Painted Music

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vitality they possess at their birth they retain for ever. When we see that a work which at first seemed instinct with vitality withers and stales, we may be sure that it was born as stale and withered as it will ever be. It is by instinct, and not by reasons deduced from the presence or absence of neologism, that the true critic is led to assert—perhaps rightly, perhaps wrongly—that a new work is endowed with vitality. Music may or may not bear the most unmistakable signs of the date of its inception: the question of its artistic significance remains in either case unaffected.

Genius consists neither in adhering to established methods regardless of their fitness, nor in inventing new terms and new relationships for the mere sake of their novelty, but in using fit terms to express a worthy message. What genius accomplishes is always 'modern,' and will always remain 'modern,' if by the word we mean 'live,' which is its only possible meaning. History shows that of the works written during any given period only a small proportion lives. There is no reason to suppose that our own period is producing an unduly large proportion of music endowed with vitality—a fact of which the writers who indiscriminately praise all forthcoming novelties seem to be totally unaware. But certainly there is no more reason to suppose that the proportion is unduly small. And if we are to ascribe any value to the teachings of history, we should be prepared to find out, if we live long enough, that 'modernity' of methods is a sign which accompanies vitality far more often than the detractors of those methods are aware of, but far less often than their more excitable panegyrists suspect.

PAINTED MUSIC

BY ALEXANDER BRENT-SMITH

Music seems to exercise a fascination over painters. I should think that there must be a hundred pictures with musical subjects for every ten with poetical and every five with pictorial subjects. I do not refer to portraits, because in that class of picture musicians do not hold a marked advantage over poets or painters. They seem to lack a certain something—influence, affluence, call it what you like—which makes them unsuitable as sitters to the eminent painters of the epoch. Nor do I refer to the many imaginary portraits of musicians, though in this branch their greater popularity begins to be noticeable. Does not everyone know the picture of the child Handel astonishing his parents with his playing—as well he might with his very modern pianoforte technique? Who is there who does not know a picture of Beethoven playing to four friends? It is called 'Symphony by Beethoven,' though its sub-title might be 'Picture of four men, trying to keep awake during a performance of a Symphony by Beethoven.' There is no record as to which Symphony he was playing, but I am certain it was not the eighth, the seventh, or the fifth; beyond that I can say nothing. Who is there who has not seen

a picture of Liszt extemporizing upon a given theme (presumably, from its four-line notation, a Gregorian tone) on a miniature pianette, with his left foot jammed down upon the sustaining pedal?

Where are the poetical or pictorial analogies to these imaginative portraits? It is true that there is a picture, or a photograph, of Charles Dickens reading to his daughters, and another of Milton dictating *Paradise Regained* to his daughters (how happy the artist with dutiful daughters!), but where is there a picture of Browning making rough drafts—the poetical equivalent to extemporizing—for 'Red-Cotton-nightcap country,' or Swinburne reciting a newly-finished poem to Watts-Dunton? Perhaps the reason for its non-depiction is that Watts-Dunton never had time to listen, having 'so much work on hand just now.' Where is the picture of Raphael painting the 'Madonna,' or Fra Angelico painting 'The Annunciation'? The truth seems to be that painters hesitate to enshrine pictures within pictures lest their own work suffers by comparison or by lack of unity of style; just as a composer would hesitate to use a melody of Beethoven in his new work lest his own invention should sound poorer than it really is.

But neither of these *tabularum genera* are quite what I mean by painted music. What I refer to are pictures which have for their subjects, not musicians but music, and not music prisoned within bars by the pen of man, but music in its native freedom. We can only judge of its character by the expression produced upon the performers' faces. In Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture, 'The Cherub Choir,' we do not need to know what music the cherubim are singing. It is enough for us to see them exult and to achieve without effort what we poor mortals ever miss—perfect combination without visible control. In Gerard Torborch's picture, 'The Concert,' we are not curious to know what music these dignified ladies are playing. From their silent instruments streams music, passionless yet lovely, like the *Earl of Salisbury's Pavane* of William Byrde. In Canziani's picture, 'The Piper of Dreams,' we cannot guess what tune the piper played, which was of such varying, yet simultaneous emotions, that it induced some fairies to dance upon a twig, others to whirl about a tree, and others to *glissando* down a hazel-branch.

So great is the fascination of music over painters, that if it were necessary we could deduce the history of music from a study of the picture galleries of Europe. Evidence for the existence of the bass viol with seven strings would be obtained from the picture by Domenichino of St. Cecilia, who manipulated that troublesome instrument with as much ease as she manipulated the portable 13th century organ in Worcester Cathedral. Carlo Saraceno has left us a picture of St. Francis, who bears in his face unmistakable signs of martyrdom, listening to an angelic performance on the violino piccolo, an instrument used by Bach in the F major *Brandenburg* Concerto. The popularity of that now almost

obsolete instrument, the recorder, is testified by the presence of two recorder players in the background of the picture of *Madame Camargo*, by Lancret, in the Wallace collection. This *Madame Camargo*, who was a celebrated dancer, is accompanied by an orchestra consisting of two recorders, a bassoon, and one or more viols; near her stands a boy with a pipe and tabor.

Where, in either poetry or painting, can we parallel this long line of abstract musical subjects? Sir Joshua Reynolds has given us a picture of cherubs singing in concert, but where shall we find a picture of seraphs reciting poetry? Still more difficult, if possible, would it be to find analogous pictorial subjects, for although painters utilise the mechanical means of music for their pictures, showing the world how seraphim make the music of the spheres, they never utilise their own mechanical processes and show us the seraphim tinting the rainbow in the sky.

When first I began to examine these musically-minded pictures I had an unwelcome suspicion, which has since grown into a horrible certainty, that what these painters loved in music was not its effect, but its production. Why, for instance, did Gerald Dow paint a portrait of himself as a violinist? Was it because he wished to proclaim his violinistic skill to posterity? If so, he would have done better to have had at least one lesson in holding the violin. Or why did Carlo Saraceno, in his picture of St. Francis, let the angelic violinist play above the bridge? Even in an angel's hands the result can only have been excruciating. No. The answer forces itself unwillingly from these pictures: painters use music in their pictures either for its sentimental appeal or else for its attractive setting.

Sometimes painters, dissatisfied with the mere depiction of music being produced, attempt to turn their ears to eyes and paint the music as it passes by. This device, occasionally used by early painters, who appended streamers bearing the chanted word to the mouths of the singers, is the stock-in-trade of every comic artist. If he has to draw a trumpeter, he is not content to show him moist with emotion, but he actually sketches the notes being blown into the air. From the bell of the trumpet there straggles an ill-disciplined crowd of notes, freed from the rules which bound them in the stave—a sort of fancy-dress ball for the notable employées of the great composers. Minims dance in bacchanalian frenzy, their large, vacant faces being supported by frail, semiquavering bodies; demisemiquavers, hitherto chained like Roman prisoners into bands of eight, caper ecstatically in their momentary freedom; sharps, flats, and naturals, who have hitherto waited patiently at the sides of their relentless masters, demand the right to be considered as free and independent citizens of the musical world. Rests there are few, but whoever wanted a rest on Hampstead Heath?

Does, then, the music of to-day possess a visible charm? From the tendency of audiences to drift

towards the starboard side of the hall for a pianoforte recital, it would seem that there is some real charm in seeing music made, and seeing music made is more than the fascination of watching nimble fingers—it is an aid to a more complete understanding of the intentions of the player. The poise of a pianist's hands, sometimes a carefully-cultivated affectation, may also be in all sincerity part of the musical interpretation. To hear the Bach-Tausig Toccata in D minor played on a pianola is sufficient to make us realise the necessity for seeing in addition to hearing. Those abrupt questions and ill-tempered answers sound, as played on a pianola, almost ludicrous, but when we see the pianist's hands leap to the interrogation and pounce to the reply, the passage becomes as meaningful as a dialogue of Molière. The pauses between the question and the answer are not, as in the pianolaid performance, the mere passing of time; they are the negation of time by the action of sight.

So, too, a pianist may defer one chord from its exact temporal position in order to give the succeeding chord greater emphasis. If so played by a pianola it would sound incorrect; but when we see it played by a pianist, though it is metro-nomically wrong, it is humanly right, because the curved flight of the hands suspends, through our sight, the passing of time.

Performers may comfort one another with these words, because they prophesy the perpetual supremacy of the Human over the Mechanical. But, stay! if music-visible is a delight in itself, will there arise a series of filmed concerts? Shall we have the pleasure of watching Coates conduct a silent symphony or Busoni perform an inaudible sonata? Will the future produce a special film star—conductor or performer—equipped with all the filmy graces of gesture and expression? Is it possible that our spectacular executants will desert the legitimate platform for the screen?

None can tell us, but in that last interrogation there is hope.

CREDO IN MOZART

BY MRS. FRANK LIEBICH

It was a simple and concise declaration of faith, that of the musician in Richard Wagner's short story, *An End in Paris*. On his death-bed his last words were: 'I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven.' The tale was written eighty years ago to keep the pot boiling when Wagner was domiciled for a while in the French capital. In the interval that has elapsed since it was printed faith in Mozart has fluctuated. During the latter part of the 19th century the Mozart Society's assemblies and concerts were a trysting-place for lovers of the Salzburg composer. But when a man's works are in public favour societies for the propagation or preservation of faith in him are not required. It is significant that the Mozart Society was needed during the closing years of the