Musical Times Publications Ltd.

A Plea for Antiphonal Chanting in Half-Verses

Author(s): Henry J. Poole

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 37, No. 644 (Oct. 1, 1896), pp. 687-688

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3369004>

Accessed: 17-10-2015 15:46 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

From Hamburg comes the news of the death there, on the 22nd ult., of Frau KATHARINA KLAFSKY, the well known German *prima donna*, after a short but severe illness. She had been obliged recently to undergo an operation on the head, which was followed by several days of unconsciousness, and in the end proved fatal. The deceased lady, who was only in her thirty-second year, was a Hungarian by birth, of poor parentage, and when quite young attracted the attention of Professor Helmesberger, of Vienna, at whose recommendation she was taken in hand by that eminent vocal teacher, Madame Marchesi. Subsequently for a number of years she was one of the leading members of Herr Angelo Neumann's "Wagner Theatre," and as a dramatic soprano took high rank in Germany. She made her *début* at Drury Lane, in 1892, in "Fidelio," and afterwards also appeared in Wagnerian opera at the same theatre. Frau Klafsky was married three times, her third husband having been Herr Lohse, the Drury Lane conductor.

We have also to record the following deaths:—

On August 16, at Sondershausen, at an advanced age, Councillor FRIEDRICH LAUE, distinguished musical amateur, friend of Liszt and Joachim Raff, one of the earliest literary champions of Richard Wagner.

On August 16, at Boston (U.S.), JOHN B. STETTSON, well-known *impresario* and theatrical manager.

On August 18, at Leipzig, C. E. OESER, famous contrabassist, for thirty-seven years member of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, aged fifty-five.

Recently, at Paris, ETIENNE PORTÉHAUT, formerly conductor at the Théâtre Italien, afterwards director of the Société de Sainte-Cécile, Bordeaux, aged sixty-nine.

On August 19, at Amsterdam, HENRI BOSMANS, violoncellist, aged forty.

On August 20, at Boston (U.S.), FRITZ GIESE, leading violoncellist of the Symphony Orchestra, native of The Hague, aged thirty-seven.

On August 22, at Paris, ANATOLE CERFBEER, musical critic, formerly editor of *Le Théâtre*, aged seventy-two.

On August 22, at Frankfort-on-Main, LEOPOLD LICHTENSTEIN, founder of the pianoforte manufacturing firm of L. Lichtenstein and Co., aged seventy-seven.

On August 23, at Ancona, BENEDETTO ZABAN, composer of several operas performed at Ancona, aged sixty-five.

On August 25, at Vienna, WILHELM WIESBERG, concert singer, particularly of *Wiener Lieder*, aged forty-six.

On August 26, at Vienna, ANTON AMON, vocalist, aged sixty-three.

At Milan, CARLO GOMES, celebrated musical composer. He was born in Brazil and studied at the Conservatoire at Milan. His best-known operas are "Il Guarany" and "Salvator Rosa."

At Brunswick, on the 19th ult., Frau CAROLINE FISCHER-ACHTEN, in her 91st year. She made her *début* as a *prima donna* soprano at the Vienna Opera in 1821, and afterwards held a leading position in the Opera-houses of Frankfort and Brunswick, but she retired into private life upwards of forty years ago.

Recently, at Naples, DOMENICO LABOCCETTA, composer, an intimate friend of Meyerbeer.

On August 26, at Barcelona, JUAN ESCALAS, flautist, composer for orchestra and military band.

Recently, at Maastricht, F. H. SMULDERS, pianoforte maker, celebrated as the inventor of an improved mechanism for carillons, adopted throughout the Netherlands and elsewhere.

On August 28, at Lübeck, LOUIS LEE, violoncellist, composer of merit, aged seventy-seven.

On August 29, at Prague, JULIUS BEER, horn virtuoso, professor at the Conservatorium, aged fifty-nine.

On August 30, at Würzburg, BALTHASAR SCHLIMBACH, organ-builder, founder of the firm of Schlimbach und Sohn, in his ninetieth year.

On the 1st ult., at Bergamo, ALESSANDRO BERNASCONI, pianist, formerly of Montevideo, aged forty-one.

On the 2nd ult., at Paris, MARIE ANNA PAPOT, professor of singing at the Conservatoire, author of a valued collection of exercises, "Vingt-sept leçons à changement de Clefs," aged forty-two.

On the 3rd ult., at Turin, CARLO CASELLA, violoncellist

and composer, professor at the Liceo Musicale, aged sixty-two.

On the 4th ult., at Vienna, JOHANN KAUTSKY, scene painter for the leading Austrian and German theatres, aged sixty-nine.

On the 6th ult., at Cannstatt, Württemberg, CAROLINE, eldest daughter of the late Bernhardt Molique.

On the 7th ult., at Rome, RAFFAELE VITALI, operatic singer and teacher, father of Giuseppina Vitali, aged sixty-three.

On the 8th ult., at Munich, Professor Dr. MARTIN HÄRTINGER, formerly operatic singer, professor at the Royal Musik-Schule, teacher of Herr Vogl, in his eighty-second year.

Recently, at Zurich, RICHARD AVENARIUS, professor at the philosophical faculty, a nephew of Richard Wagner.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A PLEA FOR ANTIPHONAL CHANTING IN HALF-VERSES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—As the real grounds for chanting the Psalms in half-verses appear to be little known or understood, I ask your permission to state the principles on which the practice is based.

1. Antiphonal chanting (*i.e.*, alternate chanting by two bodies of singers) is not only an ancient practice extending back to Jewish times, it is also a (if not *the*) most appropriate method of rendering the Psalms in liturgical worship.

2. Antiphonal chanting should be *strictly responsory*—*i.e.*, the sentence or clause sung by the second set of singers must be a *true answer* or correspondent expression to the sentence or clause enunciated by the first set of singers. The common "verse-and-verse-about" method of recitation has no reason to recommend it; it is the unintelligent way in which school children are taught to read the Bible.

3. Musical antiphony must be based on *poetical correspondence*.

4. Poetical correspondence in the Psalter is found—

(a) In a close or strong form *within* the verse—*i.e.* between the component parallel members.

(b) And in a loose or weak form *between* the verses. The former runs throughout the Psalter (except, perhaps, Psalm 137) normally in a binary form, exceptionally (to the extent of twelve per cent.) in a ternary or quaternary form; the colon stop divides the binary form, and for the most part the quaternary, into balanced halves, leaving a small number of verses containing three members unequally divided, and treated practically as in the binary form, the bipartite structure of the chant, whether ancient or modern, necessitating this arrangement.

The looser correspondence between the verses is *too rare and irregular* to form an exclusive basis for musical antiphony.

5. Parallelism within the verse (which for brevity I may term half-verse parallelism) runs prominently and persistently throughout the Psalter, and is therefore the only satisfactory basis for antiphonal chanting.

6. Ample provision, however, for the rarer forms of correspondence is secured by the use of double and multiple chants *sung in half-verses*; thus sung they mark the parallelism within the verse, *as well as* that which is exterior to it.

A few objections stated and answered.

1. However desirable half-verse chanting may be for some Psalms, there are many cases in which it cuts up a sentence and so breaks the continuity of ideas.

Answers: (a) This division into parallel clauses is part of the essential structure of the Psalms, and cannot therefore be ignored in the music or mode of chanting.

(b) The same objection would apply to the Versicles and Responses, which are really half-verses (many being taken from the Psalms), and are chanted by the priest and congregation alternately.

2. Half-verse chanting breaks the continuity of many double chants in which there is a correspondence between the first and third, and sometimes between the second and fourth phrases.

Answer: The use of such chants for the Psalms, however satisfactory from a musical point of view, is misleading, since it suggests a correspondence in the words which for the most part does not exist, while it ignores the close correspondence which runs through every verse. Composers should write chants in conformity with the structure of the Psalms, as Havergal, Elvey, Barnby, and others have done.

3. The Psalm verse is not always divided into two parallel halves; many verses contain three or more members.

Answer: See under the fourth head above.

4. There is no liturgical precedent for half-verse chanting.

Yet (a) some Psalms (as 24th and 136th) were probably so sung by the Jews.

(b) That very ancient method of liturgical worship by Verse and Response is entirely a half-verse system; the *principle*, therefore, has a good precedent.

(c) The practice is not unknown in the Roman Church (see Mendelssohn's *Letter*, June 16, 1831).

(d) Christ Church, Oxford, York Minster, and many other churches have adopted the practice for some years, and it continues to spread, being founded on truth.

I remain, yours truly,

HENRY J. POOLE.

Stowell Rectory, Sherborne.

WORDS TO PIANOFORTE SCORES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I would wish to call your attention to what I consider to be a curious oversight on the part of the foreign and English music publishers. Most of the great firms issue the principal operas, oratorios, cantatas, &c., in two forms—as complete vocal score (with text) and for pianoforte solo (without anything else). Now, I contend that, while it is true that the great majority (I hope) of professional musicians and even a large number of amateurs are able, when playing the pianoforte, to take in six or more lines at a glance, and may thus enjoy to the full the advantages of the vocal scores, there exists, at the same time, a numerous class of music-lovers that have not the time, inclination, or the ability to perfect themselves in this special branch of musical execution. For the benefit of these I would suggest that the two forms of arrangement hitherto in vogue should be amalgamated, and the works in question be edited for pianoforte solo *plus* the text. This would, of course, while not interfering in any way with the further publication of the vocal scores, render entirely superfluous the arrangements for pianoforte solo now in use, as I do not think there are any players, however unintelligent or inferior, who would not prefer to know what they are playing about (if I may be pardoned the expression) when they have the chance of doing so under the same conditions as before—that is to say, with no greater tax on their capacity or energy. It goes without saying that the same method could be applied to the arrangements for four hands.—I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

HERMANN OELSNER.

Springfield, Honor Oak Park.

A VISIT TO THE GRAVE OF POTTER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Will you, through your valued paper, let the recipients of Cipriani Potter's Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music know that the grave, No. 20,357, at Kensal Green Cemetery, is allowed to remain neglected, with Mr. Potter's name, &c., nearly obliterated, when for a few shillings the letters could be filled in and made legible to all participants in the benefits of his scholarship. In memory of him who was once Principal of their Academy, a great master, and the late head of the musical profession, let me beg of your insertion of this from a poor and aged pupil, as, in justice to the Academy itself, that great master should not lie neglected and forgotten by us or the scholars receiving the benefit of his bounty.—Yours obediently,

ANTHONY POLLON.

28, Barnsdale Road, West London.

MR. CORDER *v.* CHARLES GOUNOD. *Re* BERLIOZ.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—As one of those who attended Mr. Corder's Royal Institution Lectures and who heard with feelings of surprise and pain (to use no harsher term) that gentleman's depreciatory remarks on the music of Hector Berlioz, I venture to ask for the insertion in your widely-read columns of some remarks by Charles Gounod on the subject, which it seems to me give a much more accurate *resumé* of the case than the letter of Mr. Corder which appears in your last issue. I quote Gounod's observations from the translation of his "Autobiographical Reminiscences," recently published by Mr. Heinemann. After a few remarks on the personal peculiarities of Berlioz, he says: "His 'Symphonie Fantastique' was a real event in the musical world, the importance of which may be gauged by the fanatical admiration and the violent opposition it aroused. Admitting that a work of such a nature may be open to much discussion, the fact that its composer possessed most remarkable inventive power and a powerful poetic sentiment (which re-appears in all his subsequent compositions) still remains evident.

"Berlioz has put into musical circulation, so to speak, a large number of orchestral effects and combinations which were unknown before his time and which have been adopted by very illustrious musicians indeed. He has revolutionised the art of instrumentation, and in that respect, at all events, may be said to have 'founded a school.'"

Now, Sir, whilst I fully admit that Mr. Corder's opinions are entitled to respectful consideration, I cannot help placing still higher those of the composer of "Faust," the "Redemption," and "Mors et Vita."—Truly yours,

A LOVER OF FRENCH MUSIC.

BACH'S MOTET "I WRESTLE AND PRAY."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Mr. F. G. Edwards, in his interesting article on "Bach's Music in England" in this month's *MUSICAL TIMES*, speaks of John Christian Bach's music as being "quite forgotten."

I have always understood that the fine Motet for double choir, "I wrestle and pray," though frequently attributed to the elder Bach, is really the work of his son.

I should like to be enlightened on the subject.

Yours faithfully,

HENRY KNIGHT.

St. Ives, Cornwall,
September 5, 1896.

[The Motet "I wrestle and pray" ("Ich lasse dich nicht") was always considered to be the composition of John Sebastian Bach, but never, so far as we are aware, of his son, John Christian Bach. The highest authorities now attribute it to John Christopher Bach (1642-1703), of Eisenach, a first cousin once removed of J. Sebastian Bach's. The similarity of the initials—"J. C."—tends to cause confusion in distinguishing these two members of the great Bach family.—Ed., *M.T.*]

THE LATE MR. HOLDICH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—In your obituary notice of September there are two slight inaccuracies respecting George Maidwell Holdich. In the first instance, he did not construct the organ at Islington Parish Church, which was built by Byfield and Green in 1771; secondly, the stop he invented was called "diaocton" (not di-octon), a genuine octave coupler, each row of pipes having an extra octave on the soundboard. As the writer of the late Mr. Holdich's Jubilee article in a musical contemporary (1887) you will excuse me drawing attention to the above facts.

Yours truly,

September, 1896.

CAROLUS REX.