Review

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Reviews.

NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.

Don Giovanni. An Opera in two acts, by W. A. Mozart. Translated into English, and corrected according to the original score, by Natalia Macfarren.

MOZART'S masterpiece, with the musical drama complete, so beautifully printed, and at a nominal price, is indeed an earnest of the universality to which our culture is tending, of which the motto would seem to be "All for each." Did this edition as much exceed in price, as it falls in this respect below all others having any claims to attention, it would yet deserve a place in every student's library, for the sake of the very many new and invaluable lights that we gain from it as to notes, phrasing, light and shade, and stage directions. Glancing merely at the list of personages in the Opera, we are struck by the "Chorus of Invisible Demons," and turning to the only scene where demons are likely to appear, we are delighted to learn that the curious beings who frolic about our stage at the conclusion of the Opera, have no warrant from Mozart for their appearance, but fall into the large class of "improvements" (generally for the worse) with which singers, acting managers, and editors have so richly embellished our standard musical works. We have here, for the first time, the stage directions from Mozart himself, and they are so interesting that it seems a marvel that any reprint of the Opera should have dispensed with them.

Those who admit that phrasing is to music what punctuation is to writing, will feel grateful also for the care bestowed on this feature of the present edition. Some thoroughly false methods of writing music have become prevalent in this country; such, for instance, as when an accented note is preceded by a run of two, three, or more notes, the slurring of the run separately, without including the accented notes, thereby suggesting that such accented note should be detached from the run. Another is the slurring of all notes of voice parts where two or more fall to one syllable, whatever the character of the phrase may be; indeed, placing slurs indiscriminately over any number of notes anywhere, as we see in all but the best German editions of recent times. Staccato marks again seem to be strangely misunderstood. The sign for detaching with accent, for instance, which should only be used in passages of energy, is constantly put over delicate, florid passages. Our signs should lead, whereas they often mislead; and thus, through the carelessness, or ignorance of musicians in these things, instead of clearly pointing out the author's intention, they often cause endless confusion and perplexity with the general public. To study the slurs and dots of Mozart is to study the art of phrasing. His system of binding and detaching the notes in the instruments is such as to render his phrases invariably intelligible to the musical understanding, and in the voice parts they are invaluable guides to the singers, as to when to detach, and when to unite the sounds. We are indebted to this edition, too, for a knowledge of many beautiful points of declamation, such as the three bars before the return to the subject, in the aria "Mi tradi;" a similar variety of expression two bars before the return in "Non mi dir;" the irregularity of rhythm in both these cases greatly heightens the expression; but as vocalists have probably not understood it, a more commonplace reading has been always substituted. We notice an entirely different distribution of syllables on the quavers in the last movement of "Fuggi crudele," and one that promises more tone in the marvellous passage where they occur, than when the voice parts are cut up with a syllable on every alternate note: it would be very interesting to hear it as Mozart intended this passage should be sung. We should far exceed the space at our command were we to enumerate the varieties of reading that we encounter in this valuable edition, but they are well worthy of study. There are some curious details in

the distribution of the syllables, such as in the first bar of "Non mi dir;" and in the seventh of "Dalla sua pace;" where although we are accustomed to hear the unaccented syllable on the fourth division of the bar, Mozart places it on the half bar, thus sacrificing accent to smoothness of tone. It is also pleasant to see "Vedrai carino" merely superscribed "grazioso," instead of the invariable "andante," which, in the modern view of "andante," causes the light, playful movement to be mostly taken at so sluggish and mournful a pace, as quite to destroy the character of the piece. Several of the movements in common time, we may also mention, are here marked "alla breve" for the first time, which conductors would do well to note.

We must not conclude our notice of this edition without awarding unqualified praise to the editress for her very excellent English translation of the original text. It is easy enough to give a bald rendering of the Italian words into the vernacular, but to supply a faithful translation which shall be in rhyme, and yet carefully adapted, not only to every note, but to every accent intended by the composer is no easy task. We could give innumerable instances of the happy manner in which the words and notes are united; one, however, must suffice. Let any vocalist sing the first phrase of the Canzonetta, "Deh vieni," to the words "From out thy casement glancing, O smile upon me," and he will see that the English is almost as vocal as the Italian, and that the accent is preserved with scrupulous fidelity. When we say also that, in addition to the new features already mentioned, all the recitatives are given for the first time, and that in every respect the Opera appears precisely as Mozart wrote it, there can be no question that this edition is the most perfect ever yet issued.

Menuetto, from Beethoven's Trio, for Violin, Viola, and Violoncello. (Op. 9, No. 2.)

Allegretto alla Polacca, from Beethoven's Serenade, (Op. 8) for Violin, Viola, and Violoncello.

Scherzo, from Beethoven's Trio, for Violin, Viola, and Violoncello. (Op. 9, No. 1.)

No. 4 of Robert Schumann's Skizzen für den Pedal Flügel. (Sketches for the Pedal Pianoforte.)

Arranged for the Pianoforte by Agnes Zimmermann.

A great part of the modern music may be compared to imitation jewellery, which passes in a crowd and excites little attention, whilst the treasures of the art, like old family jewels, handed down from generation to generation, will always command both respect and admiration, even from those whose tastes are vitiated by the glittering ephemeral manufactures of the day. Those who desire the healthy progress of music must be aware how necessary it is that students should constantly have before them the compositions of the best writers; and we are glad to find that Miss Zimmermann, who has already given us some excellent arrangements from the works of J. S. Bach, is gradually enriching her series of classical extracts, all of which we need scarcely say are so skilfully adapted for the pianoforte as to render them welcome not only to musicians as reminiscences of the originals, but to teachers who desire that their pupils should be trained in a good school. The Menuetto from the Trio (Op. 9, No. 2) makes a highly attractive piece, and is moreover by no means difficult to play; the passages lie well under the hand, and it is so carefully arranged as to have the effect of being an original pianoforte piece. The pleasing character of the subject of this Minuet will no doubt make it one of the most popular of the set. The Polacca, from the Serenade, will give the performer something more to do, several extensions being absolutely necessary; but the part-writing is so excellently divided between the hands that the player is saved as much trouble as possible. Apart from the intrinsic worth of this piece, it will form a most useful study both for touch and fingering. The melodious Scherzo, from the Trio (Op. 9, No. 1) contains no passage that is not comfortably within the reach of

even moderate players. The three parts are so minutely indicated that it will be the fault of the performer if they are not clearly brought out. One of the most interesting of all the pieces is the arrangement of Robert Schumann's sketch for the pedal pianoforte. The management of the pedal part is so remarkably clever that the original effect is almost perfectly preserved throughout. This will also form a capital exercise for students; and the admirers of Schumann will thank Miss Zimmermann for placing this beautiful trifle within the reach of performers on our ordinary pianofortes. Before we conclude our notice of these compositions, we must mention that the touch is most clearly expressed in each part; that wherever there might be a doubt, the hand which is intended to play the notes is distinctly indicated, and in every passage requiring such assistance the fingering is given.

Blonde and Brunette. Two Sketches for the Pianoforte. By J. Baptiste Calkin. Op. 79.

MR. CALKIN'S Sketches, the first in G major and the second in G minor, are as different in character as the imaginary beauties in whose honour they are written; and that listeners will differ as to the superiority of the one over the other is only a proof of that wholesome diversity of taste which secures to every pretty girl, whatever may be her complexion, a fair share of attention. The first is light and graceful in the extreme; and the subject leads us to imagine that the "Blonde" is somewhat of a coquette at heart. The accompaniment of four quavers in the bar, divided between the two hands, is continued throughout, and there is just sufficient modulation to prevent any undue monotony. The lengthening out of the theme towards the conclusion is extremely happy. There is much pathos in the melody of the second piece, and the harmonies are bold and appropriate. A good effect is gained where the *staccato* quaver accompaniment is interrupted by the *arpeggio* for the left hand; and the spirited wind-up forms an excellent contrast with the placid coda of the first sketch. Trifles like these thrown off by an artist who has shown that he can grapple with more solid works, must always make their way through the crowd; for although songs "without words," they are by no means without ideas.

Meditation. Caprice for the Pianoforte.

Home, sweet Home. Etude de Concert, for the left hand only.

Composed by Willem Coenen.

THE theme of the first of these pieces is extremely pleasing, and is effectively given out, after a short introduction, by the right hand with a chord accompaniment for the left hand crossing above it. The *arpeggios* which ornament the melody will require much rapidity of finger in order to realise the intention of the composer; but pianists of the present day should be pretty well trained to the execution of such embroidery, and the piece will amply repay any trouble bestowed upon it. There is much refinement in the treatment of the subject throughout; and being written by a thoroughly accomplished pianist, it is needless to say that the passages, although difficult, are well adapted to the instrument. The study for the left hand on the well-known melody, "Home, sweet home," will require real hard work and a large amount of patience, even from advanced performers. The manner in which the subject is brought out, whilst surrounded by embellishments is exceedingly ingenious; and it may be confidently stated that, although as we have said, it will demand immense perseverance, there will not be the slightest difficulty in understanding how the passages are to be played. As a study for gaining command with the left hand, this piece will prove of much value.

Short Anthems, or Introits, by various composers, for particular Seasons and for General Use. Edited by Rev. Walter Hook, M.A., Rector of Lavington, formerly Succentor of Chichester, (In 31 numbers.)

THAT a want has long been felt among those who

have the direction of Church Services for some music, either vocal or instrumental, which shall appropriately accompany the entry of the officiating clergy into the Septum, is so evident, that it is difficult to believe that collections of Introits, for use in the English Church, have but lately come into existence. Yet such is the case, and a slight knowledge of the musical arrangements of our Cathedrals and Churches fully explains the reason why. In most Parish Churches a Hymn has filled the place of the Introit; whilst in Cathedrals, a voluntary on the organ, or the singing of the Sanctus, has been its substitute. But, however appropriate a Hymn may be to the day on which it is sung, there seems no reason why a trained parish-choir should not introduce the Introit in its proper place, especially in churches where it has been customary to have two Hymns, one where the Introit should be sung, the other before the Sermon. The congregation would not then be deprived of its looked-for Hymn; while, on the other hand, the choir would have an opportunity of impressing on the hearers, by a good rendering of good music, some important and suitable words gleaned from Holy Scriptures. The most that can be said against the use of an organ voluntary, instead of an Introit, is, that a chance of teaching a truth to the hearers is thus lost; for, supposing the Voluntary to be not only appropriate in style, but devotional and suggestive, it must be acknowledged that it is not in the power of a large section of worshippers, when thrown back on the resources of their own mind, to bring before themselves at the moment such a desirable train of thought as would be suggested by a carefully selected verse from Holy Scriptures. The use of the Sanctus, as an Introit, can on no grounds be defended; for by it the congregation is unable to distinguish between one of the Church Seasons and another; and, moreover, it must so shortly be heard a second time in its legitimate position. Its use in Cathedrals in this manner can only remind those who hear it, that when all are invited to join angels and archangels in the cry of adoration, "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus," music and musicians will have disappeared; as if art and artists had no part in the highest acts of worship, but were only to be used as a sort of condiment, by means of which a long function might be prevented from becoming tame and tasteless. But better days are, we trust, in store for our Cathedrals. The use of a short Psalm, as prescribed by the first prayer-book of Edward the Sixth, would be infinitely preferable to the misuse of the Sanctus; for these short Psalms are admirably arranged. Formerly they were chanted in the chapel service of Magd. Coll., Oxford.

MR. HOOK, whose interest in church-music and church-musicians is generally known, must be heartily thanked for the care with which he has gathered together holy words for holy days, and the judgment he has shown in the selection of composers to them. It would occupy more space than can be spared, besides involving the risk of tiring most readers, if an account of this interesting collection were given in detail. They need not, however, be grouped under the commonplace heads of good, bad, or indifferent, for they quite exemplify the feelings of various modern musicians on the subject of Style. Some are ecclesiastical, some dramatic, some very like part-songs. Those that are ecclesiastical have the usual faults, as well as the merits of that style. They will be found to contain much simplicity, mixed with an occasional dash of crudity, and generally to exhibit the true contrapuntal disregard of the sense of the words. No. 1, "Rejoice in the Lord" (S. Reay) is smooth, and avoids, to a great extent, the faults we have enumerated. No. 4, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel" is not lacking in simple vigour; but in more than one place each of the four parts is striving to emphasize different portions of the same sentence. No. 7, "Be not Thou far from me" (F. W. Hird) is not well phrased. No. 8, "Remember, Lord, Thy loving kindness" (C. G.