From Keyboard to String

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Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 36, No. 629 (Jul. 1, 1895), pp. 481-482

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3365042>

Accessed: 21-01-2016 02:54 UTC

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Naval Cadet." The close proximity of the death of Genée to that of his colleagues, Zell and Suppé, adds a peculiar emphasis to the event.

In Senhor GERVASIO LOBATO, professor of elocution at the Lisbon Conservatorio, whose death towards the end of May last is announced in the Lisbon papers, Portugal has lost one of her ablest and most versatile dramatic authors and librettists. When only fifteen years of age he started a journal, *A Voz Academica*, to which he contributed some original stories, and in 1873 brought out his first dramatic work, the comedy "Debaixo da Mascara," at the Gymnasio. A number of other stage works followed in rapid succession, many of which have been translated into Spanish and Italian. Amongst his operettas, written in conjunction with the composer Cyriaco Cardozo, may be instanced "O Burro do Senhor Alcaide," "O Solar dos Barrigas," "Coco Reineta," and "Facado e Testamento," the two former especially meeting with extraordinary success. Lobato, who was also an able adapter of French librettos and a novelist of note, wielding one of the most fertile and, it is said, best remunerated pens in Portugal, was only forty-five years of age.

JEAN JOSEPH BOTT, best remembered probably in his capacity of violin virtuoso of considerable attainments, died recently at New York, in his seventieth year. Bott was born on March 9, 1826, at Cassel, and was a pupil of Spohr. After a period of touring in various parts of Europe, in the course of which his fame as a violin player was everywhere established, he settled down as a Capellmeister, first at Cassel, in 1852, then at Weimar in 1857, and finally at Hanover, from 1865 to 1878. For the last ten years he has resided in New York, occupied in teaching. The deceased artist was the composer of two operas, "Der Unbekannte" and "Aktæa," as well as of a symphony, several violin concertos, and other compositions for that instrument.

SAMUEL CUTTER, a well-known musical amateur, died at Liverpool, on the 11th ult., at the age of forty-seven. Deceased had for many years occupied the position of musical critic on the local *Daily Post* and was much esteemed by a large circle of both professional and non-professional friends and acquaintances.

We have also to record the following deaths:—

On April 24, at Monte Video, ALESSANDRO UGUCCIONI (native of Barcelona, of Italian parentage), excellent first violinist of the Teatro Solis and of the Cathedral, professor at the Lira Academy, aged fifty.

On May 19, at Namur, JEAN PHILIPPE JACQUET, violoncellist of note, director of the Municipal Academy of Music, aged seventy-eight.

On May 20, at Königstein, near Frankfort-on-Main, SIGISMUND KOHN-SPEYER, formerly director of the Frankfort Stadt-Theater, husband of the late Antonie Labitzky, the distinguished vocalist, aged sixty-five.

On May 23, at Dresden, EMIL SCHUBERT, celebrated low comedian at the Hof-Theater, formerly popular lyrical tenor at the Kroll and Friedrich-Wilhelmstadt Theatres, Berlin, in his fifty-sixth year.

On May 24, at Barcelona, JUAN OBRADORS, gifted pianist, pupil of Gottschalk.

In May last, at Marseilles, CHARLES EDOUARD MICHEL, the distinguished musical critic of the *Sémaphore*, and contributor to the *Guide Musical*, formerly secretary to the Marseilles Conservatoire.

On May 27, at Varese, PIETRO BERNASCONI, one of the foremost organ-builders of Italy—amongst others, of the magnificent organ in the Church of San Lorenzo, Milan.

Recently, at Vienna, COUNTESS WENZEL KAUNITZ, formerly, as Josefina Czermak, a highly popular operetta singer.

On the 3rd ult., at Reichenberg, Fräulein MARIE TEIMER VON GANAHL, gifted pianist, aged twenty-four.

Recently, at Pesaro, ANNIBALE MENGOLI, excellent contra-basso, professor at the Liceo Rossini, aged forty-four.

On the 10th ult., at Bordeaux, MADAME EUGÉNIE SOURGET, highly esteemed pianist and vocalist (pupil of Zimmermann and Bertini), composer of an opera, "L'Image," of chamber music, and numerous songs, aged sixty-eight.

On the 17th ult., JAMES PECK, aged eighty-six, who for a number of years served the late Sacred Harmonic

Society as assistant-secretary, and was also known in the early days of that Society as a trumpet player.

Last month, at Boston, U.S., MARTIN ROEDER, excellent violinist (pupil of Dr. Joachim), formerly teacher at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin; since 1892 professor at the New England Conservatory, composer of several operas, aged forty-four.

On the 12th ult., at Wildungen, FRAU JULIE KOCH-BOSSENBERGER, distinguished operatic vocalist, lately of the Royal Theatre, Hanover.

Last month, at Bologna, ULISSA DONZELLI, daughter of the once famous tenor, successful pianist and teacher, aged thirty-eight.

On the 20th ult., at Frittenden House, Kent, Lady OAKELEY, wife of Sir Charles Oakeley, Bart., elder brother of Sir Herbert Oakeley. Lady Oakeley was a talented musician, and strove to advance the cause of her favourite art by all means in her power.

CORRESPONDENCE.

FROM KEYBOARD TO STRING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—Some months ago I received a letter from a well-known professor of music at Cambridge, in which he writes: "It has long been a matter of wonder to me how the great differences of tone which are produced by different players on the pianoforte can be accounted for mechanically, and I hope your researches may have thrown light on this point. I remember once rashly pronouncing a Broadwood Concert-grand which I had heard played on by only one performer to be a detestable wiry instrument, and, after hearing Frau Schumann play on it, having to box the compass and confess that it had a beautiful, round tone!"

In discussing the action of the human mechanism used in producing sounds on the pianoforte, I have had this same question raised so frequently, and my attempt at explanation has so often been thought satisfactory, that it strikes me it might perhaps be of interest to make it more generally known—not that I wish to claim originality of idea in the matter, for I believe the explanation cannot be new, only that if it has been in print before very few knew of it.

Among those who have devoted time and attention to the subject, no one has, perhaps, gone more heartily into the matter than the late Mr. Orlando Steed, who, in 1881, read before the Musical Association a paper on "Beauty of Touch and Tone," containing much that is very well thought out and interesting; but the conclusions he arrives at are hardly convincing. After affirming that we have the authority of Helmholtz for saying that every source of difference *save one* lies entirely within the domain of the pianoforte manufacturer and just as completely without that of the performer, and giving an interesting account of Helmholtz's theory, he draws the conclusion that the difference between a player with a good touch, as it is called, and one with an indifferent touch, does not depend upon the manner in which the key is struck, but upon the performer's control, as he says, over "the subtleties of rhythm—of rhythm in its twofold aspect of duration and intensity." Mr. Steed was evidently not sufficiently informed on mechanical points to discover a mechanical explanation, so that by assuming, wrongly, such explanation to be impossible, he argues, wrongly also, that the fault *must* therefore be with the rhythm.

In my opinion we must certainly admit, with Helmholtz, that the rapidity with which the hammer strikes and quits the strings (we must bear in mind that the performer has no separate command whatever over this rapidity of *quitting*) alone influences the tone—but, I would add, *as long as the hammer is made to hit the string fairly on the square*. This is just what it does not do when a loud dead tone is produced; it *rakes* the string, ever so slightly, perhaps, but still badly enough to interfere with the development of those harmonics whose presence or absence are requisite if the tone is to be full and round. Instead of thinking, with Steed, that the explanation sought has nothing to do with either the pianoforte mechanism of wood, leather, felt and

steel, or the human mechanism of muscle, tendon, and bone, I am persuaded that it is dependent upon *both*; the variable factors being (1) in the instrument, the inertia (proportionate to the weight) of the hammer and the flexibility of the hammer shank; and (2) in the arm, the natural elasticity of the flexor muscle and tendon used to strike the key. Firstly, then, as to the hammer. If it had no weight, and, therefore, no inertia, and if the shank were perfectly rigid, the best way to produce a fine tone would certainly be to depress the key from beginning to end with very great rapidity; but as the hammer's unavoidable inertia *must* exert a certain initial resistance before it gets "under way," one can quite understand that for good loud tone an ideally sensitive finger, by depressing the key during, say, one-fourth of its course more slowly than the remaining three-fourths, might impart a greater velocity combined with a more steady movement to the hammer-head at the instant it strikes the string than a finger moving at a great but uniform rate would be able to do. (It confirms my opinion to observe that if a note be struck very softly one can detect no difference between the tone elicited by a blow of the knuckle sideways, for instance, and that produced by the most careful pressure of the finger, and that it is almost entirely in the louder passages that the great disparity between pianists' power of tone-production is noticed.)

I only mention the sensitiveness of a finger capable of acting with a variable velocity during the descent of a key in order to assist in explaining my meaning, for I can hardly believe that any fingers are capable of such a nice distinction; and indeed the necessity for imagining such an ideal movement disappears if we take into consideration differences in the natural elasticity of the muscles and seek explanation from this standpoint. So we come to the second variable factor, in the pianist's arm, and as mechanical questions are often best explained by illustration, I will follow that method. Take an ordinary door, of a fair weight, and try various means of shutting it with great rapidity. Give it a violent slap with the hand; it hardly moves, because the time during which the force acted was too small to allow of the inertia being overcome. Take a piece of board, like a cricket bat, and give a violent blow with that; the movement of the door is still out of proportion to the violence employed. But cover the board with an elastic cushion, an inch or so thick, and then a blow of less intensity will produce a more rapid and steady movement of the door, the inertia of which is overcome *during the compression of the elastic cushion*—in other words, the cushion provides means of converting the great force, acting during say the $\frac{3}{4}$ th of a second into a smaller one acting during $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a second or so. *Time* is an all-important factor, because this same door which will not yield to an instantaneous slap may yet be easily moved by the pressure of a little finger acting during a measurable interval.

So it is in tone-production. If our muscles are strong but *unyielding*—i.e., if their contraction produces a dead blow like that of the bare board, all attempts to produce loud good tone will end in "banging" caused by the raking movement of the hammer; but if they are of the best quality and possess a certain natural elasticity (independent, this is, of their strength or contractile power), that elasticity will act upon the key and upon the hammer in the same way as the cushion upon the door, and a player so gifted will be as incapable of producing a "banging" tone in playing as another may be of producing a beautiful one. Each hammer movement, in the hands of the best players, is a "clean" one, the hammer-head being started on its way without violence and hitting the string with a quick impact entirely free from shakiness or "raking" movement.

The fleshy pad at the tips of the fingers is also of use in this respect and will partially assist, when well developed, in producing good tone.

W. MACDONALD SMITH.

THE "CON SORDINO" IN BEETHOVEN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—I have read your interesting article on the *fac-simile* of Beethoven's Sonata in A flat (Op. 26), but on

comparing your quotations with the printed copy fail to see in what manner that from the first bar of the Trio of the Funeral March differs with regard to the employment of the pedal from what is generally printed. *Senza sordino* means, of course, "without dampers"—i.e., with loud pedal—and *con sordino*, the reverse. This is what is printed in my edition and others that I have seen. Is it not an error in the article?—Faithfully yours,

FRED. G. SHINN.

[We cannot accept our correspondent's statement with regard to the meaning of *senza sordino* and *con sordino*, and therefore see a marked difference between the autograph and most of the editions now in circulation, including the critical one published by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel. Had Beethoven written *senza* and *con* "sordini," Mr. Shinn would be right in his contention. But in an article next month we shall discuss at length the special meaning of the word *sordino* as used in this and other of Beethoven's Sonatas; also the errors into which editors and even learned doctors have fallen through not distinguishing between the words *sordino* and *sordini*. These two terms are not merely singular and plural forms of the same word, as some appear to think.—Ed., M.T.]

THE CANTICLES OF THE CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—The question of your correspondent, "An Enquirer," under the above heading in this month's *MUSICAL TIMES* is easily answered.

In the first English Prayer Book (published in 1549) the "Jubilate Deo," "Cantate Domino," and "Deus Misereatur" found no place except in their rightful position among the daily Psalms. They were only inserted in Matins and Evensong in the Second Prayer Book of 1552, in deference to the opinion of those extreme reformers who, influenced unduly by foreigners, preferred the use of Jewish Psalms to Christian Hymns, and had a special antipathy to the Magnificat as being the "Song of the blessed Virgin Mary."

Some of the greatest of the old Church composers—e.g., Tallis, Gibbons, and Purcell—set the Benedictus to music; but it is to be feared that the chief reason why (until within recent years) the Jubilate was the popular Cantic at Matins, lies in the fact that it contains about half-a-dozen verses less than the Gospel Cantic! This opinion is strengthened by comparing the number of settings of the Cantate and Deus with those of the Jubilate. *Those* are comparatively few, while within the first half of the present century (and indeed almost ever since the Restoration) nearly every Morning Service contained a Jubilate.

The theological prejudice against the Gospel Canticles has long since died out, and it is earnestly to be hoped that composers of Cathedral music will assist the clergy in their endeavours to restore the Benedictus especially to its place of honour in the Office of Morning Prayer, by *only* writing music for *that* as a second Cantic.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,

WALTER SLATER, B.D.,

Chaplain of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

June 6, 1895.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—In reply to "An Enquirer," may I be allowed to point out that the Canticles "Jubilate," "Cantate Domino," and "Deus Misereatur" belong to the Psalter, and, as Psalms of the Old Covenant, are sung once a month by the Church in regular course.

It is therefore fitting that the hymns of the New Covenant—Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc dimittis—should not be excluded by a return to the Psalter after the reading of the Lessons. The Psalms of the Jewish Church pointed to the coming of Christ; the three Gospel Canticles are a thanksgiving for the Incarnation as an accomplished fact. Such being the case, we impoverish our Matins and Evensong by omitting the Canticles of the Gospel.

I quite agree with "An Enquirer" that it would be a great pity to lose some very effective settings of the Cantate