The Music of Ancient Rome and Its Opponent

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volume containing six Sonatas for two oboes and bass, which were brought to England by Lord Polworth, given to Wiedemann, an eminent flautist of the period, and shown by him to Handel, then a resident in this country. The master identified the works at once, and said: "I used to write like a devil in those days, and chiefly for the hautbois, which was my favourite instrument." This volume was seen by Burney in the royal library, but has since disappeared, Mr. Rockstro having vainly searched for it at Buckingham Palace. Another volume, containing a large number of transcriptions, is also known to have been brought to this country, and can be traced to the possession of a Lady Rivers in 1799. What has become of it since nobody can discover.

At the end of three years Zackau found out that his young pupil knew as much as he did himself, and, if some authorities may be credited, George Frederic knew well that Zackau had nothing more to teach. Handel's latest English biographer, Rockstro, has it that it was the boy who suggested the next step—namely, his removal to Berlin, where, of course, larger educational opportunities were available. The point is not of much importance, but we need not give Zackau's pupil credit for more knowledge than he possessed, and it does seem unlikely that George Frederic, who, in 1695, was but ten years old, could have formed any opinion about Berlin as a place of study. Mainwaring states that the decision to send him thither was arrived at after consultation, while Schœlcher mentions that the step was taken on the advice of Zackau. Either of these assertions is more probable than that the boy himself had anything to do with it. There is some reason to believe that Surgeon George gave his consent unwillingly. In his heart of hearts he still clung to the idea of a lawyer son. The robe of the advocate remained, in his view, the true garment of honour. But the old man, though reluctant, was not obstinate, and in 1696 his wonderful boy was permitted to set out for the capital of the Brandenburg Electorate, thus entering definitely upon a musical career. One thinks of the aged father with some pity, as he saw the fading of the visions he had fondly called up, and bethought him that the hope of his declining years, instead of an honourable and dignified profession, had chosen one held by the world in little esteem. He did not, probably, comprehend the fact that nobody had any real choice in the matter. Music had marked George Frederic for her own. He was her bounden servant, and nothing could prevent the discharge of his obligation.

The choice of Berlin as the scene of young Handel's further development was undoubtedly wise, that city being then a great musical centre, thanks to the encouragement given to the art by the Elector and Electress—afterwards the first King and Queen of Prussia. Towards Berlin, musical artists set their faces from all parts of Europe, assured of encouragement and support. Our eleven-year-old boy found himself, therefore, in good company on arriving. Mainwaring states that he had a "friend and relation" at the Court of the Elector; but, whether or no, the prodigy from Halle had small difficulty in attracting notice within the Elector's musical circle, and even from the Elector himself. "Thus much is certain," writes Mainwaring, "that the little stranger had not been long at court before his abilities became known to the King, who frequently sent for him and made him large presents. Indeed, his Majesty, convinced of his singular endowments, and unwilling to lose the opportunity of patronising so rare a genius, had conceived a design of cultivating it at his own expense. His intention was to send him to Italy, where he might

be formed under the best masters, and have opportunities of hearing and seeing all that was excellent in the kind." This purpose, as will more fully appear presently, was never carried out; but the Elector's intention shows how deep an impression the child's genius had made, and how likely it was that its effect upon men more competent to judge than a mere amateur would be even greater. Details of what transpired during George Frederic's residence in Berlin are, unfortunately, very meagre, but, such as they are, they have an interest which entitles them to fuller notice than is possible within the limits of the present paper.

(To be continued.)

THE MUSIC OF ANCIENT ROME AND ITS OPPONENT.

By J. F. ROWBOTHAM.

THERE is a law of nature which brings periodically into contact the large with the small, the supremely great with the supremely diminutive. In this way fortune has at last brought ancient Rome into collision with a journalist—two extremes of fancy, beyond which the mind is unable to travel either way. It may be safely asserted that Rome will survive the shock, although it can derive but little honour from so grotesque an encounter. The immediate cause which precipitated the collision was my recent essay on "The Early History of the Organ," with its numerous allusions to ancient Roman music. A writer in a contemporary of ours has taken these latter most unkindly, and indeed has intimated that he considers them a sort of personal insult to himself. He has passed through life hitherto, it appears, oblivious that ancient Rome once existed, and totally unconscious that any music was to be found therein. His surprise is therefore extreme to be told otherwise, and vents itself in a multitude of words.

His criticism of my essay takes the form of an earnest appeal for information. All is dark to him, he confesses, but he is very willing to grope his way about as best he may, if I will only start him in the right direction. He says I shall reveal "a new world" to his gaze if I will answer him certain questions which he indicates. "Mr. Rowbotham," he remarks, "is an excellent classical scholar. I," he adds, though not in so many words, "am not. I know nothing about the classics. I know nothing about ancient music. But I am very anxious to know. Will Mr. Rowbotham be so kind?" The task of helping those desirous to learn is always a pleasing one, more especially when they are so frank and ingenuous as is my kindly critic, who, by the bye, loads me with compliments on "the painstaking research" I have displayed in the essay at large, and only withholds them when my information has not been sufficiently full to please him. These compliments, unfortunately, I cannot reckon at a very high value, as the next minute he honestly confesses that he knows nothing at all about the subject.

Nero's musical ability is the first thing that troubles him. He cannot understand how such a tyrant could have been a good musician. The old saying, "Nero fiddled, while Rome burnt," he is very much dissatisfied with. He thinks there is a mistake somewhere, and that it ought rather to run, "Nero burnt, while Rome fiddled"; as, by this means, the unpleasant ascription of any musical ability to that monarch can be entirely got over. If I will but grant him this as the correct reading, he defies me to prove that Nero knew one note from another.

He next asks me urgently to reply to the four following questions:—

1. "In what sense did a Roman pantomime answer to a modern opera or melodrama?"
2. "What was the 'orchestra' used in Rome?"
3. "Of how many instruments did it consist, and of what *genre* were they?"
4. "What sort of a 'full band' was it in which Nero wanted the organ to take its place?"

The information he requires on all these points is to be so very exact that, not content with my naming the classical authors where it is to be found, he earnestly entreats me to give him "the chapter and also the verse." My friend evidently imagines that the classics are divided into chapters and verses like the Bible. But let me tell him that is not so. He knows no classics, it is true, but the merest schoolboy could have told him that the classics have their chapters, but no verses—none whatever.

The points above enumerated are those which will reveal "a new world" to my critic's gaze. It seems somewhat selfish, perhaps, that so much time and space should be devoted to dispelling the ignorance of one man; but the thirst for information is always a laudable one, and when the case is so desperate as that of my critic's, it must, at all costs, be satisfied.

First, as to the Nero difficulty. I will freely grant that my critic has made a very happy inversion of the old adage when he phrases it "Nero burnt, while Rome fiddled." I commend his ingenuity. But if he thinks he has at all shaken my historical accuracy thereby, I must tell him flatly that he is much mistaken. He knows no other passage bearing on the question than this old adage. I know several. Nero sang in the presence of thousands of spectators at the great theatre of Naples in the third year of his reign. From Naples he went to Greece, and sang at the principal theatres there. He entered into public competition with all comers at the Grecian games, of which there were four in number, the Isthmian, the Pythian, the Olympian, the Nemean, and several times received the prize (the above facts can all be found in the 20th chapter of Suetonius—there are no verses). Nero's favourite parts which he assumed as a singer were those of Orestes, Canace, Œdipus, Hercules Furens (his assumptions of these are described in the 21st chapter of Suetonius, and also in the Greek historian, Dion Cassius). Nero's diligence in improving his voice was so great that he had a singing-master or voice-trainer almost always by his side, one of whose duties was to observe the state of the atmosphere, for fear the delicate throat of the great amateur might suffer from a chill. With this singing-master he would also sit up till late in the night, practising his arias and roudades against the following day (Suetonius, chapter 20). Nero slept with plates of lead on his breast, to correct unsteadiness of breathing, and give him the power of sustaining his notes in equal volume (Suetonius, chapter 25). He would also abstain from food for days together, in order to benefit his voice; often denying himself fruit and sweet pastry, which are known to be prejudicial to singing. He could play the flute with the best players of his day, and was no mean performer on the trumpet (Suetonius again, and the chapter before last). He could play the lyre to perfection. He could likewise play the pandura—an instrument, I will be bound, my critic has never heard of in his life before. These facts, and a great many more which I have not the patience to put down, my friend will read in Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Lucian, Philostratus, Tacitus, Seneca, and Petronius, where he will be good enough to find the chapters and verses himself, for I have done enough for him.

Next to answer his four categorical questions.

Question 1. "In what sense did a Roman pantomime answer to a modern opera or melodrama?" In the sense that it was a musical play. Referring to my own words, I find that my critic has altered them considerably in his quotation, probably with a view of obtaining greater exactitude of reply. What I wrote was "The pantomime answered *very much* to what operas or melodramas do with us." There is a difference, and a considerable one. I made the comparison quite general; he makes it terribly particular. But no doubt he imagines it is all the same. For his benefit, then, and to show him what a pantomime really was, I cannot do better than translate the description of one from a Latin author. It is from Apuleius's "Golden Ass," and is inserted here for his special edification. "At the sound of the trumpets, the curtain rolled down" (another surprise for my friend. No doubt he will think it ought to have drawn up. But the chapter is the 29th in Apuleius—once more there are no verses), "and the stage was revealed to the eyes of the spectators. The scene was a wooden mountain, and a very high one, planted with shrubberies and green trees, from its top a fountain flowing, and real water was trickling down the side. A few kids were cropping the herbage, and a youth was shepherding them, dressed in the Phrygian style, with a golden diadem on his head. A beautiful boy was also on the stage, whom we knew to be Mercury from the little golden wings among his yellow hair, and the caduceus which he carried. He ran with a dancing step, and, carrying in his right hand an apple stuck with spangles, offered it to the shepherd, whose name was Paris, and announced to him in signs that Jupiter had entrusted him with the task of deciding who was the most beautiful of the goddesses, and that the apple was to be the prize of beauty. On his departure a girl of noble countenance entered, with sceptre and crown. This was Juno. Then another, who was Minerva, as her helmet told us. And yet another, who we knew was Venus. Her complexion was white and delicate, and she was lovely to look upon. And now the virgins, their attendants, came dancing in; but Juno was attended by Castor and Pollux, and by a band of stately matrons. Juno, to the modulations of the music, promised the shepherd that she would bestow such and such on him if he adjudged her the prize of beauty. Next came Minerva, making promises likewise; but two boys, Terror and Fear, danced with drawn swords around her, clashing their arms; and since it was renown in war which she promised, the pipes struck up the Dorian Mode, tantiveying in the manner of trumpets. And next came Venus sweetly smiling, amid the applause of all the spectators, and surrounded by a crowd of tender little girl-boys; and you would have thought them real Cupids, with their smooth fair faces, and little wings, and tiny arrows. They bore shining torches before Venus, as if she were going to consecrate a marriage. And virgins too in troops came dancing—the lovely Graces and the rosy Hours, scattering flowers and garlands, and soothing the queen of pleasure with the tresses of the Spring. Now then the flutes pealed out, and with a florid Lydian strain they charm the souls of the spectators, while Venus begins to step to Paris. The graceful undulations of her form, the flowing of her shape, the arching of her neck, and all in time to the delicate warbling of the flutes—can you wonder that the apple was her easy prize?" (Apuleius, chapters 29 and 30). Let us imagine a one-act opera, entitled "The prize of beauty, or the contest of the goddesses"; and a modern librettist would probably produce something very similar.

During the whole of the pantomime there was continuous music from first to last. The actors themselves, curiously enough, took no part in the singing—their action was dumb show (for these statements, apply to Calliachus, *De Ludis Scenicis* II., 754). The music was furnished by a chorus of singers and a band of instrumentalists standing on the stage, who were supplemented by a second band stationed in the orchestra (Calliachus again). While the chorus sang and the band played, the theme of the song being the narrative of the pantomime, the actors carried on their motions and gestures, endeavouring to express thereby the action of the narrative which the chorus was singing (Cassiodorus, I., Var. E, 51). The pantomimes were got up on the most stupendous scale. There were sometimes more people on the stage than in the theatre itself; for, what with the immense pageants of actors, and the great choruses of singers and instrumentalists, the stage was full (Seneca's 84th Epistle—unfortunately there are not even chapters in this Epistle, much less verses.) "The passages are full of singers," says an eye-witness, "the orchestra is thronged with trumpets, and every kind of pipe and musical instrument peals from the stage" (Seneca again, who saw with his own eyes the "new world" of which my illustrious critic utterly doubts the existence). No music in ancient Rome? Why, the idea is a monstrous one, and could only be the offspring of the most profound and benighted ignorance.

If my friend wants any more about the pantomimes—of which he first denies the existence and then asks me what they were—I can give it him. The pantomimes had overtures exactly as our operas have; they had instrumental interludes during pauses in the singing; and, finally, when they were of more than one act, they had *entr'actes*. For these facts he may look in Donatus, if he knows who Donatus is, and has anybody among his acquaintances who can translate the Latin.

Question 2. "What was the 'orchestra' used in Rome?" My friend deals with the orchestra as he deals with the pantomime. He begins by denying there was any orchestra at all, and then—suddenly assuming its existence—asks me if I can tell him something about it. The orchestra used in Rome consisted of lyres, flutes, pipes, trumpets, gongs, castanets, and cymbals. This is the statement of Calliachus, *De Ludis Scenicis* II.; Cassiodorus, *De Musica*; Calliachus, *Ad Nonnium*; Cœlius; Salmasius; and Isidore, *Origines* III. I dislike being pedantic, but my excellent friend compels me, for the moment, to be so. "The lyres were of immense size and enormous power," says Calliachus, who particularly describes them. The flutes resembled in outward appearance a flageolet, being held in the same manner to the mouth. The pipes were bound with brass, were exceedingly powerful in tone, and were said, in the words of a Roman poet, to be "the rivals of the trumpet." The gongs were made of brass or copper, but afterwards of silver, and gave a rich sonorous sound when struck. "They clashed most pleasantly," says Cassiodorus, who, among others, describes their sound minutely. The castanets and cymbals I need not particularly allude to; but my enquiring friend can find a full account of them in Cœlius, folio 1049, and Calliachus, *Ad Nonnium*, 18.

Question 3. "Of how many instruments did the orchestra consist, and of what *genre* were they?" My excellent friend knows nothing about Latin, but he surely knows a little about arithmetic. I have given him the instruments. Let him count them himself. "Of what *genre* were they?" Plainly enough—stringed instruments, wind instruments, and instruments of percussion. I hope this will be intelligible to my excellent friend.

Question 4. "What sort of a 'full band' was it, in which Nero wanted the organ to take its place?" "What sort of a full band?" Why, it was this sort of a full band—to use his uncouth way of putting it. It was the Roman orchestra, which I have lately described, on the large scale which Seneca, an eye-witness and frequent visitor to the theatres, has reported to us; when, what with the immense pageants of actors and the great choruses of singers and instrumentalists, the stage was full. "The passages were full of singers," he says, "the orchestra was thronged with trumpets, and every kind of pipe and musical instrument pealed from the stage."

This was "the sort of a full band." And now, having answered my excellent friend his very last question, I wish him adieu. I should strongly advise him not to write on any subject connected with music for the future, and particularly to leave Rome alone. But if he still desires to limp behind me, with a view of obtaining some stray crumbs of information, he had better take the remaining parts of my essay on "The Early History of the Organ," and go over them word by word. The authorities on which it is written are open to all men to read, and I have the greatest pleasure in furnishing him with the following list:—Constantine Porphyrogenitus, John Cantacuzene, Ammianus Marcellinus, Nicetas Choniates, Seneca, Tertullian, Juvenal, Theophanes, Photius, Joannes Malalas, Procopius, Theophylactus, Sigebertus Havercampus, Zosimus, Monachus Sangalliensis, Monachus Engolismensis, Annales Mettenses, Adhelmus, and Eginhardus.

IN Sir John Stainer's Report on the Musical Departments in Training Colleges, recently issued, he especially dwells upon the increasing number of students who are prepared to play an instrument, the growth of really able female pianists being a highly interesting feature. Now, much as all music-lovers may rejoice at this proof of the rapid spread of the art, serious thinkers upon the subject might anxiously inquire whether there is not a great danger of the supply far exceeding the demand, presuming that all these young musicians hope to live solely by the exercise of their art, either as teachers or performers. Happily, however, there are now many situations where such an accomplishment may prove of the utmost value, and materially strengthen the claims of those who might otherwise find much difficulty in obtaining and retaining remunerative employment. The writer of the official Report, foreseeing this, speaks of "that most useful class, the schoolmaster-organist," and truly says that either ladies or gentlemen who keep scholastic establishments, and are good musicians, would be invaluable as performers or choir-trainers in a church or chapel with which they might be officially or otherwise connected. We would, however, go beyond this, and affirm that evidences of the desirability of the possession of musical powers in many positions of life are before us every day, as one example of which we quote the following advertisement, which lately appeared:—"To Vocalists.—Wanted, a good Reader to act as Nurse. Must be able to take a leading part in anthems, glees, &c. Salary, £30 a year, paid monthly, with board, lodging, washing, and two dresses annually." Of course there are many vocalists who are not nurses, and many nurses who are not vocalists; but we only refer to this in proof of our assertion that musical acquirements in the present day may often aid those who are seeking positions quite apart from the art. Within our own experience we could instance a lady who most ably