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Orlando Gibbons

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He is not, however, superstitiously conservative. And certain of his opinions on ancient music are worth quoting :

To us Bach's scores are a new world, whose fauna and flora remain alike unknown. By flora, I mean the strange harmonies and the melodies, whose aspect is most unusual . . . The performance, in modern times, of Bach's or Handel's music is a mere chimera ; to attempt it is to provide delight for the erudites and bookworms only. Some people esteem that ancient music should be played not with a view to direct and complete æsthetic pleasure, but for educational purposes. Subsequently, beautiful and powerful works of art will appear, and be appreciated according to their merits.\*

Dr. Camille Saint-Saëns, who received his Doctorship of the University of Cambridge in 1892, is grand-officer of the Legion of Honour, and wears a great number of foreign orders. He is a member of the Royal Academies of Belgium, Prussia, Sweden, and Spain.

Among the principal works not mentioned above should be named the Septette (Op. 65, 1881), the String Quartette (Op. 112, 1899), Violin and 'Cello sonatas, the third Symphony (Op. 78, 1886—with pianoforte and organ), the Cantata, 'La lyre et la harpe,' (Op. 57), written for the Birmingham Festival of 1879. A detailed catalogue of his productions would occupy several pages.

### ORLANDO GIBBONS.

BY H. ORSMOND ANDERTON.

Three periods stand out in history as the seasons of a rich efflorescence of the human spirit. These are (1) the 5th century B.C. (roughly speaking), from the battle of Marathon, in 490, onwards—that brilliant outburst of genius that crowned Greece with glory in poetry, sculpture, architecture, politics, and philosophy ; (2) the period of the Renaissance in Europe, dating from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 ; and (3) the Elizabethan period in England. And while it is only with this last that our immediate concern lies, it is well to bear in mind one thing that characterises all three alike. Not only do they produce in the present, but they feed upon the past. Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, used, as their daily bread, the Orphic poems ; and Homer was the Greek Bible, so to speak. The Renaissance was, of course, the return of man's spirit upon the forgotten things of long ago, the re-awakening of the influence of Greece. And the Elizabethan period was a sort of doubling back upon itself of this Renaissance. In fact, this taking up into the present of the spirit of the past is a necessary condition of all true advance ; and we of the present day—a day of rapid growth and vigorous life—should read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the work of the Elizabethan period. A nation, like an individual, suffers a loss of life if its memory lapse. It must take up the past, assimilate

it, and bring it into the vivid consciousness of the present. Spenser, the central figure of the new poetry, fed upon Chaucer ; yet it is only comparatively lately that Chaucer has received wider recognition. It is done at last in poetry ; it should be done also in music. We should make these madrigalists popular—not only to musicians, but in the wider sense. It would hardly be difficult. The thing of peculiarly happy augury for the present movement is the uprising among the artisan classes—the innumerable choirs, with the Festivals, exhibiting an astonishingly high standard of performance. This seems to suggest a healthy, natural growth when we remember that at the time when England led Europe it was precisely in this choral work. For though the writers of that period set instrumental music on its career, they were but pioneers in that : their chief excellence lay in choral music. A few words, then, may not come amiss on one of the chief figures of the time—Orlando Gibbons.

He was born in 1583, being forty years junior to his great contemporary, Byrd, though he died only a couple of years after him, in 1625. Tallis belonged definitely to an earlier generation, dying two years after Gibbons's birth. Bull and Dowland were contemporaries, and died in 1628 and 1626 respectively. When we add to these Farnaby, Wilbye, and Morley, and think of the company of immortals gathered in the 'Mermaid,' that happiest of taverns, in a 'London small, and white, and clean,' we can form some notion of the artistic climate of the time.

Gibbons was the son of a Cambridge Wait, and entered the choir of King's College in 1596, so that from the first he was brought up amid the surroundings of that Anglican Church for which he was to do so much. In March, 1604, he became organist of the Chapel Royal, and two years later took the degree of Mus. Bac. at Cambridge. In 1611 he took his share with Byrd and Bull in the publication of 'Parthenia,' a collection of pieces for the Virginals. About the same time (probably somewhat earlier) the 'Fantasias of three Parts' (for viols) appeared. In 1612 the 'First Set of Madrigals and Mottets of 5 parts, apt for Viols and Voyces,' was published. In May, 1622, he took the degrees of Bachelor and Doctor at Oxford, the anthem 'O clap your hands' being written as the exercise for the occasion. In 1623 he was appointed organist at Westminster Abbey, and two years later was summoned to Canterbury to write music for the reception of Henrietta Maria by Charles I. Here he died of an apoplectic seizure, and was buried in the Cathedral.

Such is a brief outline of his outward career : to his real life, his music, we must devote more space. His main work was, of course, choral. Of his position in church music Dr. Walker says : 'His primary difference from Byrd is that he owes nothing directly to Roman influences, but stands before us as virtually the "father of pure Anglican music." Tallis and others had, indeed, sometimes sacrificed artistic convictions in order to enable the

\* 'Harmonie et Mélodie.'

words to be clearly heard by every listener; but then they fell back on the old traditional Latin, and repaid themselves by purely contrapuntal works. Gibbons was the first of the really great men to adopt, in musical matters, the sort of *via media* which the English Church has always so much favoured. . . . He set nothing but his own native language.\*

This fact of itself gives his name and work a peculiar importance, though he is far from depending on any such antiquarian interest. He had not, however, the tenderness, nor a certain mysticism of feeling, of Byrd, though he had a strong vein of meditative seriousness in the contemplation of life. And he has a surer feeling for contrast and range of effect than Byrd—the only contemporary who can rank as his peer, or above him. The celebrated Service in F is a fine and solid piece of work, sound in technique and strong. It has, too, a certain noble exaltation; but one must not look for much feeling. He would seem to have been 'English' also in thinking it indecorous to show emotion in public. The references to the sharpness of death and abhorring the Virgin's womb are passed with the same glassy calm as the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven. He could be emotional in his madrigals, but he seems to have regarded this as 'ritual,' and outside human feeling. It is sane and straightforward, and, since the congregation must hear the words, has fewer points of imitation than the madrigals, which were written primarily for the satisfaction of the singers.

In the anthems all is different. Works like 'Oh, clap your hands' and 'God is gone up' (in eight parts) would be a glory to any school. The free sweep of the melody, in the first, at 'He shall choose out an heritage,' the bold imitations, and the individual and highly-vitalized part-writing produce a fine effect and lead to a noble close; while, in the second, the splendid contrasts of tone, the antiphonal shouts of jubilation, and the grand part-writing, give a wonderful impression of multitudinous and ecstatic rejoicing. The 'Hosanna' (six parts), with its bell-like effect, though fine, has neither the grandeur nor the rich contrasts of the last-named. It is, however, one of the most popular of Gibbons's anthems, and deservedly so. A welcome antiphonal passage in the middle, at 'peace in heaven' (*p*), gives a hint of the central peace in the heart of all true rejoicing; and then the hosannas are renewed. Of course he cannot remain always on these levels, but the work in all is good. 'Lift up your heads' (six parts) is another fine specimen. Of the smaller pieces, 'O Thou, the Central Orb' is interesting, and reminds one of the treatment of Bach's Church cantatas. It was originally written for accompaniment of a quintet of viols, but Novello's have issued it in organ form. It opens for alto solo. After sixteen bars the time changes from 4-2 to 3-2, and the congregation break into the ymn, 'Come, quickly come.' A soprano and alto

duet follows, succeeded again by the choir with the hymn. In the next (and last) strophe there are six soli with free sestet imitational writing, and the choir rounds all off with the hymn and an imitational Amen. Altogether there are some fifty-three specimens of anthems and hymns, besides three services, preces, &c. A large number were issued in a collection by Dr. Boyce, and a later gleanings by Gore Ouseley, but are now available separately.

It is difficult to speak temperately of the madrigals. There are twenty, published in part-books in 1612, all in five parts; and as to praise them is really superfluous now, a remark or two will suffice. Gibbons took no part in 'The Triumphs of Oriana' publication (1601-03), and his madrigals are of a somewhat meditative cast, pondering gravely on life. The words were written, as he says in the Preface, by Sir Christopher Hatton, to whom the collection is dedicated, and they reach a very high level. 'Dainty fine bird' has a flavour of Lovelace and of Herrick; and words and music are fitly mated. The close, 'Thou livest singing, but I sing and die,' is a worthy specimen of Gibbons's powers. 'The Silver Swan' is somewhat slight, and has little of the typical madrigal imitation, but always impresses itself upon the mind. The popular copies have an error, apparently owing to the doubt of editors as to Gibbons's writing an unprepared augmented triad. The first note in the alto, bars 10 and 17, should be E♭, not D. The Musical Antiquarian Society's edition is correct. 'Trust not, fair youth' is Elizabethan in sentiment, somewhat in the vein of Shakespeare's sonnets and Herrick's 'Gather ye rosebuds' mingled. A most impressive passage occurs in 'Fair is the rose,' where the poet, speaking of the snow, says: 'So white, so sweet, was my fair mistress' face,' as she lay dead. The music drops, with a sudden hush, into minims and semibreves. The passage is marked in the popular editions with a *cresc.* and *dim.*; but it seems that an almost breathless *pp* would be more fitting. On turning up the Musical Antiquarian Society's edition, we find the passage marked *p* without *cresc.* To name a couple of others, 'Oh that the learned poets' and 'Ah, dere Heart' remain in the memory; but to mention some seems invidious when all are so fine.

The instrumental music of the period was, of course, far behind the vocal. It seems to have arisen from the practice of playing the madrigals, &c., on the viols, first to support the voices, and then as a substitute for them: a distinct instrumental style grew only slowly. Gibbons published (possibly in 1609 or 1610) a set of nine 'Fantasies of three Parts,' for viols. The first four are for treble, alto, and bass, the remainder for two trebles and bass. This last arrangement often leads to a somewhat thin effect—what is called all top and bottom. The pieces are cast in fugal mould, but the first subject often drops out, and a new figure towards the end, worked imitatively, makes a sort of peroration. Nos. 1 and 3 were performed by Professor Bantock at Birmingham,

\* 'History of Music in England,' pp. 74-5.

and proved interesting. More mature in style is the 'Fantasia of Four Parts' which appears in 'Parthenia,' a collection of Virginal music published in 1611. It consisted of works by Byrd (8), Bull (7), and Gibbons (6)—twenty-one in all. The Fantasia is not strongly individualised as instrumental music, but is an interesting work, grave and serious in character, and has very markedly the characteristic just mentioned, viz., that a fresh figure appears near the end, and is worked imitatively to make a *Coda*. Of the other pieces by Gibbons in 'Parthenia,' distinctly the most attractive is 'Lord Salisbury his Pavan.' This appears also in the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book,' which contains 297 pieces, and was probably copied out in prison (1608 or 1609-16) as a pastime by the younger Tregian, a Catholic who suffered for his faith. Byrd (59), Bull (36), Farnaby (55), Dowland (3), Morley (9), and others appear; but Gibbons, strangely enough, has only two pieces. The other is 'The Woods so wilde,' which shows traces of the immature instrumental technique of the time. Semiquaver passages of no particular design, above and below the melody, apparently gave pleasure by their mere rapidity. The sound of the instrument seems of itself to have satisfied the hearers. Still, in the quieter portion, there is a noticeable feeling for the sentiment of the title.

It is time that these great men came to occupy their true place in the Kingdom of Art. The England of the time has been aptly called a nest of singing birds, and the phrase is equally true of the musicians as of the poets. Of course there is no Shakespeare—he comes only once in the world's history. But not only did these men lead the musical world of their time, they produced work of high perfection, of a distinct character, and which the world cannot afford to lose—work which is among the richest treasures of art, and should be not only the fruit, but the food, of the human spirit.

A proposal of some novelty was made at a recent meeting of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. It seems that the system of guest-conductors has not met with unmixed approval, as it involves extra expense in fees, and the conductors have, in the opinion of some, shown a tendency to be autocratic at the expense of the Society's profits. From among the floating discontent arose the suggestion:

(1) That it be advertised in the Musical Press that the Liverpool Philharmonic Society is open to receive applications from conductors willing to offer their services to conduct one or more concerts, and to submit beforehand their programme to the committee; (2) that if the programme be approved the conductor shall be paid only a percentage of the profit after all the expenses have been met; (3) should the programme meet the disapproval of any member he shall be entitled to return his ticket to the secretary for sale, and if such ticket be sold one-half of the proceeds shall go to the credit of the member's subscription of the following season, and the remainder to the Society's funds.

It would have been interesting to watch the strenuous rivalry of our best English conductors, and perhaps many from abroad, for the rewards of this democratic competition, but unfortunately the suggestion was not taken.

## SYNCOPIATION AND EMPHASIS.

BY REGINALD GATTY.

### I.

In the following articles an attempt has been made to co-ordinate the various scattered explanations with regard to syncopation and emphasis, and to reconcile the discrepancies that exist between them. It has further been sought to show that although vagueness of definition is partly responsible for the confusion, there also prevails a widespread misconception as to the very nature of some of the effects in question.

First of all it must be pointed out that the one essential feature of syncopation and emphasis is that, being concerned with the so-called rhetorical (or oratorical) accents of music, they depend for their very existence on their unambiguous differentiation from the natural (grammatical or metrical) accents. It is only because they are recognised as dependent contrasts to the regular series of accents associated with the bar-lines that they are able to have their proper effect. Once the rhythm, and consequently the music, becomes obscure, by reason of the fact that they can no longer be differentiated from the natural accents, they have lost their *raison d'être*, unless we can be sure that this obscurity was the actual intention of the composer. It may seem superfluous to labour the point, but its importance will be realised later on, when it will be found that it is just here where differences of opinion actually occur.

Coming now to syncopation, I define it with Callcott\* and Riemann† as the sustaining of a sound that begins on a weak beat (or the weak portion of a divided beat) and ends on a strong one (or the strong portion of a divided beat). The displacement of the accent on to this weak beat from the following (silent) strong beat is rather an accompanying feature of the device than an essential one,‡ as is shown by the fact that suspensions are also syncopations, although the change of harmony preserves the strong accent on the strong beat. This may be seen in the following example quoted from Pauer ('Musical Forms,' Novello, p. 17):



Syncopations may be divided into two main classes: those that occur within the bar, and those that go 'through the bars' for their completion. Both may occur either singly or in sequence, in

\* 'Grammar of Music.' London, T. Hurst. § 86.

† 'Musik-Lexikon.' Article *Syncope*.

‡ 'Grove's Dictionary' (Article *Syncope*) defines the effect as 'An alteration of regular rhythm, produced by placing the strongest emphasis on part of the bar not usually accented,' but in this case,

must also be an example of syncopation, which is thus confused with emphasis.