Some Present Aspects of Music

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presented to him by the late Sir George Macfarren. Three years ago, in commemoration of his seventieth birthday, he received a silver bowl from the members of his permanent orchestra. But this "three score years and ten" anniversary was made still more memorable by a very remarkable demonstration in the form of a brilliant reception at the Grosvenor Gallery. It took place on April 30, 1895, under the presidency of H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, when his old friend and colleague, Sir George Grove, presented an address to Mr. Manns, offering him the congratulations of the leading musicians of the metropolis. This auspicious event was "a recognition by his brother musicians of the efforts he had made in the cause of music in England, and in advancing the claims of English composers."

Mr. Manns has a vein of humour. In his reply to this address, after referring to some of his early troubles at the Crystal Palace, he proceeded to say: "But there was another source of trouble in store for me, which, however, I had brought upon myself by that tremendous crop of long black hair which I had so lovingly cultivated at that time. Week after week did the postman bring me letters containing curl-papers of every description, with neatly written advice as to how I was to use them. I used also to receive some tiny pink notes, in which were enclosed threepenny-bits, containing repeated requests that I should go to the barber and—*get my hair cut!*"

SOME PRESENT ASPECTS OF MUSIC.

PROBABLY few persons who have given the matter serious thought are quite satisfied with the condition of music at the present day. You may point out that never has there been general content—that always the art, in the language of the retired admirals and generals who haunt West-End clubs, has been "going to the dogs." I do not dispute it, for the croaker seems to be a necessary part in the organisation of society, and he is seldom remiss in the discharge of his duties. But I cannot remember a time in which music seemed to be so much out of hand as now. The good ship once had a compass to steer by, a definite course, and men on board who knew how to take her into port; whereas now one is uneasily conscious that she is the prey of conflicting winds and currents, that nobody knows where she is going, and that the crew have no ear for the voice of authority. This may simply indicate the apparent confusion of change, just as, in a kaleidoscope, the bits of glass tumble to chaos before forming another symmetrical figure. Not that the illustration of the kaleidoscope is entirely apposite. In the case of that ingenious toy we know a thing of beauty must arise from momentary dislocation. In the case of music we cannot be sure, and uncertainty warrants

anxiety. But is it true that music is simply adjusting itself to new conditions and not degenerating into a state of anarchy?

Amid all the turmoil of faction, and the bewilderment of conflicting schools, one fact stands indisputable—namely, that the art is passing through an experience of mediocrity. Never has it so much lacked the leadership of genius and commanding power as now, although at no previous time, perhaps, has it been served by so many who just come short of that high qualification. From Bach and Handel to Brahms, through 150 years of astonishing development, genius has influenced, if not ostensibly guided, the course of music; setting the mass of devotees an example backed by authority, overcoming all opposition, and finally—this generally after death—being accepted as law-giver. But now the highest seats in the temple are vacant, the living voice of authority is silent, and, like a swarm of bees without a queen, the neophytes are pursuing their own devices, unguided and unchecked. It may be urged that this condition of personal independence is the most healthy, inasmuch as it allows free play to individual qualities and the pursuit of individual aims. We do not know this, for history supplies no material with which to work out an estimate of probable results. Never, till now, has there been a condition of personal independence, nor is that condition fully set up at the present moment. The bell-wethers whom the flock have placidly followed may be dead and gone, but the sound of their phantom tintinnabulation is still heard on the hills, and still regarded, though in diminishing degree. For now that we have no leader, word has gone forth that it is shameful to be led. "Live your own life" is urged upon musicians, as upon the restless, aimless crowd of half "emancipated" women. That sounds very well, but first be sure that your own life is worth living; be sure that you are capable of living any life at all in the paths of individualism to which unthinking people invite you. Individualism, however, is the note of the present; soon the ghostly bells will be inaudible, and then it may be said or sung, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

From that state of things peculiar results may be expected. It is well for genius to pursue its own course, and from its independence, as well as its influence, has always come the gain of art. That is its divine mission, discharging which it cannot err. For less than genius there is no such function. When the heaven-sent leader falls, his subordinates should secure the position last gained, make the best of its possibilities, and await another commander-in-chief. To the credit of British moderation and common-sense, this is what our own composers do. They work out ideas of art which have received the approval of great masters, which those masters have

themselves propounded, and they leave to others less prudent the task of showing how incompetent are any powers below those of the highest to do more. There are plenty of the latter class in active operation, and we do not lack such examples of their work as make the judicious grieve and the merry-minded laugh. Unfortunately these futilities are assisted by the cult of the new—nay, the worship of the new, for certain of our generation are worse than children in that regard. The nursery loves fresh toys, but often goes back to the well-worn doll or the familiar rocking-horse as to tried and faithful friends. Our novelty worshippers expend much of their strength in trying to break up the things of yesterday, and in devoting the remainder to clamour for greater extravagances to-morrow. Nothing in music that is wild and whirling comes amiss to them, and they listen to noisy incoherence with as much apparent reverence as did poor Edward Irving to the jabber of the “unknown tongues.” Remonstrate with them and they bid you remember how often results have shamed unbelief and mocking. We are not told how often results have done “the other thing,” but that of course. Sensible men meet the specious argument by asking if we really are to understand that because some innovations in the past have confounded their opponents, therefore everything new is good and meekly to be accepted. We are to “try the spirits,” not to fall down and worship them out of hand. Certain Bereans, when the Christian creed was preached to them, searched the Scriptures for authority, and were commended by the Apostle for their caution. An access of the Berean spirit is wanted in these days to save us from running after false lights and urging music into a swamp. Prove all things; hold fast only that which trial and judgment pronounce to be good. Especially distrust men who come airily out of obscurity with fresh revelations. They are for the most part notoriety hunters, who have been putting two and two together in some dark corner and now proclaim that the result is five. The greatest musical reformers have shown their authority by success in the older way. They inspired confidence by proving that they had a right to lead. The wild eccentric of to-day is backed by no achievement and no experience. His credentials, if he have any, should be demanded and examined.

How do these considerations bear upon the kaleidoscope theory? They tend to show, certainly, that there is a state of confusion. The bits of glass are falling from their ordered place, but are they arranging themselves anew into a more beautiful form? We can have no faith in such a result under present circumstances. The best that can be hoped is that conservative musicians may be able to restore the old order till the man of genius comes who shall teach us the right direction and method of further advance.

With regard to the eccentric and often repelling forms which music, especially that for orchestra, is now taking, an important question arises. How are we to explain the measure of favour which those forms receive? I shall not attempt to define the ratio of that measure to the whole body of musical opinion, but no one can attend concerts and fail to see that it is considerable. Moreover, the frenetic applause bestowed upon some noisy and incoherent composition, blazing with colour like a variegated poster, and backed by a “sensational” story, often exceeds that awarded to masterpieces of art. The other day Mr. Lamoureux played in succession the Overture to “Die Zauberflöte,” Saint-Saëns’s “Danse Macabre,” and Beethoven’s Choral Symphony. Which work did the audience most delight to honour? There can be no question which. The fact stood out, “gross as a mountain,” that their preference was for the “Danse Macabre,” with its false fifth and its rattling bones, its clock chiming and its cock-crowing. They would hear it more than once, and did so, though the Choral Symphony had to wait, like a neglected suitor in an ante-room. Here was a demonstration which almost made one regret the passing of the time when frequenters of orchestral concerts were a small body whom the Hanover Square Rooms of that day could accommodate, but who made up in taste and culture what they lacked in numbers. Under the musical oligarchy of which I speak true art had some chance as against the false and meretricious; the award of favour was made by a public who, for the most part, knew what they were doing—whose very failings, such as an excess of caution, leaned to virtue’s side. The change from past oligarchy to present democracy was, of course, inevitable and no less certain to produce the evil of a lowered standard in taste and appreciation. Musical education has so extended that the masses have acquired that proverbially dangerous thing, a little knowledge, and have brought into the determining counsels of music a taste not yet freed from vulgarity, together with a capacity of judgment which is swayed by the most primitive instincts. Hence the French composer with his bones, his cock-crowing, and his fiddle out of tune delights more than the finish of Mozart or the grandeur of Beethoven. I am not censuring the public as those who have wilfully gone astray. A man must act according to his lights, and, if the lights be dim, his mistakes are rather a misfortune than a fault. But the state of things just indicated is extremely unpleasant and may be of long endurance. When the franchise was extended, and the “mob” of former days came into the polling booth like a flood, a question arose in the ranks of the old depositories of power, “Who shall educate our masters?” The same query is now put in anxious musical circles and, as yet, no answer has been

given. One thing may be taken for granted—we cannot force improvement. It must be left to the always slow process of popular enlightenment, and there is great need of patience among those who would fain see the end brought about at a stroke. At present, music is in the power of the uncultured, who are ready to welcome every form of extravagance, and to determine matters of art by reference to considerations very much other than those to which the commanding voice rightfully belongs.

This, however, is a phase in the development of music which could not be avoided; which must have been foreseen. In one sense, moreover, it has a welcome aspect. Mistaken taste and faulty standards of judgment are better than none at all. Their demonstration shows at least an interest in the subject such as may be wisely directed towards the highest results. In this thought perplexed musicians may find some comfort, as promising growth out of the state of childhood which demands mere sensations and into that of manhood with its subordination to the higher things. That growth is promoted by every wise step in musical education, by every concert-giver who insists on demonstrating the good things of art, by every concert-goer who strives towards an intellectual appreciation of the works he hears. All such efforts at advancement tend away from the region where the rattle of dead men's bones is offered as music.

JOSEPH BENNETT.

THE STRUCTURE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.*

By W. H. HADOW, M.A., B.MUS.

I.

EARLY CONTRAPUNTAL AND MELODIC FORM.

THE history of music is the record of a continuous development in which it is of little use that we should seek for origins. If, then, historians have traced the course of instrumental structure from the early years of the seventeenth century, this is not because there was no instrumental music before that date, but because from thenceforward the facts became more accessible and the problems on the whole more interesting.

By structure in music is meant the disposition of ideas over a movement or composition. Its ideal is to be organic, to hold in coherent unity a diversity of separate parts. Take away the unity and it becomes chaotic; take away the diversity and it becomes monotonous; and each of these is on its own side the negation of art. A well-constructed work, in short, is one which so embodies the principles of contrast, balance, and proportion as to stimulate

our interest throughout its course, and to leave us with a single organic impression at the end. This result is effected partly by arrangement of themes, partly by distribution of tonal centres, both these being closely related to the truth and value of the emotional content.

Instrumental composers of the early seventeenth century were largely affected by two preceding influences: first, that of the ecclesiastical counterpoint; second, that of the dance measure. Both alike were probably vocal in origin; both alike at periods too early to determine called in the aid of instruments to support the voices or emphasise the rhythm. By the middle of the sixteenth century we find—(a) contrapuntal works written either to be played or sung as occasion served, and marked by their composers "*buone da cantare e suonare*"; (b) collections of instrumental dance tunes, such as those of Pierre Attaignant (1530), Tielman Susato (1551), and, a little later, the "*Orchésographie*" of Thoinot Arbeau (1588). To the former we owe the organ compositions of the Gabriellis, probably written as introductions to vocal works, and such early sonatas as those of Turini (1625); the traditions of the latter were carried on by Michael Prætorius and Ghro of Meissen (1612).

The early sonatas were written in simple imitative counterpoint with little or no real modulation, the influences of the ecclesiastical modes being still strong upon them. The dance tunes were much freer in tonality and adopted a large variety of forms, the most important of which are—(1) a two-clause stanza, the first clause modulating out of the key and the second modulating back; and (2) a three-clause stanza of which the third clause repeats the first and the second separates them by a passage of contrast. It should be added that in these early days the latter form is of extremely rare occurrence—indeed, as a rule, the clauses, whether two or three in number, contained different thematic material.*

By the middle of the century both types had considerably developed. The contrapuntal movements were gradually shaking off the influence of the modes and beginning in a cautious and tentative manner to modulate among the nearly related keys. The dance tunes were not only growing more organic as individual numbers, but were being collected together in small groups so arranged as to produce the best effect of contrast in grace and character.† This systematisation of movements gave rise to a distinction, sometimes ascribed to Biagio Marini, between sonate da chiesa and sonate da camera, the former consisting wholly

* See especially the collections of Ghro (1612) and Hammerschmied (1639).

† Thomas Morley (1597) recommends the alternation of Pavan and Galliard, and this seems to have been done in the Ballets of Hammerschmied, though the dances are not named. Later in the century the choice was mainly among the Allemande, Courante, Saraband, Gavotte, and Gigue.

* The substance of three lectures, musically illustrated, delivered at the Royal Institution, February 12, 19, and 26, 1898.