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Milton's Ode on the Nativity

Author(s): O. H. Hadams

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'AN EARLY GREEK HYMN'

SIR,—When the October number of the *Musical Times* arrived I opened it casually on page 724 and read that very interesting letter from Mr. C. F. Abdy Williams on 'An Early Greek Hymn.' I was surprised to learn that there is so much doubt and uncertainty among experts regarding Greek rhythms.

It happens that I am endeavouring—in a series of 'Studies for Children on the Appreciation of Music'—to explain the poetry of rhythm, and in my own studies on the subject I have alighted upon an alarming disagreement between Riemann's and Grove's *Dictionaries of Music*.

I had written a chapter explaining that in the line:

'Oh dear : what can the : matter be :'

the first rhythm was a Spondee ♩ and the second and third a Pyrrhichius ♪♪—information derived from Riemann. Before having my MSS. typed I wished to prove those points, so I consulted Cassell's *Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. There I discovered that Pyrrhic (Pyrrhichius) was ♪—and a most fascinating story: Pyrrhic dance, 'A species of dance said to have been invented by Pyrrhus to grace the funeral of his father, Achilles. It consisted chiefly in such an adroit and nimble turning of the body as represented an attempt to avoid the strokes of an enemy in battle, and the motions necessary to perform it were looked upon as a kind of training for actual warfare. This dance is supposed to be described by Homer as engraved on the shield of Achilles. It was danced by boys in armour, accompanied by the lute or lyre.'

Then I consulted Grove and found that Pyrrhic was duple ♪♪ (not ♪♪♪ according to Riemann), and that the triple rhythm I wanted to describe was Tribach ♪♪♪.

Will some kind person unravel this confusion, and explain which authority is right? In my book I want to relate—if possible to every important rhythm—any such fascinating legend as the one quoted above, but I cannot find any others. Will one of your wise and learned readers kindly refer me to some book that would help me? If $\frac{3}{4}$ -time can have such a delightful legend, why not some of the others?

SWISHING.

(With apologies to William Allingham.)

Ring-ting ! I wish I were a SPONDEE,

A slow-going SPONDEE, slouching through the Spring !

The ANAPÆSTS above me,

The AMPHIBRACHS to love me,

The CRÉTICUS to creep across,

The DACTYL for our King.

—Yours, &c., ERNEST AUSTIN.

Drove Cottage, Wallington, Surrey.

October 3, 1922.

ROYAL NORMAL COLLEGE FOR THE BLIND

SIR,—I am extremely sorry that my excellent friend, Mr. Guy M. Campbell, Principal of the Royal Normal College for the Blind, should have cause to feel aggrieved at the omission to mention his magnificent School in the report of the R.C.O. successes sent to you from the National Institute for the Blind, while at the same time (and quite inadvertently) another school was named in a further instance.

It is quite true that by far the greater number of successful blind candidates at the R.C.O. are those of Royal Normal College students. Owing to the exigencies of space, the National Institute—when reporting R.C.O. successes—usually omits the names of the various Blind Schools or of private teachers who prepare the candidates. In this very instance, where another school was named, we have since found that the principal credit was due to Mr. F. W. Belchamber, who coached the candidate after he had left school.

I hope Mr. Campbell will accept this frank explanation. The National Institute is concerned with all the interests of all civilian blind, and is only too anxious to place credit wherever it is due.—Yours, &c., EDWARD WATSON

(Director of Music Publications).

224-6-8, Great Portland Street, W.1.

October 4, 1922.

THE GLOUCESTER FESTIVAL

SIR,—At this excellent Festival Bach was, for some reason, only represented by his Motet, *Now shall the grace*. In various critical notices of the performances a feeling is somehow suggested that this work did not sound particularly effective. But what surely must be the true reason for such disappointment has not, so far as I am aware, been pointed out. In the *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition of the composer's works this Motet is given with accompaniment to the voices, mostly of an independent character, for three trumpets, three oboes, timpani, and strings. Thus, together with the eight voices, it is possible in places to count anything up to fifteen parts, all moving apparently at their own sweet will. A much-used figure of quavers and semi-quavers constantly appears in the orchestra, quite apart from the movement of the voices. And at times the essential bass is found in the 'continuo,' not in the vocal score. The effect of the work given in its completeness would no doubt be most exhilarating. Gloucester gave us but a 'maimed rite,' so far as I can see.—Yours, &c.,

Cheltenham.

GEORGE GARDNER.

October 6, 1922.

PURCELL FOR SMALL ORCHESTRAS

SIR,—In the October issue of the *Musical Times* mention is made of a West of England concert at which music arranged from Byrd, Purcell, &c., was performed by a small orchestra. To quote your notice:

'The Purcell Suite suffered from the fact that the conductor had scored the movements himself—a task which he frankly admits was above him. He feels strongly that a great deal of Purcell should be available for small orchestra, and we agree.'

Perhaps it would be of interest to this conductor and others to know that a Suite for small orchestra, arranged from the virginal pieces of Giles Farnaby, Byrd, and other Old English masters, is available.

This Suite, known as an *Elizabethan Suite*, is arranged from the music of the ballet, *A Masque at the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, performed at the Oxford Musical Festival in May of this year, and was scored by myself from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. It is now deposited in Messrs. Goodwin & Tabb's Library of Manuscripts.—Yours, &c.,

I, Homefield Road, S.W.19.

GORDON JACOB.

October 11, 1922.

MILTON'S ODE ON THE NATIVITY

SIR,—I am enclosing the first few bars of a setting of Milton's *Ode on the Nativity*, which I remember hearing some time ago. I should be glad if anyone could furnish particulars of composer and publisher:

—Yours, &c.,

O. H. HADAMS.

43, Ashted Road, E.5.

September 26, 1922.

WARNING TO

VOCALISTS, INSTRUMENTALISTS, ETC.

SIR,—May I bring the following to the notice of your musical readers? Yesterday a young lady vocalist called on me asking for an audition. I told her that I had over five hundred good artists on my books, and there was no prospect of an engagement in the near future. She informed me that she received a letter to come to London for an audition. Her fare was eighteen shillings, she had to pay twenty-one shillings entrance fee, and an extra five shillings for the audition. I think it is time this scandal was made public. There are many unemployed in our overcrowded profession, and artists should be careful before parting with any money to agencies or concert-directions of a kind which get their living by promising remunerative