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GEVAERT ON ANCIENT MUSIC AND PLAIN-SONG.

La Mélodie Antique dans le Chant de l'Église Latine, par FR. AUG. GEVAERT. Gand. 1895. 25 Francs.

READERS of M. Gevaert's great work, *La Musique de l'Antiquité*, will remember the convincing chapter (Bk. ii. chap. 2) in which he reinforced and illustrated his analysis of the modes of Greek music by parallels drawn on the one hand from the plain-song of the Western church, on the other from the *Volkstlieder* of modern Europe. Such a demonstration of the historical continuity between ancient, mediæval, and modern musical form must have been felt by many to carry even greater weight than the ingenious interpretation of ancient texts. In the present volume M. Gevaert returns to the same line of demonstration, but concentrates his attention upon that part of the argument which relates to the plain-song of the church, and seeks to show, by a detailed analysis of the Antiphonaria, that the antiphons still in daily use admit of an easy classification and distribution amongst the ancient 'modes.' The second part of the book consists in a 'thematic catalogue' of the antiphons of the Divine Office, classified according to the principles laid down in the first part; it is this introductory portion, therefore, which is of interest to the student of Greek antiquity. The author follows the historical line of development, opening with a brief chapter on the ancient system of modes and keys, which receives its complement in the account of pagan music in the Imperial period and its decline given in the second chapter.

In this chapter the extant remains of ancient music are laid under contribution, and serve to establish and illustrate the principles laid down in the first chapter. With the third chapter we pass to the music of the church, and first of all to the Ambrosian hymns. The continuity of their melodies with those of classical antiquity is not difficult of demonstration. As M. Gevaert says—and the truth of his assertion is patent—the 'harmonic structure' of the Ambrosian melodies of the Dorian mode, such as those to which the hymns *Aeterna Christi munera* and *A solis ortus cardine* are sung, is identical with that of the hymns of Mesomedes to Helios and to the Muse. Four other simple modal forms

are illustrated from this class of melodies, while the mixed melodies to which Ptolemy gives the name *ιασμαίολια* are recognized by M. Gevaert in the case of the hymns *Veni redemptor gentium* and *Aeternæ rerum conditor*. That the feeling for distinctions of mode and the varying *ῥθος* of the several modes was alive and powerful in the sixth century is proved by the interesting passage from the letter of Cassiodorus to Boethius (*Var.* ii. 40) translated on p. 76. Thus far then we have met with no solution of continuity. In the next chapter (chap. iv.) we pass on to the main subject of the book—the antiphonary of the Roman church—and the conclusion to which the inquiry leads is briefly stated at the outset—'Nous retrouverons ici toutes les formes et combinaisons modales que l'hymnodie latine a prises à l'art antique.' A series of illustrations presents the doctrine thus enunciated visibly before us. Examples of eight modal forms are given, and their relation to the ancient modes is shown. At the same time it is pointed out that a certain displacement of the centre of gravity, if we may so call it, has taken place since the close of the classical period. The Dorian mode has lost the pre-eminence assigned to it by Greek tradition, and its place has been taken by the various forms of the 'Iastian' mode (as M. Gevaert calls the ancient Hypo-phrygian). This is clearly shown to result from that marked aversion to the tritone which characterizes Christian music. After the valuable summary of results in a generalized form which occupies pp. 98–102 we have a brief account of the history of notation and a detailed demonstration of the process by which (after the theory of classical music was no longer perfectly understood) the ancient names of the modes were applied in new senses to the system of 8 modes—the *Octoechos* first mentioned by St. John Damascene, which still maintains its position in ecclesiastical theory. Chapter v. contains an interesting criticism from the musician's standpoint of the structure and musical value of the antiphons, based on the idea that in homophonic music, where mode takes the place of tonality, the harmony which combines the several sounds of a musical idea is gradually revealed by the progress of the theme, whereas in the

polyphonic music of the modern world the tonality is at once determined by the chords which sustain the melody. Hence 'the ancients did not seek for the unforeseen in musical sensations.' The theme, motive, or (to give it its ancient name) the *rómos* is all-important. And M. Gevaert traces the whole body of antiphons comprised in the *Tonarius* of Regino to forty-seven such *rómoi*. The fruitfulness of this principle in furthering our understanding of plain-song can only be estimated by those who will be at pains to follow M. Gevaert through his applications of the principle. Two further chapters close the first part of the book. They deal with the history of the antiphonary,—the growth of the collection, the circumstances of its transmission, and the transformations through which it has passed in the course of centuries. These chapters really form the groundwork on which the whole argument is based and may seem to some readers to be somewhat out of place in their present position. We need not here follow M. Gevaert in his lucid and convincing criticism of the sources of our knowledge of the antiphonary and its history. The conjectural account of the formation of the collection and its three periods, based on hints drawn from the Rule of St. Benedict, the brief notices of the *Liber Pontificalis* and the letters of St. Gregory as well as on a critical analysis of the texts and melodies of the antiphons themselves, is a brilliant constructive effort. Nor is the restitution of the primitive form of the antiphonary, founded chiefly on the *Tonarius* of Regino and other pre-Guidonian sources, less worthy of the author's high reputation. This is a piece of work of which it may be said with confidence that was no one save M. Gevaert could have attempted it successfully. To borrow a description recently given of him by M. Widor, we may say: 'Fils de paysans, n'ayant guère jusqu'à l'adolescence quitté son village natal, servant de messe, enfant de chœur, sans doute son âme s'est à jamais imprégnée d'une atmosphère toute spéciale, faite d'encens et de musique pieuse.'

The points, however, of more especial interest to the readers of the *Classical Review* are the new formulation of M. Gevaert's views on the subject of classical music embodied in the earlier chapters, and his remarks on the remains of Greek music discovered within recent years, which are printed in Appendix A (pp. 383-412). In the first chapter we notice a decided change in the presentation of the doctrine of modes

and their classification, as compared with M. Gevaert's earlier work. The 'three modalities' of *La Musique de l'Antiquité* no longer form the pivot of the doctrine. The 'plagal' forms of the ancient modes have disappeared (p. 13, note 2) as the result of a closer study of the ecclesiastical modes. The *ἀρμονία σύντονοι* and *ἀνειμένα* receive an explanation which seeks to do justice to the crucial passage in the *Politics* of Aristotle (1342 b 21) *τοῖς ἀπειρηκόσι διὰ χρόνον οὐ ῥάδιον ᾄδειν τὰς συντόνους ἀρμονίας, ἀλλὰ τὰς ἀνειμένας ἢ φύσιν ὑποβάλλει τοῖς τοιοῦτοις*. Few will question that M. Gevaert's theory of these modes, whether it prove strong enough to maintain itself or not, must be given the preference over the explanation offered by von Jan in his review of Mr. Monro's 'Modes of Greek Music' (*Berliner philologische Wochenschrift* 1895, 1206 ff.). M. Gevaert strenuously upholds against von Jan the doctrine of the 'Terzenschluss'—termination on the mediant—which Westphal—'pauvre grand Westphal'—had surrendered to his adversary's attacks just as the discovery of the Delphic hymn was about to lend it the weight of a striking parallel (in the cadence which, twice repeated, accompanies the words *ἀνακιδναται* and *ἀναμέλπεται*), while M. Gevaert's studies in plain-song were to confirm it from yet another quarter.

Not less interesting is the treatment of the extant remains of classical music, now enriched by such important additions as the monument of Seikilos, the Orestes papyrus, and the Delphic hymn. (The larger fragments of the second hymn were not discovered in time to receive their treatment at the hands of M. Gevaert, but we are promised a further appendix which shall deal with them.) The authenticity of the melody published by Kircher and set to the first Pythian ode of Pindar is still maintained, although (p. 32 note 4) the mixture of alphabets employed in the notation has raised a doubt in the mind of M. Gevaert. Strangely enough, this very fact is regarded by von Jan (*Scriptores Musici Graeci*, p. 426) as tending, so far as it goes, to support the genuineness of the document, since the finds of Delphi have shown us that both notations, the old and new, were employed alternatively. And this latter view is surely the true one.

M. Gevaert's comments on the recently discovered texts are those of a practical musician and a critic of sound sense. He assigns the Seikilos melody unhesitatingly to its true mode, the 'Iastian' (Hypo-phry-

gian), and points out its appropriateness; he brushes aside the suggestion that the fragmentary score of the Orestes is enharmonic; he treats the curious composite scale employed in the Delphic hymn, with its almost modern chromatic passages and its transformation of the 'minor' into a 'major' mediant, with the freedom of one whom no preconceived theory hinders from appreciating the plain facts presented by the document; he sees clearly that the composition is no *προσόδιον* as Reinach had suggested, though the inscription which enabled Crusius (*Die Delphischen Hymnen*, p. 135 ff.) to assign to it its true title as the *ῥυμος* of Kleocharēs was as yet unpublished when he wrote.

Enough has been said to show that the importance of M. Gevaert's book cannot be too highly rated by all students of the history of music. In conclusion we may notice its bearing on the discussion raised by the appearance of Mr. Monro's book on the *Modes of Greek Music*. The author does not, it is true, meet Mr. Monro's arguments in detail, but restates the traditional view of the modes in his opening chapter and throughout the work assumes the truth and at the same time furnishes the most convincing proof of the doctrine by establishing an unbroken continuity between the musical forms employed by classical antiquity and by the mediæval church. In an article recently contributed to this *Review*, Mr. Monro seems to limit his position in the sense of admitting diversity of mode for the post-classical period of Greek music, while holding this to be due to innovation, and recognizing as classical only the Perfect System with the tetrachord *συννημμένων* and the Dorian and Mixolydian modes. It is true, no doubt, that the examples of ancient composition in other modes belong (so far as the evidence at present extends) to the post-classical epoch, and that those documents which belong to, or may with probability trace descent from, the earlier period are explicable by the combination of the Dorian and Mixolydian. To this M. Gevaert himself bears testimony in a disputed case. The Orestes fragment is not Phrygian, as Crusius suggested, but Dorian (p. 391). But Plutarch quotes Aristoxenus to the effect that the combination above

mentioned was proper to tragedy; nor will it be denied that the Dorian mode is eminently fitted to be the vehicle of the worship offered to Apollo at Delphi. The *argumentum ex silentio*, never a strong one, seems especially weak here, where it is confronted by the overwhelming probability that the system on which all the homophonic music of Europe since the Christian era has been based traces its descent from the classical period of Greek art. The contrary theory, it must be remembered, rests on meanings which can, but need not, be read into the statements of unprofessional writers—chiefly philosophers in search of an analogy, or polymathic *littérateurs* with the usual inaccuracy of their tribe when dealing with a technical subject. What has already been written in these columns may be supplemented by two considerations there omitted:—

(1) Arist. *Pol.* iii. 1276 b 8 says: ἀρμονίαν τῶν αὐτῶν φθόγγων ἔρεπαν εἶναι λέγομεν, ἂν ὁτὲ μὲν ἡ Δωρίος ὁτὲ δὲ Φρύγιος. Surely the natural interpretation of these words—introduced as they are to illustrate the truth that a *σύνθεσις* of parts varies according to the *εἶδος τῆς συνθέσεως*—is that the sounds which fall within the limits of a single octave are variously disposed in the Dorian and Phrygian 'harmonies.'

(2) The so-called 'vocal' notation, i.e. the relatively 'modern' notation—the 'new' system—in the Ionic alphabet, singles out the octave F—F by the use of the unmodified form of the alphabet. Is not this because the seven modes as executed in the seven keys of the same names were brought within the compass of that octave? This, as has so often been pointed out, is the significance of the inverse order of the keys (ascending) and modes (descending). I see, therefore, no reason to depart from the position already taken in this *Review* with regard to Mr. Monro's theory. That theory is not accepted by MM. Reinach, Ruelle, Gevaert and von Jan, nor by Crusius, who, though perhaps less decided, defines his position in the words 'ablehnend oder doch abwartend.' We may hope that further discovery will bring further light.

H. STUART JONES.