

Music at the Court of Frederick the Great

Author(s): Jeffrey Pulver

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goblet he gained in a Nottingham Glee Club competition. Amongst other choral music of this type that has been popular are the part-songs 'The unfaithful shepherdess' and 'Love me little, love me long,' and especially the trio for female voices, 'Ring out, wild bells.' He also composed anthems, songs and instrumental pieces that have had useful vogue. His most considerable works were a setting of Longfellow's poem, 'The building of the ship,' for mixed voices, and of Tennyson's 'Sleeping Beauty' for female voices. The latter work has been justly described as being among the best cantatas ever written for female voices. He was probably one of the oldest, if not the oldest, surviving member of the Philharmonic Society. Often in late years he would relate his early reminiscences of the enthusiasm with which Mendelssohn was received and the interest created by Madame Schumann's first appearance.

He retired from the profession about fifteen years ago. Failing sight hampered him in his last days, but he never became quite blind. His death was perfectly peaceful. His wife and eight children all survive. Their pang at the parting must have been softened by the thought that a useful and honourable life had been prolonged so happily and ended so tranquilly.

THE LATE MR. HAMILTON CLARKE.

It is proposed to erect a simple monument to the memory of the late Mr. Hamilton Clarke, whose death on July 9 was recorded in our August number. Musicians and others who desire to do honour to the memory of the deceased are invited to send subscriptions to the Rev. Dr. Whittaker, Chaplain's House, Banstead Downs, Sutton, Surrey. The deceased was buried in Banstead Parish Churchyard on July 15.

MUSIC AT THE COURT OF FREDERICK THE GREAT.

BY JEFFREY PULVER.

Since this year began it has been almost impossible to open a German review or magazine without lighting upon the name Friedrich der Grosse—a revival of interest due largely to the fact that the date of the birth of the King of Prussia subtracted from the present year gives just two centuries. The great monarch has been reviewed, criticised, praised, and commented upon from every point of view, with varying degrees of completeness and accuracy. He has been discussed as king, as statesman, as commander, and as literary aspirant; but on one side he has not yet been seriously considered, and this is Frederick the musician. It is in this aspect that we find him more interesting than in any other; for in it we see him in what is, perhaps, his most favourable light; indeed, Macaulay thought that more could be learned of his character 'by what passed during his hours of relaxation than by his battles or by his laws.' The bi-centenary celebrations that brought into the light of to-day the memory of the military, political, and regal glories of this many-sided prince may well be left to the nation that benefited by his rule; but what he did for the music of his age, and the influence he exercised upon that of the succeeding generation, concerns us in England as much as the methods he used for the consolidation of his kingdom concern the descendants of his own subjects.

Considering his musical activity, it is very easy to forget for a moment that Frederick had another vocation that called for incomparably more time and pains than did music, but this forgetfulness is easily excusable when we remember that he found time, although filling the triple office of king, minister, and commander-in-chief, to devote some hours each day to the practise of music, and to the further development of the art in Prussia.

Frederick's predecessor, Friedrich Wilhelm, completely neglected all the arts; opera could not be given when the money was wanted for the enlargement of barracks, nor could Frederick learn music as long as the fee that his teacher would take could be used to purchase a fantastically tall grenadier. And besides this niggardliness there was Friedrich Wilhelm's ingrained aversion to all things that were not 'practical'; an aversion that amounted to a mania,

which gave evidence of its existence by the occasional breaking of a walking-stick over the innocent head of the thoughtless tutor who ventured to lead his pupil through the intricacies of the 'Aurea Bulla.'

It need not be specially mentioned therefore, that a father who rigidly excluded the study of languages, literature, and the arts from his son's curriculum would have been transported into a state of frenzy at the very mention of music as a pastime. But what might not be done openly could with a little trouble be managed in secret; and just as his mother encouraged Frederick in the secret study of French, so did she also help him in the acquirement of music, and engage teachers for this purpose. The famous Joseph Joachim Quanz came from Dresden twice a year and taught the young prince to play the flute, and others trained him in theory. Were we not thoroughly acquainted with Frederick's tenacity of purpose, we would be quite justified in supposing the study of music under such circumstances to be impossible; but what Fritz set out to do, he generally accomplished. What if he did have to hide in a wood or cave with his musical friends when they wished to practise? The matter has a certain tinge of humour about it that would raise merriment were we not so well acquainted with the misery of Frederick's youth; but the Gilbertian touch is not entirely wanting, for Dr. Charles Burney, travelling in Prussia in 1772, says: 'Quanz told me that the late Queen-Mother encouraged the Prince in his favourite amusement, and who engaged musicians for him. But so secretly had this to be done, that had the King found it out, "All these sons of Apollo would have incurred the danger of being hanged."' Macaulay further tells us, in his essay on the second Frederick, that when imprisoned by his father for his so-called desertion from the army, he was able 'to play his flute without having it broken over his head—his gaolers were thus more tender than his father.'

Frederick's marriage and subsequent accession altered these conditions; the band of faithful musicians he had formed were transferred to Potsdam (for 'Sans Souci' was the favourite sojourn of the King when not politically engaged), and their numbers augmented by the engagement of some of Europe's foremost musicians. His day, as we know from the pages of Carlyle, Macaulay, Kugler, &c., was mathematically divided so that no moment was lost. We also know that in each day some time was consecrated to the practise of the flute and to the writing of music; the time between seven o'clock and the supper hour was occupied by a concert, a gathering for the encouragement and practise of the best music at the period. A. von Menzel's famous picture of a 'Concert at "Sans Souci"' will be familiar to most, even in this country; and from it we can form an excellent idea of these functions: Frederick, tall, severe, and lean, stands before his music-stand playing one of Quanz's concerti; Franz Benda is *Concertmeister*; Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach is at the pianoforte. Shortly before the hour for starting, Frederick has carefully tried over the more intricate passages of the cadenzas he has himself written for his concerti; the orchestra is kept waiting in an ante-room. When the king has spent some time in technical exercises (he loved to call these *Solfeggi*, and some volumes of them are still to be seen at Potsdam), he will call in his band and the daily concert will commence.

Dr. Burney, ever curious for information, as befits a man who is touring the Continent in search of material for his proposed 'History of Music,' was smuggled into the palace and hidden behind some hangings. In the diary of this tour, which he published in 1773, he gives his criticism of Frederick's performance: 'His *embouchure* was clear and even, his finger brilliant, and his taste pure and simple. I was much pleased and even surprised with the neatness of his execution . . . as well as by the feeling and expression. . . . In short, his performance surpassed in many particulars anything I had ever heard among *dilettanti* or even professors.' His technical excellence, of course, was due to his life-long study; in his eighth year he already played the flute, for in the accounts of pocket-money spent when at that age, we find the entry, 'For mending the flute, four groschen.' Occasion for surprise that he could continue this practice when discharging the many duties that fell to the king is amply provided if we remember the countless things he insisted upon doing himself. But when he wished

to think out some new plan, or formulate new military methods, he would take his flute and pace the long corridors of 'Sans Souci,' and allow his tootling to 'assist his imagination.'

But many royal musicians could play an instrument well, and compose a piece also; herein does not lie Frederick's greatest musical importance. It is rather in his patronage of some of the most renowned of musicians that his interest to the musical historian is centred. His training had made of him a discerning critic, and he was able to tell the good musician from the bad without having to depend upon the advice of friends who wished to bring their own particular protégés into royal favour. He heard Franz Benda practising through the open windows of an inn, and recognised him to be what he was—a violinist far above the average, and he engaged him, after having given him an audition at the palace, where he himself accompanied the violinist on the pianoforte. This patronage of Benda gave the world a new school of violin-playing, the so-called 'Berlin School,' one that so far as true musicianship goes produced the finest string players ever heard. But the engagement of Benda alone could not have produced this result; at this Court the violinist met such musicians as C. H. Graun, his brother, J. G. Graun, and Quanz; and the influence of these composers and performers of Italian training, added to Benda's Bohemian taste and originality, formed the beginning of what was later to produce such artistically important results. Burney says of Benda: 'His style is not that of Tartini, Somis, or Veracini, nor that of the head of any one school or musical sect; it is his own, and formed from that model which should be ever studied by all instrumental performers—good singing.'

The third son of the great Johann Sebastian Bach—Carl Philipp Emanuel—was engaged as Frederick's accompanist as early as 1738, and was one of the most interesting figures that adorned this Court. Enjoying a great reputation and occupying the highest position in the musical world of Germany, as much on account of his witty geniality and sociability as for his profound learning and true musicianship, he is remembered now as a composer of great merit and as the greatest developer of the sonata-form. He frequently spoke of his father, and Frederick as frequently asked him to invite Johann Sebastian to Potsdam; but the Cantor always found some excuse for not complying. At length, however, he agreed to visit Frederick and give him the opportunity of hearing and marvelling at the greatest wonder of musical history. He arrived at Potsdam in May, 1747, and Frederick, looking through the list of strangers who had arrived during the day, lighted upon the name of Bach. He was just about to put the flute to his lips when the paper was handed him. He had glanced through it coldly, but when he came to the magic name his whole visage altered; his eye lit up, and laying his flute aside he said, 'Gentlemen, old Bach is come.' After having waited so long to see and hear this musical giant, impetuous Fritz could not be expected to wait any longer now that 'old Bach' was so near; he therefore sent word by the son that Johann Sebastian was to present himself without delay. Time was not even allowed him to change from his travelling dress into his 'schwarzer Cantor-Rock,' and in a very few minutes he was at the palace. Frederick had by now given up all idea of a concert for that evening, and devoted himself entirely to his distinguished guest. Enthusiastically he led Bach from one apartment of the palace to another, and where a pianoforte was found the Cantor had to perform—now to improvise, now to construct a fugue; every sort of musical exercise was thought of and asked of the Leipsic magician. The king gave a theme, and the visitor treated it fugally; and all the while the enthusiasm of Frederick and of the band who followed them grew until Bach was looked upon as a sort of musical idol. A six-part fugue was demanded, and Bach, choosing the theme himself, satisfied the demand in the most brilliant fashion. When he returned to Leipsic he worked out the royal theme more elaborately, and adding some other compositions to it, sent the volume to Frederick as the famous 'Musikalisches Opfer.'

Of all the eligible *Capellmeister*, Carl Heinrich Graun seems to have been the one most suited to Frederick's tastes; at all events, the king would hear very few operas that were not composed by him. Indeed, the works of Graun and Hasse were, with very few exceptions, the only ones he would permit at his opera-house. In these operas

some of the finest singers that Italy ever produced appeared, and it is for this raising of the operatic standard in Prussia that Frederick merits more space in the history of music than he occupies at present.

Graun's activity as a composer was very great and varied. Between 1747 and 1756 he wrote and had performed at the Opera no fewer than twenty-seven Italian operas, and in them the brightest stars of Italian vocalism created the title-roles. The world-renowned Giovanna Astrua first appeared in the Pastoral composed by Graun and others, for which Frederick himself wrote several numbers; Carestini supported her. Felice Salinbeni created Cæsar in 'Catone in Utica' (1744); and so also appeared Elizabeth Schmeling, Signora Agricola, Signora Gasparini, Pasqualino Bruscolini, and Porporino.

The opera-house that Frederick built in 1742 was the most magnificent in Europe. Graun was in Italy at the time, and engaged the singers. Burney tells us that the orchestra consisted of fifty of Germany's finest instrumentalists. The establishment was complete in all details—a ballet-master, a troop of dancers, a chorus, and everything that could be thought of at that period was done to make the place worthy of its object. The expense of it all was defrayed by the king. Admission was free to all properly accredited persons. We can thus look upon this opera-house as a sort of royal hobby, one that was built for the pleasure of the king in the first place; but we cannot deny that a more public-spirited motive lay behind, and that the ultimate object was the revival of an art that had lain dormant during the reign of Frederick's predecessor.

Such was the Opera for which Graun composed; an arduous duty, for Frederick was not an indulgent task-master. In addition he was ever severely critical with his servants, and on one occasion he said to his cembalist Fasch; 'Graun should have a thoroughly first-rate man beside him to spur him on; but where is all the money to come from to pay such men?' Nevertheless, when surrounded by enemies in Bohemia, this king, hearing while on the battlefield of the death of Graun, said: 'Eight days ago I lost my best field-marshal (Schwerin), and now my Graun. I shall create no more field-marshals or conductors until I can find another Schwerin and another Graun.'

Interesting as Frederick was in politics, in war, with his band, or in the streets of Potsdam, he was perhaps still more so in the opera-house. There he played the part of commander-in-chief as he did on the parade-ground. Standing behind the conductor or the harpsichordist, he directed the proceedings as only a musician could, and as a man who felt he had a proprietary right to do so. 'He is such a strict disciplinarian,' says Burney, 'that if a mistake is made in a single movement, or evolution, he immediately marks and rebukes the offender, and if any of his Italian troops dare deviate from strict discipline by adding, altering, or diminishing a single passage in the parts they have to perform, an order is sent "de par le Roi" for them to adhere strictly to the notes written by the composer at their peril.' But musician as Burney undoubtedly was, he does not entirely agree with Frederick for this severity. The learned Doctor was doubtlessly also infected with the habits and fashions of the period, for he goes on to say, 'This when compositions are good and singers licentious, may be an excellent method, but certainly shuts out all taste and refinement.' Here we need not necessarily agree with him; why should 'taste and refinement' be dependent upon the caprice of a singer who ostentatiously wishes to show off his or her florid and cadential twists and twirls at the expense of the composer's simplicity of diction? We know that Frederick's taste in music was pure and simple; we are therefore not surprised to find him waging vigorous war upon the spoiled children of the vocal art, who sacrificed the composer's intentions to their love of pyrotechnical display.

In those words so innocently uttered by Dr. Burney, we see another reason for praising the memory of the great Frederick. This was his successful attempt to simplify the music of his age; he was averse to ornamentation which was introduced with the sole object of proving the performer's technical skill—a tendency that led to a style so overloaded with useless ornament that the original object of the art could scarcely be discerned. In gathering around him the musicians he did, he secured the music of his concerts and his opera from this abuse; and remembering the great influence

Frederick had over the artistic world, we may take it that much of the reform was directly due to his endeavours and those of the musicians he patronised and befriended.

One thing is especially noticeable when we read the names that have frequently been quoted in this article; it is that while all the singers, with the exception of the Schmeling, have been Italians, the instrumentalists have always been Germans, and so have the conductors and composers. Frederick, as we know, would have nothing to do with German literature or the German language; and because he once said 'What! a German singer perform an aria? I would as soon hear my horse neigh it,' several otherwise broad-minded historians have come to the conclusion that he extended his prejudice over all German music. Nothing could be further removed from the fact. We have seen how early in his musical career Frederick had Germans in his service; and we also know that the only operas he would have were those of German composers; the only concession that can be made is that he preferred the Italian methods of vocal production to those of the Germans, but that in all other branches of the art he was a staunch supporter of the national talent; and in this respect Frederick undoubtedly chose correctly. On the morning following the concert that Burney had overheard, Quanz told the Doctor that of the three concerti the king had played, one was written by the flautist over forty years earlier, and that the other two 'were made twenty years ago; these pieces have stood their ground very well.' And this Burney very rightly takes to be 'an indication of a sound judgment and of great discernment in his Majesty to adhere thus firmly to the productions of a period which may be called the Augustan age in music.'

The example set at Court can have had no other effect than to popularise the art in society; and many concerts in which the ablest musicians performed the best of music testify to the hold that music was gaining in Frederick's capital. Ernst Friedrich Benda, in collaboration with Karl Bachmann, founded that famous series of concerts that were so popular in Berlin, and which ran uninterruptedly and successfully from 1770 to 1797. The influence of the king did not stop here; at the Court of Dresden the Princess Maria Antonia sang, played, and composed, in a truly professional manner. Her operas, for which she wrote the libretti as well as the music, were highly valued, and his Majesty of Prussia was her warmest friend and counsellor. She sent her work to her royal colleague for criticism, and Frederick wrote her the most complimentary of letters. One of her operas—'Il trionfo della fedeltà'—was produced by royal command at Potsdam; and for this performance Frederick himself composed an extra aria.

Reviewing this great musical activity of the king, it is difficult to realise that so large a proportion of his time was spent on the battlefield; but this did not interfere with his practice or enjoyment of music. As soon as the enemy permitted him to settle in winter quarters, the band was summoned in sections by turn, and the everlasting flute brought out again.

Such, then, was Frederick the musician; a personage as interesting to the student of 18th century art and culture as he is to the student of military tactics; a man who, had he not been a king, would have been as important on this account alone as were any of the other noble patrons of music. What Esterhazy did for Haydn, Frederick the Great of Prussia did for many, but with this difference: Frederick raised the standard of the art for the whole of Prussia, and set an example that led to the betterment of all conditions in the musical world of his epoch, and for this we are justified in honouring his memory now, just two centuries after the day on which his advent caused such joy in his future kingdom.

THE PROMENADE CONCERTS.

The 'Promenades' have probably never opened more brilliantly than they did on August 17. The magnitude of the audience seemed to surpass all previous experience, and the absence of extreme heat left the listeners freer than on other crowded occasions to enjoy and to applaud. Enthusiasm was spontaneous, eager, and thoroughly impartial. British musicians played an honourable part in the proceedings. The most important and the best received of the less-familiar

works in the programme was Mr. Hamilton Harty's bright and attractive 'Comedy Overture,' and an exceptional trio of soloists was found in Miss Carrie Tubb, Mr. Frank Mullings, and Mr. York Bowen. Beethoven's 'Egmont' Overture, Tchaikovsky's '1812,' Wagner's 'Tannhäuser' Overture, and Wormser's suite, 'L'enfant prodigue,' helped to make up an excellent 'popular' programme.

Monday, August 19, was the first Wagner night, with a much-familiarized programme and a large audience. August 20 brought the first hearing in England of a Piedmontese Suite by Sinigaglia that recalled his Piedmontese Dances, especially in the use of folk-tunes. On August 21 three pieces by Fiocco, orchestrated by Mr. Norman O'Neill, were performed for the first time. The adapter deserves praise for the restraint and modesty with which he has moulded the tempting medium of the modern orchestra to the modest design of the old composer. Given such judgment as Mr. O'Neill has shown, there is a large field open for the unemployed composer in the re-orchestration of old music. The same concert provided the first hearing in England of a triple Concerto for violin, violoncello, and pianoforte by Paul Juon. There was no obvious reason why it should not be the last hearing in England. The most patient and sympathetic listening failed to detect beauty or other merit beyond that of an occasional fine passage of rhetoric that emerged as if by accident from an arid waste of ascetic modernism. Long and well-deserved applause was showered upon the three gifted ladies—Misses Marjorie Hayward, May Mukle and Auriol Jones—who provided the performance. Afterwards Brahms's third Symphony was given a romantic performance.

THE JAQUES-DALCROZE TRAINING SCHOOL AT DRESDEN.

THE Jaques-Dalcroze Training School for rhythmic gymnastics at Hellerau, near Dresden, celebrated its first annual School Festival during the days of June 28 to 30, with interesting demonstrations of rhythmic gymnastics in their simple and more highly-applied forms. A few words with regard to the new buildings in which this remarkable institution is housed may be acceptable. As to this we cannot do better than quote the official prospectus, which states that 'the management of the Jaques-Dalcroze Training School has built a festival hall in accordance with the designs of the architect, Herr Heinrich Tressenow, and with the artistic assistance of the painter, Herr Alexander von Falzmann, which, in its clear, simple proportions does not pretend to be anything but an enclosed space.' The lighting of the stage and the auditorium has been most ingeniously arranged, producing a result of ideal simplicity. It is an evenly distributed, not directly visible, and absolutely shadeless light, which can be increased and decreased at will. The border between the stage and the audience is occupied by the space for an orchestra of sixty performers. There is no stage curtain. The performances on each day commenced with simple rhythmic-gymnastic exercises. These were followed by graceful dances for the girls and march-like movements. Later on came rhythmic-plastic interpretations of emotions such as joy, brightness, pain, sadness, fury, hatred, &c. The climax of the proceedings was reached by movements associated with the performance of J. S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C minor from the first part of the 'Wohltemperirte Klavier' (the three parts of the fugue being beautifully represented by twelve girls and six youths), the same composer's Invention in G minor, and the Prelude and Fugue in E minor by Mendelssohn. Magnificent also was the musical and plastic presentation of the first part of the second Act of Gluck's 'Orfeo,' with its choruses and dances of the Furies. Fräulein Emm Leisner sang the short air of 'Orfeo' very beautifully. M. Jaques-Dalcroze, who had himself composed an Idylle, 'Echo,' and other charming musical items, was the recipient of ovations of a most enthusiastic character which were fully deserved, as the importance of his idea and work for the purposes of the musical education of the individual was on these occasions more strikingly demonstrated than ever before.