

The Nurseries of English Song. II

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performance in the open air. In the ordinary way it is absurd to ask for any richness of content in open-air music, and if the performance were of, say, some classical subject, not intimately touching, we might feel plenty of toleration for pastoral music so mildly rococo and not offensive. But this Tragedy is not an *Orpheus*, an *Iphigenia*. It is not to be regarded with the detachment that might allow us to find in Dedler's poverty-stricken art a little historical interest, and the gap between the powerfully stirring effect of the stage-spectacle and this humble but persistently long-winded music is a drain on sympathy and patience. Above all the onlooker who is at all musical cannot get Bach out of his head, and indeed to the point of feeling that the best things in the Passion Play—the large sincerity, serenity, and pathos of the stage action—have been a million times more satisfyingly expressed by Bach in terms of music. Once come to know the *St. Matthew* Passion and Oberammergau is no place for you. This poor Dedler dared to attempt much what Bach did in interpolating meditative arias at crucial points of the sublime drama. How exquisitely the tension of pain is thus relieved in Bach's Passion Play no reader here needs telling. At Ammergau the musical platitude of these meditations (comparable to a very old-fashioned type of Three Choirs' Festival oratorio on some Old Testament subject) sets one saying, 'No more Ammergau for me—the Lent Passion Play at St. Paul's or St. Anne's, Soho, is good enough!' The close of it all is the most disconcerting. The infinite tenderness, the sweet, grave relaxation of Bach's chorus 'In tears of grief, dear Lord, we leave Thee,' must surely for all of us be the one conceivable right closing mood. Oberammergau ends on a chirpy little Hallelujah Chorus of the flattest inadequacy.

There was a competent orchestra this year at Oberammergau. The choir sustained all day an unflagging dignity. The tenor soloists were rather trying. There was an extremely fine young bass, Guido Diemer, on whom fell much of the work. C.

THE NURSERIES OF ENGLISH SONG—II.

BY FRANK KIDSON

By 1745 the fame of the London pleasure-gardens—Vauxhall, Marylebone, and Ranelagh—as musical centres, apart from their places in the fashionable world, had been firmly established. Vocal music became an item in the instrumental programmes, and, as stated in my previous article,* the best and most popular talent was engaged. This particular talent was quite ready to accept Vauxhall engagements, for there was very little opening for it elsewhere. Concerts, apart from the gardens, were not everyday functions as at present, and the theatre gave rather limited scope for professional guinea-earning.

In this matter we of to-day have to thank those bewigged proprietors of the garden leases for the encouragement they gave to English music. If we eliminate from the published music of the time all that had its first hearing at the public gardens, there would be very little left to show what English music was like in the 18th century.

Vauxhall and Marylebone had erected covered orchestras, supported by pillars at about 10-ft. from the ground, and singers and instrumentalists in all

the finery of the period—lace ruffles, powdered wigs, silk or velvet coats, satin waistcoats and breeches for the male artists, and even gayer attire for the women—did their level best to amuse the crowd that clustered around.

The vocalists could have had no easy task to make their voices heard amid the hubbub of the gardens; the rustle of the trees, the calls for waiters, the gay laughter at the tea-tables, or the hilarity that conceivably accompanied the rack punch for which Vauxhall was famous—all must have militated against the 'light and shade' that is so effective in an ordinary concert-room, and killed anything like delicate singing. At the three principal gardens organs had been erected, and the tinkle of the harpsichord could be heard in the numerous pieces and 'lessons' for that instrument that every composer felt called upon to produce. How 'thin' these sound to-day! But we must realise the limitations of the spinet and harpsichord in regard to sustained tone. On wet days—and a wet day at Vauxhall was not an unknown misery—the music was performed in an elaborate 'rotunda,' as at Ranelagh; but this was a poor substitute for the open-air concert on a fine evening.

In the early days of Vauxhall singing, a popular item was T. A. Arne's pastoral, *Colin and Phæbe*, sung as a dialogue by Mrs. Arne and Thomas Lowe. This can be seen in Arne's *Lyric Harmony*, Book I. In the 'fifties Miss Stevenson, Miss Burchell, and Lowe were the fixed singers. They not only sang the modest ditty telling of the loves and jealousies of impossible pastoral people, but tackled elaborate cantatas, accompanied by heavy instrumentation. The musical director and composer for Vauxhall during this period was Dr. John Worgan, and many of his Vauxhall compositions as performed by the singers named can be seen in his *Agreeable Musical Choice* and like collections.

Thomas Lowe deserted Vauxhall in 1763 to take the lease of Marylebone Gardens, which in a few years brought him to bankruptcy. He then sang at Finch's Grotto Gardens.

Miss Stevenson and Miss Burchell were the chief exponents of the particular type of lyric that was so characteristic of Vauxhall and Marylebone. It sang of the simple love-making of artless and yet artificial maidens and equally artless and artificial swains who were shepherds by occupation. These were eminently 'swains,' because 'swain' rhymes so neatly with 'plain,' and everything occurred on 'plains.' The following example shows the type:

No nymph that trips the verdant plains
With Sally can compare:
She wins the hearts of all the swains
And rivals all the fair.

Another popular type was the 'Scotch' song. This was written by versifiers without the slightest knowledge of the Scots vernacular, and perfectly ignorant of the meaning of any but the most obvious of Scotch words. The composers played up by introducing into every bar a galvanic snap which was then considered the essence of Scots music. The one Vauxhall Scotch song which has survived to our own day is James Hook's *Within a mile of Edinburgh town*. This was founded on an earlier pseudo-Scotch song written by Thomas D'Urfey. Hook's song was sung at Vauxhall in the season of 1780 by Mrs. Wroughton, its printed title when published being *I wonnot buckle too*. In this occurs the line 'Sweet lav'rocks

* See June number, page 394.

bloomed.' Whoever penned the line was evidently under the impression that 'lav'rocks' were some kind of flower, and ignorant that they were really skylarks! In after years the word was altered to 'laylocks,' the early and correct form of 'lilacs.'

Then there were numberless lyrics singing the praises of particular beauties, with the name of the lady in the last line of each verse, thus :

While beaux to please the ladies write,
And bards to get a dinner by't,
Their well-feigned passion tell,
Let me in humble verse proclaim
My love for her who bears the name
Of charming Kitty Fell.

Other ladies celebrated in this kind of song are 'Nanny of the Hill,' 'Nan of the Vale,' 'Charming Bessy,' among many maidens equally inspiring to the Vauxhall poet. The authors of these effusions were writers who had got the trick of easy verse in conventional manner. Some were amateurs who doubtless were gratified if their verses got a hearing at the gardens, but it was necessary that a tame poet should be kept to supply goods to order. Samuel Boyce was an early representative, and John Cunningham wrote Vauxhall lyrics about 1760. The chief song of Cunningham's that survived a merely ephemeral existence was *May Eve, or Kate of Aberdeen*. This was set to music by Jonathan Battishill, and sung in 1761. It afterwards appeared in most collections of Scotch songs. Another occasional writer for Vauxhall was Robert Anderson, the Cumbrian poet. In the 'nineties of the 18th century, 'Mr. Upton' was the chief versifier, with, for coadjutors, a Mr. Richardson and a Dr. Houlton.

To revert to John Cunningham. At one time an actor and a playwright, he was poor enough to justify his existence as a poet even if his verses did not. He passed his last years—he died in 1773—at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was seen by Thomas Bewick, the wood-engraver, who made a sketch of him unknown to the subject. The bundle in his hand contained a herring and some broken food. R. H. Cromek obtained this sketch from Bewick, and it is here reproduced.

Regarding the permanent directors and composers for Vauxhall, it is stated that James Worgan held that position from 1737 (when music was first introduced into the Gardens' programme) until 1757, when he resigned in favour of his brother, Dr. John Worgan. The latter held the position, with a break at about 1761, until 1774. James Hook composed songs for Vauxhall as early as 1769. He succeeded Worgan as permanent composer and director of the Gardens' music, and held the post until 1820. At a later date Sir Henry R. Bishop was composer and director to the Gardens. Sims Reeves's popular *My Pretty Jane*, the composition of Bishop, was first sung at the Gardens by Robinson. To trace all the musical events of Vauxhall down to the time when Kitty Stephens and Madame Vestris sang is a task beyond the limits of this paper. I can only say that as a nursery of popular English song it maintained its position until almost its closing time in 1859.

We have nothing to do with the Vauxhall accessories of firework displays, balloon ascents, acrobatic feats, and the like; my task is to show that Vauxhall and its fellow gardens did more for English music than is generally recognised.

Turning to Marylebone Gardens, I find equal evidence of musical progress, with William Defesch

as first violin and general director of the musical performances. Defesch wrote some rather pretty vocal compositions in the style of the day. These were sung at the Gardens.

As I have said, Thomas Lowe assumed the management in 1763. After he had failed, Dr. Samuel Arnold ventured into the same thorny path, and came to grief as Lowe had done. F. H. Barthélemon, composer and violinist, had much to do with the Gardens in 1770, and about this time sundry musical burlettas or small operas were performed. But fireworks—as in the case of Vauxhall—came, and musical art had to take a second place. Concerts ceased in 1775.



JOHN CUNNINGHAM
(Author of many Vauxhall Songs)

Marylebone in its best days made no stint in the provision of the best talent. Singers and performers of the first rank came, and alternated between Vauxhall, Ranelagh, and Marylebone, appearing also at the theatres.

Hook was not absolutely tied to Vauxhall. In the season of 1772 he had a Scotch song sung by Mrs. Cartwright at Marylebone. As it is an excellent example of the ultra-Scotch snap which the English musician of that period considered essential to impart a Scots character, I reproduce it. The words are from Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, vol. ii., circa 1726, and are by William Crawford. It will be noticed that Hook uses some of the same phrases that he afterwards employed in *Within a mile of Edinburgh Town*:

SUNG BY MRS. CARTWRIGHT AT MARYBONE GARDENS

MUSIC BY JAMES HOOK, 1772.



round the ewes and... lamb - kins play And
mu - sic fills the groves, But my lov'd song is . .
then the broom So fair . on . Cow - den -
knows, For sure so sweet . so soft a . .
bloom . . else - where there nev - er . grows. For
sure so sweet, so soft a bloom Else -
where there nev - er . grows. But . .
my . . lov'd song is . . then the . . broom So . .
fair on . . Cow - den - knows, For
sure so sweet, so . . soft . . a . . bloom Else -
where there nev - er . grows.

The composers for the gardens had the privilege of issuing their songs in book or sheet form, and the London music publishers made up books of Vauxhall and Marylebone songs by different composers. There was a series of songs composed by Dr. John Worgan published in the 'fifties of the 18th century.

The Thompson firm published yearly collections by James Hook in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the 18th century, and Bland & Weller issued Hook's Vauxhall songs—with a view of the Gardens—in the 'nineties. Dale did the same in the new century. These thin folio booklets of ten or a dozen songs are interesting as showing the taste of the town in vocal music.

As time passed, and fashions changed, the public gardens devoted themselves to more popular entertainments than were afforded by concerts of music. The excitement of balloon ascents, of seeing a lady dancing on a tight-rope amid blazing fireworks, public dancing, and a thousand-and-one similar features displaced the old order and pushed aside the simple ballads that Vauxhall and Marylebone had provided for the amusement of an earlier generation.

Then concerts under cover became frequent in more accessible parts of the town, and so the gardens lost their musical prestige.

But to revert to my thesis, the London pleasure-gardens were undoubtedly the nurseries of English music, especially of the vocal kind, and much as we moderns may despise the simple art that they put forth, we have really to be thankful that they existed to foster a national music culture.

STUDIES ON THE HORN

By W. F. H. BLANDFORD

II.—WAGNER AND THE HORN PARTS OF *LOHENGRIN*

(Continued from August Number, page 547.)

In the July number of the *Musical Times* an article by the late Ulric Daubeney, entitled 'Instrumentation: Some Strange Survivals,' drew attention, not for the first time, to the singular manner in which Wagner has written his horn parts in *Lohengrin*. In the Introduction to Act 3, as there stated, Wagner repeatedly alters the key of his horns, sometimes without allowing any rest whatever in the music during which the change of a crook could be effected. And the article went on to observe that the composer's 'written notation, of course, conforms to the so-called classic method,' which was hardly happily expressed, seeing that, when critically examined, it is found to be almost without a true parallel in any other composition whatever.

It is remarkable that any mystery should attach to the methods and intentions of a composer who died less than forty years ago, especially as Hans Richter, himself a horn-player, could probably have thrown light on them. Yet in 1897 Prout, citing a passage from *Lohengrin* in which the key of the horn is changed twice from C to D and back again on consecutive notes (*The Orchestra*, Ex. 156), observed:

We utterly fail to conceive why Wagner has adopted this impracticable notation, which is likely to confuse the player, and most certainly does not help the score-reader.

Now the commanding personality of Wagner in the domain of orchestration renders any departure of his from accepted practice worthy of study, and we shall therefore attempt to throw light on a problem which, so far as known, has never yet received adequate explanation.

Before considering the score of *Lohengrin*, it will be advisable to glance at Wagner's treatment of the horns in his earlier works. The introducer into the operatic orchestra of the valve-horn and inspirer of Wagner was Halévy, who wrote for two valve-horns and two natural horns in *La Juive*, produced in 1835. Wagner in his earliest operas (*Die Feen* being disregarded) employs the same combination; in the Overture to *Rienzi*—the rest of the score being unexamined by us—he uses valve-horns in G; in the *Flying Dutchman* in F, G, and A; and in *Tannhäuser* in E and F—all practicable keys—and he requires no changes of crook that cannot be effected during silent bars. The changes were, however, intended to be made, for the procrustean practice, which has bewitched composers and players alike, of fitting everything to the F crook is of more modern origin. The parts themselves exhibit no special technical difficulties or eccentricities of notation, and prove that Wagner had from the start mastered the principles of writing for the valve-horn, which evidently he abandoned in *Lohengrin* of set purpose.

Tannhäuser was written at Dresden in 1843-44, and finally revised in 1846; its successor, *Lohengrin*, was written there in 1846-48. The first question to arise on the latter is as to the nature of the horns employed, for here the terminology of the score does not help us, as it indicates only *Hörner*, without stating *Ventil-* or *Waldhörner*. A perusal of the Prelude will, however, satisfy the reader that all four horns in the orchestra are valve-instruments. At the same time, we are inclined to think—it is impossible