'Boney's Lamentation' and 'To Rodney We Will Go'

Author(s): W. H. Grattan Flood

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 52, No. 816 (Feb. 1, 1911), p. 100

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/906662>

Accessed: 31-12-2015 04:55 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Correspondence.

THE STUDY OF RHYTHM.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—The correspondence on this subject will not be without use if by it any definite conclusions can be obtained. As I understand the situation, Mr. Abdy Williams does not contend that rhythmical units are to be found in all music, but that in certain cases they may be present. It is evident that the question is not one of the existence of a law of rhythm, which can be always applied; no 'law' is claimed.

A good deal has been written on the subject of this theory by various writers; but, as it seems to me, no one has been able to formulate a theory which will stand the test of minute examination, and which will apply to all cases. As this is so, what I may call 'the measure theory' becomes simply a question of taste involving no fundamental principles. The discussion will then turn on the advisability of reading into music pauses which are not outwardly apparent. The Air with variations, in Beethoven's Op. 26, will serve as a good test-case of the value of the theory. If we are to adopt the 'measure' theory the construction of the first phrase would be somewhat as follows:

Now in the first place this division into measures is not absolutely accurate. As Mr. Abdy Williams well remarks, 'If we divide it mathematically we ruin it.' In the second place, no one would dream of performing the passage in this manner. What then becomes of the practical utility of the theory? Finally, most people will agree that the passage involves a gradual rise to the cadence bar. If we make a caesura in bar two, not only would the free flow of the music be spoiled, but the interpolation of an anacrusis would bring into too great prominence the A flat in bar three, and thereby weaken the effect of the cadence bar.

A study of the variations on this theme will show how rhythmic variety can be obtained on a basis of strict phrase form. The third variation gives us a good illustration of the effect of a gradual rise to the cadence bar. Would any theorist wish to split up this passage into measures, or to insert a caesura at any point? Surely the ultimate fact in the consideration of this kind of musical rhythm is the phrase, which may or may not be sub-divided into sections, and around which any amount of variety of treatment is possible.

In conclusion, I certainly agree that Riemann and Lussy are indebted to Greek theory. But Greek rhythmic theory was vitiated by an 'exploded' fallacy—the fallacy of the divisibility of motion.—Yours faithfully,

T. H. YORKE TROTTER.

THE WHOLE-TONE SCALE.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Mr. Clutsam, in his interesting articles on the whole-tone scale, mentions that he can find 'no example that at all represents the effect, the genesis of which lies in the passage shown in Example 3.' But the following passage from Debussy's 'Jardins sous la pluie' seems to constitute such an example. Has Mr. Clutsam, in spite of his careful search in many modern works, failed to notice this passage, or have I failed to catch his exact meaning when he speaks of 'the tonal chord associated with chromatic progression'?

Yours faithfully,

FRANK MERRICK (Jun.).

[We have referred Mr. Merrick's letter to Mr. Clutsam, who writes to us as follows:]

The reference to Debussy's pianoforte piece 'Jardins sous la Pluie,' sent you by Mr. Merrick, in no way discounts the remark in my article which he quotes.

Primarily there is no complete chord of six notes (an essential) to be found in the passage, although I admit the *incomplete* similarity, and was also aware of it. But the trend of my article was to show that the tonal chord of six complete notes was for practical purposes simply a dominant, with half-a-dozen roots at its user's disposal for modulatory purposes. And in this direction I am afraid a great many of your readers may have misunderstood the real purpose of my article.

'BONEY'S LAMENTATION' AND 'TO RODNEY WE WILL GO.'

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—In reply to Miss Lucy E. Broadwood's letter, I wish to point out that what she considers 'an irregular fifth bar twice in the first half of the tune,' viz., 'Rodney's Glory,' is in reality a strikingly characteristic inspiration of O'Carolan's genius, and reflects the rhythm of his own Irish words, which is tolerably well imitated in the English lyric by Owen roe O'Sullivan. O'Carolan's song is entitled 'Righ Seamus,' and is an elegy in praise of King James II. and the Old Pretender. His metres have been a puzzle to English and foreign musicians, and even Mr. Alfred Moffat, who has so well edited a book of Irish airs, falls into the mistake of printing a whole bar, 'to complete,' as he says, 'the form of the eight-barred period,' in his setting of 'Bumpus Squire Jones.'

The source for the words of 'Rodney's glory' is an accessible little book in Irish, giving the Irish songs of Eoghan ruadh (Owen roe) O'Sullivan, edited by Rev. P. Dinneen, M.D., entitled 'Amhrain Eoghain Ruaidh Uí Suilleabhaim,' published by the Gaelic League, Dublin, in 1901. In his admirable introduction he prints the eight English verses, as written by Owen roe, who fought in that memorable encounter. I also possess a good MS. version of the song—and copies are to be found in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

As to the source of the tune, I have two MS. versions: one is dated 1756 and the other is 1795 or 1796. The latter belonged to William Elliot Hudson, and formerly belonged to his father, Edward Hudson, M.D., who wrote an 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' published in Dublin in 1788.

In regard to 'Hussey's Maggot,' I have no doubt but that it was either composed by Mr. Hussey or popularised by him in the second quarter of the 18th century. Miss Broadwood, however, does not seem to be aware that there were Husseys in Ireland long before the year 1170; in fact the O'Hussey family were noted Irish bards. But even assuming that Hussey, the gentleman piper, was of the English stock that came over in 1170, surely a residence of nearly 600 years ought to settle the matter of nationality. If the Irish Hussey of 1730 is to be regarded as English, because a supposed ancestor came over from England 600 years previously, then similarly Henry Purcell, the great English composer, must be classed as a Norman, whose ancestor came over to England in 1066. This Hussey, the gentleman piper, was an uncle of Bishop Hussey of Waterford and Lismore, the bosom friend of Edmund Burke.—Yours faithfully,

Enniscorthy.

W. H. GRATTAN FLOOD.

THE NATIONALITY OF FOLK-SONGS.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Do not you think the argument as to whether old airs were originally English, Scotch, or Irish very stupid? It is well known that before any of them were put to paper they were sung by men who travelled about the three countries, and different singers rendered them differently, so that it is quite possible that when musicians first thought of preserving them the same airs (varied) were taken down in England, Scotland and Ireland, but where they were originally sung will ever remain a question. The songs of Ophelia were entirely traditional until about the end of the 18th century, when Mr. Linley took them down as they