Review

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REVIEWS.—(Continued.)

VIOLIN MUSIC.

A Modern School for the Violin. By August Wilhelmj and James Brown. Nos. 20—28.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

Several new numbers have recently been issued of the section of *A Modern School for the Violin* devoted to pieces for the violin and pianoforte. Messrs. August Wilhelmj and James Brown show excellent discrimination in their selection, all stages of proficiency and varieties of style being gradually provided for in the course of the series. Although primarily designed to be studied concurrently with the editors' twelve books of Technical Exercises and Studies—thereby completing their great scheme of including in one systematic school all that is necessary for the acquirement of the art of violin playing—the concertos, sonatas, solos, &c., comprised in these newest additions are, of course, of equal value if used in conjunction with any other school or method. The contents of each number are chosen so as to make them of special suitability to a distinct degree of progress, as far as can be graded by knowledge of the various positions of the violin; this fact must in itself be of considerable assistance to teachers when engaged in the difficult task of selecting pieces for their pupils.

Taking the present numbers according to their degree of difficulty, *Twelve Christmas Carols*, and *Four Little Pieces*, the latter by Pleyel, are for quite young players who have made a little advancement in the first position. There is no reason why the drudgery and dreariness of the pupil's first efforts to master the difficulties of the violin, or indeed of any other instrument, should not be relieved by the practice of pure, simple melodies, such as are contained in these two books. The Carols will specially help to impart expression, rhythm, and cantabile playing, while the pieces by Pleyel (arranged from the well-known Duets for Two Violins, Op. 8) will serve as an easy introduction to sonata form.

The *Sonata in A* by Mozart, and the *Bourrée and Gigue* by Bach, are suitable for those who have become proficient in the third position. The Sonata is that in two movements beginning with an *Allegro molto*—

and followed by an exquisite *Tema con Variazioni*, a theme which may serve as a beautiful example of Mozart's power of melody. The *Bourrée and Gigue* have been arranged by the editors from a *Suite in D*, originally written for small orchestra. Besides forming excellent practice before attempting the more difficult works of the same character by such composers as Bach and Corelli, these two pieces may be recommended to teachers who require something suitable for violins in unison. Occasional practice in unison playing is very beneficial to young as well as to more advanced students. It not only helps to impart confidence to them, but also to impress on them the absolute necessity of a strict observance of bowing directions, phrasing, nuances, &c.

Haydn's *Sonata in G* (No. 8), is an arrangement by the composer of one of his string quartets (Op. 77, No. 1). Amongst the many pleasures to be derived from violin playing perhaps the keenest of all is that of leading a string quartet—when it can be done well. In this arrangement the first violin of the quartet can be practised with the (arranged) pianoforte part of the Sonata, and then the other instruments may be added *ad lib.* After all goes well with the quartet, the pianoforte part should, of course, be dispensed with. The violin part is not very difficult, but the performer must be well acquainted with the sixth position. We now come to the *Concerto in A minor*, by Bach, a delightful work which contains one of the most exquisite and graceful slow movements ever written. Two very popular solos form the next number—*Réverie*, by Vieuxtemps, and

the *Sarabande and Tambourin*, by Lécclair. The editors have added to the close of the *Réverie* two short cadenzas, either of which can be taken instead of the one supplied by the composer. To depart from the original text in performance cannot be commended, but the extra cadenzas will prove admirable little studies in octave playing.

Last of this instalment is Rode's *Concerto in A minor*. This is one of the finest of the old violin Concertos, and may be practised with advantage again and again by those who wish to advance beyond a mere superficial knowledge of their instrument. It would be difficult to overpraise the admirable bowing and fingering supplied by Messrs. Wilhelmj and Brown—not only to this Concerto, but throughout the entire series of pieces. Moreover, each number contains interesting historical notes, and many useful hints as to the best way of playing and practising the various pieces and movements.

WAGNER AT BAYREUTH AND AT MUNICH.

(BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

One does not look for novelty in the works given at Bayreuth, but novelty in their production experience has taught us to expect. 'Der Fliegende Holländer' was the nearest approach to a novelty at this year's festival, having been introduced at Bayreuth only a year ago. Many have inclined to doubt whether this early work would quite repay the cost and trouble of an elaborate revival, but I fancy that most of those who have witnessed a performance will feel that it fully justified itself. It certainly illustrated in striking fashion the methods which distinguish Bayreuth. Stars are always discouraged, but in this case there was not an individual performer who could fairly be styled of the first rank, while as vocalists pure and simple one would hesitate before placing the majority as high as the second. The impression made by the opera was, none the less, the deepest in my experience. It was treated quite seriously as a drama, which the actors set themselves to expound, not simply contenting themselves by making the best effect out of their parts, and still less seeking to create a series of isolated musical sensations. This, joined with perfect stage management, artistic scenery, and the most wonderful stage appliances, accounted for the impressiveness of the production.

In the *Dutchman* there is a curious mingling of styles. The characters which appealed strongly to Wagner's imagination evoked, even at this immature period, his characteristic individual style—there are, for instance, many passages in the *Dutchman's* part which are big enough in their lines, and dramatic enough in feeling, to belong to a period quite as late as 'Lohengrin,' if not later. In other minor parts he would seem to have been hardly sufficiently interested to raise himself above the current operatic style. *Erik* is a mere operatic tenor lover, and his cavatinas have tunefulness enough, without a trace of the warmth of melody which characterises Wagner's later works. *Daland* is rather different. He is a thoroughly commonplace individual, with a veneer of heartiness that does not conceal a keen eye for the main chance. His superficial cheerfulness is exactly reflected in his music, though later on Wagner would no doubt have made it equally appropriate by different means. Now the point of the Bayreuth performance lay chiefly in this, that the dramatic significance of each character was carefully and consistently suggested. Emmy Destinn's *Senta* was full of intensity; she was possessed by her one idea of saving the unhappy man who had won her sympathy. Emil Borgmann had the hard, unpleasant timbre that seems to be the rule with German tenors, but he atoned by making *Erik* really a man, and not a warbling barber's block. Theodor Bertram's conception of the title part was thoughtful, but by no means convincing; he did his best, but the study was too apparent, he never felt the romance of the character. On the other hand, Madame Schumann-Heink's *Mary* and Paul Knüpfer's *Daland* were well finished and altogether excellent interpretations. The