

Organ Accompaniments

Author(s): Edwin H. Lemare

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 41, No. 685 (Mar. 1, 1900), pp. 161-164

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3366290>

Accessed: 20-06-2016 16:39 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

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](mailto:support@jstor.org).



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

anybody. The Count seems to be aware of this, and "backs down" somewhat from his original standpoint, saying, "And it is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency, and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these feelings by sounds, so that the hearers are infected by them, and experience them as they were experienced by the composer." How are we to reconcile the two statements? In the one case, Tolstoy argues that art begins only when the object of the artist is to convey his own feeling to others. In the second place, that is also art which attains the end of infection although such a result is not in the mind of the artist. If I have fairly stated our author's ideas, there is obviously something to reconcile; but from the general tenor of his argument it may fairly be assumed that the first of the two statements—*i.e.*, that which insists upon a conscious design to "infect," is the true expression of his thought. Assuming the validity of this argument, what follows? Surely that all music composed under a creative impulse, which demanded gratification and contemplated nothing beyond, is not art! I need scarcely argue the existence of a creative impulse. Have we not repeatedly seen it—more especially in the case of Schubert—achieving work after work which the composer had no hope of ever bringing before the public, and by means of which he could neither benefit himself nor others? These are instances of "unconscious necessity," to borrow a term from Richard Wagner. Music is not exclusively the child of calculation. It often sings as the birds sing, and no more than they can keep silence.

I am interested to find Tolstoy admitting that art includes not only the expression of a man's actual feeling, but also that of imagined emotion. He was bound to do so, or leave little art to be argued about. But even here I find statements that do not exactly dovetail. Having said, "And it is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings," &c., our author declares, with all the emphasis of italics, as follows: "To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so as to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art." I wonder if the confusion set up in my mind by Count Tolstoy's conflicting statements is due to an infection transmitted by a confusion in himself? Here we have it, first, that it is art if a man imagines feelings and communicates them; second, that the feelings must have been "once experienced." Which is to be the basis of art—imagination or recollection? Apparently, recollection, for, in another italicised passage, we are told that the artist hands on to others "the feelings he has lived through."

It is to be observed, further, that our author bases all art, and therefore all the art of

music, upon emotion, and upon that kind of emotion which seeks to reproduce itself in others. It follows that musical works which are emotional neither in origin nor effect cannot be examples of art. This at once extinguishes the claim of all compositions which exploit the technical resources of music, as, for example, the fugues of Bach and Handel (with some exceptions), such overtures as that to "The Messiah," and an untold number of other works, produced prior to the beginning of romanticism in music, as we now understand it. In many of these cases, to say the least, there is no question of emotional origin, expression, or purpose. They are exercises in the forms of music; they are purely abstract in their nature, and touch nothing outside themselves. We value them according to the measure of skill and knowledge that enters into their workmanship, and they occupy in the intellectual and, so to speak, manipulative phases of music a position analogous to that of the emotional masterpieces of our own day in their domain, yet, according to Tolstoy, such compositions do not satisfy the conditions of art, and are, therefore, not art. Following up this conclusion, to what category of existing things must we assign Bach's Prelude and Fugue in G minor, or Handel's music in the "Amen" chorus, which is no more essentially expressive of "Amen" than it is of any other Hebrew ejaculation?

To sum up the position of the argument as far as it has gone, Count Tolstoy declares:—

- I. That Art and what we generally understand as Beauty are not necessarily connected.
- II. That not Beauty, but the Good is the end of Art.
- III. That Art (artistic activity?) begins when a man seeks to inspire in another the feelings, real or imaginary, which he has himself felt or fancied.

Nos. I. and II. will be more fully considered later, but to No. III. it has already been objected that in music there is often no such purpose as "infection," and that much great music is connected with emotion neither in origin, character, nor purpose. All such works Tolstoy's theory "rules out."

JOSEPH BENNETT.

(To be continued.)

## ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENTS.

By EDWIN H. LEMARE.

IN recording the result of my own practical experience in playing organ accompaniments, I can only hope that it may be in some way helpful to all who are interested in this subject. To accompany the service in a dignified and reverential manner is a matter of supreme importance. It is difficult, in a short article, to do full justice to such an extensive subject. I will, therefore, give a few hints for the benefit of those organists who may perhaps have few opportunities of hearing really good church

services, and, on the other hand, have not had the advantage of a thorough training in organ playing and accompanying a choral service. It is surprising, when one comes to think of it, that there are few who succeed, at any rate when accompanying the church service, in making their accompaniments interesting in themselves, apart from the far higher duty of trying to illustrate and deepen the meaning of the words by an accompaniment which should be both sympathetic and in good taste, without being unduly dramatic.

Take the Psalms, for example. In how many churches is it possible to hear a single word sung by the choir? and even if the words are pronounced distinctly and pointed properly, the organ is frequently played so loudly as to overpower the voices. One becomes conscious that the organist is under the impression that *this* is the right occasion for him to make a personal display, instead of keeping the organ in the background, and making it an *accompaniment* to the choir. The organ should accompany the choir; it is not the function of the choir to accompany the organ.

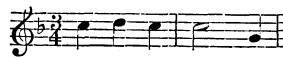
I am quite aware that in many churches the keyboard is placed in such a position—viz., with so much of the organ projecting over the player that it is impossible for the organist to know the effect he is producing, or whether the balance of choir and organ is such as he would like if he were a listener in the church; but in such cases the difficulty might be avoided by taking every opportunity of hearing another player at the keys, say at the weekly full rehearsal. He would then be able to find out the relative power of each stop and the most effective combinations to use when he himself accompanies the choir. This is a point of the utmost importance. Every organist should study carefully not only the general effect of his instrument, but the power of each individual stop as it is heard in the church.

Now, let us suppose we are "Seated one day at the organ" and quietly considering, from the organist's point of view, one or two matters which seem to be the most essential qualifications of a good church organist. We will first of all discuss the voluntary.

The common fault one finds with the majority of improvised voluntaries is their utter aimlessness and want of systematic treatment. They remind one of the schoolboy's well-known essay on the horse: "The horse is a noble animal, and so is the cow. My father once had three cows," &c. For instance, one may hear an organist start his voluntary, say in the key of C, and, before he has treated you to a very few bars, he finds himself in the key of D. He then takes you off to F, followed by B flat, and, by the time the choir have finished their preliminary devotions, he has settled down in the key of E flat! If organists who meander about like this would first of all drill themselves into the ordinary sixteen-bar metre, and bear in mind

the first phrase throughout, they could, with practice, improvise a piece in much better form; moreover, they would gradually develop a consciousness of form which will come out in their more elaborate efforts.

The best form of exercise is to take a sheet of music paper and rule out sixteen bars, and say four extra bars for a tonic pedal at the end. Mark over the eighth bar "Modulate into dominant"; at the twelfth bar, "Pass through subdominant"; at the sixteenth bar, "Return to tonic"; and then add "Tonic pedal, four bars." Supposing we take this phrase as an example:—



According to this plan it could be worked out something like the following:—



*Modulate into Dominant.*



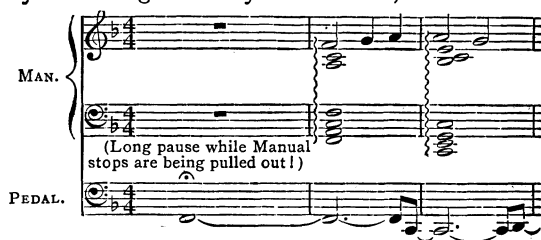
*Pass through Subdominant.*



*Return to Tonic. Four bars Tonic pedal.*



How much better this would be than the style of thing one very often hears, viz.:—



The pedals coming first, the chords being spread, and, worst of all, the doubling of the thirds in the bass, are no exaggeration of such inflictions. Space will not permit me to say more on the subject of improvising at present, but I should like to lay stress on the following, viz. :—

- (1) Practise in *four-part* harmony.
- (2) Make your first phrase recur again and again in the various parts.
- (3) Stick to sixteen-bar phrases for some time until you begin to acquire the feeling for the natural form.
- (4) Don't double your thirds, or notes that require resolution.

In making suggestions for accompanying a church service, so much, of course, depends on the choir. I mean whether they have been properly drilled to sing independently of the organ, or whether they rely on the organ to keep them in tune and give them the various leads, &c. I will presume that your choir has been carefully trained by yourself, and it is quite immaterial to them whether the blower goes to sleep, or the new curate sings all the responses half a semitone sharp! Let us take the Psalms, which are in some respects the most difficult part of the service to accompany. If it is necessary to play the chant over, do so on a soft organ, say the *Choir*, with soft 8 and 4-ft. stops, and without pedals.

One is liable to use too much 16-ft. work in accompanying voices. Personally, I hardly ever use 16-ft. stops on the manuals when accompanying the Psalms. The effect is as bad as doubling all your parts, and reminds one of being in the congregation and sitting next to someone who sings the melody an octave, and very often *two octaves* too low! Make the choir give the expression to the words, and let your accompaniment be simply a help and support.

If you play a solo on a separate row of keys, choose the tenor part if it is interesting in itself. One can, of course, make the outline different from that of the voices, and thus give a very good effect. Vary your accompaniment as regards registering and change of manuals as frequently as the different sentiment of the words seems to require; but do not be grotesque or unduly dramatic. When all modern organs have the *Choir* enclosed in a separate swell-box and both the *Choir* and *Swell* controlled by balanced pedals, endless varieties will be opened up in the way of accompanying; moreover, in playing organ solos, it will then be possible to put as much expression into the accompaniment as into the solo played on another row of keys.

Avoid as much as possible any *rallentandi*, except, perhaps, after the Gloria of the last Psalm; they are quite unnecessary in the course of the Psalms and do not in any way add to the effect. If you find that your choir-boys are beginning to sing flat, do not try to pull them up by using more organ; but choose

a stop of the Claribel or open Flute quality, and play the melody as a solo in the treble part. More organ encourages them to sing louder, but not necessarily in tune. If, on the other hand, your choir are beginning to sharpen in pitch, immediately soften your accompaniment and add 16-ft. stops. I usually find this has the effect of making everyone sing more softly and consequently better in tune. Make your accompaniment as *legato* as possible and do not take your hands off the keys at the asterisks in the Psalter. This practice, I fear, is by no means uncommon; it is only justifiable when there is a slight misunderstanding on the part of the choir in regard to the pointing.

The following suggestions might also be worth considering:—

- (1) Do not use too much pedal, or 16-ft. stops on the manuals.
- (2) If you have a 32-ft. stop don't get too fond of it!
- (3) Be very careful in filling up your parts, and look well after your thirds and sevenths.
- (4) Do not play in more than five parts on the Great Diapasons, as the tone is too ponderous to allow of this.
- (5) Remember the remarks concerning the spreading of chords already alluded to.
- (6) Do not keep your right foot on the Swell pedal, and make your left foot skip about and do half its colleague's work.\*
- (7) Let the choir have a verse here and there to themselves. An obligato on some solo stop, while the ordinary accompaniment is thus temporarily suspended, may be added with good effect.
- (8) Do not always have your "Swell to Great" coupler out. Give your Great Diapasons a chance by themselves.
- (9) Do not use your Swell Oboe when playing in chords. The character of tone is not suitable, unless it happens to be a very "round" and softly voiced stop, in which case one might use it occasionally in this way.
- (10) Use the different families of tone in your organ, sometimes unmixed. For instance :  
(i.) 16, 8 and 4-ft. Gedacts, or closed wood quality; (ii.) 8 and 4-ft. Gambas, or string-toned stops; (iii.) Reeds alone; (iv.) Diapasons alone, and so on.

There is much more to be said regarding the accompaniment to the Psalms, but as this greatly depends upon the way in which the choir has been trained, I must leave it until I

\* This bad habit has become very general owing to the Swell pedal being placed at the extreme right-hand end of the pedal board, where it is impossible to work it with the left foot. Also, with the usual "pump-handle" arrangement, one *must* keep one's right foot on it if one wants any gradation of tone between the closed Swell and the open box. Anything more clumsy and inartistic than this old-fashioned arrangement cannot be imagined.

have an opportunity of discussing the matter of Choir Training, which I hope to do in these columns later on. Next month we will consider the accompaniment to the Creed, and playing Anthems, &c., from the ordinary pianoforte arrangement.

(To be continued.)

### ENGLISH MUSIC IN DRESDEN.

WITH a view of my keeping perfectly *en rapport*, more especially as to vocal music, in one of the most musical centres in Germany, I recently spent some weeks in Dresden, a city I have visited on former occasions, and in which I have had the happiness of becoming acquainted with many congenial spirits. Among the first pleasures of this, my recent visit, was to hear Sir Hubert Parry's remarkably fine Trio in E minor, which, wherever it is performed, invariably meets with the warmest admiration and sympathy. Such was the appreciation it received on this occasion that it is to be performed again, and by the Dresden Philharmonic Society.

Dresden, as everyone knows, is richly possessed of many architectural as well as other art beauties, the chief of which is its wealth of museums and picture galleries. Here is to be found the world-renowned picture of "La Notte" (the Holy Night), by Correggio, which, with its opening heavens and descent of angels towards the Holy Family, attains to the sublimity of Handel's "Hallelujah," and is of itself sufficient to make priceless the great picture gallery of Dresden.

The art of music finds the most numerous adherents in Dresden; but while classical and chamber concerts have their many admirers, the universal taste is opera, of which the *répertoire*, so far as my information goes, is almost unlimited. Hofrath von Schuch, the conductor, is a man, so to speak, born to his work; and whatever the opera—be it the most classical or the most popular—his rendering of it is as if all his life he had had no other to conduct. It matters not whether it be "Siegfried" or "Fra Diavolo," the utmost perfection is invariably secured. His broad views, his precision, his general picturesqueness—which may be regarded as some of his most striking traits—all combine to justify the opinion that the opera over which he presides is about the most perfect in Germany. I understand that he has been asked by Grau to go to America to conduct the opera. We certainly ought to have him in London; and I endorse the opinion of many in the wish that we may welcome him at Covent Garden. *Apropos* of royal recognition of his merits, it may be mentioned that a year or two since he had the pleasure of receiving from the King of Saxony His Majesty's portrait set in a frame

of twenty bank notes, each of the value of a thousand marks.

It would be a great mistake to assume that all the greatest German vocal artists visit this country. Nor is it needful to give the names of the several fine singers attached to the opera. But my pen seems to force me to write the name of Fräulein Therese Malten, a prima donna whose every impersonation is a musical and dramatic perfection. (Happily when I left Dresden she was well on the road to recovery after a very serious illness.) Nor should I be doing another great artist justice were I not to say that the *Hans Sachs* of Herr Scheidemantel is among the most complete representations of that character I have ever witnessed. In fact, I consider this artist unique in his versatility, and I trust that we may have his presence in London this season and hear him in some of his other famous *rôles*. It can hardly be out of place in speaking of Herr Scheidemantel to make reference to his villa, which is quite the old German type of residence, everything being in thorough keeping; it is entirely of a character to suit a genial worthy like *Hans Sachs*. With regard to the artists in general at the Dresden Opera House, I must content myself with saying that every embodiment I witnessed seemed to be a conception carefully thought out and developed.

I turn now to speak of the Conservatorium, which, in a word, is what might be expected in such a city as Dresden. It is in a very flourishing condition. The head of the establishment is Herr Krantz, son of the former principal; but Frau Hofrath Krantz still takes a great interest in the work which her late husband did so much to bring to its present state of usefulness. The affairs of the Conservatorium are managed by a committee of musicians of high attainments, including Herr Hofrath Draeseke, regarded as the greatest contrapuntist now living. His personality is such that every musician must regard him with supreme interest. His originality, his general skill, his dramatic force, and his inspiration have been abundantly proved in his opera "Herrat," produced some years since, and in the opera "Gutrune." Interesting symphonies have flowed from his pen, notably the one in F. "Cristus," a trilogy, is a great work, which is now finished, and when it is performed should prove, I do not hesitate to say, an epoch-marking masterpiece. The choral and orchestral classes of the Conservatorium are really excellent, the latter being under the direction of Herr Rappoldi. So strong were my expressions of approval of the choral class on a former occasion, that at my suggestion the Director immediately assented to putting into rehearsal some English works. But, alas! death put a stop to the fulfilment of his promise. However, I have the assurance of his son, the present Director, that if I will send him some English works by our foremost writers of