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LA GUERRE DES BOUFFONS.

BY JEFFREY PULVER.

(Continued from page 19.)

'La Serva Padrona' was followed on August 22 by 'Il Giuocatore,' a work in which many composers collaborated, but of which the major portion was written by Orlandini; the success of these intermèdes increased as their performance became more frequent; there can be no doubt that the French party were losing ground. The performance of Pergolesi's 'Maestro di Musica' (September 19, 1752) scored heavily on the Italian side, and the French could plainly see that the very existence of their opera was threatened. In quick succession followed 'La Finta Cameriera' of Latilla, 'La Donna Superba' by Rinaldo di Capua, 'La Scaltra Governatrice' of Gioacchino Cocchi (who composed for the London opera, 1757—62), 'Il Cinese Rimpatriato' by Selletti, 'La Zingara' of Rinaldo di Capua, 'Gli Artigiani Arricchiti' by Latilla, 'Il Paratajo' of Jomelli (one of the most important of the teachers who brought Italian music to France), 'Bertoldo in Corte' by Ciampi (who, with a party of Italian vocalists, produced some Italian comic operas in London 1748—62), and 'I Viaggiatori' of Leonardo Leo. There can be no two opinions as to the result of these productions; they achieved, for Paris, unprecedented successes; but although the intrinsic value of the works themselves was, in the first place, responsible for these successes, yet I think, with Jahn, that they were as much due to the methods of performance as to the works themselves.

'They were Italian throats, Italian methods of playing and singing' that helped the form of the vocal pieces to fall easily in the ear, and to bring out to the best advantage the easily-understood and well-sustained melodies of the visitors.—From Jahn's 'Mozart.'

While these things were passing on the stage, the parterre was equally busy; while the Italians were showing what true musicianship and artistry could do, the combatants of the pit and under the Royal boxes launched pamphlets against each other. Rousseau, in his 'Confessions' (Book viii.), says the two parties were 'as heated as if they had to do with an affair of State or of Religion.' The preliminary skirmishing that preceded the arrival of the Italians was followed by a brief armistice used to witness their first performances; it was not of long duration, for as soon as the French party saw the effect of these intermèdes upon the public they realised that some action was necessary to defend the operas of Lully, Rameau, and their adherents. The Baron d'Holbach, therefore, opened the dance with his pamphlet, 'Lettre à une dame d'un certain âge sur l'état présent de l'Opéra.' Grimm, by no means unwilling, and still having his armour upon him, immediately countered the stroke with his mocking 'Le petit prophète de Boehmischbroda' (1753), which in biblical language prophesies the destruction of good taste unless Paris became converted to Italian music; the pamphlet was neat, biting, trenchant. Rousseau says: 'Le Coin du Roi voulut plaisanter, il fut moqué par le Petit Prophète,' and in the same section of the 'Confessions,' says that with the exception of his own contributions to the squabble, the 'Prophète' was the only one that survived, 'tous les autres sont déjà morts.' Grimm's 'Little Prophet' was reprinted in *Corr. Litt.* XV., p. 315 *et seq.*, and in German in the *Zeitschrift für Musik*, IV., p. 63 *et seq.* (Jahn). What Pougin ('Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Musicien') calls 'a deluge of satirical writings of all sorts' followed; and their writers did not hesitate to seize the 'You're another' method when

they had arrived at the end of their arguments. Grimm's prophecy brought forth the 'Réponse du Coin du Roi au Coin de la Reine' by the Abbé de Voisenon. The Baron d'Holbach, who was the first in the field, then appeared in print again with 'L'arrêt rendu à l'amphithéâtre de l'Opéra sur la plainte du milieu du parterre intervenant dans la querelle des deux Coins'; Pidansat de Mairobert entered the lists with 'Les Prophéties du grande Prophète Monet,' and about half a hundred others. Meanwhile, the most brilliant pamphleteer of the Italian party, perhaps the most biting polemist of his era,—Jean-Jacques Rousseau,—bided his time. He was busy with the production of his own 'Devin du Village'; but as soon as he found the leisure he concocted what became one of the most famous pieces of polemical writing of the 18th century. His 'Lettre sur la Musique française,' published in November, 1753, at a time when the quarrel was beginning to subside, when the different writers had used up all their arguments and all their invective, could not fail, in Pougin's words, 'de faire un bruit du diable.' Rousseau himself had no small idea of this pamphlet; in the 'Confessions' he says: 'Le Coin du Roi . . . voulut se mêler de raisonner, il fut écrasé par la Lettre sur la musique française.'

Exactly what Rousseau's ideas on the subject of French music were are, I suppose, sufficiently well known to every student of the 18th century; nevertheless, there may be some few who have not yet come across the writings under consideration, and for their benefit it will be well to see what Rousseau had to say on the matter. The first thing that strikes one in taking up practically any of Rousseau's writings dealing with music is the implacable hatred he shows for the French musical art, and the Guerre des Bouffons gave him an excellent opportunity for showing his great talents as a polemical writer. That Rousseau cannot for a moment be taken seriously, in spite of his obvious love for music, is apparent. I have endeavoured to show what sort of musical and theoretical study he enjoyed, and to what degree of proficiency he attained, at another place.* Suffice it now to repeat that he never mastered the gentle arts of harmony, that he detested counterpoint because he never understood it, and that the fugue was for him a device of barbarism. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find his 'Lettre sur la musique française' full of ridicule for the Frenchmen who elaborated their scores. The pamphlet thoroughly vilifies everything French in the art; not only the composers themselves, but also the orchestra, the directors, the players—even the language. 'The French possessed no music,' said he, 'and if they did, so much the worse for them.' 'The French language was utterly unsuitable for setting to music,' he wrote; yet at that time he was enjoying the success achieved by his own 'Devin du Village,' which he wrote in French—and quite nice French, too! In passing it may be interesting to note that this opera secured for him a royal pension, and that Madame de Pompadour, that virtuous lady now a shining light in the 'Coin du Roi,' played a leading rôle in it on at least one occasion. Even in his letters Rousseau indulges in cheap jests at the very staging of the French operas. Here are one or two examples:

The heavens are represented by certain bluish rags, suspended from rod or cords, like the *étalage* of a laundress . . . the chariots of gods and goddesses are composed of four joists suspended by a thick rope like a see-saw; between the joists is a plank upon which the god is seated, and in front hangs a piece of coarse, bedaubed linen which serves as a cloud to this

* v. *The Commonwealth* for October, 1912.

magnificent chariot. Under the machine one can see the light of two or three stinking and badly-snuffed candles . . . incense worthy of the divinities!

In similar strain he goes on (Letters, Part II., No. xxiii.) to describe the demons as they emerge from their traps, how the thunder and lightning are produced, and revels in sarcasm and irony to his heart's content, without, I suppose, hurting the box-office in the slightest. He does not even spare the French audiences:

By their hand-clapping one would take them for deaf people charmed at hearing, here and there, a more than usually piercing sound, encouraging the actors to redouble their efforts.

He leaves the effect of such treatment on Muses, Graces, and goddesses to the imagination,—‘pour les diables, passe encore.’

When he attacks the orchestra he waxes warmer:

Imagine a *charivari* without end of instruments, without melody, a perpetual and trailing growling of basses . . . which I can never support for half-an-hour without obtaining a violent headache. . . All this forms a sort of psalmody to which there is ordinarily no melody or rhythm. But when by chance there is heard a sprightly air, there is a universal stamping; you hear all the *parterre* in movement following with great difficulty and great noise a certain man of the orchestra.

This last is the ‘Batteur de mesure’ of whom Rousseau has much to say in his Dictionary of Music: ‘Whereas the German and the Italian, who are intimately affected, can follow and feel [the movement] without effort, and who have no need to beat the time.’ But it is as Pougin remarks, ‘He who wishes to prove too much proves nothing.’ Rousseau was not entirely wrong, but he was also by no means always right. In Dr. Burney he found a staunch supporter; in the ‘History of Music’ (IV., p. 3) he says:

Rousseau, in his ingenious and spirited ‘Lettre sur la musique française,’ has confined his remarks chiefly to the vices of the French language; but to all, except the natives of France, a less eloquent and forcible writer might easily have proved it unfit for every kind of vocal music superior to a *Vaudeville* or *Chanson à table*.

And also:

But all he has said of the French recitative, false expression, want of measure and melody, is so true that the most reasonable part of the nation have long since given up these points, and only wish to preserve their language in the lyric theatre and to graft upon it the music of Italy.

Nevertheless, the good doctor was fearful lest he be drawn into some controversy, for he shields himself behind a footnote:

It is not my wish to be thought an implicit believer in the paradoxes of Rousseau when he says that the French have no music, nor ever, from the nature of their language, can have any, and if they have, *tant pis pour eux*. I regard it more as a sarcastic *bon mot* than a truth which will admit of demonstration.

But he does think ‘there was too much good sense, taste, and reason in this letter for it to be read with indifference; it was abused but never answered.’ It certainly was not ‘read with indifference,’ for Pougin tells us that it brought forth no fewer than thirty replies. Rousseau himself was never less modest than when he was speaking of himself as a writer on music. In his ‘Confessions’ he says:

‘La lettre sur la musique française’ . . . was taken seriously, and raised up the whole nation against me, who thought themselves offended (vicariously) in their music. The description of the unbelievable effect produced by this pamphlet would be worthy of the pen of a Tacitus (!).

The appearance of Rousseau’s ‘Lettre’ was ‘the signal for a new shower of pamphlets. . . . The famous pamphleteer, Fréron, the audacious enemy of Voltaire, struck the keynote in publishing in his “Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps,” two slashing articles which he did not hesitate to reprint in pamphlet form under the title “Lettres sur la musique française en réponse à celle de Jean-Jacques Rousseau” (Pougin). Cazotte followed with his ‘Observations sur la Lettre de J. J. Rousseau au sujet de la musique française.’ The second edition of the *Guerre des Bouffons* being thus well under way, one Yso rushed into print with his ‘Lettre sur celle de M. J. J. Rousseau, citoyen de Genève, sur la musique,’ but the scribbler, being scarcely worthy of the lance of the ‘citizen of Geneva,’ was ignored. More considerable was the attempt of one Travenol; this gentleman, a member of the Opéra orchestra, had already appeared in print when he published, in collaboration with de Noinville, a history of the Opéra; his contribution to the quarrel bore the sweetly ingenious title of ‘Arrest du Conseil d’Etat d’Apollon rendu en faveur de l’orchestre de l’Opéra contre J. J. Rousseau, copiste de musique.’ Poor Rousseau! This ‘copiste de musique’ was a cruel reminder of the philosopher’s early days of struggle when he preferred to copy music at ‘so much a page’ (‘Confessions’) rather than relinquish his association with an art he so dearly loved and which he so imperfectly understood. Another adherent of the French faction was the Abbé Laugier, who sent his shaft somewhere near Rousseau’s armour when he launched his ‘Apologie de la musique française contre M. Rousseau’ into the world. Pougin, to whose work I am much indebted for many references, says that as many as sixty-three distinct writings appeared during four years, all bearing upon the *Guerre des Bouffons*. But the indefatigable Rousseau was not yet finished; he wrote and issued a ‘Lettre d’un symphoniste de l’Académie royale de musique à ses camarades de l’orchestre,’ in which he not only pleasantly protects the Italian music against the attacks of his adversaries, but also takes the opportunity of advertising the alleged ignorance of the orchestra. He accuses the members of the band of deliberately playing as badly as possible when accompanying the Italian productions, of playing out of tune, of ignoring all nuances and neglecting the rhythmic and dynamic indications. The brave instrumentalists were not slow in revenging themselves; Rousseau even suspected them of plotting to murder him! He writes in his ‘Confessions’ that his ‘life was in danger. The orchestra of the Opéra hatched the honest plot of assassinating me when I should go out.’ But, luckily for the admirers of Rousseau’s later writings, the poor man slightly exaggerated the intentions of the benevolent musicians; they did no worse than burn him in effigy before the Opera-house amid inspiring scenes of mock solemnity. The directors of the Opéra, however, were more cruel; they prohibited the composer of the ‘Devin du Village’ from entering the Opéra, and it was not until twenty years later that he was permitted to revisit the scene of his success with his beloved opera—a readmission which he owed to the ministrations of Gluck.

It is curious to notice what effect these writings had upon the two schools of composition. While Rousseau was trying to prove how unsuitable the French language was to the purposes of music his own opera (in French) was being admired. To go from small things to greater, we find performed at about the same time such compositions as Rameau’s ‘Lysis et Délie,’ ‘Daphnis et Eglé,’ ‘Les Sybarites,’ ‘La Naissance d’Osiris’ and ‘Anacréon,’ all given at Court, thus proving that the King was one of those

not won over to Rousseau's way of thinking either by the 'Lettre' of the 'Citoyen de Genève' or by the prophecies of that 'proud pillar of the Encyclopædia'; for His Majesty French was still good enough a vehicle for this music. The French faction can be said to have won a passing victory when the Italians were politely but very firmly asked to leave Paris (March, 1754); but their influence remained, and a French Opéra-Comique grew up that was the direct outcome of their visit. Even Rameau said on one occasion that if he had been twenty years younger he would have gone to Italy and have worked there with Pergolesi for his model; so that, although the French secured a nominal victory, the truth remained as before, that Italy had yet much to teach that France could with profit learn. Nevertheless, we find Burney saying in his 'Present State of Music in France and Italy' (1771):

I perceive that the overtures and act tunes of this theatre as of the *Theatre Italien* are all either German or Italian. They begin to be ashamed of their own music everywhere but at the serious opera, and this revolution in their sentiments seems to have been brought about by M. Rousseau's excellent 'Lettre sur la musique française.'

In which Burney shows the same *naïveté* as is so often discernible in Rousseau's writing. Dr. Burney, too, said that the disputes were not yet ended when he was writing his History; and just as Rousseau seems to have overlooked the fact that his own opera was written in the impossible language, so does Burney appear to neglect the presence of such compositions as Rameau's 'Surprises de l'Amour' (1757), 'Les Paladins' (1760); Grétry's 'Le Tableau parlant' (1769), 'Zémire et Azor' (1771), 'Richard Cœur de Lion' (1784), and a huge number of others; Monsigny's 'Le Cadi Dupé' (1761), 'Le Roi et le Fermier' (1762), 'Le Déserteur' (1769), 'Felix, ou l'Enfant trouvé' (1777), and very many more; and Philidor's 'Le Bûcheron' (1763), 'Tom Jones' (1765), and 'Les Femmes vengées' (1775). These are but a few of the many works in French that were written and played with success in Paris during the period succeeding the Guerre des Bouffons, and only four composers are named. Not all the ingenuity of Rousseau, nor the sarcasm of the encyclopædists, could persuade France that her language was not all it need be in music's service, or that her composers were insufficient or unable to satisfy her demands. But if the Guerre des Bouffons drew attention to only a few of the bad habits and customs prevailing at the time, and by so doing remedied them, it was not waged in vain.

Church and Organ Music.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP.

The first number of *The Free Catholic* contains an article by Mr. H. C. Colles on 'Music and Worship.' He considers that Church music suffers through having no standard. 'The mediæval Church had such a standard in the pure melody of its plainsong; its musicians were constantly departing from that standard and constantly being checked either by authority or by their own consciences, and brought back to judge the truth of their original work by that standard; just as hymn-writers, preachers, and makers of prayers of to-day are constantly brought back to compare their expression with the standard of the Bible language.' Surely if preachers and hymn-writers should use the Bible as a literary standard (though most of us feel that modern special services put forth by authority fall lamentably short of their model), Church music composers have a similar standard in the ancient plainsong. Mr. Colles seems to regard the restoration of this and other of the older types of

music as being likely to convert the Church into a museum of antiquities. But at what point in the history of music are we to decide that the interest and value are purely antiquarian? Just as many of Bach's works are more modern in feeling than a vast amount of music written since his day, so there are plainsong melodies more fluid and modern than thousands of airs written even during the past decade. In music, as in literature, many things have been expressed centuries ago in terms that have an appeal for us to-day. That is why we can still open our Chaucer and Shakespeare, certain of finding more profit than in the pages of some living writers with huge circulations.

'Our own value for a great tradition,' says Mr. Colles, 'is not shown by copying it, but by fulfilling it. Palestrina reformed the music of the Papal choir, not by returning to plainsong, but by composing the "Missa Papæ Marcelli."' True; but how if a Palestrina were given the task of reforming the music, not of the Papal choir, but of the village or parish church choir in England to-day? He would probably recommend the revival of the simpler forms of plainsong, or would compose music of which the chief characteristics should be the purity and absence of secular rhythms and associations that distinguish plainsong. There is the standard, and just so far as modern Church music, whether simple or complex, unisonous, homophonic, or polyphonic, suggests the inside of the Church rather than the outside, to that extent it is fulfilling a great tradition.

Mr. Colles says well what many are of late beginning to think, when he remarks that we should learn the value of silence. 'If we are not sure what music to have, let us have none. We can wait till the spirit moves us. We can avoid that dreadful practice of singing everything in our worship, whether there is occasion for it or not, of filling up the chinks with meandering on the organ, of putting in an anthem because the choir demands it.' He suggests as an alternative reading of a familiar rubric: 'In quires and places where they *must* sing, here followeth the anthem,' and concludes a thoughtful and suggestive paper with the true remark that when people feel the need for music, they will soon find the music that they need.

INSTALMENT OF A LAY-CLERK AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY: INTERESTING CEREMONY.

On November 23, 1915, Mr. Hatherley Clarke was installed as an Alto Lay-Clerk at Westminster Abbey, in the place of the late Mr. Schartau.

The ceremony dated from Elizabethan times, and was probably much older. After the Collect 'For all sorts and conditions of men' the service was stopped. The Precentor left his stall, and conducted the candidate into the middle of the Choir facing the High Altar, where he read the following form of installation:

I, Leigh Hunter Nixon, Master of Arts, Precentor of this Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Westminster, by virtue of an order from the Right Rev. Herbert Edward Ryle, Bishop, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Westminster, do instal you, Hatherley Clarke, as Lay-Clerk of the said Collegiate Church, to discharge the duties, and to receive the stipend attached to the said office.

The newly appointed Lay-Clerk was then conducted by the hand and placed in his stall, and the following prayer read over him:

Cape hauc sedem laudes Dei Celebraturus, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Returning to his stall, the Precentor read the accompanying prayer:

O Lord, grant that Thy servant, Hatherley Clarke, Lay-Clerk of this Collegiate Church, may both see and know the things which he ought to do: and give him grace and power faithfully to perform what he hath promised and his duty requires, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mr. Hatherley Clarke is the third singer who has been appointed to the Abbey from St. Anne's, Soho, famous alike for its Bach services and its adherence to the old Cathedral music, which is still under the direction of Dr. E. H. Thorne.