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JANUARY 10, 1898.

F. CUNNINGHAM WOODS, Esq., M.A., Mus. B.,
IN THE CHAIR.

THE GIORGI FLUTE.

BY H. STANDISH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—In introducing to your notice this evening the Giorgi Patent Flute and the Giorgi Patent Flute Head as applied to other style cylinder flutes, I beg, on behalf of Messrs. Joseph Wallis & Son, to thank you for the opportunity you have afforded me of demonstrating the superiority which we claim the Giorgi flute possesses over other flutes.

The inventor, Signor Giorgi, prior to his coming to England, had the flute, which will be played this evening—viz., one without keys and descending to D, severely tested by the Conservatoires of Music at Rome, Parma, Bologna, and Milan, and after the most severe tests employed by the professors of music forming the committees of the different Conservatoires, with a view to seeing whether or no the flute did possess all those merits which the inventor claimed for his invention, and whether such a flute was really playable and likely to become useful to the flute-playing public, they decided that all that the inventor claimed had been proved, and granted him the certificates, of which I have brought copies, and shall be pleased to hand one to any gentleman desirous of reading them.

The claim of the inventor for his flute is, firstly, that a far superior, clearer, and purer tone is gained by the adoption of his mouthpiece; secondly, the necessary position for the player to assume in playing on his mouthpiece accords to the player a greater capacity of lung, and, in consequence, wind power; also, it gives him an easier position to play in, as it

does away with the necessity of having the arms and hands raised nearly level with the chin, which position all flute players will admit is very tiring during a long performance; and consequently the neck of the player is not twisted, but the head is kept in a straight position.

With regard to the fingering of the Giorgi flute, it is contended that pupils progress much quicker by not having any keys to trouble about and not having to learn complicated cross fingering in common use, and in consequence the Giorgi system is to be preferred. This was one of the tests employed by one Conservatoire of Music in Italy, the authorities of which wished to see the progress made by a beginner on the Giorgi flute and a beginner on the ordinary style (Boehm). At the end of three months both pupils were brought before the committee and played their respective flutes; the committee were unanimous in deciding that the pupil on the Giorgi flute was much in advance of the pupil using the Boehm flute. We can hardly expect that flautists who have mastered a fingering that answers all their purposes will throw themselves out of gear for some weeks to learn the Giorgi system of fingering, but we offer them an advantage in being able to change the head of their own flute for a Giorgi flute head, whereby they may have the opportunity of playing in a much easier position than their old one, besides producing a better tone.

In conclusion, I may say that the Giorgi flute is perfectly simple in its construction, there being no mechanism to get out of order, and, should any portion of it become damaged in any way, the parts can be replaced at a small cost in comparison with the cost of repairs of expensive flutes at present in use. Perhaps I may be permitted to mention that the total cost of a Giorgi flute is only £2 2s., in comparison with the cost of a flute on the Boehm system costing £15 to £40.

Our exponent, Mr. Green, flautist in the Grenadier Guards Band, is in attendance this evening, and will play first of all a piece on the plain Giorgi flute descending to D, which is a flute without any keys at all, and will afterwards perform on his own Boehm flute fitted with a Giorgi flute head. In criticising Mr. Green's performance on the plain Giorgi flute, it is only fair to say that he has only had the flute in his possession a short time, during which time he has been constantly called away by his military duties, which have prevented him giving as much time as he would have wished to the instrument; and, further, like all other first-class flautists, he has been in the habit of using covered holes, whilst the Giorgi flute on which he is going to perform to-night has perfectly plain holes, which makes rapid performances more difficult, as those of you who play the

flute will be aware. However, those players who prefer to have all covered holes can have their desires fulfilled at a small cost.

As Mr. J. Finn has kindly brought here his Boehm flute and will play on it, an opportunity will be afforded you of hearing and observing the respective tones of the two instruments.

Mr. Green then played on the Giorgi flute a "Fantasia on Russian Airs," and was followed by Mr. J. Finn with a "Nocturne," by Jadassohn, on the Boehm flute. Both gentlemen then played a Duet, an "Andante" by Kuhlau.

DISCUSSION.

MR. SOUTHGATE.—I should just like to make a few remarks. What an extraordinary thing it is that that which has been tried before so often comes up again, perhaps with some little improvements. The way in which the Giorgi flute is played, blown at the end instead of into the tube held transversely, reminds one of how the old *náy*, merely an open tube, was played in Egypt thousands of years ago, and is still played in the streets of Cairo. [A *fac-simile* of one was then shown; the original was taken out of an ancient tomb; it possesses six finger holes on the top, and one thumb hole underneath.] And I have here a *fac-simile* of another most interesting flute, of which two were found in the pyramid of Ahmin; one is in the possession of M. Maspero, the eminent Egyptologist, and I went to Paris to see and examine this and another remarkable instrument. You will observe that like the Giorgi flute it has eleven finger holes. Now as we only possess ten fingers, it follows that two of the holes have to be covered by one finger. It is managed by putting one hole at the side (the top end), it can then be stopped by the middle joint of the first finger of the left hand, the top hole on the top being covered by the first portion of the finger. I may mention that I have already exhibited this particular specimen before our Association in 1890, and Mr. Finn showed that the complete chromatic scale could be played upon it, with the addition of the enharmonic seventh! It is curious that this Ahmin flute and the *náy* combined seem to constitute the Giorgi flute; the instrument is played at the end and it has eleven holes. I may just mention that at Barnum's Show, now running at Kensington, in the Arab band will be seen a player on a small *náy*.

The CHAIRMAN.—In common with Mr. Southgate, I dare not lay any claim to being a flute player. That too may be the case with some of us here in the room. We, however, as musicians cannot help being greatly interested in noting the application of that system of fingering which we are told has been known to exist so long before the Giorgi flute was introduced. I notice that there are gentlemen present who are flute-players, among them Mr. Welch, on whom I will call to say what he thinks of the Giorgi fingering and method of blowing.

Mr. C. WELCH.—There are two separate and distinct peculiarities in the flute now brought under our notice; one, the way in which it is held, straight, like the English flute, not crosswise like the German flute; the other the circumstance that it has no keys or other mechanism. This way of holding the flute, although novel, is by no means new. Besides the Egyptian *náy*, which is turned slightly sideways, though the obliquity is much less than that of our flute, there is, I believe, a Chinese flute which is held straight. I was thinking, too, at the moment of a flute, said to have come from Africa (it is garnished with a tuft of camel's hair), in the possession of Mr. Taphouse, of Oxford. It is constructed with a notch into which the player impels his breath. The sound is easily produced and is agreeable to the ear. Boehm, whose name is so well known in connection with ring-keyed instruments, contemplated the idea of making a flute to be held straight. One day, when I was walking with him in Munich, not many months before his death, he put his walking-stick to his mouth, holding it as if he were playing on a Giorgi flute, and said: "If I were a younger man I would make a flute to be played like this. I suppose somebody will do it when I am gone." We immediately began to speak of something else, so that I did not learn from whence he derived the idea, how he proposed to construct the flute, or what was the object he had in view; but on going to the Italian Exhibition at Earl's Court some years afterwards, I saw the idea carried out. The instrument there exhibited was the Giorgi flute in its early form. It was not made of ebonite, like that now before us, but of metal, and, instead of being keyless, was constructed with square keys of immense size covering holes of the same shape, the fingering being quite different from that of the flute we are asked to examine, or any other flute. It will be observed that the Giorgi flute is not furnished with a cork, the performer's breath passing into the end of the instrument where the cork or stopper is usually placed. The cork, which closes one end of the tube of a flute, is not brought close to the mouth-hole. The nature of the vibrations which are set up in the column of air between the cork and the

mouth-hole is unknown, they never having, as far as I am aware, been subjected to examination by an acoustician. We know, however, that the length of this column of air has a great effect on the harmonics. Now Signor Giorgi claims, I understand, to have greatly improved the harmonics. It is, I presume, on the dispensing with the stopper, and on other changes made in the upper end of the tube that the claim is based. The instrument shown at Earl's Court terminated in a cross-piece, in which, I have no doubt, there was a cavity or cavities to take the place of the interval between the cork and the mouth-hole, and in the flute before us I observe a recess at the back of the tube near the mouth-hole, intended, presumably, for the same purpose. I should mention that, with the flutes now in use, the great difficulty in execution lies in the top octave. If the notes are fingered as harmonics, they are so flat and so inferior in tone that Clinton used to say that if flute players were obliged to confine themselves to them the instrument would not be worth playing. On the other hand, if the high notes are fingered in the ordinary way, their manipulation in rapid passages is very difficult, for each note requires a double fingering. It might be compared to double stopping on the violin, with the difference that the flute player, instead of producing two notes like the violinist, produces only one. If, then, Signor Giorgi has rendered the harmonics equal in tone and intonation to the double fingered notes, he will have conferred an immense benefit on flute players; but, should it prove that he has spoilt our present high octave without perfecting the harmonics, few will be disposed to have his head-piece applied to their flutes. As regards the other point, the abolition of the keys; its advantages are too self-evident for it to be necessary for me to say a single word in pointing them out. A flute without keys is a dream which has haunted almost every one who has attempted to apply his inventive powers to the instrument, but it has hitherto been regarded as a Utopian idea, as hopeless as the search for the philosopher's stone. Messrs. Rudall & Carte have a drawer half-filled with models, some of which have been brought here to-day by Mr. Finn, and are on the table before us, the outcome of this inventor's dream. The digits of man are limited to ten, but the flute is pierced with eleven holes, the inventor's problem being how to cover these eleven holes with the ten fingers. Indeed, it is really more difficult still, for it has always been considered necessary to retain one of the digits, the right thumb, for supporting the flute, so that there remain but nine fingers for the eleven holes. One of these two difficulties Signor Giorgi proposes to get over by an expedient which, had not Mr. Southgate just shown us was known to the ancient Egyptians, would have seemed to be a perfectly new and original idea. He

closes two holes with the first finger of the left hand, one with the first phalanx, the other with the third, or nail phalanx as it is called. For the other hole for which there is no finger, Signor Giorgi has recourse to a method which had often been previously suggested; he takes the right thumb from its office of holding the flute, and devotes it to closing the hole. Fifty years ago, when the Boehm flute was coming into use in England, there were three men, each of whom was anxious to invent something better, Richard Carte, John Clinton, and Abel Siccama. The last-named, Siccama, constructed a flute with only one key, and proposed to communicate his ideas to the other two. One evening they met by appointment, Carte and Clinton signed an agreement in which they undertook not to divulge what was about to be disclosed, and then Siccama produced the model of his invention. Siccama had adopted the same plan as regards the right thumb as Signor Giorgi—in fact, the fingering of the right-hand part of his flute was identical note for note with that of the Giorgi instrument. The trio sat up the whole of the night discussing the project, Mr. Carte maintaining that the performer would be certain, sooner or later, to meet with a sequence of notes on his attempting to play which, in a rapid passage, the flute would fall from his hands. Possibly Signor Giorgi would meet this objection by saying that the statement might be true of the transverse flute, but not of the flute held straight. How this may be I cannot say, but I am sure that the new instrument will have a fair trial. It will neither be crushed by trade jealousy nor extinguished by professional prejudice. If the claims which have been put forward on its behalf are well founded, slowly perhaps, but surely, it will make its way. On the other hand, if, when it is put to the test of actual experience, it should be found wanting, the Giorgi flute will only add another to the many good intentions with which—well—with which the drawer at Messrs. Rudall's is filled.

Dr. HARDING.—I just want to ask two questions. In the Giorgi flute without keys, can you play in any key? And, secondly, can you play any passage rapidly?

Mr. STANDISH.—I am not a flute player and cannot speak critically, but Signor Giorgi will be in London in a week or two, and I shall be glad to arrange a meeting with him. In answer to the questions I would say it can be played in any key, and so far as a rapid passage is concerned it can be played very much more rapidly if you have covered holes, but it does not alter the position of holding it.

Votes of thanks to Mr. Green and Mr. Finn were passed unanimously, and a similar compliment to the Chairman closed the meeting.