The Great Composers. No. XXIV. Hérold (Continued)

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Latin-English dictionary of the fifteenth century, the word is used to describe a "Crowde, an instrument of musyke." The drone of the bagpipe and the unstopable strings of the old "Crowde" becoming a sort of burden or chorus to the melody played on the strings.

(To be continued.)

THE GREAT COMPOSERS

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

No. XXIV.—HÉROLD (continued from page 145).

FROM the production of "Le Lapin Blanc," Hérold ceased to write in his journal other than passages which struck him in his favourite authors, and thus cut off from us the most important source of information at once accurate and interesting. This is all the more to be regretted because the closing years of the master's life were those of his greatest triumphs—those in which, conquering the world's applause, he wrote his name on tablets more imperishable than brass.

In 1826 Hérold associated himself with Planard, as musician and librettist, accepting from him a drama entitled "Marie." Every amateur knows this work by repute, but, though it still belongs to the repertory of the Opéra Comique, few English music-lovers may have been privileged to hear it. "Marie" hardly accords with the taste of the present day. It involves no commanding story of sensational interest, and the music, fitting itself to a slight and rather episodic subject, has for its leading features refinement and delicacy. But sixty years ago a sense of the idyllic was not lost, and "Marie" enjoyed extraordinary popularity from the first night of its production at the Opéra Comique (August 12, 1826) till newer works from the same pen diverted interest to themselves. Nevertheless "Marie" cannot be accepted as belonging to the composer's most characteristic productions. Hérold took a singularly long time to discover or, at all events, to illustrate his own individual style. He began by imitating whatever was most popular, and was naturally drawn into the train of Rossini by the united force of superior attraction and self-interested calculation. Little by little, however, as the French composer felt his innate strength, he emancipated himself from a somewhat ignoble situation and put forth his own powers in his own way. The music in "Marie" evidences this change unmistakably, though by no means free from the influence of Rossini, whose spirit it partially reflects, as well as the characteristics of his style. But in 1826 a touch of Rossinianism was no obstacle to popular success, and "Marie," as we have said, was promptly taken to the public heart and cherished there. First all Paris, and then all France, sang the choice bits of the work, till on every hand were heard the strains of "Une robe légère," "Batelier, dit Lisette," and "Je pars demain."

At this time Hérold had dismissed himself from the post of accompanist at the Italiens, and gone to the Grand Opéra as chorusmaster. The good fortune of "Marie" may or may not have led to further promotion, but, in any case, from chorusmaster Hérold rose to be *chef du chant*, "a position," says M. Jouvin, "which gave him, in association with the *chef d'orchestre*, the artistic direction of our first lyric stage, but absorbed his time, labour, and energies in exchange for very little glory." The constant duties of his office had the more serious effect of diverting Hérold from the work of composition, and during three years he produced only one piece, unless six ballets be counted. These appear to have given him very little trouble. He used to write them in the midst of his

friends, in whose conversation he at the same time joined. Their names and dates are as follows:—"Astolphe et Joconde" (1827), "La Sonnambule" (1827), "Lydie" (1828), "La Fille mal gardée" (1828), "La Belle au Bois dormant" (1829), "Les Noces de Village" (1830). M. Jouvin has some interesting observations upon the method of these and other ballets of the period:—"The art of writing ballet music was, at that time, an art of arrangement. The melodies employed by the composer, borrowed by him from works old and new, even from the refrains of the vaudeville and the tunes of the street, had to explain the pantomime of the characters, and, by the ingenious introduction of a known theme, reveal to spectators the situation which the dancer could not depict by mere movement. In 'La Sonnambule Villageoise' Hérold happily introduced into the quarrel of the two young peasants the piquant duet of the two old women in 'Le Maçon,' and he recalled with much charm the popular melody of Amadée de Beauplan, 'Dormez donc, mes chers amours,' in the scene of sonnambulism. This framing demanded a certain art, and when the operator was a Hérold there were reasons why the tasteful ornaments of the frame should be worth as much or more than the picture. The imagination of the composer of 'Marie' was not so completely the slave of the hand occupied in making the *pot-pourri* as that she failed to open her wings on her own account. In following her with his eyes into space, the arranger, leaving the scissors for the pen, became an inventor, and a work of *marqueterie* one of inspiration. In 'La Sonnambule,' a dramatic *Finale*, second act, and the symphonic piece accompanying the promenade of *Thérèse* upon the tiles, bear the mark of great talent."

The one work, other than ballets, to which reference has been made was some incidental music to a drama, "Le Dernier jour de Missolonghi," written by Ozanneaux, and produced at the Odéon, April 10, 1828. We are told that in this the poet succeeded a little, and the musician a great deal. Hérold's contribution included an overture, often heard for years after in concert-rooms, some songs and dance measures, and a prayer. About this time—the date is variously given—Hérold received the Legion of Honour, thanks in some measure, perhaps, to Rossini, who, M. Azevedo tells us, would not accept that coveted distinction till after it had been bestowed upon his gifted fellow-artist.

In 1830 appeared, at the Théâtre Ventadour—temporary home of the Opéra Comique—a one-act piece entitled "L'Illusion." The story, by Saint-Georges and Ménessier, was gloomy, ending with a suicide, but Hérold's music made its sadness poetic, and all Paris ran to hear and to weep. M. Jouvin cynically remarks that every woman whose eyes were beautiful enough to shed tears with grace frequented the Ventadour, and copiously cried over the love and misfortunes of the heroine. Thirty-one performances of "L'Illusion" were given without a break, and the "run" of the piece extended, through the heats of summer, to seventy-nine nights—a wonderful success in the Paris of that day. Looking at this result, it may be worth while to dwell a little upon the cause. The plot of "L'Illusion" is certainly happy in its opportunities: A young diplomatist, travelling to distract his mind from disappointment in love, meets, in a Tyrolian village, with a girl who is the exact counterpart of the woman who is lost to him. In her person he worships the object of his adoration, but "on ne badine pas avec l'amour." That which is an illusion to the man is a reality to the village maiden, and at length the hero determines to marry her, though still not for her sake so much as for her likeness to another. At this juncture the

lost love appears upon the scene. Death has widowed her, and she is free. Learning the situation the peasant girl takes an heroic resolution. At the wedding ceremony it is the true adored one who, prompted by the counterpart, occupies the bride's place. As for the Tyrolienne, having made happy the man to whom her heart is given, she throws herself into an abyss, and perishes. No wonder that, with such a sympathetic, poetical, and touching story, all Paris went to see the "Illusion." With regard to the music, M. Jouvin writes: "Hérold composed eight pieces for this one-act drama, all of which reveal the sure and skilful hand of a great musician. Particularly admired are the overture, treated as a *pot-pourri*, the introduction, picturesque and full of colour, a delicious romance, a well-developed *Finale*, which includes a waltz still remembered, though the work as a whole has disappeared from the scene, 'La valse' de l'Illusion," under which title it was for a long time popular."

Hérold's next venture was a failure as conspicuous as the success of "L'Illusion" was great. The composer's biographers, or some of them, contend that this was the fault of the librettist, Planard, who, falling himself, involved excellent music in ruin. Planard named his work "Emmeline," and took the story from an English novel, but, apparently, without adapting it to French tastes, which were not gratified by waiting through three acts for the softening of a flinty father's heart in the interests of true love. Among the audience at the *première* of "Emmeline" was the dramatist Scribe, of whom, in this connection, M. Jouvin gives some interesting particulars:—

"M. Scribe regularly attended the first representations of works by his *confrères*, occupying a box for which he paid; it being his rule never to ask for free admission even to the theatres whose fortune he made. Of all the spectators attracted by what is called a dramatic solemnity, M. Scribe showed himself the most attentive and the most reserved. At the back of his box, serious and silent, he followed the course of the work for the first time submitted to public judgment or caprice. Success or failure, cheers or hisses, calm or tempest among the crowd, nothing troubled or deranged his meditative repose, nothing was able to draw from his emotion or his impatience a visible sign of satisfaction or the reverse. Not that he envied the success of a *confrère*, or that he would hide from spectators the pleasure, enjoyed in secret, of witnessing the failure of others. He was above the petty meanness of an author's vanity, and, if he desired success for himself, he loved to see it reward his colleagues. M. Scribe visited the theatre to study his art, not for diversion. If the drama was well received, he went away without saying a word; if it failed, not on account of the subject, but because of indifferent workmanship, he would remark, on leaving his place, 'That is a piece which I shall reconstruct.'"

Scribe saw just such a piece in Planard's "Emmeline." He wrote one of his own on the same story, brought it out at the Gymnase, and obtained a great success.

Of the "Emmeline" music, only an orchestral fragment survives; this being played at the Opéra Comique, between the second and third acts of "Marie," whenever that opera is performed. Hérold's French admirers are distinctly of opinion that, if revived, "Emmeline" would have a chance of favour, and one of them demands, "Why allow a masterpiece of grace and sentiment to sleep in the library of a theatre?"

In 1830 Miss Smithson, the English actress, re-appeared in Paris, to court once more the favour shown by the French public during her tour with Macready

two years before. It is said that Miss Smithson failed to obtain success in England after her triumph in France, and some Gallic writers are unkind enough to insinuate that insular pride would not cry "ditto" to French judgment. The matter is not worth discussing now. Enough that Miss Smithson went back to Paris, and appeared at the Ventadour (May 11, 1830) in a piece called "L'Auberge d'Auray." This appears to have been written to provide the English artist, who could not play in French, with a pantomime part designed to show the eloquence of her gestures and facial expression. She had to portray the anguish of a peasant wife whose husband is tried and condemned to death on suspicion of harbouring a Vendean leader. Dramatically, the experiment failed, but some incidental music written by Hérold and Carafa presented a redeeming feature, and the piece made at any rate a *succès d'estime*. Twelve months later Miss Smithson married Hector Berlioz and began a matrimonial career not unlike, in sad disappointment, her experience on the stage.

We now reach the most glorious period of Hérold's life—that in which he gave "Zampa" to the world and followed up his masterpiece with "Le Pré aux Clercs." Like most other composers of opera, Hérold found his greatest difficulty in the obtaining of good libretti. Of the many new dramas submitted to him few pleased, till at last the master began turning his attention towards old subjects, among others that of "Don Juan." That Mozart had already dealt with it does not seem to have prevented Hérold from at least entertaining the idea of trying his own hand upon the story. At any rate, he spoke about it to the dramatist Mélesville, who, glad of a chance of appearing as Hérold's co-labourer, set to work immediately upon a libretto embodying the principal incidents introduced by Da Ponte into the book for Mozart, but, of course, under new conditions which, as "Zampa" must be familiar to musical readers, we need not stop to indicate. Hérold approved the drama as thus prepared and began the music with zeal.

At this time the Opéra Comique (in lodgings at the Théâtre Ventadour) was in a very bad way. Collapse and ruin so stared the enterprise in the face that it became for the director a matter of serious concern to find a work adapted to please the public. But this unfortunate person missed his chance when Mélesville read to him the libretto of "Zampa." It did not please him, he rejected it, and went on to inevitable catastrophe. Hérold, who was present, put the unfortunate MS. in his pocket, saying, "The subject suits me, my music is three parts finished; when you want a success to save your theatre you can come and find me." When the non-perceptive manager had come to hopeless grief, it was resolved to make a special effort and, if possible, resuscitate the fortunes of the Opéra Comique. France could not, for very shame, allow them to remain in such a state, and incur the reproach of neglecting a peculiarly national form of art. Consequently, the famous Dr. Véron was placed in charge of the Grand Opéra, the man he superseded, M. Lubbert, being transferred to the Ventadour, and commissioned to raise that house from its low estate. Lubbert and the authorities behind him set about their task in good earnest. Among other steps, they brought Valentino from the Grand Opéra as *chef d'orchestre*, increased the orchestra till it numbered eighty performers, and announced for the opening night a new opera by Hérold, entitled, "Zampa, ou la Fiancée de Marbre." No one knew what would be the result, but on all hands men felt that the life or death of the Opéra Comique was involved. On the morning of the opening one journal said:—"To-day the grand inauguration will take

place. . . . 'Zampa, ou la Fiancée de Marbre,' is the work destined to effect a great act of resurrection or sudden death; for it cannot be concealed that, after so many promises, if the result disappoint all is over for a long time with a theatre which the public can neither love nor avoid in moderate measure." So said they all on that momentous third day of March, 1831, and it is easy to believe that Hérold felt weighed down by an immense load of responsibility. He carried the burden, not of his own fortunes merely, but those of an historic stage. What wonder if he staggered under them? or if he felt buoyant and light-hearted when Paris thundered its approval of the new work, lifted the composer to the skies, and temporarily saved the Opéra Comique from ruin?

It is no part of our purpose to criticise here an opera so well-known as "Zampa," but it may be worth while to show how some of Hérold's contemporaries and countrymen regarded it. M. Scudo wrote: "The side of this work that stands open to criticism is, as nearly always with Hérold, confusion of styles. The austere and sober phrase of 'Joseph' (Méhul) is found in company with Italian *bravura*; the chansonette disperses with its importunate cock-crow all the phantoms evoked from the supernatural. Mozart, Méhul, Weber, Rossini, Auber—how many more?—may be found in the hybrid formation of this superb monster. You find in 'Zampa' the echo of all the inspiration, of all the great voices of the time. Under the mobile structure of that orchestra, so full of presentiments and mysteries, you distinguish Weber; those duets, those Venetian-coloured *Pinales*, conceived, worked with the vigorous authority of a master, speak to you of Rossini, while here and there the small details, the grace, the spirit, the lively and piquant features murmur in your ears the names of Boieldieu and Auber. Every instant one regrets that a man capable of producing the art of others with such intensity of reflection, such supreme ability—a man of such rare talent—did not learn to speak for himself. It is, they say, because Hérold had no personality. Invention failed him; his opéra-comique, more grand than that of Auber, is but a reduction of grand opera." Now let us hear M. Jouvin on the same subject: "That which ranks 'Zampa' among the rare and privileged productions, the authority of which establishes itself more and more, is that all the divisions of art are brought into equilibrium. The brain, the heart, and the hand of the composer are fraternally associated to produce a thing complete and perfect. Hérold's melody, flowing in abundant stream, is by turns passionate and light, it comes from lofty elevations or mysterious profundities, and if a bright ray of sunshine makes it scintillate upon the stones where it babbles, never does a vulgar phrase throw itself into the current of pure originality, and affect its transparency. The harmony, of sustained power and elegance, taking in some sort, under a competent hand, all the forms and folds of sonority, proves a creative gift, even in the art of combining groups of chords; the shock of modulations, in appearance the most violent, passing into harmonic resolutions of incomparable sweetness. One is surprised that such an aggregation of notes, which seem to do violence to sound, should be a caress to the ear. . . . In 'Zampa' one runs through the entire gamut of sentiments and passions; all is contrast in that production at once masterly and charming, and in which the style of the musician is nevertheless an admirable unity." We have now heard the critic and the eulogist speak, each representing a section of the musical public, to whom "Zampa" submitted itself for judgment. As to the opinion of the present time, it can hardly be said actively to exist. "Zampa" has not been heard

in England, we believe, since its production at the Gaiety theatre many years ago, and our concert-rooms have only the overture. But an opera so famous, about which every amateur has heard, and concerning which he knows something, can hardly have disappeared for ever. It will come up again some day and make the name of Hérold once more familiar.

With regard to the immediate results of "Zampa," we take the following from Scudo's *Musiciens du Passé, du Présent, et de l'Avénir*. "'Zampa,' from its first appearance at the Ventadour, had not the success which is commonly reported. More fame than cash—such was the moral of the comedy. In France and elsewhere Hérold's renown grew, but he gained little in fortune. It was only later that his music, however honourably received, became for the Parisian public an object of attraction. There are musicians who succeed during their lifetime; others see their star rise in the heavens only when they have reached the abode of Pluto. Halévy dead, it was everybody's business to forget him. Of his numerous works it is doubtful if more than a few friends know their names. 'La Juive,' which is better than nothing, endures at the Opéra, but not a note of 'Guido et Ginevra,' 'Charles VI. 'Le Juif Errant,' and 'La Magicienne' has survived. He left behind him the score of 'Noé'—who has troubled about it? Speak to men whom this matter concerns, and they will answer, like Louis XIV., 'Otez-moi ce magot de devant les yeux?' On the other hand, Hérold is, to-day, thought much of by all of us. If life neglected him sometimes, death did wonders in his favour."

A month after the production of "Zampa," Hérold's connection with the Grand Opéra was broken off by the director, Dr. Véron, as a measure of economy. The institution, though receiving an enormous annual allowance from the State, had been for a long time getting deeper and deeper into debt, till at last the time came for authoritative action of some sort. Under these circumstances, Véron was installed as director, with orders to adjust expenditure to revenue and restore the fortunes of the house. The Doctor, in taking the post, bound himself to respect the engagements entered into with artists by his predecessors, but it happened, in the case of Hérold, that his contract as *maître du chant* was verbal and not committed to writing. Véron at once seized the opportunity to reduce expenses, and the *maître du chant* received his dismissal. Hérold, however, was not the man to put up with treatment of this kind. He promptly appealed to the courts of justice, which took nine months to consider the matter, and then decided in his favour. The decree went forth that the first *maître du chant* at the Opéra must be treated as a *premier sujet*, that there was an implied contract between Hérold and the institution, that the dismissed official must be reinstated for a term of ten years and a-half, at a salary of 5,000 francs, and that the director must pay 3,750 francs as salary for the nine months of deprivation. This, it must be admitted, was not exactly a feat of economy on the part of the illustrious Doctor, who took care not to say anything about it in the Memoirs which, some thirty years ago, all Europe read with amusement. In justice to Véron, M. Jouvin points out that, though he was hard upon the *maître du chant*, he could be considerate to the composer, and saved "Le Pré aux Clercs" at a critical moment by lending one of his artists to take the place of a recalcitrant.

Once more Hérold became concerned with the fortunes of the Opéra Comique, to which "Zampa" did but temporary service. The director, Lubbert, was active and able, but, according to one witness,

the institution had fallen into hopeless decay, while the public avoided the Ventadour as a house which had become *declassé*. Six months after "Zampa" the affairs of the theatre had reached a crisis, and again something had to be done on the principle of "kill or cure." Lubbert then bethought him of a great work suited to the taste of the day—sombre in character and making a strong appeal to the imagination and emotions of the audience. This was not *opéra-comique* by any means, but what could a poor director do? A man who has gone under water twice cannot afford to be particular as to the means of keeping himself afloat. Lubbert, in pursuance of his scheme, invited the co-operation of Scribe and Castil-Blaze, by one or both of whom the story of the notorious poisoner, Marquise de Brinvilliers, was selected for treatment. Ten pieces of music had to be written for the drama, and, there being no time to spare, the task was divided among nine composers: Cherubini, Berton, Paër, Boieldieu, Auber, Carafa, Batton, Blangini, and Hérold. Of course the music was a mixture of styles, and as a musical play "La Marquise de Brinvilliers" attracted only the curious. Neither did it succeed as a drama. First performed on October 31, 1831, it ran, if running can be spoken of in such a connection, till December 9, when the house closed. M. Lubbert had shot his bolt, it missed, and there was no course open but to shut the doors.

In January, 1832, the Ventadour re-opened with M. Laurent as director. He, too, was compelled to try drama, and he, too, failed; his tenancy of the unfortunate theatre lasting six months only. What to do now for the poor Opéra Comique? Obviously, some said, to change the theatre, and this advice prevailed. A little theatre, the Nouveautés (now the Vaudeville), was taken, and there, in September, 1832, the second stage of France was set up with very few hopes and many fears. Apparently the institution was doomed, but there could be no harm in another struggle. Hérold at once began writing for it, and, in October, he and Scribe produced a little piece "La Médecine sans Médecin." This, however, was only a sop thrown to an impatient director clamorous for novelty. It answered the purpose, proved to be a success, and assisted in keeping the house open till the composer had finished an opera to be known as "Le Pré aux Clercs"—a masterpiece destined to revive the faded glories of the Opéra Comique and complete the edifice of Hérold's fame.

(To be continued.)

KEY COLOUR.

By FRANZ GRÖENINGS.

(Concluded from page 656, November, 1887.)

ON Wood-wind instruments differences in colour or *timbre* of notes run or group themselves very differently to those on brass instruments, which proves again distinctly that Key Colour cannot be generalised. On any wood instrument the lowest note stands out in richness against all the rest, as the sound emanates solely from the end opposite the mouthpiece (bell end), whereas with all other notes the direction of sound is divided between the bell end and some open lateral holes, whether they determine the length of the vibrating air column in producing fundamental notes, or whether they are opened merely to help the division of the air column at one of the loops, necessary to produce with ease the harmonics or upper partials required. Again, the lowest octave stands out, all its notes being fundamental notes; the notes above are partials of those fundamental ones at higher wind pressure. These may, as in brass instruments,

be produced as higher partials of lower fundamental or as lower partials of higher fundamental notes, with a very slight difference as to *timbre*; e.g., on a

Boehm flute— may be produced as fifth

harmonic of ; as fourth harmonic of

(the usual way); or as third harmonic of

In a similar way may be produced as seventh

partial of ; as sixth partial of ; as fifth

partial of ; or as fourth partial of

the latter being the way generally employed by opening in addition the hole, to form a loop

at one-fourth of the column of air employed. Double reed instruments, like oboe, Cor Anglais, and bassoon, are similar, but the latter two give further illustrations of what I said about the effect of additional resistance to overcome, when speaking about bends in cornet and trombone, as it will be found the peculiar character of Cor Anglais is more pronounced in notes where the vibrating air column reaches below the knee, and on a bassoon the real "funny" notes are to be found on the long joint, owing mainly to the wind being forced round that small acute angle at the bottom of the butt. The single reed instrument, the clarinet, is similar and differs at the same time, as unlike on the others, the second partial or octave of any fundamental note will not speak, whereas with the help of the thirteenth key (for a loop) the third partial or twelfth of any fundamental note is easily got; hence the fingering of the third partials (or twelfths)

corresponds with that of their fundamentals—

whereas on flute and double reed instruments the fingering of the second partials (or octaves) corresponds with that of their fundamental notes, from which it is clear that any distinctions between scales based on the mixture of fundamental notes and lower and higher partials on a clarinet, would widely differ from those on the other wood-wind instruments; moreover, the character of a register, say the third partials (medium register), will be found to lie on a C

clarinet from ; on a B flat clarinet

from ; on an A clarinet from

on an E flat clarinet from when

measured by one pitch. Where then to look for fixed or absolute Key Colour in wood-wind?

Of wind instruments not *à bouche*, those *without* reservoir (or worked by direct hand pressure), such