

John Dunstable

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Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 45, No. 741 (Nov. 1, 1904), pp. 712-714

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/903583>

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service, as the ladies so much admired it ! I have known him begin a solo with an elaborate 'shake,' and end with one, besides introducing two or three in the middle of an anthem. In fact, 'shakes' were so numerous that they must have *shaken* the Cathedral to its very foundation !

It is no wonder that the general education of the poor little choristers was greatly neglected, owing to the time they had to give to the innumerable practisings insisted upon by Dr. Buck. He was very particular as to his choristers' diet, especially when a boy had to sing a solo. On one occasion a Norfolk clergyman asked Dr. Buck to lend him a solo boy to take part in a performance of 'Elijah.' The choice fell upon Master A. R. Gaul, who had the honour of being invited to dine—sitting at a



DR. FRANK BATES,  
ORGANIST AND MUSICAL-MASTER OF THE CHORISTERS.  
(Photograph by Mr. A. E. Coe, Norwich.)

side table—with the clerical concert-giver before the performance. In the course of the dinner a note arrived for the host, who proceeded to read it aloud before his assembled guests. It read thus :

Dear Sir,  
Please don't let little Gaul have any pudding.  
Yours faithfully,  
Z. BUCK.

Dr. Frank Bates, the present organist, was born at March, Cambridgeshire, January 13, 1856. After having been assistant-organist of Holy Trinity Church, Leamington, he became (aged 18) organist of St. Baldred's Episcopal Church, North Berwick. There he was very successful in training a choir of fisher boys, and after eight years at North Berwick, he was appointed organist and choirmaster of St. John's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh. He took

his degree of Mus. B. at Dublin in 1880, and two years later the further distinction of Doctor, being then one of the youngest doctors of music in the United Kingdom. For the latter degree he composed an oratorio entitled 'Selections from the history of Samuel.' In December, 1885, from among 118 candidates, Dr. Bates was appointed organist and 'musical-master' (to give the official designation in the Chapter records) of the choristers of Norwich Cathedral, a position he has held with credit to himself and in pleasant co-operation with his colleagues for nearly nineteen years. Since 1900 he has successfully conducted the Norwich Philharmonic Society, and, since 1901, the Norwich Choral Society, formerly the Old Gate House Choir : and in various other ways he takes part in the musical activities of the city. He lives in a charming Elizabethan house in the Close, a delightful habitation which more than one American has expressed his desire to remove bodily to 'the other side' !

For kind help rendered in the preparation of this article, the writer's thanks are tendered to Dr. A. H. Mann, organist of King's College, Cambridge, conductor of the Norwich Festival Society's concerts, and chorus-master to the Festival; to Dr. W. T. Bensly, Chapter Clerk of Norwich; to Dr. Frank Bates, Organist and Musical-master of the Choristers of the Cathedral; and to Mr. A. E. Coe, of London Street, Norwich, for his excellent photographs.

DOTTED CROTCHET.

#### JOHN DUNSTABLE.

The unveiling of a monument to John Dunstable by London musicians may serve as an occasion for a few remarks concerning him and the position he holds in musical history. Nothing certain is known of him, except the date of his death, Christmas Eve, 1453. It is probable, though not absolutely certain, that he was born at Dunstable in Bedfordshire, where there was a wealthy and important monastery; he may have taken his name from this, but surnames were then getting permanent, bequeathed from father to son. For instance, Simon Tunsted, born at Norwich, but named after his father from Tunsted, is a case, and an older one. The name John Dunstable is also found among the monks of St. Albans, but this was in the 14th century under Abbot Hugh, who died in 1326. More to the point is the record of a grant made in 1436, giving 'liberam warrennam in Stepilmorden et Gildenmorden in com. Cantabr.,' to 'Joh. Dunstaple, armiger.' This may have been the astronomer-composer, but I think the probabilities are against it. Long before 1436, Dunstable was celebrated all over Western Europe, except perhaps Germany. It appears probable that he was born about 1380.

His position in musical history is more interesting than speculations concerning his biography. He flourished in the early 15th century, the period when the problem of artistic musical composition was at last solved; and in my opinion the ancient

statements, that it was Dunstable who solved the problem, are correct. Walter Odington, who was living at Oxford in 1316 and 1330, left a most complete treatise on the music of his day; Simon Tunsted, or one of his friars, wrote another in 1351; but neither of these writers mentions Imitation, Passing-notes, or Suspensions, and without these resources it was impossible for music to become an independent structural art, able to bear analysis on its own account. But all this constructive material is found in Dunstable's works. In addition, consecutive fifths and octaves are forbidden; and the meaningless ugly dissonances of older attempts have disappeared. I do not know a single earlier attempt of which the 'harmony' is even bearable, except some pieces in a MS. at Cambridge.\* And yet, scarcely fifty years after the date when Tunsted's treatise was completed, the mighty change had been brought about. How was this achieved?

About this time a school of clever experimenters existed among the organists of Florence. Some of their works exist in the British Museum† (Additional MS. 29987), dating perhaps towards 1450. Others are preserved at Paris and in Italy. Ambros judged that these men looked too far forward; they had an inkling of modern dramatic expression, and foreshadowed the early 17th century innovating musicians of Florence. But they could not progress, because the structural resources were not yet in use; and very soon afterwards the Italians gave up music altogether for many years, in fact till the 16th century. Some of these earliest Florentine writers in their experiments occasionally made very lucky shots at true part-writing; it has been generally believed that Dunstable had visited Italy, possibly (as Dr. Wilhelm Nagel suggests) along with Lionel Power, and he may have taken hints from hearing these effects. But we know nothing certainly, though the assertion on Dunstable's epitaph that he was the man who 'scattered the sweet arts' of music 'through the world' suggests his visiting the Continent. Let us turn to recorded facts.

Tintoris, writing about 1480, asserts that it was the institution of Chapels Royal, attracting men of genius, that brought about the great improvement of music, so great that it seemed as a new art, which new art first arose among the English, whose chief was Dunstable. Here we find something tangible, by a trustworthy authority. He tells us that the art of composition arose from the establishing of the English Chapel Royal. When was the English Chapel Royal instituted? The earliest reference I have been able to find is in 1417. Several names are incidentally mentioned, but they are otherwise unknown. It appears to me that we may reasonably suppose Dunstable was a member of this Chapel Royal, 'plena cantoribus

ampla capella,' as a eulogy of Henry V. calls it. Through daily hearing the effects produced by this large body of voices, and their extemporised 'discant,' a man of genius would develop the sense of distinction between pleasing and unpleasing successions of chords, which the older musicians appear never even to have thought of. The art of independent and correct part-writing required higher powers and real invention, but Dunstable at any rate had acquired it long before 1430. The Agincourt Song was written before 1422. Haberl judges that Dufay was already acquainted with Dunstable's works before he went to Rome in 1428; and between 1430-40 there was a choir-book written for Trent Cathedral in the Tyrol, which contains ten of Dunstable's works, besides fourteen by Power and other Englishmen, so quickly had the 'new art' spread! Martin le Franc,\* in 1437, confessed that the best musicians of his own Paris were beaten by Dufay and Binchois, who copied Dunstable's 'nouvelle pratique.' Later writers of the 15th century—English, Flemish, or Spanish—always give Dunstable the earliest place among musicians. Finally, the French poet Eloy d'Amerval, in his vision of paradise (published 1508) describes how in heaven Dunstable, Dufay, and other great musicians continually compose hymns of praise for the saints and angels.

The sad destruction of English service-books at the Reformation doubtless is the reason for the disappearance of Dunstable's works, which were, except fragments, quite unknown till recently. But a very large number has lately been discovered at Rome, Trent, Bologna, and elsewhere on the Continent, above all at Modena. English MSS. of the 15th century are rare, and very often the pieces preserved are anonymous. There is an incomplete Mass for three voices † at Cambridge; it is complete in the Trent MSS. No composer is mentioned in the carol-books preserved in the Selden MSS. at Oxford, and Trinity College, Cambridge; one piece in the former is found in the Modena MSS., and ascribed to Dunstable. There are, however, works by both Dunstable and Power in the Old Hall MS. recently brought to light by Mr. Barclay Squire. Dunstable's astronomical calculations are preserved in the Laud MSS. His three-voiced piece 'O rosa bella' has been published in various works; four sacred compositions from Bologna have been facsimiled by the Plainsong and Mediæval Music Society, and eight are printed in the *Denkmaeler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich* with a facsimile of the Trent version of 'O rosa bella.' A thematic catalogue of all the known works, compiled by Miss Stainer, may be seen in the second volume of the *Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft*, p. 9.

Two epitaphs on Dunstable exist; one, now restored, was placed on his grave in London; the

\* See No. 1772 in the Catalogue (revised) of the recent Exhibition at Fishmongers' Hall. It is not safe to conclude that lines of music written like a modern score were certainly intended to be sung simultaneously; they should be compared with the lines of poetry.

† When cataloguing the English Virginal-books in the *Monatshefte für Musikgeschichte* for 1902, I drew attention to this important MS., hitherto neglected.

\* Naumann, in his 'Illustrated History of Music,' quoted the lines confessing the supremacy of Dufay and Binchois, but carefully suppressed the passage concerning their English model. Dufay is Naumann's hero.

† Exhibited at Fishmongers' Hall, but in the revised catalogue (No. 1771) erroneously called 'two-voiced.'

other was written by Abbot Wheathamstead, whose epitaphs were printed by Weever from the Cotton MS. Otho B 4, ruined by a fire at the binder's in 1865. Both epitaphs ascribe such extraordinary genius and virtue to Dunstable, that, as Fuller says, they must necessarily allude to the same man, for it would bankrupt nature to produce two such amazing prodigies.

Before concluding, it may not be superfluous if I add a few remarks concerning the *Gymel*. Several German historians have written at length upon this supposed English style. They have credited the assertion of Gulielmus Monachus, whose treatise purports to teach composition after the true English styles—in fact, 'English as she is compoged'—these styles being *Faulxbourdon* for three voices and *Gymel* for two. But *Gymel*, or *Gimel*, often marked in English 15th and 16th century MSS., seems rather to denote *divisi*. The importance attributed to *Gymel* in the development of harmony is quite unjustified.

That it should have taken several centuries after Huchald and Guido before the problem of musical composition was solved may appear strange; but it should be remembered that until Walter Odington's time the tuning followed was that of Boethius, which was unsuitable to harmony, and made thirds discordant. We find from the exhaustive treatises of Odington, Tunsted, and Johannes de Grochæus that the necessary means for composition had not been invented in 1350, nor the laws discovered; but all was accomplished by 1430. Who did it? 15th and 16th century writers said it was Dunstable; and so did the historians Martini, Hawkins, and Burney. Through a careless misstatement of Baini's in 1828, Dufay was for some time credited with the priority of the invention; the correction, first made by Arnold in 1867, and subsequently confirmed by Kade, Eitner, Haberl, and others, has shown that Dufay was a later musician, that the ancient statements were correct, and the priority of the invention justly belongs to John Dunstable, *Tua laus, tua lux, tua Musica princeps*.

Someone may ask, 'If these are your opinions, how do you explain "Sumer is icumen in," of which at least the tune was written about the year 1226?' All I can answer is, that the more one speculates on the origin of that wonderful piece the more puzzled one gets. Let a curious reader wade through the many pages which Dr. Nagel devoted to the subject in his 'Geschichte der Musik in England,' and he will begin to realise how insoluble that problem is.

H. DAVEY.

Dr. Henry Hiles died, we regret to record, at Worthing, on October 20, in his seventy-eighth year. He had recently left Manchester—where he had spent forty-five years of professional life and where he was greatly esteemed—and had settled at Pinner, in order to enjoy a more leisured life after a long and honourable career. As a composer Dr. Hiles is best known by his fine glee, 'Hushed in death.' A biographical sketch of him, the materials for which he personally supplied, with a special portrait, appeared in THE MUSICAL TIMES of July, 1900.

## Occasional Notes.

*Has a man no Music in him? he will never become a poet; has he no Poetry in him? he will never become a musician. The old writer uttered a deep truth when he quaintly defined Poetry as 'Reason joined with Musick'; and we may justly add that Music is 'Poetry and Painting in sound': Poetry, because its merit lies in the ideality of its aims and the beauty of proportion in its construction and form; Painting, because it enables us to call up vividly scenes which painters have ever essayed to put on canvas, though they have perhaps never realized them to the fullest. Great poets and musicians are of 'the few who ennoble the many,' and they probably do more than any other artists to save humanity from a saddening and pessimistic view of life, of the dread struggle for existence going on around us.*

JOHN STAINER.

Names and personalities, even in music, so soon pass out of memory that the name of Jules—subsequently Sir Julius—Benedict is comparatively forgotten. As the centenary of his birth falls due on November 27, the occasion may serve to recall the name of a musician who, not so very long ago, was a very prominent figure in English musical life. Although Benedict was a German—he was born at Stuttgart, November 27, 1804—he made his chief success as a composer in an Irish opera, 'The Lily of Killarney,' which, despite its old age (as operas go), still retains its popularity. The first performance of 'The Lily of Killarney' took place at the Royal English Opera, Covent Garden, on February 10, 1862. Alfred Mellon conducted, and the principal vocalists included the sisters Louisa and Susan Pyne, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Henry Haigh, and Mr. Santley, the last-named, in the rôle of *Danny Mann*, singing in the familiar duet 'The moon has raised her lamp above.' *The Times* eulogised the work, saying that it 'fairly earned the unequivocal success it obtained,' while the *Musical World*—the criticisms in both journals doubtless being from the pen of Mr. J. W. Davison—said:

We have no hesitation in pronouncing Mr. Benedict's new opera a veritable masterpiece, and the work alike of a profound artist and an original thinker. If the composer has been occasionally restricted in his aspirations by the somewhat conflicting elements of the story [by Dion Boucicault], and the special character and *couleur locale* of lowly Irish life, he has in many instances triumphed over all obstacles, and literally competed with the old Irish composers themselves in the sweetness, wildness, and plaintiveness of their melodies. In the two ballads of *Eily*, 'In my own mountain valley' and 'I'm alone,' *Hardress Cregan's* song 'Eily Mavoureen,' and *Myles's* 'Lament,' in the first act, Mr. Benedict has caught the very spirit of Irish melody. But the music is all beautiful.

Could higher praise be given? For the Birmingham Festival of 1870 Benedict composed his oratorio of 'St. Peter,' a work which contains some music that should not be forgotten, e.g., the soprano air 'I mourn as a dove,' and the melodious chorus 'The Lord be a lamp unto my feet.' A favourite pupil of Weber, Benedict lived the life of a busy musician in England for fifty years. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1871, and died, in London, June 5, 1885, aged eighty, his remains being interred in Kensal Green Cemetery.