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The Semibreve Canto Fermo in Strict Counterpoint

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That his talent and exceptional pianistic gifts secured early recognition in Germany is placed beyond doubt by the fact that when Bülow resigned his position at the Conservatorium at Munich, Buonamici was chosen as his successor, and the young Florentine, thus becoming a colleague of his master, Rheinberger, held the chief professorship of the pianoforte in that School for the following three years.

Whether a threatened paralysis of the left hand (caused by over-practice, but eventually cured) or an attack of that *mal du pays* to which your Tuscan is peculiarly liable induced him to reject enticing offers and settle down finally at Florence, just when a brilliant career as a pianist seemed open to him, I know not.

But to Bülow, who was as fond as he was proud of his pupil, the decision was without doubt a great disappointment. Although Buonamici's performances were from first to last uniformly and deservedly successful in his own country—in which his appearances were at one time frequent—as well as in Germany (Weimar, Kiel, Baden-Baden, Mannheim, Munich, &c.), his natural characteristics were not of that stuff to enable him to live happily in the perpetual publicity and rivalry which are but part and parcel of a virtuoso's career. The inevitable ruffings and irritations of the travelling artist's life were thoroughly repugnant to him, although he had little or no experience of them; and however willingly he played in private, in later years at least his retiring disposition needed strong persuasion before it allowed him to exhibit his powers in public.

A fascinating warmth of expression, combined with an exquisite ease and delicacy of execution, were striking features of his very individual style. His exceptional beauty of tone and touch invariably reminded me more vividly of Rubinstein—when that master was not in the 'Ercles vein'—than of any other eminent pianist I have yet heard; while a total absence of anything like effort—still less of affectation—made the personal charm of his playing complete. Buonamici performed Liszt and Chopin to perfection, and as a reverential and thoughtful interpreter of Beethoven he certainly excelled.

On his return from Germany he accepted the principal professorship of his instrument at the R. Istituto Musicale, also undertaking the directorship of the Società Cherubini, a choral Society originally founded and conducted by Madame Hillebrand. Further, the Società del Trio, of which the excellent concerts became the chief artistic events at Florence for a number of years, was formed by him, with the co-operation of Chiostrì (violin) and Sbolci (violoncello), and continued until quite recently, with the assistance of Faini and other prominent local professors.

Buonamici's growing fame as a teacher continued to the last to attract a large number of pupils—a very considerable number of whom were English and American students—from all parts of Europe. These, with many young Italian musicians to whom he gave of his best, are now mourning the loss of their accomplished master. The cordial friendship which existed between Liszt and Buonamici has already been touched upon. Wagner also, in whose house he was always a welcome guest, had a particularly warm regard for him, as the following incident, which took place at the first performance of 'Parsifal,' may well bear witness.

When the curtain fell at the end of the first Act, Buonamici, whom chance had placed under the composer's box, stood up to join in the general ovation. Wagner saw him, and immediately called out, 'When did you come?' 'I'll tell you later on ;

listen to the applause, master!' 'No, no; you come up here at once,' was the reply. Without taking heed of anything that was going on around him, Wagner leaned over and, assisted by one or two spectators below, pulled Buonamici, *coram populo*, into his box, in which his young friend remained during the rest of the performance.

The deceased artist was also a busy editor, who issued many valuable editions of pianoforte music, including Beethoven's Sonatas, Studies on special difficulties in Beethoven, 'Biblioteca del Pianista,' &c. His latest publication was an interesting Suite of transcriptions of quaint pieces by an old, forgotten Italian composer, Azzolino Bernardino Della Ciaja di Siena, and published by Bratti (Florence). These effective old-world pieces will well repay the attention of advanced students.

It remains to be said that the always-welcome pianist visited London four times, viz., in 1887, 1890, 1892, and 1893, and on each occasion his public appearances were of the most successful and gratifying kind.

On the first of these occasions, he played Beethoven's Choral Fantasia at a concert given by the short-lived London Musical Society, on June 24, in St. James's Hall, under my direction, and his masterly performance of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto was enthusiastically applauded at a Philharmonic Concert on June 5, 1890.*

The ranks of those musicians who had the good fortune to be brought under the personal influence of Liszt and Bülow are rapidly thinning, and these few words of tribute to the memory of 'Beppe' are penned in the sad knowledge of the irreparable loss of a true artist and lovable friend, with whom I shared some of the happiest times that life can give.

A. C. M.

[Buonamici's son, Carlo, is a distinguished pianist and much-prized teacher at Boston, U.S.A.]

THE SEMIBREVE *CANTO FERMO* IN STRICT COUNTERPOINT.

By C. H. KITSON.

In a recent paper read before the Musical Association, Mr. F. Corder adversely criticised the use of a semibreve *Canto Fermo* in the study of strict counterpoint, chiefly on the ground of its alleged unrhythmic nature. Dr. C. W. Pearce, in his address before the Royal College of Organists on January 24, replies to this criticism by saying that the semibreves should be grouped into duple or triple rhythm, thus :

Such a view is quite possible and practicable in uncombined counterpoint, except in the fifth species. But in combined counterpoint it is open to serious objection, as liable to give a false impression of the place and purpose of the semibreve *Canto Fermo*.

Now the real purpose of strict counterpoint is to teach a student to compose in the 'strict style,' that is, in the style of the polyphonic period. Two objections to this view will at once be raised : (1) That the modes are not used ; (2) That the composition of this period exhibits no use of a uniform semibreve *Canto Fermo*.

* Not July 5, as stated in last number, p. 247.

As regards point (1), it need only be said that it would be much better if the counterpoint were modal as it originally was. As regards point (2), it is quite true that the semibreve *Canto Fermo* is not used as a constant factor in the music of the polyphonic period, nor indeed in that of any period. But work with a semibreve *Canto Fermo* is purely technical, and if once the student sees how to apply this technique, the matter is at once elucidated. It is a great pity that in examinations the study of strict counterpoint is never taken beyond this technical stage. Now let us explain the matter in detail. As the term 'chord' was unknown in the polyphonic period, it was impossible to teach technique by studying one kind of chord at a time, as we do in harmony. Counterpoint is an anterior system, in which the method was horizontal. Thus the only method possible was to teach one sort of movement at a time, *e.g.*, the five orders of counterpoint. The theorist therefore looks up all the examples of one kind of movement or another he can find in the music of the period, and frames his rules accordingly; and he finds that the semibreve covers all the kinds of movement that can be found. It is, therefore, *artificial*, and acts as a sort of prop for elementary study, just as the figured bass in harmony. But there is this important point to remember, that in the music that it thus serves as the determining factor of analysis, the semibreve covers *two* accents and not one.

An examination of the Kyrie of Palestrina's 'Missa *Æterna Christi Munera*' will illustrate the matter, and also introduce some difficulties that will require elucidation:

Ex. 2.

Ex. 2. Musical score for Kyrie eleison. The score is in four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. The score includes various rhythmic markings and accents, such as '1', '6', '10', '2', '3', '5', '7', '9', '8', '4'.

Take first of all the cases that present no difficulty:

- (1) Is an example of first and second species.
- (2) " " first, second, and fourth species.
- (3) " " first and third species.
- (4) " " first, second, fourth, and fifth species.
- (5) " " first and second species.

It will at once be seen why two chords in a bar in strict counterpoint are permissible.

At (6) we apparently get first species in minims, and at (7) first and second species in minims and crotchets. But this is not actually so, so far as procedure is concerned. In applying the technique:

- (1) All semibreves follow first species principle.
- (2) All minims follow second species principle.
- (3) All crotchets follow third species principle.
- (4) All syncopated minims follow fourth species principle.

Now, it is agreed that two chords in a bar may be used. When a semibreve *Canto Fermo* is used, the two chords necessarily have one note in common. But when this ceases to be a constant factor, the principle of two chords remains, but it is not necessary that they have a note in common. This explains (6) and (7).

It will be seen that the Alto uses at (7) the familiar florid idiom $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$ and $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$ is used in scholastic counterpoint over the semibreve.

It is also very important to remember that a prepared discord and its resolution almost invariably occur on a strong accent followed by a weak one, *e.g.*, $\frac{2}{2} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$, not $\frac{2}{2} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$. See (2), (8), and (9).

If we adopted Dr. Pearce's principle we should produce:

Ex. 3. Musical score for Kyrie eleison. The score is in four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. The score includes various rhythmic markings and accents, such as 'U'.

Whereas the true rhythm is:

Ex. 4. Musical score for Kyrie eleison. The score is in four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. The score includes various rhythmic markings and accents, such as 'U'.

But, someone will say, this example from Palestrina is not florid counterpoint. That is true. It is an indiscriminate use of all the species, adapted to the needs of composition. The important thing is that semibreves still follow the first species principle, minims the second species principle, &c. The accents move in minims and not in semibreves. Some further difficulties remain to be removed. At (10) we have a repeated note. The words demand this: The equivalent in scholastic counterpoint is $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$

Again, repeated minims = semibreves, and repeated crotchets = minims. The important point to see is that whether a semibreve be present or not the idiom of the parts remains just as if it were there, and the parts follow the principles, harmonic and melodic, of that prop.

Next, let us proceed to show the working of the principle. Let us take first a short example of ordinary scholastic counterpoint with the accents marked in accordance with the historic basis:

Ex. 5.

Ex. 5. Musical score for Kyrie eleison. The score is in four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. The score includes various rhythmic markings and accents, such as 'C.F.', 'U', and 'U'.

The rhythm is :

and not :

The next stage of scholastic study should be that in which we apply these principles, without the prop of a semibreve *Canto Fermo* :

It will be seen that all the parts obey the rules of melodic idiom of florid counterpoint, and that they move just as if a semibreve *Canto Fermo* were there as a constant factor. It will also be seen how utterly wrong it would be to imagine the rhythm to be :

The next stage of study is composition in the strict style. All that need be said here is that the writer has proved time after time that such a course as has been outlined above results in a student's being able to write accurately in the manner of the 16th century, so far as technique is concerned.

If it be argued that it is of no use to learn a dead language, then strict counterpoint should be abolished, and something else should be invented to take its place. But we must carefully guard against attempting to make strict counterpoint what it was never intended to be, and never can be. The semibreve *Canto Fermo* is a perfectly intelligible thing, if understood aright. It is simply a prop, which has finally to be eliminated as a constant factor. But it is most important to remember that it represents two accents. Thus it is that in his chapter on counterpoint on a chorale in his treatise on counterpoint, Sir Frederick Bridge says: 'The Chorale is usually written in minims, and may be regarded as a part in the second species with the remaining parts in florid counterpoint.' That is to say that the minims represent accents (two in a bar), and the florid parts use the idioms of a bar over two minims and not one, e.g. :

Added parts Florid.

To put it another way, if in strict counterpoint we combine the first, second, and fourth species, we produce a series of chords moving in minims :

Each of the bars in the above contains a semibreve, and it will be realised that it is the harmony of Tallis's Canon. But it would be quite wrong to regard the minims either as divisions of beats, or as lasting over two beats. Probably all the trouble about strict counterpoint would disappear if teachers and examiners gave more attention to it in the second stage, with either a florid part as *Canto Fermo*, or with a second species part as *Canto Fermo*.

- (1.) *i.e.*, Third species principle, already learnt with prop of semibreve *Canto Fermo*.
- (2.) It is allowable to change the harmony on the fourth crotchet.

Here the minim *Canto Fermo* is rightly regarded as moving in grouped accents—U

The important points are :

- (1.) That the strong and weak minims form together a bar of scholastic counterpoint, and not two bars.
- (2.) That the bar contains two accents, and not merely one.

The right view of the semibreve *Canto Fermo* is that it represents two accents (or three in triple time) in all combined work, and in any case where the fifth species is used.

TEACHERS' CONDITIONS IN WESTERN CANADA.

BY LIONEL KINGSLEY.

The sphere of music in Canada can be divided, roughly, into two zones, that of the East and that of the West. Neither of these is concerned with what the other does. The East, which shelters the old and quasi-old cities of Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, and Ottawa, stalks along in a high atmosphere of grand opera in the season, classical concerts, and fine orchestras. Musicians abound in the avenues of the great cities, and competition is as keen as in Europe, for not only do the highly-trained students of the Continent emigrate thither, but it is a convenient outlet for the surplus talent of the United States. In the East there is a considerable amount of culture, and where culture is in evidence the condition of the fine arts may often be found financially to be in a parlous condition. So, for musical purposes, the East will be dismissed from the scope of this article, for it contains passable imitations of the overcrowded musical cities of the Old World.

Certainly it is not in the East that a man, going to the Dominion to carve out a career, or a living—to be more temperate in expression,—as a teacher, is likely to gain recognition and success. It is to the middle of Canada that we must look, to that part commonly known as Western Canada, the great provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The delightful province of British Columbia, which is much better suited, climatically, to the Englishman, must be ruled out, for the market-place of music there is crowded to excess at present. A decade hence it may offer openings for teachers.

The newcomer, when he enters the great St. Lawrence River and passes the smiling hamlets on the banks, and hears the bells ringing from innumerable little churches stuck away in the hills or sheltering close down upon the shores, must put regretfully behind him the hope of participating in the musical work of cities cultured in the art, and resign himself to the inland places and townships where music is still, necessarily, in its infancy. His task will be to uplift the rough settlers of the West.

Taking Manitoba, for instance, whither many English teachers have gone of late years, the newcomer must not cherish too fine ideals; for the chief place in this province is engaged in the perpetual boosting of real estate. It loves this better than the finer things of life. This city is Winnipeg, known among the Indians as 'Dirty Water.' It is very material, contains about 200,000 people, and is a large, straggling capital stuck in the middle of a cheerless flat prairie. It appears to have, at present, all the musicians it can assimilate. The talented man

coming there will be told that there is always room at the top—that chilly place where one usually gets all the stormy winds which blow: but he will find that there will be little inducement to toil there, and, after all, a musician must live. The citizens of Winnipeg love better the click of knives and forks in the 'quick-lunch' cafés than the music of the spheres.

There is a musical set at Winnipeg which is very powerful; it is feminine and dominating. It is known as the Women's Musical Club. It may be said that such clubs are to be found in many of the larger Canadian towns. These clubs certainly do a great deal to foster the purest of the arts, but they rather tend to become cliquey, a close preserve. They offer a welcome to the feminine newcomer, be she teacher or gifted amateur, but the unhappy male is barred. He is penalised by virtue of his sex, and must remain, unhappily, in the outer darkness away from the shining lights of musical society. So man in Canada is handicapped; and the woman teacher starts with a certain advantage, for, naturally, to be a member of one of these clubs is to come into contact with those people who can influence pupils and resultant fees.

There is a men's musical club—the Clef Club—but being essentially a Bohemian one, it offers no scope to the man who has to earn his living. Decidedly woman has usurped the high places in music in this great outpost of the Empire. The Women's Musical Club gives a concert each week or fortnight in the 'season,' and members are invited to furnish the programme. But truth to say these concerts could be of greater musical value. At present many of these clubs are mutual admiration societies, and inside and outside criticisms are barred. It is possible to hear at these recitals the classics and romanticists played as correctly and icily well as ever the heart of pedant could desire. Sometimes as a relief an artist bird of passage is invited to play or sing. Cadmon, the composer and collector of Indian melodies, Schumann-Heink, and others of equal fame have been stars at these concerts.

The teacher new coming to Winnipeg (and he should come a few months before the winter sets in, so that he may become known socially) must give his opening concert and be prepared to lose money by it. Then he will settle down to the usual drudgery of seeking pupils. He will find little good in advertising. He should come equipped with introductions. If a singer he may secure a church appointment ranging anywhere up to a hundred pounds a year. This will pay his current expenses, so that all he takes in his studio will be net profit. If he has no introductions or appointment he will find the task he has set himself a very weary one. And there have been quite a number of young, ardent, musical hearts broken in the land or the primitives, the mighty West. He will find that he has to compete with all classes of teachers whose fees range anywhere from a pound to a shilling a lesson. The 'pound people' are very old established, and have so secured the cream of the pupils. They are exceedingly well entrenched, musically. Some make handsome incomes, indeed, and camp luxuriously in the hot season with the rich on the lakes or in the mountains.

The newcomer will find a formidable competition in a local Conservatoire, which is a chartered company run on business lines. All in this establishment is cut and dried. Godowsky's name is on the prospectus as patron and supervisor, and much play is made with his personality. This Conservatoire is built up on a foundation of paper examinations. As everyone in the city plays the piano, after a fashion, the teachers in this school are well employed. But there is no further demand for them at present.