The "Invention" of Polyphony

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On the 1st ult., at Copenhagen, PETER SCHRAMM, for many years member of the Royal Theatre, who, six years ago, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, once more appeared in his favourite part of *Leporello*; aged seventy-six.

On the 2nd ult., at West Norwood, ROBERT SLOMAN, Mus. Doc., Oxon., aged sixty-five.

Recently, at Versailles, EUGÈNE ABBEY, one of the chiefs of the firm of E. and J. Abbey, and son of John Abbey, who, about 1830, established at Versailles the organ factory to which he has given his name.

Recently, at Baden, near Vienna, WILHELM KRANKENHAGEN, celebrated bassoon player, formerly professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire; since 1869 member of the Imperial Viennese orchestra, and professor at the Conservatorium; aged seventy.

On June 9, at San Francisco, CHARLES GOFFRIE, violinist. Born at Mannheim, he came to England in 1842, and was engaged at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, from 1847 until 1872. He also played at the Philharmonic, Ella's Musical Union, &c., and was a member of Her Majesty's private band.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE "INVENTION" OF POLYPHONY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—*Apropos* of your remarks on Mr. Davey's theory that Dunstable "invented polyphony," I note that in the article to which you refer in your June number Mr. Davey cites, as his chief modern authority, Dr. F. X. Haberl, Musical Director at Ratisbon Cathedral, from whose article on Du Fay, published in the *Vierteljahrsschrift* (first year), he quotes a passage which certainly shows that, *when he wrote it*, Dr. Haberl accepted the statement in question. But Dr. Haberl wrote this in 1885, and as Mr. Davey is careful to point this out, he is evidently not aware that the same eminent *savant* wrote something quite different five years later—by which time he had evidently discovered that his former view was an error. If Mr. Davey will refer to the ninth edition of Dr. Haberl's "Magister Choralis," published in 1890, he will find the following on page 2: "From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries arose Polyphony (*Vom 13. bis 15. Jahrhundert entstand die Polyphonie*), which in the fifteenth century, through William du Fay (*ob. 1474 in Cambrai*) and his pupils, was still further perfected in its rhythmical aspect."—Truly yours,

F. GILBERT WEBB.

July, 1895.

[We are obliged by Mr. Webb's quotation from Dr. Haberl's "Magister Choralis," which, when writing, we had overlooked. It will be seen from our article in another column, however, that Polyphony "arose" quite a couple of centuries earlier than is admitted even in Dr. Haberl's last statement.—Ed., *M.T.*]

MR. CORDER'S LECTURES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—While thanking you for your kind remarks on my lectures, will you allow me to join issue with you on one or two small points. You say, "That which is born of calculation differs widely from that which the brain produces by unconscious effort." Are you sure of that? It is a common belief that brilliant achievements are the result of "unconscious cerebration"; but that this is always the case I can bring shoals of instances to disprove. Unconscious cerebration is a very convenient thing, but I cannot myself regard it as superior to conscious labour of mind. That were too humiliating a notion.

Next, as to the "something" which gives "life" to an art work. Until it can be made clear to me what kind of a "something" this is, I must be excused for retaining the logical belief that art works only differ in degree of merit, not in essence at all. You urge the young musician to strive to give this "something" due expression when it cries

for birth, but how can he if it is impalpable and indescribable? This surely amounts to no more than saying, "Be very self-critical."

Again, you ask how is it that in some works the themes are inappropriate to their treatment? This sentence should be, "How is it that in some works the treatment is inappropriate to the themes?"—for I presume that you must have your themes before you can treat them. The answer is then obvious that, if the composer fails to select a suitable method of treating his subjects, he fails to produce a satisfactory art work. Remember that I did not say *melody* had no character of its own, but a *melodic phrase*, which is quite a different thing. Whether the phrase skips or goes by step matters not one jot until it is built up into form, as I showed by some rather striking examples. It is not a question of *suggestiveness*, but of *definite character*—again, two very different things.

But these are all side issues; the whole argument pervading my lectures was one which I conceive you will hardly dispute (though my audience refused to accept it)—namely, that Art is a human fabrication, and that therefore it can be learnt and cultivated by all human beings (though of course in widely different degrees). The amateur cannot conceive of anything being learnt; though, strange to say, he believes in teaching! To him things "come," or do not "come"—generally the latter, one must confess. My appeal—my vain and hopeless appeal—was for him (it is chiefly *her* though) to put more faith in human intelligence and less in Divine interference. I said, and I repeat, that it is sheer insult to regard the person whose whole being is devoted to absorbing and reproducing the manifold mysteries of art as a kind of pump of which he works the handle while the Almighty supplies the water.—Faithfully yours,

F. CORDER.

July 4, 1895.

WIND INSTRUMENTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES"

SIR,—A letter appeared in the June number of your paper, signed by Ed. Sachs, in which he cites a sarcastic reply, said to have been made by Haydn to a certain horn player, as showing "the views of composers, and consequently also of the general public, with regard to compositions for and performances by wind instruments."

It would no doubt be a very desirable state of affairs if, as Mr. Sachs says is the case, the views of the general public in musical matters agreed with those of the great composers; but I am afraid this musical millennium has not yet been reached—even in Manchester.

It appears that the remarks attributed to Haydn were made to a particular horn player, most probably an amateur—in Haydn's time a poor professional player was not very likely to be able to engage the services of a master to compose music specially for him—and were not made of wind instrumentalists or even of horn players in general; and that this was not Haydn's opinion is abundantly proved in his symphonies and other orchestral works, where many of the leading themes and finest ideas are given to the oboe, horn, or bassoon.

When, however, we consider the primitive and faulty construction of the wind instruments at the disposal of Haydn and the older composers, the only wonder is that they employed them so largely, and it must have been solely due to the feeling that, without their relief orchestral works would be comparatively flat and colourless, that they used them at all. How Haydn would have scored, had he had the improved instruments and admirable players of the present day at his disposal, can only be surmised.

Neither is what Mr. Sachs states to be the public feeling with regard to wind instrument music borne out by facts. The most cultured and critical audience in England, or perhaps in the world, is that which attends the Monday and Saturday "Pops." at St. James's Hall, and I have invariably found, and I think most old frequenters will agree with me, that whenever Beethoven's Septet, Schubert's Octet, Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, or other works for wind instruments were on the programme, there was sure to be an extra good house.