Beethoven's Sketch Books. Chamber Music, &c (Continued)

Author(s): J. S. Shedlock

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THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

NOVEMBER 1, 1892.

ROBERT FRANZ.

THE great song-writer passed peacefully away to his rest on the 24th ult., in the city where he was born on June 18, 1815. He had all the advantages of a good education placed before him, but his predilection for the study of music led him to neglect other work. It is curious to note that the father of the illustrious composer of "The Messiah," also born at Halle, detested music and musicians, and opposed his son's wishes, and that more than a century later we find Robert Franz's parent acting in a similar manner towards his son. At length, in 1835, young Robert was placed under the well-known F. Schneider at Dessau, in order to study harmony and counterpoint. On his return home he led a dreary, aimless life until the year 1843, when he was appointed Organist of the Ulrichskirche and Conductor of the "Singakademie," and subsequently "Königlicher Musikdirector." In 1861 the title of Doctor of Music was conferred on him by the University of Halle. Already, in 1841, his hearing became impaired, and this affliction, coupled with a serious nervous disorder, caused him to give up writing. It was, however, only in 1885 that he resigned his post of musical director at the University. Pecuniary troubles followed, but these were considerably alleviated by the generous exertions of Liszt, Joachim, and others, who organised a series of Concerts which realised the sum of £5,000. His latter years were devoted to editing the works of Bach and Handel. He married Marie Hinrichs, who was also a composer of songs. It was only last summer that Robert Franz presented the writer of these lines with a set of his wife's songs, at the same time pointing out those which pleased him best. Marie Franz died in May, 1891. In 1885 the seventieth birthday of Robert Franz was duly celebrated at Halle, and on that occasion the composer published, under the title of "Albumblatt," his first composition for the pianoforte.

Robert Franz is known chiefly by his songs, which rank next to those of the greatest song-writers, and higher praise than this is scarcely possible. It was in the year 1843 that he published his first set of twelve, and of these Robert Schumann remarked: "Of the songs of Robert Franz much may be said; they are no isolated phenomena, but stand closely related to the whole development of our art during the last ten years." And again in the same article: "He aims at something more than well or ill-sounding music; his desire is to reproduce the poem with its real depth of meaning." Franz's second set of songs was dedicated to Schumann, the third to Mendelssohn, and the fourth to Liszt. The last-named composer, who wrote a long and remarkable article on Franz's songs in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of 1855, afterwards reprinted as a brochure, says: "His songs are mostly moods which are absorbed in themselves, and rarely tend dramatically beyond themselves." And again, the unobtrusive character of Franz's music has been aptly described by a modern writer, Mr. Fred. Niecks, the present Professor of Music at Edinburgh University, in the following sentence: "Robert Franz is like one of those quiet, unpretentious people you are apt to pass heedlessly by in a crowd, but who, if you once come in close contact with them, fascinate you, draw you to their hearts, and there hold you with fetters light as gossamer,

strong as iron." And what Franz wrote about himself as a song-writer will certainly not be out of place here. He says: "That I almost exclusively cultivated the song-form and wrote only very little else, was at first the consequence of an irresistible need; afterwards I became convinced that in this form culminated my most individual contents. It was, therefore, a matter of principle with me not to leave this path, and it is not likely that I shall try my fortune on other roads." In the matter of original composition, he never left that path, but, advancing steadily along it, achieved lasting fame.

The number of Robert Franz's songs exceeds 250. His favourite poets were Heine, Lenau, Rückert, and Burns. Of the songs, thirty of the best have had English words adapted to them by the late Mr. Francis Hueffer, one of the composer's most sympathetic admirers. These have helped to popularise Robert Franz in this country, but now German is becoming more familiar and they are heard in both languages. The fact that Franz's songs do not often appear on concert programmes does not prove that they are ignored, for most of them are for home enjoyment rather than for concert use. Besides his achievements in the department of song, Franz became known through his "additional accompaniments" to Handel's "Messiah" and "L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato," Bach's "Mattäus Passionsmusik," Magnificat, and other works. Widely differing views have been expressed with regard to their merits, and the present is certainly not the moment to open up the vexed question. But even in this brief record of his life and art-work, his attempt to revivify the scores of old masters cannot be ignored. To him it was a labour of love, and even those who question his methods would scarcely doubt his sincerity and earnestness. Robert Franz has fully expounded those methods in his "Oeffener Brief an Eduard Hanslick," published in 1871, and his preface to his score of "The Messiah" also contains much that will prove serviceable to those who desire to become further acquainted with the matter. Essays on Robert Franz's songs and arrangements have been written by Saran, Ambros, Liszt, Hueffer, and others. Now that the composer has at last paid the debt of nature, attention will, for a time, be specially directed to his songs, but future generations will still respect his memory and enjoy his music; and to Franz, Schubert and Robert Schumann will be added the name of Robert Franz.

BEETHOVEN'S SKETCH BOOKS.

By J. S. SHEDLOCK, B.A.

(Continued from p. 592.)

CHAMBER MUSIC, &c.

OF the two Sonatas for pianoforte and violoncello (Op. 5), No. 1 in F is only represented by the opening bars of the principal theme of the *Allegro*:—

with the second bar in the form in which it appears at the commencement of the development section; also—

and other rough memoranda which indicate that Beethoven was working at the first movement.

Of the Sonata in G minor (No. 2) there is more to be said. There is a long sketch of a piece, apparently

for pianoforte and some stringed instrument, in which occurs the following—

The piece was never finished, and from these and other passages we may perhaps consider the G minor Sonata indirectly evolved from it. The opening phrase in the major key of this sketch presents, indeed, a foreshadowing of the Trio of the third movement of Beethoven's Symphony in A, for it commences—

and a little farther on we have—

which certainly recalls the prominent horn passage in the same movement.

On another sheet there are actual sketches for the first movement of the G minor Sonata, and from their close resemblance to the printed version the work must have been already far advanced. For a well-known passage in the *Coda* Beethoven, however, writes—

followed by—

not one of which represents the master's latest word; this was how he tried, tried, and tried again.

In chapter 46 of his "Zweite Beethoveniana" Nottebohm describes two sketch books of the years 1798 and 1799, both of which are of importance in connection with the history of the origin of the Quartets (Op. 18). In the second of these books (formerly in the possession of Aloys Fuchs, afterwards in that of F. A. Grasnick) there are sketches of the first, second, and last movements of the Quartet in A (Op. 18, No. 5). Nottebohm also informs us that some sheets of that sketch book are missing. The half sheet marked 152 in our *Notirungsbuch* may very possibly be one of those missing sheets. On it we find variation 3 of the *Andante* indicated thus—

and variation 5 thus—

Then there is a long sketch of the *Finale* almost down to the double bar, with the second subject in E presented in a somewhat different version from the printed one—

By the way, the resemblance of this theme to the one in A flat in the *Rondo* of the *Sonata pathétique* is striking. Beethoven was engaged in writing both works at about the same period. Of another work, the Septet which also then engaged his attention, we seem to catch a glimpse in the following—

Those three up-beat quavers are in the Sonata, Quartet, and Septet themes—

In other cases it will also be found interesting to compare works composed at the same time, and to note certain outward resemblances of figure and theme; but to this attention has already been called. See, for instance, the Sonata (Op. 53) and the Quartet in E minor (Op. 59, No. 2).

On sheet 81 there is a long sketch of the *Andante* of the Pianoforte Quintet in E flat (Op. 16), which was played by Beethoven at Vienna on April 2, 1798. The theme is given, but in less ornate fashion than in the printed version—

The form of the oboe solo passage seems to have been, for a time, uncertain. We have—

and at the top of the page, probably an afterthought—

The bars leading to the second entry of the theme on the pianoforte are written somewhat *à la* Liszt, thus—

and so, with certain differences, the sketch (which occupies a whole page) goes down to the very last bar of the movement. On the other side of the page is a fairly long sketch of a movement in E with the superscription *Sinfonie*.

In another part of the Notirungsbuch, and on similar paper to the above, is the second subject of the *Rondo* of this Quintet—

The Notirungsbuch contains the *Minuetto* and *Trio* of the Sextet (Op. 71), written out in score; on another sheet there are a few bars relating to the *Finale* of this work.

Mention has been made in these articles of fugue themes and of fugal work, relating evidently to the days when Beethoven was being initiated into the mysteries of counterpoint by his teacher, Albrechtsberger, but to our previous remarks and illustrations one or two additions of interest may be made. On the first page of a half sheet (marked 45) the first eight bars of Handel's great Fugue in G minor—

are written down. Why Beethoven wrote thus much and no more it is, of course, impossible to say. The eighth bar, with a plain bar-stroke, is immediately followed by a scale passage in 6-8 time. This is not

the only bit of Handel to be found in the sketch books. In one there is the commencement of "I know that my Redeemer liveth," written down in a sort of score-sketch (for flute, clarinet, and bassoon).

Among a lot of short sketches we come across the following light canonic imitation—

uns 2 Variat.

and on another sheet the two following canons in the unison—

and

On page 158 there is an interesting *fugue à quatre* of thirty-eight bars on the following theme—

From the Notirungsbuch, as of old from the enchanted gardens of Armida, it is indeed difficult to escape, though our subject-matter is by no means exhausted. On many a page are unfinished sketches which tempt one to pause and speculate as to what they were or what they might have become; there are mysterious notes, reminding one of the

eccentricity and genius displayed by Turner in some of his drawings, and tempting one to unravel their secrets; and there are mystic signs, like the hand-writing on the wall, but, alas! without a Daniel to decipher them. For the present, however, we must leave this magic and fascinating volume. It is to be hoped that the patience of our readers has not been too severely taxed; for it is one thing to gaze on the master's sketches, another thing to describe them. The style of writing, the size or shape of the notes, indicates now care, now impatient haste; the scratchings out and alterations give, as it were, a reflection of the composer's processes of thought; the colour of the notes (in pencil, black or red ink) suggests varying degrees of meaning; and finally the juxtaposition of sketches differing in key and character, and the confusion which reigns supreme on many a page, present almost a photograph of the vivid workings of the master's brain. Without a sight of all these things even the most interesting of the sketches quoted lose much of their life and importance; they bear a relation to the autograph sketches somewhat similar, perhaps, to that which the handmarks themselves of Beethoven bore to the thoughts by which he was possessed when he penned them. In our concluding article next month we shall speak about the birth of a Symphony—viz., the "Pastoral."

(To be concluded.)

FROM MY STUDY.

EVALINA called the other day with her uncle's congratulations upon my return to town. I made many inquiries as to the state of my old friend, and learned with some concern that he continues to write what he calls poetry. "He does not compose so many ballads as formerly," quoth Evalina, "but has taken to more serious things, elegies and such like. I fear that he has begun an epic, and have heard something about a drama in blank verse." "My dear," said I, "this is serious. I am deeply sorry for your uncle. Has his condition been aggravated by the death of Tennyson?" This was an artful question. I knew what was coming when the maiden flushed and her little hand stole into the recesses of a bag she was carrying. "Dear Mr. X.," exclaimed Evalina, "it had a very bad effect indeed. Uncle sat up all one night working hard, and tearing up, oh! so many sheets of paper. But he achieved what he called an act of poetic homage, and—don't be angry, please—he has sent it to you by me with a request for its publication in one of your chatty articles." With this the child laid before me an envelope inscribed in my friend's well-known hand. "Evalina," said I, "this is ridiculous. Is your uncle posing as a candidate for the Laureateship?—the attitude ascribed to everybody who has written lines on this subject, and therefore one to be religiously avoided." "I am very sure," said Evalina, "that he has not considered that matter. But he is proud of his little poem, and I—if you will excuse me, dear Sir—don't think so badly of it myself." "Tut, tut, child," I cried, "are you an aider and abettor in his folly? However, let me look at the precious effusion." So saying, I opened the envelope and read. Now I am myself no judge of poetry, being inclined to look upon that form of literature in much the same light as did Mr. Thomas Carlyle. Nevertheless, I am not debarred from criticising the thing by the fact that I do not like it and know nothing whatever about it. Hence I remarked judiciously: "With all respect to you, my dear, and all proper regard for my friend, the author, this is very poor stuff indeed." "Please, Mr. X.," quoth the

damsel, "in what consists its poverty?" I evaded the question, remarking that I could only give satisfactory answer to an expert. "Oh! but you will print it, won't you?" pleaded Evalina. "H'm, child—only on condition that I be allowed to wash my hands of all responsibility. But there is another consideration: the Editor of THE MUSICAL TIMES may object to open his columns for the reception of —" "Nay," was Evalina's timely interruption, "he is known to be a most amiable man." "Amiable, but dutiful," said I. "Ah, well! dear Mr. X.," returned the maiden, brightening, "you send on the poem and I will plead with the Editor." Said I, "You shall have your way, as far as I am concerned. You always do. Now go, and tell your uncle how deeply sorry I am that the symptoms of his disorder are more aggravated than ever." Here are my poor old friend's lines:—

Like thine own Arden, thou hast "crost the bar,"
And sailed o'er seas mysterious to the Golden Isles;
Yet not forgetting thy dear England there;
If it so be that memory survive,
And earthly love lives on in blessed souls.
My fancy paints thy Spirit's glad return,
After long years, to see again the home,
And them who dwell therein; listing sweet talk
Of one who liveth still in English fame,
Whose music waketh yet the Island lyre.
What if thou find'st another in thy place,
O'er all thy fair dominion holding rule?
What if thy country hear another's song,
And loves the singer? E'en so must it be,
For Art's inheritance will lack not heirs
Whose voices, fresh as tune of birds in spring,
Shall charm the ear with strange new melodies.
Yet may'st thou know thyself our own,
And, in the evening hush or Sabbath hour,
Mark the clear cadence of thy rhythmic chant
O'er all the vocal land, constant and low,
Like murmurous anthems of the solemn sea
Heard inland in the quiet of the night.

Evalina had scarcely left me before Y. called with crusty congratulations, which, as not being an ensample for ceremonial procedure, I forbore to repeat. These over, said he: "Country air has a strange effect on some people. I read your gush about the blackbird, the robin, the hill-tops, and all the rest. What are you becoming? A Jefferies without insight?—a mere wordy vapourer?—a retailer of cheap sentiment? Faugh! Stay in town, where sometimes you do avoid writing nonsense." I answered nothing, and he went on: "I have another complaint against you. Why fill up those articles of yours with talk about, and extracts from, ballads neither true nor beautiful?" Quoth I: "Why don't you send me a paper on musical fallacies?" "That's not the question," said he; "and if it were, let me tell you that facts wherewith to explode fallacies are sometimes hard to run down and bag. But better do nothing than inflict upon the public column after column about folk who never existed, and if they had lived, would have been whipped or hanged." "Y.," I remarked severely, "you are a Philistine." "Pooh," was the reply, "call me something else if you want to hurt. Gath and Askelon were decent places to dwell in when David saw Bathsheba. We did not compass the death of Uriah. Keep to the point, which is useful facts *versus* worthless ballads." "But what," I exclaimed, "is the good of discussing with Mr. Obstinate, who would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead?" "Certainly not," chuckled Y., "I don't believe in ghosts." "Nevertheless, you must have some respect for high authority. You know Aiken?" "He had talents," growled my friend, "and has, long ere this, been chastised for not turning them to better account." "Listen to