

Chinese Music (Concluded)

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he had so clearly expressed. For his own part he was too old—'being at the age when one is not so much inclined to compose as liable to decompose'—to turn his eyes to new horizons, but he was very willing to acknowledge that Wagner's ideas were of a nature worthy of the serious consideration of young composers. 'Of all the arts,' he concluded, 'music is that which is, by reason of its ideal character, most subject to transformations, and to these there can be no bounds. Who, after Mozart, could have foreseen Beethoven? Or, after Gluck, Weber? And, after these, why should there be an end to progress?'

As they came away Wagner acknowledged to Michotte that Rossini's simplicity and earnestness were not what he had expected, and that, impossible as it was for him to explain his ideas in the course of a short conversation (and in a strange tongue), Rossini's quick perception of all his points had delighted him. And he added a few words of appreciation of Rossini's genius as a composer, his gift of melodic invention, his instinct for the stage and for dramatic expression, adding: 'What would he not have produced had he received a thorough musical training; above all, if, less Italian and less sceptic, he had felt in him the sacred nature of his art? . . . I must say this: of all the musicians I have met in Paris he is the only one who is truly great.'

Wagner never saw Rossini again, but eight years later, on the death of the master, he wrote a brief 'Remembrance of Rossini,' which appeared in the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* of December 17, 1868. It afterwards was incorporated in the 'Gesammelte Schriften,' and appears in English guise in Mr. Ashton Ellis's translation of the 'Prose Works,' vol. iv., p. 269. In it he refers briefly to this visit, the impression it left with him, and the calumnies to which mischief-makers gave currency regarding the relations between the two composers. As regards the impression which Wagner made upon Rossini, Mr. Michotte is able to afford us a glimpse, for soon after the interview he happened to be at a gathering in Rossini's house and heard the master say to Azevedo, one of the most violent anti-Wagnerians: 'I must admit that this Wagner seems to me endowed with faculties of the highest order. His whole appearance, his chin especially, reveals the character of an iron will. It is a great thing to be able to *will*. If he also possesses in the same degree, as I believe he does, the power of effecting that will, he will make himself heard of.'

HERBERT THOMPSON.

An interesting sale of autographs took place at the Hotel Drouot, Paris, during the last week of February. A short note by Chopin fetched £5; a receipt by Beethoven for 1,200 florins from the Archduke Rudolf realized £4 2s. 6d.; two bars in score from 'Lohengrin,' written in pencil, £5 4s.; a sheet of sketches by Beethoven, £7 4s.; a sonata by Gounod, £12 8s. (purchased by M. Charles Malherbe); the score of Massenet's 'Phèdre,' £20 4s.; a Chopin Mazurka (Op. 7, No. 1), £28 4s.; and a Schubert song (1 page), £52!

## CHINESE MUSIC.

(Concluded from page 166.)

In the first instalment of this article I dealt with the musical scales and systems of notation employed by the Chinese from the remotest antiquity and used with but little change to-day. What can we learn of the instruments on which the music was played, and from some of which it was perhaps derived? First there are a tub and a couching tiger—curious symbolic instruments of wood, used for beating time (to this day a most conspicuous feature in Chinese music), or to mark the beginning and end of a performance. Gongs, made, not as now of brass or bronze, but of sonorous stone, were well known and were used singly or in chimes of sixteen or more. Chimes of bells, too, were common; the usual bells being of a strange flattened shape with no clapper. Bells with wooden clappers were also in use, but they were hardly regarded as musical instruments. Of drums the commonest variety seems to have been barrel-shaped. Such drums attained to a great size, and were generally supported on an upright post which passed through the body of the instrument. A modification of this arrangement survives in the pedlar's common rattle drum. There was, too, a straight-sided drum called *Po Fu*, which, however, has disappeared.

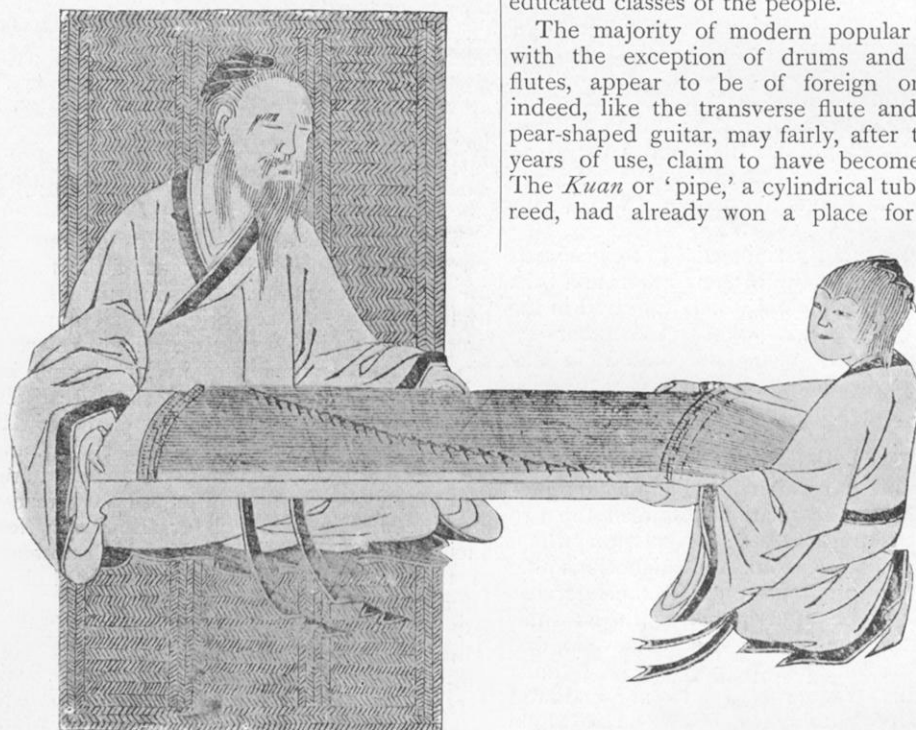
The ancient wind and stringed instruments were very few. The most important of the former was the *Yo*, a vertical flute. This instrument, regarded by the Chinese as the origin of all music, was a simple open pipe with three finger-holes. The pipe measured 20 inches in length and half an inch in bore, and the finger-holes were three, five and seven inches respectively from the lower end. The scale of this flute begins D E F# G#, and it is strange that Tsai Yü should give a special fingering to produce G#, so substituting, as has already been mentioned, the Mongol or European for the ancient native scale. The *Yo*, which now appears in the form of the *Hsiao* with six holes, was improved in its embouchure and known as the *Ti*, but the present Chinese *Ti* is identical with the transverse flutes as used in Europe. There were also pan-pipes, and a very strange horizontal flute called *Chih*, with closed or partially-closed ends.\* Two more wind instruments, both interesting, complete the list: the *Hsüan*, a little resonator of baked clay, not three inches long, shaped like an egg, with a hole at the apex (across which the performer blows) and five finger-holes symmetrically arranged in the sides; and lastly, the well-known organ, *Shêng*. This organ consists of a small cup-shaped air-chamber into which are fitted little bamboo pipes with free reeds. At present it is made with only thirteen or fourteen sounding pipes, but some of the ancient varieties seem to have had as many as twenty-four or even thirty-six pipes. After a life of some three or four millenniums in the East, the free reed was at length introduced into Europe in the seventeenth century,

\* All these wind instruments, on which only the diatonic scale could be played, were formerly made in the different keys required by the transposition of the classical music as described above. Now, they appear to be made only in the key of *Huang Chung* (D), and to sound the nearest note they can to the right one.

though it was not turned to any practical use till a century later.\* Two large psalteries, the *Ch'in* with seven strings and the *Shê* with twenty-five, are perhaps the only stringed instruments that belong to the really ancient epoch (see illustration). The strings of the *Shê* gave only one note each, but on the *Ch'in* thirteen inlaid studs of gold marked the points where the strings should be stopped. But the scale thus produced is unlike the theoretic Chinese scale, and the *Ch'in* with its thirteen studs and the little organ with its strangely tuned thirteen reeds both seem, in their present form, to suggest an unexplored region in the history of Chinese music. It is important to remember that, till near the end of the fourteenth century, China had free intercourse not only with the bordering tribes of Mongols, but also with more distant India, Arabia, and Persia, and sometimes even with

by a troupe of dancers with postures appropriate to each word, and this posture-dancing is still performed at the Confucian ceremonies with splendid and picturesque effect by thirty-six boys clad in gold and scarlet and blue. As a connecting link between these two classes of sacred and profane music has grown up gradually the music of the theatre, which now appears to be in popular estimation the most important music of all. Theatrical performances are, over a great part of China, connected with religious festivals and take place often in the forecourt of a temple; while, on the other hand, they seem to supply amateur musicians with much of their material. Music as a *profession* is not now regarded as wholly reputable, but it is common to hear men singing snatches of a song from the theatre as they go along the streets or country roads, and amateur instrumentalists are many, both among the poorer and the better-educated classes of the people.

The majority of modern popular instruments, with the exception of drums and one or two flutes, appear to be of foreign origin. Some indeed, like the transverse flute and perhaps the pear-shaped guitar, may fairly, after two thousand years of use, claim to have become naturalized. The *Kuan* or 'pipe,' a cylindrical tube with double reed, had already won a place for itself in the



THE SHÊ PLAYER (16TH CENTURY).

Europe. Her ancient contact with America seems to have left little or no trace on her own music or on that of the Indians. Tsai Yü incidentally mentions the fact that the scale of the popular organ is different from that of the classical instrument, though he seems to have no suspicion that the studs of the *Ch'in* are anything but ancient.

Music in China has rarely been of a purely instrumental type; indeed, for centuries it seems to have been considered merely as an adjunct to the chanting of hymns and prayers and singing of secular songs. These hymns were not only accompanied by instruments, but were illustrated

state ritual eight or nine centuries ago. The double reed with conical tube (*So na*, ? = zourna) is certainly a later introduction, and the single reed, still only found in various rudimentary toys, is later yet. The fiddle came probably from India. In a list of instruments published about A.D. 1300, we seem to catch it lately arrived in an early stage of development—a thing with two strings, *between* which was put a thin slip of bamboo for a bow. The instrument, though much improved, has practically never got beyond two strings, and the horse-hair with which the bow is now strung still passes between the strings. Though its introduction is thus comparatively recent, the fiddle has won great popularity, and no instrument is

\* See Mahillon, 'Catalogue du Musée instrumental de Bruxelles,' and Hermann Smith, 'The World's earliest Music.'

now more often heard in the hands of amateurs or on the stage.

Whether composition is taught or studied as a profession may be doubted. That there have been famous composers is certain, but they have been no less self-taught than the great poets. Certain instruments, especially the three-stringed guitar, are taught not so much now by blind men as to them. For the rest the art of playing seems to be privately taught, or learnt from books, or picked up and perfected by endless private, or sometimes painfully public, practising.

Of the result of all this study and practice, as we hear it, it is impossible to give an adequate idea in words. For anything like counterpoint we may look in vain. On certain instruments, notably the organ, dulcimer, and the ancient psalteries, two notes, generally with the interval of a fourth, fifth or octave, are played together or in rapid alternation and there harmony seems to end.\* Chinese singing, it is said, cannot be imitated by Western throats, nor Chinese music written in Western notation or played on Western instruments. Celestial music has been described as written in a key which is neither major nor minor; the Chinese voice is a kind of falsetto, hard to reproduce. At the temple services are heard slow, solemn, monotonous chants accompanied, very quietly for the most part, by a great variety of instruments. A theatre, whether in a building or in the open court of a temple, seems at first a very pandemonium—the hubbub of the audience, greetings shouted to a friend desried far off on the other side of the house, cries of the hawkers of refreshments, incessant chatter of everyone—all this is easily and frequently drowned by the clash of cymbals and clatter of drums on the stage. Yet if you manage to hear the singing—and there are actors who will make you hear them through everything—it will often repay the trouble. At its best it is a really wonderful exhibition of vocal power and skill. And then there is the fiddler with his futile-looking little instrument. Persuade a first-rate performer to play to you alone away from the uproar of the theatre, and you will find a fulness and strength and yet refinement of tone of which you would not think the fiddle capable, and in the player a dexterity and touch of which a Joachim might have no need to be ashamed, while the music is full of phrases of a fascinating beauty.

Music, like too many things in China, seems to have been going backward. Tsai Yü's great effort to revive the true music in the sixteenth century was a failure. A century later was published a book, which is still solemnly followed in the state services, compiled by a man who seems to have had the slightest possible claim to be called a musician. The instruments are no doubt rudimentary and clumsy. The popular music of to-day may make us smile if we think of it as the

outcome of the eager and laborious study of four thousand years. But the supreme honour in which theoretic music was held of old has tended to reduce that to a purely academic study, and the living music which is played and sung may have no connection with the study of the scholar. We must not judge the East by our standards of the West. When all is said, China is in her own sense a musical nation. Music enters into almost all the concerns of her life, and her people find in simple musical sounds a meaning and joy which we may never know.

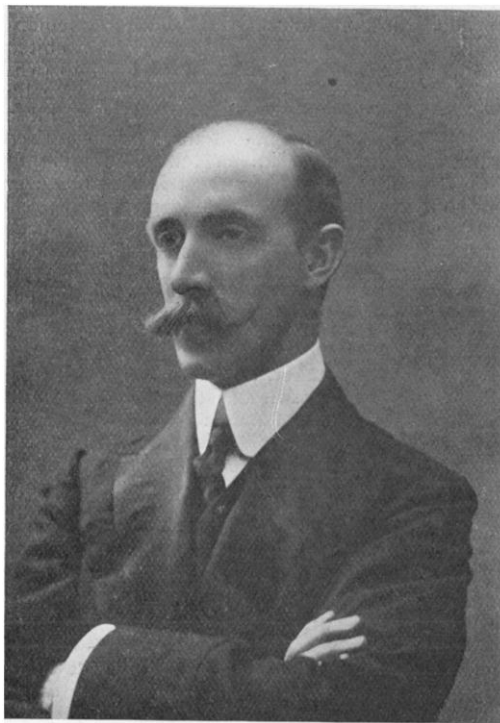
A. C. MOULE.

## Occasional Notes.

*There is not any musicke of instruments, whatsoever, compared to that which is made of voyces, when ye voyces are good and ye same are well sorted and ordered.*

WILLIAM BYRD (1590).

*Veni, vidi, vici* is a motto which the Blackpool Glee and Madrigal Society can surely claim after their recent visit to London. Not only was their concert on March 5—to which detailed reference is made on p. 248—honoured by the presence of the



MR. HERBERT WHITTAKER.

CONDUCTOR OF THE BLACKPOOL GLEE AND MADRIGAL SOCIETY.

(Photograph by Mr. R. Berry, Blackpool.)

Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales, but the refined singing and poetic interpretations of the choir drew forth a chorus of unqualified praise from the musical critics and all who were fortunate enough to be present on that eventful occasion. In giving the

\* There is similar 'harmony' in the Confucian Hymn, the *Hsiao, Hsuan* and *Ch'ih* sounding the fifth above or the fourth below the melody, whilst the *Ti* and *Shêng* give the melody an octave higher, the whole effect being similar to that of the 'Organum' of mediæval times.