Musical Times Publications Ltd.

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Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 25, No. 491 (Jan. 1, 1884), pp. 10-12

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3356896>

Accessed: 28-10-2015 08:26 UTC

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In conclusion, let me say this to those who do not yet know or do not yet love the subject of my essay. 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.

DR. HANSLICK AND GOUNOD'S "REDEMPTION."

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

THE recent performance of Gounod's new oratorio in Vienna gave the famous critic of the *Neue Freie Presse* an opportunity of expressing his opinion about the work. For that all connoisseurs waited with an anxiety more or less keen, according as they themselves felt more or less interested by the subject matter. No one pretends to ignore the importance of Dr. Hanslick's judgment. Concerning his zeal for the good of art no question can arise; the admirable balance of his intellect and feeling is on all hands recognised as a supreme qualification for critical work, while his literary power and extensive knowledge give weight to whatever he writes. True, the admirers of this distinguished man are not always able to agree with him, and it must be confessed that he has often put to a severe test the respect of those who follow the *cult* of Wagner and his congeners. No pen has been used with more perseverance and force against what some of us regard as musical heresy than that of Dr. Hanslick. The present writer certainly does not complain thereof. He has followed, *longo intervallo*, on the same line. Many others feel very keenly the trenchant remarks of the Viennese critic upon the gods worshipped in temples dedicated to the *Zukunft*. Yet even these, I venture to think, temper their irritation with respect, or, to put the case more correctly perhaps, view his action with the greater concern because of the estimate they set upon his honesty and influence. When, therefore, Dr. Hanslick speaks about the "Redemption," it behoves us to listen, not only for the actuality of what is said, but for its potentiality also. Wellington used to declare that Napoleon's presence in the field was equivalent to a force of 50,000 men. Similarly Dr. Hanslick's vote is not the vote of one person only. Thousands of musical readers entrust to him their consciences and their judgment. His pockets are full of proxies.

I propose now to examine Dr. Hanslick's remarks upon Gounod's oratorio, not in a spirit of cavil, but of pure criticism—the spirit which alone enters as of right into such a case.

Dr. Hanslick begins an article in the *Neue Freie Presse*, of November 11, by pointing out the early tendency of the French composer to church work. He refers to the sacred music written by him when at Rome, to the interesting evidence given by Fanny Hensel in a now well-known letter (see *Die Familie Mendelssohn*), and to his having been occupied, when at Berlin in 1843, with the text of an oratorio on the subject of Judith. Subsequently the master devoted himself to the lyric stage, "but," says Dr. Hanslick, "of late years even Gounod's operatic music began to take a religious colouring, as is shown by a decided leaning towards oratorio style in 'Polyeucte.'" The critic accepts this leaning—and, in the light of after events, he is entitled to do so—as evidence of Gounod's disposition towards *ses premiers amours*. Approaching old age, the sentiments that in early years were powerful began again to exercise authority. "The mysteries of the Church, which ruled Gounod's youth, and had already turned him towards spiritual things, seemed now, in his sixty-sixth year, to break forth

with renewed force." All this must be accepted as a statement of fact, to which, indeed, M. Gounod would willingly confess. There can be no doubt that he is extremely susceptible to religious emotionalism. The artistic nature is necessarily emotional, and, in the French composer's case, a tendency towards mysticism brought all his individuality under the influence of religious ideas and feelings. It may be questioned whether he ever shook off the yoke. At any rate, we know that he has passed under it again, in obedience to a process which has almost the force and regularity of law. The youth and the old man in one and the same person often join hands across the gulf of time, so that, if "our little life is rounded with a sleep," our dreams at the end of it take the same texture as those which fascinated its beginning.

A question arises as to the purpose of Dr. Hanslick in dwelling upon a fact so well known as Gounod's pietism. The answer soon comes. Our critic contends that the composer, in an excess of religious feeling, wrote the "Redemption" more as a devotee than as a musician. "Genuine piety, so we believe, urged the operatic composer at last towards the work called the 'Redemption,' and ordained that in it his devotion should stand out more conspicuously than his talent." The writer presently adds: "This consideration carries us straight to the kernel of Gounod's oratorios—they are the work of a man who is pious, but, on account of so much piety, feeble as a composer. It would almost seem that he wrote in full view of Heine's words—'the less church music attracts notice the better it is.'" Dr. Hanslick then goes on to contend that an oratorio written for the concert-room belongs to a different category. Church music, we are told, is dominated by religious devotion, whereas other sacred music should be an exemplification of æsthetic devotion. The one contributes to the worship of God; the other to the worship of Art. Here I dare to join issue with my distinguished *confère*, and decline to recognise the distinction he has set up.

What is the practical purpose of Church song? We cannot for a moment suppose that its acceptableness to the Divine Being depends upon its artistic form. He to Whom it is addressed looks only at the heart and takes nothing amiss "when simpleness and duty tender it." In this regard the ornate service of the cathedral and the uncultured offering of the village chapel have the same sweet savour. The difference lies in the reflex action upon ourselves. The more perfect the art, the more complete its influence over, not the worshipped Deity, but the worshipping man. If this be the case, upon what basis rests the argument for a distinction between the sacred music of the church and the sacred music of the concert-room? The one has a clear right to all of æsthetic culture that the other possesses—even, if possible, a greater right, since that which we devote to the God we worship should be the best which the powers He has given enable us to offer. This simple fact is recognised everywhere, and, in greater or less measure, by all churches. I must, therefore, decline to admit the distinction Dr. Hanslick sets up, and, consequently, to join with him in applying it as a test to the "Redemption." The question is not whether that work belongs to the church or the concert-room. If, as an oratorio, it be not fit for the one, I fail to see how it can be adapted for the other. Let me now carry the argument a step further.

Dr. Hanslick charges Gounod with having forgotten that in an oratorio we expect first of all, not religious devotion, but æsthetic; and he intimates that such a work is not elevated by Church surroundings so much as by the genius of the composition. I answer that these considerations are

intimately affected by the nature of the subject treated. Dr. Hanslick appears to have made no distinction whatever between one religious theme and another. For anything he has to say on the matter they are all alike, and will all take the same sort of musical illustration. The instinctive feeling of the vast majority of English readers tells them that this is not so. They believe in a material difference, and the objection that once largely existed against countenancing oratorio at all was but an exaggeration of the sentiment upon which that belief is based. Take, for example, the story of Elijah and that of the Redeemer. In one case we have matter open to well nigh the same free treatment as a secular subject. All the devices of art are fitly applicable for the heightening of an effect which may be made strongly dramatic without reproach, since the events are those of human experience. It is different with the other narrative, wherein is an appeal to the profoundest emotions that sway the religious nature. The Incarnation, the Suffering, the Death, the Resurrection, the Ascension—at the very thought of these things all true Christendom becomes inspired with love, reverence, and awe. Approaching them, the composer enters a Holy of Holies, and must be careful how he treads. He had better leave outside every form of æstheticism that cannot be made strictly subordinate to his religious devotion. He may not use this theme as a mere vehicle for his art. From that course he is barred by the simple decencies of the case, and all he can do is so to treat the subject as to heighten its power without distracting the mind from contemplation, or supplanting devotion by artistic perceptiveness. Dr. Hanslick will perhaps reply, that if the life and work of the Redeemer may only be treated thus, the subject does not belong to the concert-room for which M. Gounod wrote. I fail to see where a limit to the religiousness of the concert-room comes in, and Dr. Hanslick can hardly contend that religiousness has no place there, since the argument would banish sacred works entirely, or lay their performance open to the charge of gross irreverence. The point of the matter lies here—religious subjects are to be treated by the musician, not with an eye to fancied distinction between the church and the concert-room, but with strict regard for their essential character. If they may be surrounded with all the sumptuous things of art, then let those properties be forthcoming, but if their awfulness forbid such decorative effects, music should minister humbly, and to the glory of its theme alone.

It is to the praise of M. Gounod, rather than to his reproach, that, in Dr. Hanslick's words, he "carried out all through an intention to make the music of his sacred subject as simple and unostentatious as possible," doing his utmost to "turn the attention of the hearers as little as possible to the composition in order that it may be the better concentrated on the Biblical narrative." The result we all know. In England, at any rate, the "Redemption," because of the intensely devotional spirit to which its music ministers, has taken a place among the highest things of well-judged and rightly applied art. Its effect, some will argue, is religious rather than artistic. Granted, but no other effect would meet with acceptance. A "Redemption" which shall be artistic rather than religious is scarcely conceivable.

I trust it has been shown that Dr. Hanslick's argument against Gounod's work on the grounds above set forth will not stand, either in its distinction between music for the concert-room and music for the Church, or in its insistence upon the dominant claims of æstheticism in the matter of this particular oratorio.

Dr. Hanslick goes on to describe the purport of M. Gounod's Preface to his work, and then to deal with particulars of the work itself. Here also he finds evidence of a false basis. The illustrious critic touches, for example, upon certain avowedly descriptive passages, such as the March, which pictures the brutality of the Saviour's persecutors, and, in the narrative of the Resurrection, the skip of a third which M. Gounod uses to express the fact that "Christ, by His Divine power, has triumphed over the grave and over subjection to death." Dr. Hanslick applies to these pretensions the hard word *unheilvolle*, but in the act of accounting for their failure he pays a compliment to the composer, whom he describes as "by nature too really musical to agree seriously with the descriptive tendencies of Liszt and Berlioz, and to break away from true musical form." Next in order of mention comes the theme typical of the Redeemer. According to Dr. Hanslick this is not, strictly speaking, a *leit-motive*, but a separate melody, and he rightly describes its character as sweet and yearning. Let me add, by the way, that he notes what, as far as I am aware, had not previously been pointed out—the typical melody occurs nine times, and in Christianity nine, it appears, is a mystical number.

Little of all the foregoing calls for answer. Dr. Hanslick will hardly deny that descriptive music is legitimate, though its rank may not be the highest, and he cannot for a moment suppose that M. Gounod regards a skip of a third, or any other interval, as musically equivalent to the Resurrection. Admitting descriptive music, its significance must lie somewhere within itself, and must spring from a certain adaptation or arrangement of technical resources. M. Gounod simply tells us what he means by the skip in the case referred to, and the question is, not whether the interval of a third can describe a raising from the dead, but whether, coming at the right moment after a sequence of tones and semitones, it is suggestive and appropriate. Dr. Hanslick's contention that the Redeemer theme would just as well represent in "Faust" the longing of the rejuvenated Doctor for his victim, or that of Romeo for Juliet, seems to me hardly worthy of so able a writer. Dr. Hanslick, it is true, admits that this is owing rather to the essential vagueness of music than to the composer's inability, but the consideration should have led him to withhold the objection altogether, since, as criticism, it cannot be pertinent.

Dr. Hanslick enters into further particulars regarding the constructive peculiarities of Gounod's work, and betrays a tendency to exaggeration rather surprising in one usually so careful. He says that "the two Narrators adhere firmly almost throughout to one tone, only now and then venturing a step up or down." He charges the choral numbers with the same poorness and monotony, because "for the most part they are sung in unison, while even in those which employ four voices almost all the parts progress in the same way, without fugal or contrapuntal device or characteristic figuration." I leave the readers of THE MUSICAL TIMES, who know the "Redemption," to say whether Dr. Hanslick has here given a perfectly accurate description, or whether, in stating a rule, he has overlooked many and important exceptions. The Viennese critic does not dwell long upon such details as the foregoing. He soon reverts to general observations, and closes his notice with remarks which are severe almost to bitterness.

After comparing the oratorio to a plain on which no natural feature arrests special attention, he intimates that it must be accepted as wholly beautiful or not beautiful at all. Hardly a page of the work,

we are told, can be praised as skilful, genial, or original, and hardly another condemned as faulty, vulgar, or ugly. Consequently, only very pious and musically very appreciative hearers will leave a performance of the "Redemption" with a wish "to be redeemed by Gounod a second time." It seems to me that this last sentence contains the French composer's justification. Music that is one with its subject will be little cared for by those to whom the subject is indifferent, and as in the "Redemption" art enters into the story to be there absorbed, rather than to carry on a consciously independent existence, it follows as of course that those to whom religion means nothing approach the work without interest and leave it without satisfaction.

Dr. Hanslick should have stopped here; but unfortunately his notice has a *coda*, and therein is found a sting, sharp and acrid beyond common. He says: "We will not enquire whether it has been simply religious meekness and humility that have kept him (Gounod) so far from art and brilliancy in the 'Redemption.' . . . A man may become a monk from piety, also from poverty. One thing is clear—that with the measure of talent Gounod now possesses he can hardly hope to write a good opera; but he could certainly trust himself to compose an oratorio of such harmless respectability (*harmlose Anständigkeit*) as the 'Redemption.' So he has at least shown himself as much a self-critic as a religious enthusiast." With great respect for Dr. Hanslick, I believe this to be the kind of criticism that is better left unanswered. M. Gounod can defend himself from sneers if he think it worth while, and the best reply to whatever argument the quoted words contain is discoverable in the profound impression made by the "Redemption" upon the vast majority of its hearers—an impression quite miraculous as the result of a work which is no more than one of "harmless respectability." The appeal is from Dr. Hanslick's opinion to the verdict of a great religious and musical community, by whom alone such an oratorio as the "Redemption" can be judged. That verdict has been given, and I, for one, am satisfied with it.

HANDEL'S ORCHESTRATION.

By EBENEZER PROUT.

IN no other country of Europe are the works of Handel so admired, nowhere else is his genius so venerated, as in England. Yet even here, out of the enormous number of compositions which he produced, there are certainly not a dozen, probably hardly more than half-a-dozen, which can be said to be thoroughly familiar to the general public; while even of professional musicians there are very few who are acquainted with the whole series of the oratorios, to say nothing of the operas. Consequently, while amateurs have a fairly adequate idea of Handel's grandeur of style, few have any conception of his almost exhaustless variety. In saying this, I am not denying that in one sense he repeats himself a great deal. There are certain formulæ, certain cadences, belonging to the age when they were written, which recur in nearly every work. There is also much which is now antiquated; and there are few people who would have the patience to sit out any of Handel's oratorios (excepting "Israel in Egypt") if given unabridged. The operas are as a whole still more old-fashioned, consisting almost entirely of songs connected by interminable recitatives; and, in spite of the many beauties which they contain, the revival of one of them now would be an intolerable anachronism. Yet, after making every deduction for

that which possesses only an historical interest, there remains in the collection of Handel's works a mine of beauty of which few but those who have made a special study of him know anything at all.

One of the commonest misconceptions among musicians with regard to Handel is that his orchestration is wanting in variety, especially in the songs. It has occurred to me that it may be worth while to endeavour to prove the fallacy of this view; and I propose in this series of papers to enter into a somewhat detailed examination of Handel's scores from the point of view of their instrumentation only, leaving out of consideration all questions of musical beauty, except in so far as that may be connected with the treatment of the orchestra. I hope to prove conclusively that it is an entire mistake to suppose that Handel's instrumentation is monotonous. It will be necessary to enter into technical details to such an extent that I have a strong suspicion these articles will be found dry and tedious by all except those specially interested in the subject. It is to such that I address myself; and I advise all other readers to pass to something more likely to prove interesting.

The earlier editions of Handel's scores—those of Walsh, Randall, Wright, and Arnold—are so inaccurate, and especially so incomplete (instruments being often omitted altogether), as to be virtually useless for my purpose. The only reliable edition is that now in course of publication by the German Handel Society, under the superintendence of Dr. Chrysander. As there are still between twenty and thirty volumes wanting to complete that edition, I shall be unable to notice the whole of the oratorios and operas; but in some seventy volumes which I have examined I have found amply sufficient for my purpose.

The composition of the orchestra which Handel employed differed radically from that of the present day, not only in the fact that (as will be seen presently) it contained many instruments now entirely obsolete, but also in the proportion of the various masses. We find in Rousseau's "Dictionnaire de Musique" a plan of the opera orchestra of Dresden, as it existed under Hasse in 1754—five years before Handel's death—and there is every reason to believe that the composition of the orchestra in London at the same date was very similar. The orchestra at Dresden consisted of two harpsichords, at one of which the conductor and at the other the accompanist sat, eight first and seven second violins, four violas, three violoncellos, three double-basses, two flutes, *five* oboes, *five* bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, and drums. I shall be able to prove, to all but absolute certainty, from Handel's scores that the proportion between wind and strings could not have been very dissimilar in his orchestra. We have also the documentary evidence of the list of performers at the Foundling Hospital, when "The Messiah" was given there on May 3, 1759, immediately after Handel's death. The list is preserved at the Foundling, and it shows that there were twelve violins, three violas, two violoncellos, two double-basses, four oboes, four bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, and drums—the proportions, it will be observed, being nearly the same as at Dresden. It may be worth noting, as bearing on the question of "additional accompaniments," that there are no bassoons or horns in Handel's score of "The Messiah," and that the oboes are only to be found in the chorus "And their sound is gone out."

One sometimes hears a wish expressed for the performance of one of Handel's works in its original form. Were it possible to realise such an idea, it would doubtless be most interesting, if only from