Review

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Only the sound of a voice. Song. Words by Adelaide Procter. Music by Michael Watson.
[Metzler and Co.]

MR. MICHAEL WATSON is a prolific composer, but he has produced nothing better than the song before us. If in the due colouring of the words he occasionally becomes a little restless in his modulations and figures of accompaniment he must be freely forgiven, not only on account of his artistic intentions, but because in every case the mere workmanship is skilful and thoroughly satisfactory. The opening phrase is extremely melodious, the chromatic progression on the words "tender and sweet and low" effective and well harmonised, the change to the triplet accompaniment in happy sympathy with the text, and the conclusion of the song expressive without exaggeration. The music is carefully written for the register of a contralto voice, and has been sung in public by Miss Orridge.

Our Island of love. Barcarole, for two voices. Words by Charles Searle. Music by Francesco Berger.
[Moutrie and Son.]

A FLOWING and melodious theme, in 9-8 time, simply harmonised, is here set to some very harmless lines which we may fancy just such a lazy lover as we see floating down the stream on a hot summer evening might be supposed to sing to his fair companion. Under such circumstances we can scarcely expect that either poetry or music will be very exciting; but both are pleasing and refined enough to satisfy the majority of amateur vocalists.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE seventieth anniversary of the birth of Franz Liszt, which occurred on the 22nd ult., was celebrated in various ways throughout the musical world, taking the form of musical ovals, congratulatory addresses by representative artistic bodies, or special articles, devoted to the career of this unique artist, in the public press. Were we to make even a brief reference to the more important of these manifestations of the esteem in which Liszt is universally held, we could do so only by the exclusion of all other matters from these columns. Suffice it to say that at Weimar—his former artistic home—the oratorio "St. Elizabeth" in the guise of a sacred opera, was given on the stage of the Hoftheater, on the 23rd ult. From Rome, where the pianist-composer is just now residing, a *Times* correspondent reports as follows, under date the 23rd ult.: "A charming musical fête, including the inauguration of the new Roman Quintet Society, was given yesterday afternoon at the Palazzo Caffarelli, in the Capitol, the residence of the German Ambassador, on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of the celebrated pianist and composer Liszt. Among the pieces given were a quintet for piano, two violins, viola, and violoncello, by his pupil Sgambati; and a fragment of a symphonic poem of his own composition, entitled "Le Berceau," for two violins and viola. The venerable artist was greeted with enthusiastic plaudits by the distinguished company with which the room was crammed, and for a long time after the concert was finished he stood surrounded by a crowd pressing forward to offer him their congratulations." The fragment of a symphonic poem here referred to, is doubtless the first movement of the composition inspired by a drawing from the pen of Michael von Zichy, to which allusion has been made previously in these columns.

A similar jubilee was celebrated on the 24th ult. in his native Germany, and more especially in his native town of Frankfurt, on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Ferdinand Hiller, the veteran champion of the classical school in music, whose distinguished merits both as composer and orchestral leader, as well as his high personal character, have won for him the unqualified esteem of musicians and art-lovers throughout Europe—a fact which has but recently obtained fresh confirmation by the public ovals offered to him on the occasion of his visit to Barcelona.

Herr Xavier Scharwenka's newly founded Conservatorium was formally opened at Berlin on the 9th ult. with a

concert consisting exclusively of compositions by masters of the young institution, and likewise executed by them. Professor Jähns spoke an appropriate prologue, written by Carl Wittkowski.

The season 1881-2 of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concerts commenced on the 6th ult. We insert the programme in our usual appendix to these columns.

The authenticity of the manuscript of a posthumous opera by Donizetti, "Il Duca d'Alba," has been further confirmed by a Commission named by the Academic Council of the Milan Conservatoire, consisting of SS. Bazzini, Dominicelli, and Ponchielli. "The pieces of music," a *Times* correspondent writes, "that are entirely finished, or can be easily finished following the indications of the master, are eighteen in number, and consist of three airs and three choruses, four duets, two terzets, three complete pieces, and three dramatic scenes. The fourth act only is wanting in two important pieces. But, in spite of this, the great line traced by the master is so clear that the Commissioners are persuaded the 'Duca d'Alba' can be intrusted to safe and expert hands to be presented to the public as the indubitable work of Donizetti." The interesting manuscript has been purchased by the publisher, Francesco Lucca.

Operatic performances in the Flemish language have been instituted at Antwerp under the direction of M. Van der Ven, and were inaugurated on the 8th ult. with the "Wonderdoctor" by Mertens. In the course of the season works by Benoît, Miry, Block, and other Belgian composers will likewise be produced, and the novel undertaking is likely to prove a very successful one.

Johannes Brahms, the *Wiener Abendzeitung* informs us, has recently played before a circle of intimate friends in the Austrian capital his latest composition, viz., a pianoforte concerto in B flat major, which is described as "a giant-opus, a veritable pianoforte-symphony in four movements, and, both as regards its formal dimensions and its grand artistic intentions, without a parallel in musical literature." Herr Ignaz Brüll, on the occasion referred to, supplied the orchestral part on a second pianoforte. The composer will shortly proceed to Meiningen for the purpose of rehearsing his new work with Hans von Bülow and his famous orchestra.

The pianoforte used by Carl Maria von Weber at his residence in Dresden has been bequeathed by the son of the great composer, Max Maria, to the Berlin Museum, where the interesting relic is now preserved.

Dr. Hugo Riemann, the eminent musical *savant*, has accepted a professorship at the Hamburg Conservatorium.

We extract the following from the Berlin *Musik-Welt*: At Wiesbaden, a new opera, "Cleopatra," by Freudenberg, the director of the Conservatorium of that town, is shortly to be produced. This is the fifteenth "Cleopatra" composer. The fourteen preceding operas with the same subject and title were composed by Castrovillari (1662), Graun (1742), Monza (1776), Anfossi (1778), Danzi (1779), Cimarosa (1790), Guglielmi (1798), Weigl (1807), Paër (1809), Nasolini (1813), Combi (1842), Truhn (1853), Maistre and Rossi (1876).

Arrigo Boito's "Mefistofele" will be produced for the first time, at the Imperial Opera of Vienna, in February next, with Madame Lucca in the part of *Margherita*.

A very successful revival of Gluck's opera "Armida" took place on the 13th ult., at the Dresden Hoftheater, under the direction of Capellmeister Schuch.

Swedish papers are full of reports and anecdotes of the enthusiastic reception accorded to Madame Christine Nilsson on the occasion of her recent visit to her native town of Christianstad. Crowds of people met the *prima donna* wherever she went, flags being displayed from numerous houses, and no kind of demonstration was omitted which could tend to show how proud the people of Christianstad are of their gifted countrywoman. As an instance of the latter fact may be mentioned the religious care with which the wooden gate, some little distance outside the town, in the roadway, had been preserved, which, when a little girl, Christine Nilsson had been in the habit of opening for passing vehicles, in order to gain a few pence towards the purchase of a much-coveted violin.