

Falstaff

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Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 54, No. 847 (Sep. 1, 1913), pp. 575-579

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/908045>

Accessed: 27-11-2015 09:47 UTC

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works of César Franck, Vincent d'Indy, Chabrier, Debussy, Florent Schmitt, Deodat de Séverac, Erik Satie, Ravel; by Miss Marjorie Thompson, whose full, well-controlled mezzo, and excellent French pronunciation won golden opinions, her share in the programme consisting of troubadour songs, airs by Lulli, Rameau, Rousseau, Grétry; modern songs by Lalo, Franck, Délibes, Fauré, Debussy; and by Mr. Montagu Nathan, who played admirably violin pieces by old masters: J. M. le Clerc, Jacques Aubert, Francœur, Gossec, and Grétry.

Several of the points touched by the lecturer were studied at length in his contributions to the *Musical Times*,* and are therefore not included in this synopsis.]

* See articles on 'The origin of modern musical idiom,' 'Vincent d'Indy,' 'Saint-Saëns,' 'Massenet,' 'A French biography of Bizet,' &c.

FALSTAFF.

BY EDWARD ELGAR.

For the Leeds Festival, in October, a 'Symphonic study for orchestra, in C minor, with two Interludes in A minor' (Op. 68), has been completed by the writer of these notes. If we take the word 'study' in its literary use and meaning, the composer's intention will be sufficiently indicated.

As the work is based solely on the Falstaff of the historical plays (1 & 2 Henry IV. and Henry V.), in examining it or listening to it, the caricature in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which, unluckily, is better known to English playgoers than the real Falstaff, must be forgotten. Prof. Dowden, after allowing the probable authenticity of the tradition that *The Merry Wives* was written at the request of Elizabeth, says: 'Shakspeare dressed up a fat rogue, brought forward for the occasion from the back premises of the poet's imagination, in Falstaff's clothes, . . . he made it impossible for the most laborious 19th century critic to patch on *The Merry Wives* to Henry IV.*, and it is noteworthy that Morgann, in his essay on Falstaff, ignores *The Merry Wives* entirely. The real 'Sir John Falstaff is a conception hardly less complex, hardly less wonderful than that of Hamlet.'† This complexity has been summed up by Morgann as follows: 'He is a character made up by *Shakespeare* wholly of incongruities;—a man at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality; a knave without malice, a liar without deceit; and a knight, a gentleman and a soldier, without either dignity, decency, or honour.'‡

The idea that Falstaff is merely a farcical character is entertained so generally that it is necessary to insist on the last clause of Morgann's statement—a knight, a gentleman, and a soldier. He 'is by no means a purely comic character. Were he no more than this, the stern words of Henry to his old companion

would be unendurable.'* 'He had been page to the Duke of Norfolk, a fact which certifies to his respectability of position and inferentially to his possessing the instincts of a gentleman; had associated with John of Gaunt, who certainly would have had nothing to do with a poltroon; had served for many years in the army and earned knighthood, then a purely military title . . . takes his soldiers into the thick of the fight where they are soundly peppered, and he himself must have been in great danger, earns from the Prince who supposed him to be dead, a tribute of regret he would hardly have bestowed on one whose cowardice he despised.'†

To this catalogue of honour may be added that Falstaff appears at the Council held in the King's camp (1 Henry IV., Act v., Scene 1), the others present being the King, the Prince, Lord John of Lancaster, and the Earl of Westmoreland.

It is in 'an apartment of the Prince's' that Falstaff first appears, and the feeling of pleasantry which runs through the dialogue is almost courtly; Prince Henry apostrophises him as 'Thou latter spring! All-hallow'n summer!' Then follow scenes so finely graduated that they exhibit one of the highest flights of Shakespeare's genius—we are shown the inevitable degradation down to the squalid end.

'In the First part (Hen. IV.) he takes a whole-hearted delight in himself, in his jollifications, his drolleries, his exploits on the highway and his almost purposeless mendacity. . . . In the Second part his wit becomes coarser, his conduct more indefensible, his cynicism less genial.'‡ He appears many times in the Second part, but only on one occasion in the Prince's company; we note almost with pain, the gradual fall from the close companionship to lower and still lower levels until we arrive at the repudiation by the new King followed by the death scene, the peculiarly poignant account of which is given in Henry V. 'The king has killed his heart,' says the Hostess—'The king hath run bad humours on the knight,' says Nym—'His heart is fracted and corroborate,' says magniloquent Pistol, and in the next Act comes the incomparable passage 'A' made a finer end and went away an it had been any christom child; . . . for after I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and a' babbled of green fields.'§

Hazlitt sums up his study of Falstaff thus: 'The true spirit of humanity, the thorough knowledge of the stuff we are made of, the practical wisdom with the seeming fooleries, have no parallel anywhere else. . . . In one point of view they are laughable in the extreme, in another they are equally affecting—if it is affecting to shew what a little thing is human life.'

* Dowden. 'Shakspeare—His Mind and Art.' † Dowden.

‡ Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir J. Falstaff (1777). Maurice Morgann.

* Dowden. † Deighton. Introduction—Henry IV.: Macmillan.

‡ Brandes. Introduction, Hen. IV.: Heinemann.

§ I have adopted Theobald's suggestion, now beyond cavil if not beyond criticism.

The musical interpretation, or, as it is preferably called study of the character of Falstaff, is practically in one movement, with two interludes, to be noted later, and falls naturally into four principal divisions which run on without break. These divisions are not shown in the score, but it is convenient to cite them as follows :

- I. Falstaff and Prince Henry ;
- II. Eastcheap, — Gadshill, — The Boar's Head, revelry and sleep ;
- III. Falstaff's March,—The return through Gloucestershire,—The new King,—The hurried ride to London ;
- IV. King Henry V.'s progress,—The repudiation of Falstaff, and his death.

Some lines quoted from the plays are occasionally placed under the themes to indicate the feeling to be conveyed by the music ; but it is not intended that the meaning of the music, often varied and intensified, shall be narrowed to a corollary of these quotations only, and this simple presentation of the composer's ideas makes no attempt to describe the manifold combinations of the themes, the contrapuntal devices, and other complexities of the score.

I.

'An apartment of the Prince's'—at court, —'Enter Sir John Falstaff': we see him 'in a green old age, mellow, frank, gay, easy, corpulent, loose, unprincipled, and luxurious' :*

Celli, Fag. & Bass Cl.
Ex. 1. *Allegro.*
f. ten. ten.

This, the chief Falstaff theme, appears in varied tempi throughout the work, and knits together the whole musical fabric.

It will be convenient to place here the rest of the personal Falstaff themes, although Ex. 4 does not occur till section II. :

Cl. Str. &c.
Ex. 2. *p*

Cor., &c.

Ex. 2a. *f* Wind. &c.

'I am not only witty in myself but the cause that wit is in other men.'

* Morgann.

The ascending *crescendo* passage (celli, Ex. 3) shows Falstaff as cajoling and persuasive :

Ex. 3. *mf* *schierzando.*

'Sweet wag, when thou art king,' &c.

The gargantuan, wide-compassed *fortissimo* (Ex. 4), first given to the strings in three octaves, exhibits his boastfulness and colossal mendacity :

Ex. 4. *Grandioso e largamente.*
ff

'I am a rogue if I were not at half sword with a dozen of them two hours together.'

The Prince is suggested in his most courtly and genial mood by :

Ex. 5. Celli., &c.

The symbol of his stern, military character will be found later (Ex. 21).

As the scene is mainly a conversation the music consists of a presentation and variation of these themes, ending with an impetuous rush of Ex. 1,—the persuasive Falstaff has triumphed, the dominating Sir John is in the ascendant.

II.

We are in Eastcheap and plunge into a quicker tempo commencing with a theme made up of short, brisk phrases :

Ex. 6. Cl. & Fag. Viole.
pp *8va lower.*

Celli., Viole, Celli. *tr. tr.*

p Fag.

all of which, used largely in the construction, should chatter, blaze, glitter and coruscate; no particular incident is depicted, but the whole passage was suggested by the following paragraph:

'From the coldness, the caution, the convention of his father's court, Prince Henry escapes to the teeming vitality of the London streets and the Tavern where Falstaff is monarch. There, among ostlers and carriers, and drawers, and merchants, and pilgrims, and loud robustious women, he at least has freedom and frolic.*

The musical illustration of the Tavern would not be complete without the Hostess and Doll Tearsheet, if not the 'dozen or fourteen honest gentlewomen,' so a suggestion

Ex. 7. Str. *tr* *ff* *Tutti. f*

of the theme associated with this most virtuous company flits across the fabric to find its full expression later.

We now come to more substantial material:

Ex. 8. *f* *dim.* &c.

Here with his cheery companions is the Falstaff who sings, 'When Arthur first in court,' who shouts delightedly at the prospect of battle, 'Rare words! brave world!' and who describes himself as 'a goodly, portly man, of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble carriage,' and who 'did good service at Shrewsbury.'

A full presentation of Ex. 4 follows, and a vociferous combination for full orchestra of Exx. 8 and 4, the latter forming the bass; after a short recapitulation of Ex. 6 and its companions (*diminuendo*), we enter on a new phase, the midnight exploit at Gadshill. Want of space prevents the exhibition of the material employed, save the cheerful, out-of-door, ambling theme:

Ex. 9. *pp* &c.

* Dowden.

and the mysterious semiquaver passages with the muffled calls through the wood:

Ex. 10. Cor. Λ *ppp* Viole. &c.

Variants of Ex. 5 in hurried quavers *pianissimo*

Ex. 11. *pp* &c.

are heard, indicating the coming of the Prince, and the strenuous Ex. 12:

Ex. 12. *8va.* *ff* *Piatti.* *Piatti.* *Piatti.*

depicts the short struggle for the twice-stolen booty, 'got with much ease.'

An extended *fugato* on Ex. 4 in quavers, hurried and scrambling, suggests the discomfiture of the thieves, who, after some attempts to repair their disorder (Exx. 8 and 9) arrive once more in tolerable case at the Boar's Head:

Ex. 13. *tr* *sf* *sf*

'Shall we be merry? As merry as crickets.'

The 'honest gentlewomen's' theme (Ex. 13), now complete and raised to due importance, runs its scherzo-like course until the Falstaff theme (Ex. 4) is interjected, somewhat unsteadily but encouragingly, evolving a trio section of uproarious vitality; after the reprise, the knight again attempts speech (Ex. 4), but is somewhat more incoherent, vague, and somnolent. Through the heavy atmosphere a strange, nightmare variant of the women's theme floats:

Ex. 13a. *tr* *ppp* C.B. *pizz. 8va. lower.*

and with an augmented version of Ex. 1 Falstaff sinks down to the heavy sleep suggested by :



'Fast asleep behind the arras;—how hard he fetches breath.'

The sleep theme is embroidered with much orchestral detail for muted strings, &c., and leads into the first interlude :



'He was page to the Duke of Norfolk.'

This, a dream-picture, is scored for a small orchestra; simple in form and somewhat antiquated in mood, it suggests in its strong contrast to the immediately preceding riot, 'what might have been.'

III.

But the man who 'broke Skogan's head' does not long dream of the courtly period of his youth; Exx. 2 and 3, now *fortissimo*, show a sudden awakening; a *fanfare* is heard (muted brass) :



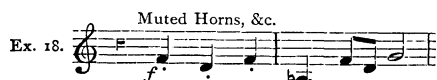
once distant and a second time less remote. All is bustle and preparation for the route, 'a dozen captains . . . knocking at the taverns and asking everyone for Sir John Falstaff.'

Out of the hurry and confusion Ex. 1 is heard; Falstaff emerges 'to take soldiers up in counties as he goes.' The march follows :



'I have foundered nine score and odd posts.'

It is hoped its attendant theme



may be a fitting accompaniment to the martial gait of the scarecrow army, of Wart, Mouldy, and the 'forcible Feeble.'

On the edge of battle, the light-hearted knight, who had once before led his men where they were 'soundly peppered,' jokes in the face of danger with John of Lancaster (Exx. 1 and 6, now in the bass and much extended).

When the army is 'discharged all and gone,' he decides 'I'll through Gloucestershire: there will I visit Master Robert Shallow, esquire.' The march (Exx. 17 and 18), as we approach the fields and apple-trees, assumes a song-like character :



until we rest in Shallow's orchard. Here we have the second interlude, scored as is the first for small orchestra, and again with an old English flavour and as simple in form.

After some sadly-merry pipe and tabor music the following passage for muted violas and 'celli may be quoted, as it plays an important part in section IV. :



This mild, bucolic entertainment is suddenly interrupted by Pistol announcing (Ex. 5), 'Thy tender lambkin now is King—Harry the Fifth's the man.' A large and agitated presentation of Ex. 4 shows Falstaff glorying in the news: 'Master Shallow, my *Lord Shallow*, be what thou wilt, I am fortune's steward.' The march theme (Ex. 17) is resumed rapidly, 'I know the young King is sick for me'—'we'll ride all night.'

IV.

Near Westminster Abbey the new King is to pass with his train; Falstaff and all his company await his coming among the shouting populace,— 'There roar'd the sea, and trumpet-clangor sounds.'

The music takes the form of a triumphal march, founded on the King's military theme (Ex. 21) :



with several additional sections. Into them the Falstaff themes are expectantly thrown; the King's approach is suggested (as in section I.) by a strenuous version of Ex. 11, recalling the merry times of Gadshill, but now the orchestration is heavier and the import serious.

The climax comes with Ex. 5, fully harmonized and extended, when the King appears 'Glittering in golden coat . . . and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer'; then with a rush of quavers, the Falstaff theme (Ex. 1) is given *fortissimo*, and the King halts. A brief parley ensues, but Falstaff is inexorably swept aside by the King's brazen motto, and the last pitiful attempt at cajolery is rudely blasted by the furious fanfare (Ex. 16):

'How ill white hairs become a fool and jester—I banish thee on pain of death.'

Immediately the royal march is resumed, and dies away: the King has looked on his ancient friend for the last time.

In short phrases (Exx. 1 and 6) the decay of the merry-hearted one is shown. The broken man weakens until, with a weird, final attempt at humour (Ex. 3—violas), we enter upon the death scene—'He is so shaked that it is most lamentable to behold.' The incomparable description has been quoted already; the music is founded on the orchard theme (Ex. 20). With many changes of harmony, faltering and uncertain, it goes to the end as if 'he played with flowers and babbled of green fields.' True as ever to human life, Shakespeare makes him cry out even at this moment not only of God but of sack, and of women; so the terrible, nightmare version of the women's theme (Ex. 13*a*) darkens (or lightens, who shall say?) the last dim moments. Softly, as intelligence fades, we hear the complete theme of the gracious Prince Hal (Ex. 5), and then the nerveless final struggle and collapse; the brass holds *pianissimo* a full chord of C major, and Falstaff is dead.

In the distance we hear the veiled sound of a military drum; the King's stern theme is curtly thrown across the picture, the shrill drum roll again asserts itself momentarily, and with one *pizzicato* chord the work ends; the man of stern reality has triumphed.

In the time of their close friendship the Prince, thinking him dead, says, 'Poor Jack, farewell, I could have spared a better man,' and sadly we say so now. The Prince, arrived at his kingly dignity, fulfilled the prophecy of Warwick, 'he will cast off his followers, and their memory shall a pattern or a measure live.'

Their memory does live, and the marvellous 'pattern and measure' Sir John Falstaff with his companions might well have said, as we may well say now, 'We play fools with the time, and the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us.'

['Falstaff,' Symphonic-Study with two Interludes (Op. 68), will be performed at the Leeds Musical Festival on Thursday evening, October 2. It will be conducted by Sir Edward Elgar.]

The following is a list of successful candidates at the recent examination for Scholarships at the Trinity College of Music. All appointed for one year, with possible renewal. (Organ), Frank Hubert Belton, Donald Ivo Priestley; (singing) Gertrude E. Harrison; (violin), Dora Bianchi, Glyn John, Evelyn Mary Moore, Phyllis Novinskiy, Jessie Mary Parker, Walter H. Whittaker; (horn), Edric Greiffenhagen; (pianoforte), Frederica Birch, Leotina P. Barthelmeh; and in the Junior School, Doris Rose Drewery.

THE NIETZSCHEAN SPIRIT IN MUSIC.

BY GERALD CUMBERLAND.

Just as we can see signs of the rising sun long before it has appeared above the horizon, so can we clearly trace the coming of a new philosopher or poet in the work of the men of a previous generation. A great man, it would seem, begins to influence the world before he is born; tidings of him reach us mysteriously, and our need of him seems to have the power of actually bringing him into being. Great men are not born fortuitously; they always arrive at the precise moment when they are required. Moreover, their coming is prepared for; in one place or another some men and women are always made ready for the reception of their ideas. Charles Darwin did not blaze suddenly upon the world of science: the comet, swimming into existence from outer space, had been dimly seen many years before its arrival. In the music of Haydn are the ghostly features of the coming Beethoven, and upon the operas of Gluck we can detect the faint impress of Wagner's hand. Even Nietzsche, the most original of all recent philosophers, was not new; he had, so to speak, appeared in the world many times before, writing in faltering tones with the pen of Stendhal, aiming blows at the world with the puissant arm of Napoleon, and occasionally flouting Europe with the music of Berlioz. The personality of Nietzsche was but a gathering together, a focussing, of many scattered forces which, by some unknown principle of Nature, united themselves together in order to strike more heavily upon the closed doors of intellectual prejudice.

The truth is that all great men present in their genius certain common human qualities in a concentrated form. The essence of many thousands of rose-leaves is distilled into a pint of attar, and into a man of genius have been pressed the unconscious thoughts and aspirations of multitudes of his fellow-men. He merely voices what they feel; when they hear him speaking aloud their own thoughts, they hail him as a prophet and seer. But he is not different from them except in his greater power and courage. When Nietzsche began to be extensively read, a large section of Europe became conscious of something in themselves which they had never seen before; that is to say, the philosopher did not reveal anything new, but simply expressed what was and always has been embedded in human nature. In a word, the Nietzschean spirit is not new—it is old; but for many years it has either been lying dormant, or it never fully revealed itself until Nietzsche himself began to write.

But what precisely *is* the Nietzschean spirit? Briefly, it is the spirit of the master as opposed to the spirit of the slave; it is the spirit of conquest, of self-confidence, of self-trust, of courage, of cruelty even, of selfishness. Now, these qualities (or defects, if so you choose to call them) have been present in many men of creative musical genius; indeed, no really great composer has