British Composers and the Military Band

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requires for a certain purpose. For example, in the first Prelude of the 'Forty-eight,' Bach uses all the twelve sounds of the tempered scale; but in the following fugue he employs only eleven. Do we therefore say that these compositions are constructed upon slightly different scales? Would such a distinction be worth the mention? I am not quite clear as to whether or no Prof. Davies intends to suggest that composers should sometimes confine their efforts to the manipulation of 'the augmented 3rd scale,' or 'the diminished triad scale,' or even to a 'six-note sounding.' But I am inclined to think not, since even in the few bars marked '*maestoso*,' he has introduced *b* flat and *g* flat, neither of which sounds form part of the given scale. But in that case, what becomes of the scale?

It is obvious that Prof. Davies accepts the device of equal temperament as a foundation for his theories, his examples showing that he draws no distinction between sharps and flats. I should very much like to hear the chords on page 736 sung by a small choir—or, say, six voices, soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass. The example in arpeggio *à la* Schumann certainly possesses possibilities, as Prof. Davies remarks, which become gradually obvious. I have discovered, for instance, that it sounds equally well if played *al rovescio*; not note by note, but arpeggio by arpeggio; only in that case the 4th with which it concludes should be played not at the beginning, but at the end; of course *g-c* instead of *b-e*.

As for the *maestoso*, I cannot agree that it is 'common-place,' except for the fact that I am unable to discover anything in the upper part that can be called melody. But here again, the notation is weird. The final progression, by the way, is the same as that with which 'Everyman' opens—the tonic chord preceded by one consisting of the 7th, minor 3rd, and minor 6th.

Passing on, I am again doubtful whether we are to be allowed any notes other than those of the given 'sounding,' because when speaking of 'the diminished triad scale,' Prof. Davies says 'there are no chords of the diminished 7th,' and this deprivation applies also to 'the augmented triad scale.' I agree that 'this characteristic alone would give them distinction'; but if passing-notes are allowed (as in the *maestoso*), might not a sinful diminished 7th perchance creep in?

As for 'the six-note sounding,' we are vouchsafed no information concerning its genesis, but clearly it is not based on the 'perfect euphonics'—perhaps this is why it is so 'entrancingly interesting.' Six common chords, to an old-fashioned musician, seem rather short allowance; but I do not suppose that the man now due, or over-due, will have any use for common chords. The 'sounding' is (again I agree) piquant and very clear, but I doubt whether it will prove also 'very useful.' I can easily imagine myself getting very tired of it.

Prof. Walford Davies tells us—he even suggests that we shall be able to discover for ourselves—that chords and scales are lasting things. Well, I always thought they were, although I never took any particular credit to myself for thinking so. But of late years I have begun to hope that some at least of the chords are *not*. When Prof. Davies says 'they are imperishable because there is nothing in them to perish,' he makes me feel very uncomfortable. I cannot help hoping it is not true.—Yours, &c.,

5, Richmond Mansions, ARTHUR T. FROGGATT.
Dewton Road, Twickenham.

SYSTEM IN MUSICAL NOTATION

SIR,—In my opinion Mr. A. R. Cripps's letter in your issue for November should not remain unchallenged. He has, apparently, read the *Musical Times* review of Mr. Elliot Button's book and not the book itself, and has chosen two of the most convincing examples in the book, viz., the opening of the Schumann Romance in F sharp, and that of Bach's Toccata in D minor. He is evidently more 'hide-bound' than he thinks, and I am *not* one of those 'everyones' who will agree that 'the impression produced on the eye by the original differs absolutely from that produced by the amended version.'

From time to time I have written down and published many of my musical thoughts, and I feel sure that had I

followed Mr. Button's rules—which until now I had not thought of—I should in many cases have made my meaning clearer to portrayers of my compositions than I have done. Mr. Cripps seems not to have noticed that which impresses other musicians, viz., the light the book sheds on the real intentions of the great classical composers. If, for instance, the *Scherzo* of the 'Eroica' is 'Buttonized' the result is rather astonishing, and, as far as one can judge, it shows quite clearly Beethoven's intentions.

Personally I think that musicians and composers should be much indebted to Mr. Elliot Button for having had the courage to offer his opinions in a published book. I say quite frankly that I am firmly convinced of the usefulness of the changes advocated in 'Musical Notation.' As to that, how can we go to a higher authority than Sir Edward Elgar, whose Preface graces this most interesting publication?—Yours, &c.,

FERRIS TOZER

20, Howell Road, Exeter. November 17, 1920.

BRITISH COMPOSERS AND THE MILITARY BAND

SIR,—I trust you will allow me the hospitality of your columns for the purpose of appealing to British composers on behalf of military music. Hitherto they appear to have regarded this branch of their art as a negligible and somewhat contemptible Cinderella whom they have tacitly agreed to ignore. Either this, or they have been restrained by fear of the unknown from exploring the potentialities of the combination of wood-wind and brass of which the military band is composed. It seems to me that they are thus neglecting an important means of obtaining for their work a very wide public hearing, not only in the three kingdoms, but wherever throughout the world British units are stationed. Therefore, through your columns, may I put before them the following propositions with a view to inducing them to reconsider their present attitude.

The concert season at Kneller Hall is from the middle of May to the end of September, and during that time I will undertake to give performances of:

- (a) Original compositions for military band;
- (b) Original compositions for orchestra, arranged for military band;
- (c) Arrangements for military band of music by classical composers.

With regard to (c) it should first be ascertained by application here whether an arrangement has already been made and whether the piece selected is considered suitable.

A committee of experts will sit in judgment on all music submitted to determine whether it is worth rehearsal and performance. Compositions for consideration should be sent in on or before January 1 in each year. None can be accepted subsequently for performance in the forthcoming season.

Composers will be invited to attend the rehearsal and performance of their works, and invitations for the latter will be sent to musical critics, military directors of music, and representatives of music publishing firms. As many such works as possible will be played throughout the concert season, and a final performance of all those considered most successful will be given, at which it is hoped to secure a representative attendance of the above. Composers are advised to keep, if possible, a duplicate copy of their scores.

A library of the works performed will be formed at Kneller Hall, a list of the contents of which will be forwarded to military band presidents and directors of civil wind-bands, who for a small fee will be able to have any piece required for a specified time for performance. Any pieces subsequently published will be withdrawn from circulation.

The above scheme has the support of the British Music Society and the Patron's Fund.

Full information regarding the technique and normal composition of a military band will be forwarded on application.—Yours, &c.,

JOHN C. SOMERVILLE

(Colonel-Commandant, Royal Military School of Music).

Kneller Hall, Twickenham.

October 12, 1920.