Consecutive Sevenths

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ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE.

MUSICAL SETTINGS OF THE TE DEUM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—You frequently commend musical writers for the strict adaptation of music to words, and also for reflecting the sense of some passages on the text of others by a repetition of the same music; permit me to draw the attention of your readers to certain points which are almost invariably disregarded by those who compose music for the "Te Deum."

That song consists of three parts. The first praises God as revealed in the Holy Trinity, and is really a Creed. It consists of thirteen verses. The second part, which begins at v. 14, "Thou art the King of Glory," &c., is a "hymn to Christ as God," commemorating His Incarnation, Sacrifice, and Ascension. It consists of five verses. The third part commences at v. 19, declaring our belief in Christ's Second Advent, and is a prayer for help and salvation. The last verse is personal, and is generally believed to have been added to what was the original form of the "Te Deum." For further and fuller information let me refer the reader to Blunt's Annotated Prayer Book, page 12.

Whilst I write of this, may I also point out some very common errors in expression and pronunciation connected with the musical rendering of the "Te Deum." Very frequently it is sung to a double chant, which is a most absurd proceeding, for verses 11, 12 and 13, which refer to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, manifestly require an equal treatment. And usually a minor chant is introduced at v. 16, continuing to the end of v. 23, when a return is made to the major. These changes are utterly destructive of the true meaning of the hymn. It is inconsistent to pronounce the "ch" soft in Cherubim, and hard in such words as Chaldæa, Carmel, Canaan, &c., for the "ch" in each case stands for the same Hebrew letter, which is always hard. Angels are said to "cry aloud," hence, the "Holy, Holy, Holy" should be *ff*, and not *pp*. Sabaoth has the accent on the penultima, not, as it is commonly pronounced, on the antepenultima. From Spenser's time downwards this word has been continually confounded with Sabbath, but with which it has no connection whatever. Sabbath means "Rest"; Sabaoth (really Tsebâôth) means "Armies" or "Hosts." In verses 7, 8 and 9 the words "praise Thee" should not be louder than the verses of which they form part, for they are not more emphatic. Verse 19, "We believe," &c., should be slow and solemn as the meaning of the words requires. In the Eastern church, I have been told that it is customary for worshippers to prostrate themselves at these words.

Is it too much to hope that those who compose music for the "Te Deum" and for the various other parts of the Services of the Church, will one day first make themselves acquainted with the meaning of the words? Without that knowledge, the hymns and canticles are mere sound: with it, they become instinct with life and reality.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

W. J. LÖWENBERG.

CONSECUTIVE SEVENTHS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

SIR,—Allow me, as a musician, to thank you for your repeated protests against consecutive sevenths, which, as a rule, are no doubt very offensive. But may I at the same time suggest that a hard and fast rule *cannot* be laid down in the case of sevenths any more than in the case of fifths, which few composers now refuse to write when the effect is good. I am not prepared to support my opinion at a moment's notice, by quotations from the musical classics (though I think it would not be difficult to do this), but will content myself with asking if the subjoined progression can offend any one—

Please to observe (1) that the harmony is only in three parts, (2) that the progression objected to is between *extreme parts*, and (3) that we have an undeniable false relation into the bargain.

I am, Sir, &c.,

CLEVELAND WIGAN.

Dover, Oct. 2nd, 1874.

[The writer asks if his quoted progression "can offend any one?" To this, there can be but one undoubting and unwavering answer; it would be a task hard enough for Psyche or for Graciosa to find a succession of notes more excessively ugly. The courtesy of the querist compels the utmost respect for his proposition, but it may not command acquiescence in the same. As he states, there are the two sevenths $\overset{C}{D} \overset{B}{\underset{C}{\#}}$, and the very offensive false relation between the C of the first chord and the C $\sharp$ of the second, either of which alone would be sufficiently disagreeable to careful ears, but the two together are as near as possible to intolerable. Possibly the progression is to be found in music of the best masters; but this only proves that they wrote, not that they could have defended it. With such musicians, the beauties that surround an occasional lapse, so dazzle the ear as to render it insensitive to faults which would be most conspicuous in the productions of little minds, where the fault is the only striking incident in a phrase. The study of the great masters is the best road to artistry, but we must study them with a discretion as to what to adopt and what to avoid. Not one of us is immaculate, not even the greatest; and the occasional slips of those we most revere should not encourage us in careless writing, but render us more and more scrupulously self-critical, we, who have no hope to attain to the merit we admire in others, and know that therefore even their errors would be many times more glaring in music of our own.—ED. M. T.]

DR. STAINER'S EVENING SERVICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MUSICAL TIMES.

DEAR SIR,—I trust you will pardon my troubling you, but (if not too insignificant), I should like to have this question answered:

In your review of Dr. Stainer's "Short Festival Setting of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis," you mention a progression as "proceeding from 9th to 2nd, " $\overset{C}{\#} \overset{B}{\underset{A}{\#}}$," is it not *really* a progression of *consecutive ninths*? By replying in your Answers to Correspondents you will greatly oblige A.M.

[The first of the two chords is the seventh of C $\sharp$, the seventh being the bass note; the second of the two chords is a seventh of B, the seventh again being the bass note. It would have been more correct to describe the progression as being in consecutive seconds, and an apology is here offered for the oversight.—THE WRITER OF THE REVIEW.]

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

*** Notices of concerts, and other information supplied by our friends in the country, must be forwarded as early as possible after the occurrence; otherwise they cannot be inserted. Our correspondents must specifically denote the date of each concert, for without such date no notice can be taken of the performance.

Our correspondents will greatly oblige by writing all names as clearly as possible, as we cannot be responsible for any mistakes that may occur.

Correspondents are informed that their names and addresses must accompany all communications.

We cannot undertake to return offered contributions; the authors, therefore, will do well to retain copies.

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