The Father of the Symphony

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disconcert it, the recitatives of Telramond, like those of Thérèse, terrify it. A few drops of essence suffice to perfume a vase; four words of love, jealousy, or anger are enough for the development of a grand *morceau*." As to the supremacy of music and the composer, as compared with poetry and the poet, we read: "The moment music comes into play it commands, and the words obey. For proof, observe that, however bad the verse may be, it cannot affect the music; while the finest stanzas are unable to do anything on behalf of music that is worthless. Such power has the musician that he can save the poem, if it be ridiculous; and destroy it, if it be sublime. Let the composer be Beethoven, and out of a *berquinade* springs 'Fidelio'; let him be Weber, and from the most incoherent, the most silly, book of fables 'Euryanthe' disengages itself." Continuing the argument, our author denies the possibility of any such instantaneousness between word and note as Wagner's theory assumes. "In spoken language the words arrange themselves successively, and I perceive them only after the phrase is formed and my memory has collected them. Music, on the contrary, seizes me from the first note, and takes me along without leaving either the time or the power to return upon my steps. How can we hope to establish a complete union between forces so diverse?"

Taking as a text the remark of Ambros, that "if Wagner's principles become generally recognised and adopted as the laws of art, we may at once cry '*Finis musica!*'" M. Blaze de Bury discusses, in a very interesting manner, the question whether music has not reached the limit of its development. Here space does not allow us to follow him, but we may quote one passage which shows pretty clearly his view that the present is a time of decadence. After referring to the "joyous and cordial parody of the ancient *régime*," he says: "This is not the parody by which the actual theatre is poisoned. Modern burlesque humour kills the idea, and with the idea the man who has been inspired by it. They speak of reviving Gluck upon the stage, and we shall see what becomes of 'Iphigenia,' 'Orpheus,' and 'Eurydice' developing their grand pantomime, and their serene majesty, before an assembly saturated with cynical jokes, and still warm with the refrains of 'La Belle Hélène.' 'The music of the future! here it is,' said Rossini, one day pointing to a score of that repertory, comparable to certain plants, rank, entangled, that cover the surface of a lake, and keep from its waters, once transparent and profound, the light that comes from on high. Enthusiasm, respect for beautiful and holy things, we have renounced, but in return we scoff, sneer, and gambol to a marvel, and if we do not lift our hands towards heaven, we lift our legs in turning wheels." If the music of the burlesque theatre be one form of the music of the degenerate future, our author asserts that there is another—the music of Bayreuth, and "the more foolish of the two may not be that generally supposed." "Look on the side of the Fichgelgebirt, to the little town where lived the honest, modest, excellent Jean Paul; there dwells, enshrined in his presumption, a man who believes himself the Deity, and to whom his faithful priests never cease to sing mass. He thrones himself in his Walhalla among giants, Norns, and Walkyries, and when he has finished talking to Odin, he proposes to himself a task—strange, unlikely even for a god—to correct Beethoven and amend Gluck. . . . Alphonse X., King of Castile and Leon, was fond of saying, 'If God had done me the honour to consult me, many things in creation would be better than they are.' So reasons this personage. 'In Beethoven's place, I should have done thus,' and without more ceremony he gives to the clarinets the part of

the oboes, cuts, writes over, adds to, and generally treats the text as though it were the work of a pupil. . . . To correct Beethoven and amend Gluck is less the effort of a great mind misled than of a Prudhomme."

Our author professes to discover in Wagner much adroitness in turning the flank of difficulties, and much skill in, by a move of the hand, making riches out of poverty. "No one knows better than he the defects in his cuirass, and hence his habit of getting inside the mailed coat of legendary heroes, assured, in advance, of public favour." More than this, he diverts public criticism from his music to his theory, and appeals from the present to the future, which has no voice wherewith to condemn. "To address the future is always a convenient thing, and it costs little to proclaim truths which cannot be contradicted by experience. True art knows nothing of such pretensions as these."

It is no part of our design to criticise the opinions of M. Blaze de Bury, or review his facts. On such a subject most readers are able to operate for themselves. But the utterance of a writer, in his way so distinguished, ought not to be passed over, especially if we regard it as evidence of the light in which Wagner is seen by French literary men.

THE FATHER OF THE SYMPHONY.

By L. NOHL.

How shall we account for the fascination, the powerful hold on our mind, which the hearing of a symphony, executed by a well-appointed orchestra, never fails to produce? Is it eternal nature herself that is here speaking to us? She who, sphinx-like, has looked upon mankind for ages ever silent, whose very contemplation has ever suggested to man profoundest problems of life; has she, then, suddenly solved these problems herself, disclosing them to us through the medium of a language which, while dispensing entirely with the word or with any definite conception whatever, is yet both eloquent and clearly defined? Those rigidly wooden or fantastically curved instruments, and the incalculable movements of the players, may present an odd spectacle to the outward eye; but they convey through the ear to our inner perception a picture full of animation appealing directly to our most precious thoughts and life-experiences.

Still, it is not to nature, as such, we owe the manifestations of this wondrous power. Nothing, in fact, is more truly the production, and indeed a veritable triumph, of the human mind, than this orchestra with its manifold capabilities in producing musical sounds. Nor is it more than a hundred years ago since the orchestra in its present organic construction has been called into existence. All civilising nations, from the oldest times, have, on the other hand, contributed their share in bringing about this result. The Orient invented the string instruments, as for instance the *rebek* of the Arabs, from which the modern violin derives its origin; and among the Celtic and Germanic nations of the North this instrument became the leading one in instrumental combinations, to which the inventive genius of the Italians added the more sombre-coloured and deeper tones of the violoncello and contra-basso; and in more modern times the true *viola alta* has been introduced, thereby completing in its proper symmetrical proportions the orchestral string quartet. The harp also has been restored to the modern instrumental chorus, that ancient instrument which accompanied the religious festivities of the Egyptians, and to the sounds of which the poets of Israel sang their inspired songs. Flute and lyre were already employed in the music of ancient Greece; trumpet and horn served in times

of war; the shawm was the instrument of the shepherd; kettle-drums and cymbals had been brought from the East by the Crusaders; and thus the awakening and growing spirit of musical art gradually began to unite all these various interpreters and concomitants of characteristic phases and emotions of real life into a picture admirably adapted to represent a combination of manifold individual experiences, and to stimulate the highest efforts of the artist in seizing hold of this new "creation within the creation" in order to render it one of the most important and exhaustive means of expression for the various phases of the human mind. With this the first stage of development in the spiritual use made of this orchestral body is reached which culminates in Beethoven. How recent the achievement, how near to us the first halting-point!

As a matter of fact, however, this combination of instruments into an organic whole, and especially their selection for the production of a well-balanced *ensemble* amongst the multitude of different more or less perfect tone-givers, although of comparatively recent date, is the result of manifold experiments and æsthetic speculations of preceding ages. The more liberal use made of the individual instrument, as well as of a combination of them, originates, indeed, in the same want of the human mind which some three hundred years ago had called opera into existence; we mean the newly awakened cravings of the artistic minds of the *renaissance* period to find their own selves represented in their individual experiences, their happiness and sorrow, their love and enmity, and every other natural emotion of life. The preceding centuries of music cultivation were devoted to the service of the Church, and the harmonic tone-combinations produced by this highly developed ecclesiastical art furnished, in the first instance, examples for compositions specially adapted for the display of that oldest of combined instruments, the organ. Subsequently such organ-music was transferred to the pianoforte, together with the dance-tunes and secular songs of the people, and the more artistically elaborated operatic forms of song; and the amalgamation of these elements led, through the free effort of creative genius, to the highest development of instrumental art yet known, the modern symphony. Of it, and of the "father of the symphony," Joseph Haydn, the following pages will endeavour to give a somewhat comprehensive account.

The distinct ideas which nowadays we associate with the word "symphony" have little or nothing to do with the original meaning of that term. *Symphonia*—in the Grecian theory of music—signifies merely the consonance of several voices or instruments. We meet with the term in the first harmonic efforts of the tenth century, in the Netherlands, where the strange combination of a given melody (*Cantus firmus*) with a fourth or fifth running parallel with it, is called a *Symphonia*, in contradistinction to the *Diaphonia* or *Discantus*. In the sixteenth century the band of the "Stadt-Pfeifer," or town-piper, as it paraded the streets with trumpets, cornets, fiddles, flutes, and trombones, was called the "entire symphony." Again, in the seventeenth century, the name of "symphony" was given to the *clavicembalo*, the forerunner of the modern pianoforte, because that instrument represented, in a measure, the chorus of harmonic voices. Subsequently every vocal composition with instrumental accompaniment received that name and even the *Symphoniæ sacræ* of Gabrieli, and of his pupil Heinrich Schütz, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, will now be more correctly described as oratorio music—their chief characteristic feature consisting in the expressive vocal solos which the accompanying instruments only serve to

raise into greater prominence. Finally, when in consequence of the tendency of the time towards a freer exercise of the art, as an expression of individual life, the Song of the Shepherd (*Mandrinio*) had been made use of in the madrigal—a contrapuntal vocal composition for several voices—the innovation found so much popular favour that such vocal pieces were either partly or entirely transferred to instruments also, and were then called symphonies. Thus already about the year 1600 we find Ludivico Viadana writing *Sinfonie musicali*, *i.e.*, eight-part instrumental canzonets. Meantime, opera became more and more prominent as a means of musical expression, and while it cultivated the expressive solo singing on the one hand, it assigned, on the other hand, the polyphonic element to the instruments. Hence, in the seventeenth century every instrumental piece is styled a symphony, even to the few bars before or between the performance of a vocal piece. These introductory movements, however, form the real nucleus of our modern symphony. The movements which are called by that name, emanating from the period between 1650-1750, were indeed still of a miscellaneous character, such as *ritornelli*, *fantasias*, *concertos*, *toccatas*, and even *fugues*. Thus, Sebastian Bach's "15 Inventionen und Sinfonien," written in 1723, are intended for instruction in pianoforte-playing, and scarcely differ in character from his "Preludes" for the same instrument. The construction which characterises the first movement of the modern symphony, however, is to be found already at that period, and even before, in the distinct contrast of two melodies or motives employed in the *Sonata*, whether it be that of Scarlatti (born 1683), consisting of only one movement, or those of Corelli (died in 1713) and others, which consist of several. And in the latter period especially we begin to meet with the characteristic element which distinguishes the symphony from all preceding instrumental compositions, *viz.*, the *sonata-form*—*i.e.*, an organic art-work, consisting of *allegro*, *adagio*, and *finale*, harmoniously developed and complete in itself, characteristic alike to the form of the quartet and symphony, and to the pianoforte *sonata*. The history of the *sonata* is therefore, in the first instance, also the history of the symphony, and it is to the former we must now briefly direct our attention.

The introduction of two new elements into instrumental compositions materially aided the development of the art. These were the dance and the song. The two represent in themselves the fundamental condition of all life-movements, *viz.*, the change of rest and motion. Introduced into opera in Italy, the dance-movement furnished the type for the *Sinfonia*, specially so called, which formed the instrumental prologue to the action on the stage, and consisted of a lively movement, followed by a slow one, and concluding with a repetition of the former usually played at an enhanced speed. The overture to Mozart's "Il Seraglio" is an example of the old *Sinfonia* which had received its stereotyped form in Italian opera by the elder Scarlatti. The influence of secular song, on the other hand, made itself felt more especially in imparting natural feeling and true sentiment to the operatic air of Scarlatti, constructed though it was upon the same *da capo* or repetition principle as the *Sinfonia*. By the adoption of this new element, *viz.*, the contrasting of different themes, an important change was wrought also in the form of the old *sonata*.

The word *Suonata* signified at first merely an instrumental piece, in distinction to the *Cantata*. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, however, we meet with the *Sonata da chiesa* or *da camera*, church or chamber *sonata*, exhibiting already a distinct

individuality of form, which was based upon the development and elaboration of contrasting melodies and *motivi*, and which distinguished it from all other instrumental pieces. This characteristic peculiarity, the germ of which, at least, existed already in the compositions of Domenico Scarlatti, became equally manifest in the three movements of which subsequently the sonata consisted, taking its model, no doubt, from the alternation of rest and motion as represented in the existing Italian *Sinfonia*. Examples might be quoted in this respect from the violin compositions of the Italians Corelli and Vivaldi and from the pianoforte sonatas of the German Johann Kuhnau. In Italy, particularly the *Concerti grossi*, i.e., compositions for several instruments, exhibit this arrangement in three movements, while Johann Sebastian Bach has written a similar "Italian Concerto" for the pianoforte. The movements consist in an Allegro, Andante, and a final Presto, the first and the last being written in the same key. Greater individual depth was infused into the sonata by the French school of composers, notably by F. Couperin (whose compositions of this class consist, however, still of one movement only), while the great organists of Northern Germany contributed their mastery in harmony to the development of the art-form in question, and even J. S. Bach approaches in this respect more nearly his French than his Italian contemporaries.

The immediate precursor of our "Father of the Symphony," however, was a German, the son and disciple of the great Sebastian—viz., Philipp Emanuel Bach. In his "Sonatas" the form of this particular class of composition has become finally determined, and it remained for Joseph Haydn to adopt and develop it both in the quartet and the symphony. Before examining more closely the special and creative merits of the plan upon which the sonata of Ph. E. Bach is constructed, for the purpose of showing why Haydn should be looked upon as the originator of its adoption in modern symphony, it will be necessary to cast a cursory glance over the artistic career of the master in order to arrive at a due appreciation of the great and far-reaching artistic deed he thereby achieved.

(To be continued.)

THE GREAT COMPOSERS, SKETCHED BY THEMSELVES.

BY JOSEPH BENNETT.

No. VII.—SPOHR (continued from page 450).

SPOHR was engaged for the Philharmonic season of 1820. He does not mention the sum agreed upon, but speaks of it as "considerable," as, indeed, it should have been, seeing that the master was required to "direct some of the eight concerts, to play *sol* in some, to assist in all as orchestral violinist, and, lastly, to leave in the hands of the Society, as its own property, an orchestral composition." The husband and wife started on their journey in good time, giving concerts at Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, and Brussels. In the last-named town, Spohr met with M. and Madame Boucher, who were also giving harp and violin concerts. He was immediately struck by a contrast: "The manner in which Boucher allowed himself to be waited upon by his wife on these occasions was remarkable. When he had taken his seat at the desk she would ask him for the key of his violin-case, open it, bring him his violin, then the bow which she had previously resined; she then laid the music before him, and, lastly, seated herself near him to turn over the pages. When we were invited to play the whole of this process was inverted,

for I not only fetched my own instrument but took my wife's harp out of the case, led her to the seat where she was to play and then tuned up; all of which, in the previous performance, had been the business of Madame Boucher." Boucher, who had an enormous opinion of his own importance, expressed himself charmed by Spohr's playing, and the master quaintly says that he may have meant it, since in a letter of introduction given by him to a person at Lille, the Frenchman observed: "If I am, as some say, the Napoleon of violinists, Mr. Spohr is certainly the Moreau." In due time Spohr reached Calais and suffered a three hours' agony of sea-sickness when crossing the Channel. Upon this he dwells with much pathos, but his words need not be reproduced. His arrival in London, by the night coach from Dover, was an appropriate sequel to a melancholy episode: "When we were set down in the yard of the coach-office, with our luggage, I found myself in very great difficulty. In spite of every endeavour, I could not find any one to whom I could explain myself, for I knew not a word of English, and none of all whom I addressed understood either German or French. Nothing therefore remained for me but to hunt up some interpreter in the street, while my wife watched the luggage. But it was yet early in the morning, and I saw none but people of the lower class from whom I could expect nothing. At length a better dressed man approached, whom I first addressed in German, then, as he shook his head, expressed my wants to him in French, but the man shrugged his shoulders and went his way. A second person, however, who had witnessed this scene, approached me and asked in very good French what it was I wanted. He was one who hired himself out as interpreter and out-door servant at hotels, and at my request immediately fetched a hackney-coach for me to drive to Mr. Ries, whose address I fortunately remembered." The next day was fixed for an interview with those high and mighty potentates the Philharmonic directors, and Spohr, anxious about a good first impression, looked well to the adornment of his person. "I made a careful toilette, and put on expressly for the occasion a bright red Turkish shawl pattern waistcoat forming part of my wardrobe, and which was considered on the Continent as a most elegant article, quite in the newest fashion." Wearing this gorgeous garment, the innocent-minded master descended into the street, and "attracted the general attention of all who passed." But there was something special in the public notice, such as a bright red waistcoat could hardly explain on its own merits. "The grown-up people contented themselves with looks of surprise and passed on their way; but the young urchins of the street were loud in their remarks, which unfortunately I did not understand, and, therefore, could not imagine what it was about me that so displeased them. By degrees they formed a regular tail behind me, which grew constantly louder in speech and more and more unruly. A passer-by addressed me, and probably gave me some explanation of its meaning; but as it was in English, I could derive no benefit from it. Fortunately Mr. Ries' house was not far distant and I soon reached it. His wife, a young and amiable Englishwoman, who spoke French fluently, soon solved for me the problem of my adventure. The death of George III. had but recently taken place, a general mourning had been officially ordered, and, according to English custom, no person durst appear otherwise than in a black suit. In other respects my dress was black, and, therefore, according to requisition, but the unfortunate red waistcoat spoilt all. Mrs. Ries observed to me that I had, doubtless, to thank my imposing height and earnest