THE Musical Times

ESTABLISHED IN 1844

Three Pieces. For the Pianoforte. Op. 10 by Edward Elgar
The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, Vol. 40, No. 678 (Aug. 1, 1899), p. 551
Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3365549>
Accessed: 03/02/2015 12:40

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School of Studies for the Pianoforte. Solos, Duets. Edited by Conrad Kühner. [Breitkopf and Härtel.]

THERE are many collections of pianoforte pieces designed to develop the abilities of the young and aspiring pianist, and their value greatly varies; but those published by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel may be placed amongst the best. The series of solos comprise twelve books. The first begins with simple passages of elementary character, and with each book greater demands are made upon the executive ability of the player. The composers represented in the second volume of the pianoforte solos are H. Lemoine, C. Czerny, C. Kühner, J. B. Duvernoy, O. Wermann, C. Reinecke, L. Köhler, F. Le Couppey, E. Grenzebach, C. T. Wolff, and T. Kirchner. The pieces vary from twenty to forty bars in length, and have manifestly been chosen to cultivate independence of the hands and varieties of touch. The same principles are pursued in volume three, which comprises twenty-one pieces contributed by H. Bertini, F. Le Couppey, G. T. Wolff, E. Parlow, C. H. Döring, St. Heller, O. Wermann, C. Kunze, E. Grenzebach, and A. Krause.

The collection of duets is based upon the same lines and is of equal merit. As, however, in all such works variety of style is desirable, from an educational point of view, the entire omission of English composers is a mistake.

Three Pieces. No. 1. *Mazurka.* No. 2. *Sérénade Mauresque.* No. 3. *Contrasts: The Gavotte*, A.D. 1700 and 1900. For the Pianoforte. Op. 10. By Edward Elgar. [Novello and Company, Limited.]

To write a *Mazurka* that shall contain the *traditions* of a *Mazurka*, and be, notwithstanding, an unhackneyed composition, is by no means an easy task, and yet this Mr. Elgar has accomplished in the little work before us. Abruptly starting with a *forte* shake on the dominant of the key (D minor), followed by a hint of the coming subject, a short introduction of ten bars brings us to the *Mazurka* proper—a bold, original melody which takes hold of us at once. To this in turn succeeds a contrasting little subject of a more reflective turn, that savours of the “*musette*”; and when, sixteen bars later, begins the delicate *Trio* (*pp* and *più mosso*) in D major, though without change of signature, the chromatic *nuances* through which we now glide seem just the complement of what has gone before—not a bar too much in the piece, not a superfluous note from beginning to end, but all are parts of one consistent whole. Mr. Elgar has had something to say, and he has said it tersely, appositely, and powerfully, so that one feels the work to have been a genuine inspiration. We may add that there are no transcendental difficulties to be overcome, but that it is within the reach of the average player.

The same remark applies to No. 2, in so far that the stately *Mauresque Serenade* presents no great difficulties of execution. After a short prelude—just a gentle thrumming of the strings on a dominant foundation—the lover begins, in the eighth bar, his song to his lady-love; a delicate, persuasive melody (in the minor, of course, for does not the minor contain more sighs, more heart-throbs in its accents than the more blatant major mode?), formed on the harmonic scale with the raised fourth, which always adds a certain weirdness and melancholy to the expression. A second verse follows, with the melody repeated an octave higher, and a little undercurrent of melody for the left hand also. To this succeeds the *Trio*, naturally enough, in the tonic major; and after being given by the left hand in the tenor part, and repeated once more in the treble, the minor mode again recurs, and this is, without doubt, the most interesting and characteristic section of the composition. The working-out of the *Finale* is effective and decidedly uncommon, the first melody being repeated upon a dominant pedal, which continues through some thirteen bars, and which, moreover, ceases only with the cessation of the music, which, curiously enough, ends upon the common chord of the dominant; but so happily is this brought about that it does not in the least strike the ear as unfinished, but just as the most natural sequence of events.

Contrasts in *tempo*, key, accompanying figures, devices for breaking up the divisions of the bars, and so on—in all these points the above *Gavottes* answer to the title bestowed

on them. The first, in G minor, starting off quite simply with a melody for the soprano, is immediately imitated by the alto, and this in turn by the bass. This *Gavotte* is carried consistently through in three parts, with merely the addition, here and there, of octaves to strengthen the bass. The second *Gavotte*, which enters in an abrupt manner in G major, is taken at a more rapid *tempo*; sometimes in three and sometimes in four-part harmony; fuller chords; new departures in phrasing and rhythm; all of which give it the impress of a different period. When 1700 recurs it is elaborated *à la* 1900, and from this point the work, which began so simply, is of far more than average difficulty, introducing a counterpoint which it will take some practice and careful fingering to divide up conveniently between the two hands; also quite a considerable number of shakes are introduced, which require some study, both alone and in conjunction with the other parts. It is only fair to add, however, that the contrapuntal part is written in small notes, to indicate that it may be dispensed with, should it prove too discouraging a difficulty to the student otherwise anxious to learn this piece.

Third Polonaise. For the Pianoforte. By Walter Macfarren. [Ashdown and Co.]

THE stately old *Polonaise* is a well-worn theme, but Mr. Macfarren has succeeded in presenting it under a guise which, if not wholly new in itself, is none the less fresh and happily conceived. The first subject starts off at once with a bright and imposing theme in A major, with here and there a decided flavour of Weber about it. The second subject, which follows after a couple of pages in the relative minor, is a very pleasing one, and in this respect bears the palm. The second time it is ingeniously varied, thus preventing the possibility of monotony; and after an intermediate recurrence of the first subject, the second is employed again very charmingly in F major (instead of F sharp minor as before), thus inducing many beautiful changes of harmony, while keeping as near to the original melody as is possible. The interest of the piece never flags for a moment; it carries one along with it from first to last, and as it offers no pre-eminent difficulties in execution, it will doubtless be a popular *salon* piece. It is dedicated to the composer's pupil, Miss Mabel Colyer.

Novello's Parish Choir Book. No. 396-405. [Novello and Company, Limited.]

CHOIRMASTERS in search of fresh settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* may be recommended Nos. 396 to 399 of this excellent series. No. 396 is a setting in G, by Henry Smart, in which the best traditions of the true church style are preserved. The music is in five vocal parts, the harmonies being enriched by the division of the sopranos. The style is contrapuntal, but diatonic in character, and although a well-trained choir is imperative, the part-writing will not prove difficult to those who possess a fair knowledge of music.

In No. 397 the evening *Canticles* have been set in A, in a less exacting manner, by William Russell. The choral writing is in four parts and is chiefly in solid harmony.

Mr. H. M. Higgs has provided the music to No. 398, and it is such that will interest its exponents. The *Magnificat*, in the key of A, includes an alto solo, and the *Nunc dimittis* opens with a passage for a tenor voice; but both of these are easy to sing, and the vocal part-writing will present no difficulties to a choir of average abilities.

No. 399, in D, by Ferris Tozer, is much simpler than any of the preceding. Several of the verses are set in unison for the voices, and the four-part writing is easy to read. Passages for tenors or sopranos in unison provide effective contrast, and the organ accompaniment in such portions possesses interesting independence. It may be added that the setting was specially composed for this year's festivals of the Exeter Diocesan Choral Association.

Nos. 400 and 401 are melodious and devotional settings in four parts, on cards, of the *Kyrie Eleison* in E flat respectively by John E. West and Charles Macpherson.

Nos. 402 to 405 have been provided by Myles B. Foster. In No. 402 the *Nicene Creed* is allied to music in C of an emphatic character appropriate to the text. The sentences