Musical Instruments in the Early Church

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effectiveness of these songs is due in no small measure to their having the directness and expressive qualities of folk-song. In one or two others of Mr. Shaw's recent songs, however, there are signs that he is rather too easily using the little *clichés* from which folk-song is no more free than is the royalty ballad. The only difference is that of the two conventions it is the better. But it is a convention none the less. We want to reproduce the spirit of folk-song, not the letter. With the former we get life and originality; the latter is merely imitative, and imitations are apt to be anything but vital.

Peter Warlock continues to produce some of the best of modern native songs. His 'Love for Love' and 'Sweet Content' (Winthrop Rogers) are well up to the standard of his former efforts. The first is a delicious setting of some quaint words from a Harleian MS., for high or low voice; the second is yet another version of Dekker's well-known poem.

Letters to the Editor

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

SIR,—I was interested in Mr. Clement Antrobus Harris's article on this subject. The Psalms would undoubtedly be accompanied at first by the lyre or kithara, for the word 'psalm' means a hymn or song (sacred or secular), accompanied by one of these instruments played with the fingers, harpwise. A kitharode was the same kind of composition, but played with a plectrum. Each had an instrumental prelude, analogous to the pianoforte prelude that introduces any modern song.

At various times there arose prejudices against instruments, just as nearer our own times we have the Calvinists at Geneva prohibiting all instrumental music for ninety years, the Scotch Church abolishing the organ, &c. I doubt if there was at any time a universal banishment of instruments. But when the lyre and kithara were prohibited, the prelude and interludes were missing; and as these were integral parts of the psalm, their place was taken by the antiphon, a sort of vocal prelude to the psalm about to be sung.

The lyre was an instrument of seven to nine or more strings: its form is so well-known that no description is necessary. For instance, the pedals of my grand pianoforte are supported in a lyre-shaped frame. The kithara was simply an enlarged and more powerful kind of lyre, mostly played with a plectrum. One frequently sees it on statues. It was to the lyre exactly what the grand pianoforte of to-day is to the upright, or the harpsichord of our forefathers to the spinet. At Bradfield College I accompanied the choruses of the Greek plays with lyres played harpwise: the boys could not manage the plectrum.

Mr. Harris makes the remarkable statement that the kithara had frets. The neck was unknown to—or at any rate unused by—the Greeks, from whom the early Church derived its music. The Egyptian *nefer*, a more ancient instrument than the lyre, had a neck like a banjo, but I have seen no evidence of frets.

When the organ (or hydraulus) was introduced, it did not accompany the voices, but was used only for interludes down to the time of the Reformation. The hydraulus appears as late as the year 826 A.D., when Ludwig the Pious had one placed in his palace at Aix. The Eastern Church seems never to have overcome its prejudice against the use of instruments. It is more conservative than its younger rival the Church of Rome. When studying its music with a priest of the Greek Uniat Church I asked him why they used no organ. I knew perfectly well, but wanted to see what reason he would give. 'We have no place for it in our liturgy,' he replied; 'we sing the whole time'—which showed that it never occurred to him that the organ could be used with the voices, but only in intervals, of which there were none in his liturgy.

By the way, for a long period the organ was spoken of in the plural, while the singular was reserved for the vocal organum. This has frequently led to misunderstandings on the part of historians, who translate *cum organo* as 'with the organ,' whereas it should be 'with the (vocal) organum.'

To this day the Spanish speak of *los organos* when mentioning the instrument, and *canto de organo* when referring to unaccompanied singing in parts. The word *organo* here is of course the mediæval *organum*; the word *organos* the mediæval *organi*; the player, for instance, was *pulsator organorum*, not *organi*. This distinction is not found in the earliest allusions to the instrument, where both organ and hydraulus are named *organum*. I think the distinction between the singular and plural begins about the 10th century: it led eventually to the English expression 'a pair of organs,' and the French 'les orgues.' But I have trespassed on your space too long.—Yours, &c.,

C. F. ABDY WILLIAMS.

Myrtle Cottage, Milford-on-Sea.

THE SYMPHONY AND THE KINEMA

SIR,—The article by Mr. Sydney Grew in your May issue under the above heading calls for some comment. The gist of Mr. Grew's argument seems to be summed up in the sentence 'The cinema is a compound of pictorial art and dramatic art, both of which clash with music.'

Dramatic art, *plus* music, combine to form the art of opera. Mr. Grew has no objection to opera, I imagine. He has no objection to sitting in an opera house, watching the actions of the performers while listening to the music they produce. But what he does seem to object to is to sit in a kinema and watch the actions of some people while certain other people (whom he cannot see) produce the music. But why? No answer seems forthcoming.

When I was at Cairo last spring, I attended the performance of several operas, the dramatic part of which was contributed by the kinema, while the music was rendered by a large body of singers and an orchestra behind the screen. The performances were magnificent. Never have I heard music sung with more dramatic power, and never have I seen opera so well acted. Here, certainly, is a case in which pictorial and dramatic art combined never clashed with the music.

Mr. Grew's argument therefore leaves me cold.—Yours, &c.,

F. DARWIN FOX.

111, Lansdowne Road, W. II,
May 1, 1920.

ORGAN RECITALS AT BRISTOL.

SIR,—The writer of the Bristol notes in your issue for May states that St. Mary Redcliff is the only place at Bristol where organ recitals are regularly given.

It would be an injustice to the organists of St. Stephen's and St. Thomas's Churches to allow such a statement to pass unchallenged. In the former Church the fifty-second recital of a Thursday dinner-hour series was given to-day. During the past half-year various organists have played programmes at St. Thomas's on the first and third Mondays of each month, alternating with St. Mary Redcliff's second and fourth.—Yours, &c.

ARTHUR G. COLBORN.

Stapleton, Bristol,

May 6, 1920.

Sixty Years Ago

From the *Musical Times* of June, 1860:

CRYSTAL PALACE.—The sixth season of the Crystal Palace was fitly inaugurated, on the 4th of last month, by a musical festival in honour of Mendelssohn, upon the same colossal scale as marked the performances at the late Handel Festival. The oratorio performed was 'Elijah,' which was selected for the inauguration of a statue of Mendelssohn. The orchestra, consisting of about 3,000 performers, were not so effective in the rendering of the choral passages of this oratorio as they were in the broader music and more familiar Handelian choruses . . . and there was an evident want of enthusiasm in the audience. The music of 'Elijah' is of a more complicated and florid character than any that has hitherto been attempted by the colossal orchestra, and though the grander parts of the choruses were brought out with most telling effect, there was a cloudiness and apparent unsteadiness in the delicate passages . . . In the soprano music Mdlle. Parepa sang