explained. Ildebrando Pizzetti is doubtless the greatest musician in Italy to-day; that is, the one who has most fully attained his individuality, and who in his work expresses with the widest sense of equilibrium the deep feeling of his country and race, using the most adequate and modern means that can be imagined. This fine figure of an artist stands out clearly on the national horizon: and advances surely and steadily, full of study and love for his art. He needed a

larger frame than the brief space allowed for each sketch. Pizzetti will be dealt with fully so soon as occasion offers: that is, directly after the production of his latest opera, 'Dèbora e Jaèle,' which Toscanini will present at the Scala next spring. This opera, judging from those fragments which the composer has played on the pianoforte, will probably reveal in its dramatic vicissitudes nearly all the soul and feeling of the artist, and will therefore represent almost the apex of his art, clearly and repeatedly affirmed by the musician both in his keen critical writings and his fine compositions of recent years: *e.g.*, 'Fedra,' the Sonata for violin, the five Lyrics, and the music for 'Pisanella.'

Many readers are doubtless familiar with some of the essential characteristics of contemporary Italian music: here and there in the course of these monographs a pause has been made to consider these, with special reference to the work in which they were most clearly revealed. The subject is important, and has one outstanding feature.

This is, that the greater and the better part of the music written in Italy to-day is, above all, melodic and lineal in character. This melody—which has nothing to do with that of the 18th century, when a beautiful or an ugly melodic line could exist, while now there are only expressive melodies and inexpressive melodies—never presents itself to us emaciated, austere, or dry (as, for instance, it may easily be found to be in the pages of the latest exponents in France of *linea*, the ultra-anti-impressionists), or as something so rigid that it can hardly bend without breaking, and that cannot adhere perfectly to a curved shape. Of Italian melody it may be affirmed that it has a plasticity very different from that arabesqued on a pianoforte lacking warm tones or depth and volume. It may be said to have three dimensions, and to create around itself, as it were, a halo that multiplies its expressive power and imparts to it an intrinsic life which alone can inspire that artistic emotion which is at the same time pleasure of the mind and enjoyment of the senses. The Italian melody is always an abandonment to a lyrical or dramatic impetus, and not the presentation of an idea springing from the brain. It may be that at times it is slightly provincial and rustic, but it is so vigorous and healthy that it immediately captures universal sympathy, even when it is transported to the concert-hall. Italian melody, in short, sings—even when it is instrumental—while in its spontaneity it preserves that measure and equilibrium which make us compare the pages of a Monteverde and a Bellini to Greek marbles. Italian melody is, then, plastic from a stylistic point of view, and vocal from the point of view of expression.

A second feature of Italian music has its origin in this melody, and consists in solidity of construction and a tendency to conclude the discourse with

a fine full stop; that is to say, it preserves the love of order. Although the modern Italian musicians were among the first to break down the barriers of scholastic form and to burst the bonds of the 'quadratura,' there is always in their compositions a sense of concreteness along with a logical spirit tracing round the page a line which, even if not apparent, is quite distinct: that is, that the composition, even if it may not present those points of resemblance and periodicities necessary for its classification in one or other of the formal categories, yet has a truly intimate unity—a unity not conferred upon it by almost mechanical externals.

Latent in every member of the Italian race, lying at the bottom of the spirit even of the most turbulent, is love of order (love of order and not of discipline imposed by others—the German type). A certain type of tight-rope dancing musician much in vogue lately, and introduced to Italy as the latest international fashion, has not found imitators here. All the capers and shrill laughter represented in compositions of one or two pages deficient in musical notes but abounding in literary precepts and boulevard wit, have rapidly fallen into oblivion under the indifference of the public and of native composers.

Passing on to what might be called the content of the work of art, along with the new tendencies we find in Italy a renewed religion of art—that is, the vision of art as something high and pure, and therefore not to be contaminated by realisations which are mean or grotesque or in any way wanting in human feeling.

In every composition of modern Italian musicians there is the endeavour, at least, to include therein the greatest quantity of human feeling, to embrace the vastest horizon, and to rise towards the highest contemplation of life. Hence a certain pleasure in handling the amplest musical forms—the sonata, the quartet, the music-drama—and in giving preference to the healthiest and weightiest poets and to arguments of universal comprehension: subjects from ancient Greece, from the Bible, from the great historical epochs, or else purely fanciful creations hovering in a lofty poetical atmosphere. It is, in short, a spirit of elevation which inspires the minds of the musicians; and it is a good symptom even if the intentions are not always sincerely and deeply matured and the realisation consequently is not adequate. It is a good symptom, inasmuch as it denotes at the same time that public opinion is tending towards more breathable air, that it desires to understand and appreciate art in its true meaning and in its highest mission.

The writer does not attempt to prophesy as to the future of Italian musical art; but basing an opinion (as would be logical) on the present, it would doubtless present itself in a very promising light. There exists a firm tendency towards greater artistic consistency; and to embrace in this unity the greatest variety of single characteristics, tastes, and sympathies. During the past few years—ten, or perhaps

less—have appeared works which, it may be said without fear of presumption, are well worthy of the respect of all who judge without prejudice—e.g., 'Fedra' and the Violin Sonata by Pizzetti, the Sette canzoni and 'Rispetti e strambotti' by Malipiero, 'Fontane di Roma' and 'Poema Gregoriano' by Respighi, 'Coplas' and the pianoforte pieces by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, the Sonatina by Luizzi, 'A Motte Alta' and the pieces for string quartet by Casella, 'Basi e bote' by Pick-Mangiagalli, 'Chiari di luna' by Tommassini, and 'Sakuntala' by Alfano. There is here quite enough to illustrate in the clearest possible manner the sincere musicality of a nation that wishes to be once again what it was in the centuries of its greatest artistic splendour.

There is enough, too, to cause reflection among those who, outside Italy, still believe (doubtless in good faith) that our art has stopped short at *verisme* and the young school of Mascagni (no longer young, alas!); and who think that 'Cavalleria' and 'Tosca'—to quote two examples of that school—still represent the mirage of young musicians in Italy.

THE 'OLD VIC.': AN APPEAL

Who doesn't know of the splendid work for music and the drama the 'Old Vic.' has done and is doing? To ask for a Shakespeare theatre or a National Opera House at present is like asking for the moon. While we are waiting for times when such schemes will be feasible, let us not forget that at the famous old theatre in the Waterloo Road we have a very near approach to both institutions under one roof. But that roof can cover it for only a little longer, and unless the appeal printed below meets with a speedy and generous response there will be no more 'Old Vic.' All who have seen for years past densely crowded audiences enjoying the best in drama and opera will agree that the collapse of the enterprise would be a big set-back to the cause of popular art. We hope that the following appeal, backed as it is by so powerful and representative a body, will be completely successful:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Musical Times*.

SIR,—The admirable work done at the Royal Victoria Hall, popularly known as the 'Old Vic.,' is now well known. By very strenuous effort Miss Baylis and her colleagues have succeeded in producing Shakespeare performances and opera continuously, on lines artistically right, at such low charges that every section of the public is able to see them. So warm has been the appreciation of these performances that it is certain that their cessation would be regarded as a disaster by the people generally, and not least by the 'Vic.'s' many friends in the Dominions over seas. It is to avoid this disaster that we now venture to appeal to you.

The 'Old Vic.' has reached a crisis in its career. Some time ago the London County Council warned the management that it would have to put its house structurally in order. The building is an old one, and compliance with the County Council's standard will mean heavy expense. The County Council has been very forbearing, as the 'Vic.' would be the first to acknowledge with lively gratitude. Now, however, the time has come when these alterations and extensions must be carried out. If this is not done the 'Vic.'s' licence may be in serious danger.