Martini's "Esemplare"

Author(s): E. W. Healey

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We have also to record the death, on August 30, at Homberg, near Cassel, of Dr. Wilhelm Volckmar, one of the most remarkable organ *virtuosos* of our time, and highly esteemed as a composer of sonatas and other pieces for his instrument. He was also the author of an Organ School, a standard work of its kind, which obtained a wide circulation. Volckmar was born at Hersfeld, in 1812, and in 1835 was appointed to a professorship at a government training college in Homberg, which post he occupied up to the time of his death.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MARTINI'S "ESEMPLARE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I have been so interested in the above work (a copy of which a short time ago came into my hands) that I would gladly see put into practice the suggestion made by the writer of an article on the book (under the heading of "Saggio di Contrappunto," in Grove's Dictionary), that there should be a careful reprint of the same; surely a small committee of leading musicians might take the matter up, and (after ascertaining the probable cost of each copy) canvass—through the musical periodicals, or otherwise—for subscribers' names, until a sufficient number were obtained to start the thing. The new edition might take the form of a translation, or be kept in the original Italian, this last (from the nature of the work) being easily understood with some little help from a dictionary.

In the meantime I thought that a slight description of the "Esemplare" might not be uninteresting to some of your readers, who though, perhaps, unacquainted (from its extreme scarcity) with the book itself, are yet familiar with the many allusions to it and quotations from it, met with in such standard text-books as those of Cherubini, Ouseley, Banister, &c.

The full title of the first volume is "Esemplare ossia Saggio Fondamentale Practico di Contrappunto sopra il Canto Fermo," the second volume having the same, excepting that the word "Fugato" takes the place of "sopra il Canto Fermo." The first volume contains examples of old church music, composed on ancient *canto fermo*, and is divided according to the "tones"—so many compositions on Melodies of the "first tone," so many on Melodies of the "second tone," and so on. These examples are taken from the works of the following composers: Animuccia, Cifra, Corvo, Falconio, Gabusso, Minarti, Morales, N. N., Navarro, Nitramo, Olstani, Ortiz, Palestrina, Pasquale, Pontio, Porta, Rota, Willaert, Vittoria, and Zarlino (Martini himself adding some canons, &c., in illustration of different points cropping up in the course of his discourse). Each composition is fully analysed, and its contrapuntal artifices and chief beauties noticed, the peculiar characteristics induced by the particular "tone" to which its *canto fermo* belongs (such as cadences, &c.) being clearly pointed out.

The second volume contains samples of fugal composition in styles varying from free imitation to strict canon, and in scores of from two to eight voices, by the following composers: Agostini, Barberieri, Baroni, Bernabei, Caresana, Clari, Foggia, Gesualdo (Principe di Venosa), Lotti, Marcello, Marenzio, Monteverde, N. N., Pacchioni, Palestrina, Pertti, Piochi, Porta, Predieri, Riccieri, A. Scarlatti, Stradella, Steffani, and Turini (Martini, as in the first volume, furnishing various musical illustrations to his commentary).

In the style of free imitation the Madrigals by Palestrina, Marenzio, Monteverde, &c., form a most interesting series—very instructive as showing the peculiar characteristics of this class in contradistinction to those of the old church music forming the rest of the collection in this second volume. All these examples are (like those of the first volume) accompanied by a most enjoyable running commentary; in fact, the "Esemplare" is like a gallery of old masterpieces, which we view in company with a genial and clever critic—a critic, moreover, who has a loving reverence for the works of art on which he discourses. Here (in Martini's notice of an extract from Palestrina's "Ave

Maria") is an interesting little passage on "real" answers, "which are not much admired by many moderns, who for the most part admit only tonal fugue; the old writers, on the contrary, were persuaded that real fugue was more valuable and convenient to the composer, and practised this more than the other." And again, at page 81: "It should be observed that, for the most part, the first masters of the art answered a subject at the fourth rather than at the fifth, to avoid accidental sharps and flats."

Martini places the mere mechanically clever forms of composition on their proper level, saying of them (in his discourse on a canon in contrary motion, by Zarlino)—"These artifices, these laborious engagements, easily appear to composers of our times as useless fatigue, that very quickly corrupts the good taste which is the natural and intrinsic quality of our music; but I think that such an exercise, practised with moderation by those who desire to attain to perfection in the profession, may afford great light and help towards mastering the most essential rules of counterpoint."

The following sentence on the value to the student of a *canto fermo* as a basis for his exercise is terse and to the point:—"By practising upon this he has a guide for mastering most easily and quickly the art of composing well; whereas he must, on the contrary, without this guide, proceed uncertainly and blindly to form the melody of the parts (especially the bass) and to join them in a disorderly and displeasing counterpoint."

Martini had a high appreciation of the old church melodies as powerful aids to religious feeling. In his notice of a hymn for the "Vesper of all the Martyrs," by Palestrina, he says—speaking of the *canto fermo* on which it is composed—"This canto, above many others, produces in thoughtful hearers a feeling of gladness and innocent delight, which moves their spirits to praise God with greater fervour, and to exult in the distant glory which the sainted martyrs enjoy in heaven."

In the masterly essay on fugue, forming the first part of the second volume, Martini places fugal themes in a three-fold classification (which I have never seen in any other treatise)—viz., into that of—

and gives a clear description of each kind, in addition to the above musical illustrations.

In conclusion, I trust that the suggestion before alluded to may before long be put into practice, and that my professional brethren may enjoy the great intellectual treat which a careful perusal of Martini's "Esemplare" affords.

I am, dear Sir, yours truly.

E. W. HEALEY,

Helensburgh, N.B.

Mus. Bac., Oxon.

ORIGIN OF A MUSICAL PHRASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—May I be permitted to state that the song which contains the phrase—

was composed by Auguste de Weyrauch (Sivonia), 1820, and not by Schubert.—Yours, &c.,

SERG. J. M. BEETON.

Kneller Hall, September 3, 1887.