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Clavier Suites of the 17th Century

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more by the criticism that traces the subtler forces that are working through all music, and defines the relation of the given work or man to these forces. And, as I have said, it is only in our own day that critics and composers have become aware that such forces as these are always at work. Burney, when he travelled through Europe in the last quarter of the 18th century, had evidently not the faintest inkling of the larger problems of musical criticism; his notions of judgment seldom rise above praise of a composer for his "elegance" or his "taste." That a composer was part of a particular civilisation, or symptomatic of some phase of some evolutionary law that can be seen to be working through all the arts in all periods—of this he never had the dimmest glimpse.

'To-day not only the critics but the more alert of the composers see themselves as "tendencies" in the eternal struggle of æsthetic ideals. It was the French composers of the last decade who set musical thinking upon this path, and it is the adherents of this school, in the main, who pursue the path most successfully. While German music was plodding along contentedly in its conventional sentimental tracks, never dreaming that any other world of music was possible outside its own, the newer French minds, of which Debussy was the leader, were riddling it with malicious criticism, neutralising the superfluous oil of it with the acid of their irony. The most sustained and smashing indictment ever written of German music is to be found in "Jean Christophe"; but "Jean Christophe" would never have been written had not Romain Rolland been preceded by Debussy and Mallarmé. For the first time in history musicians began to be really critical of themselves and others, really conscious of the broad evolutionary lines not only of the past, but of the present. One of the best expositions I have heard of this evolution was that in a short lecture by Mr. St. Clare Marston, at a recital of modern French music given by Mr. Claude de Ville at Wolverhampton a few days ago. Mr. Marston made unusually clear the distinction between music of the German kind (not emanating exclusively, of course, from Germans), which is largely a matter of the decorative filling up of an established pattern, and the newer French music, that abhors—in theory at any rate—the pattern and the cliché, and aims at the direct and accurate transcription of some quite personal emotion or sensation.

'At present there is a lively struggle, embittered to some extent by national hatreds, between these two ideals. We shall be wiser if we refuse to see it in terms of national opposition, with which it has really nothing to do. What we are witnessing is a course of evolution that art has often had to go through before. Owing to a variety of causes, social and economic as well as purely musical, German music drew into itself for some two centuries the best there was in the imagination of all Western Europe, and developed undistractedly like some great tree, one huge branch shooting out as another died, and all contributing to the strength of the parent organism as they in turn drew their strength from it. But every tradition is bound in the very nature of things to exhaust itself in time; and the German tradition has obviously been approaching exhaustion for a generation at least. It has run to seed in two ways, musically and morally. The filling up of the great symphonic patterns (I use the term "symphonic" to cover operatic as well as purely instrumental writing) tends more and more to become a mere matter of technical facility. Max Reger is the supreme illustration of this: he often talks so volubly not because he has anything particular to say, but because evolution has put him in possession of a language so copious that even a man with nothing to say can say it at great length and with a dazzling

profusion of imagery. All this *remplissage* is obnoxious to modern French music, that despises decoration for mere decoration's sake, and insists on the composer having something very definite to say before he sits down to say it. But if German music runs to the super-fat, candour compels us to say that French music runs to the super-lean. So far it has shirked its real problem, that, however, will have to be faced some day—the problem of working on a large scale. Its exploitation of piquant harmonies, piquant colours, and piquant resonances, and its often exquisite transcription of sensations so delicate, so fugitive, that German music has never been conscious of them, are well enough in their way; but all this limits the scale on which the music can successfully work. When it does try to work on a larger scale, as in "Iberia," the music becomes little more than a collection of brilliant effects bearing the minimum of intellectual relation to each other. The real difficulty of the newer French music will arise when a great moral impulse stirs it, as the "Faust" spirit, for example, has stirred four generations of German music, and human nature has to be shown in its larger dramatic conflicts. When that happens, a great symphonic frame will have to be filled out, to some extent at least, with what we call in German music "pattern-weaving." The vital question is whether French music will be able to evolve a system of pattern-weaving as original as its intentions.'

CLAVIER SUITES OF THE 17TH CENTURY.

By J. S. SHEDLOCK.

The Bardi coterie towards the close of the 16th century and its attempt to revive the musical declamation of Greek tragedy, resulted in Peri's 'Eurydice' (1600). Only seven years later Monteverdi began his wonderful career at Mantua with 'Orfeo,' followed by 'Arianna' in 1608, his art-work ultimately leading to Gluck and Wagner. But already in the middle of the 16th century polyphonic music had become so intricate that there was little in it to appeal to the emotions. Such was especially the case in the settings of the Mass, in which the words were of high importance: this therefore led to the protest of the bishops at the Council of Trent in 1562. The popularity of folk-music and dancing-songs throughout Western Europe during the 16th century was also instrumental in bringing about changes, not only in stage music, but in other branches of the art. Bull and Byrd, the two great English masters of the second half of the 16th century, were affected thereby; also the great Italian composer and teacher Andrea Gabrieli. How much folk-music was taken up by English composers of the 17th century may be seen in 'Musick's Handmaide' of 1663.

Morley, in his 'Introduction to Practicall Musicke' (1597), says, 'After every pavan we usually set a galliard,' the word 'usually' implying that in his day it was already an established custom. And Butler, in his 'Principles of Music' (1636), tells us that the former was 'invented for a slow and soft kind of Dancing, and the latter for more quick and nimble motion.' Moreover, there was another contrast: pavans were in duple or common time, galliards in triple measure. Yet there was a strong connecting link between them. In both, the melody in earlier days was probably the same, except for slight changes due to difference of measure. After a time only the first few bars, or indeed the first few notes, were alike. This lasted throughout the 17th century, and even

longer.* Beethoven (Op. 28 and Op. 110) connected movements of sonatas by similar means.

At the opening of the 17th century there seems to have been no definite group of movements other than that of the Pavin and Galiard. This therefore was the germ from which sprang the Suite of three, and soon that of four movements, which latter played so important a part in the virginal music of the 17th and 18th centuries. The regular, or one might say classical Suite, consisted of a Pavan, Galiard, Saraband, and Gigue. The first two movements, however, were gradually superseded by the Alman (Almain, Allemande), and Courante.

The term Suite does not appear to have been used before the 18th century. Chambonnières, who seems to have written the first works of the kind for harpsichord, merely announces them as 'Pièces de clavecin'; Couperin published his as 'Ordres'; while the German Froberger described his as 'Partien,' a term handed down from the old Town Pipers. Suite merely means 'a set,' and it was used in the 18th century to distinguish it from the Sonata, which likewise consisted of a group of three or four movements.

Chambonnières, born about 1600, died in (or soon after) 1670, in which year he published his two books of 'Pièces de clavecin.' He was satisfied with the approval of persons of judgment and authority, and of different nationality, to whom he had played them. Finding, however, that very faulty copies had been circulated, he resolved 'à donner volontiers ce que l'on m'ôtait avec violence.' As clavecinist to Louis XIV. he had no doubt many opportunities of performing

his 'Pièces.' The reputation he enjoyed is well shown in a letter written from Vienna in 1649 by William Schwann, addressed to Christian Huygens, the celebrated astronomer and mathematician. Froberger, he says, had asked him to try and get some of Chambonnières's pieces. In 1649 Froberger himself was a well-known composer, and this curiosity—though as yet Chambonnières had published nothing—seems to show that he had not been able to procure any copies. Huygens, passionately fond of music, was in Paris a few years later. A concert is mentioned by Krebs at which a German of note delighted those present by his performances on the harpsichord; and this must surely have been Froberger. Most likely Chambonnières and Huygens were there, and very possibly Denis Gaultier, the celebrated performer on the lute, with whom Huygens was on very friendly terms.

With regard to harpsichord pieces of the 17th century in France, the late M. Jules Ecorcheville makes some very interesting remarks in the 'Vingt Suites d'Orchestre du XVII^e Siècle français,'† which he published in 1906. Music of this kind, he says, was arranged in various ways—for viols,‡ violins, and oboes, &c., also for lute and for harpsichord. Chambonnières, in his 'Pièces,' seems indeed to have taken lute music as a model. It is even quite possible that some numbers are mere transcriptions of lute music. In the few notices of the composer attention is called to his extraordinary gifts as a performer, though little is said about his music. The following short 'Courante' will give an idea of his smooth and pleasant style:

CHAMBONNIÈRES.

Courante.

REPRISE.

* Students who are interested in the history of their art will find illustrations of this connection in the Pavanas and Galiardas by F. Richardson and John Bull contained in the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book' (edited by J. A. Fuller-Maitland and W. Barclay Squire), vol. i., Nos. 4 and 6, 34 and 48. Notice should be taken of both treble and bass in the latter. The Allemandes and Courantes (which in time took the place of Pavans and Galiardas) of Froberger are not easily accessible. Two examples are therefore given:

Ex. 1.

Allemande.

&c.

Courante.

(The above quotations are printed from the original.)

Ex. 2.

Allemande.

Courante.

Sarabande.

See also Kuhnau, Partie in E minor; Handel, Lesson in F minor (Allemande, Courante, and Gigue).

† This was a very old device. In Dalza's 'Lute Book' of 1508 the Saltarello and Piva dance-tunes, both in triple time, are mentioned as appendages to the Paduana (*i.e.*, Pavan) in duple time. The Piva, according to Mersenne (1636-37), was played on a chalumeau, a kind of bagpipe, used by the country folk in France in their dancing-songs, at weddings, &c. Piva is Italian for bagpipe, hence it became the name of a particular melody or dance. In Judenkunig's collection (1523) of dances arranged for lute, there are two Bransles (a favourite French dance) with superscriptions, 'Nicolas mon beau frère' and 'C'est mon ami,' *i.e.*, evidently melodies of dancing-tunes.

‡ The above-named 'Vingt Suites' are thoroughly Suite-like in character. The term Suite, however, does not occur in the music, but merely in the catalogue of the Cassel Library, drawn up by Doctor Israël.

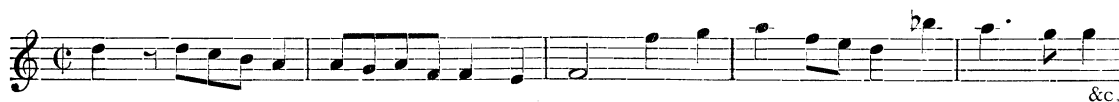
§ The viola da gamba (bass viol) was much played. Prince Charles was fond of the instrument, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who played the 'viol-de-gamboys,' will not be forgotten.



* * For full explanation of the ornaments, see Dannreuther on 'Musical Ornamentation,' Vol. i., page 95 (Novello's Primer Series).

The set of pieces—Allemande, Courante, Saraband and Gigue—formed, as stated, the regular or classical Suite. Anyone only familiar with the Suites of Bach might think the Allemande never had any connection with dance-rhythm. Formerly, however, it

was very different. A specimen of one in the early part of the 17th century by Adam Drese will be clearer and shorter than description. Only the beginning of the treble part is given :



The remaining seven bars are similar. It will be seen that it does not begin with upbeat note or notes. Further, in the three under parts there is no polyphonic writing. What the old Courante was like may be seen from one (No. 201) in the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.'

At an early period other movements of a light kind (Menuet, Gavotte, Bourrée, Passepied, &c.), were added to the four above mentioned, and the usual place for them was between the Sarabande and Gigue, but there was no fixed rule. Many Suites by Lock, Jenkins, and others had only the first three movements.

François Couperin, surnamed the Great (1668-1733), studied with one of the four organists of Louis XIV., Thomelin by name (sometimes written Tolin), and at his death succeeded him as a master-musician of the King. As clavecinist Couperin was celebrated, and as composer he may almost be named the Chopin of the 17th century, for he was great in small things. Moreover, his speciality was the harpsichord, just as that of Chopin was the pianoforte. The number of *agréments* (grace-notes) in his music renders the interpretation thereof difficult. Couperin, however, attached great importance to them. 'Je déclare,' he wrote, 'que mes pièces doivent être exécutées comme je les ai marquées.' When playing them on the pianoforte, the tone and touch of which are so different, some liberty should be allowed, but great care must be exercised not to spoil the spirit of the music. Couperin would no doubt have referred to this matter, only the pianoforte in his day, like the British Fleet in Sheridan's play, 'was not yet in sight.'

As regards dates of publication (1713-30) of the 'Pièces,' they belong to the 18th century, but like those of Chambonnières, many were probably composed long before 1713, when Couperin was forty-five years old, and some certainly were written before this date. In the dedication 'Au Roi' of 'L'Art de toucher le Clavecin' (1717) the composer says: 'It is twenty-three years since your Majesty listened to my

compositions.' And the first Book—which most likely was composed at an early period—contains the four normal movements of a regular Suite, followed by many others with changes from major to tonic minor keys, or *vice versa*. If every movement, with repeats and *doubles*, were played, monotony would ensue; for music in which charm, delicacy, and piquant harmonies are special features must keep within bounds. Possibly short selections were made from them and placed between the Sarabande and Gigue, or Rondeau, as was done by composers from Chambonnières onwards.

Forkel, in his 'Ueber Bach's Leben, Wirken, u. Werke,' says that Bach was most probably acquainted with Couperin's music. Bach, whose interest in French music is proved by a copy which he made of a Suite by Dieupart (a celebrated player on the harpsichord), must have known Couperin's music; there are, indeed, passages in his Suites which indicate direct influence of the French composer. With one piece Bach was most probably acquainted, for it is in a manuscript book which belonged to his wife. Although not directly connected with the subject of this paper, the short story of how it came into that book may excuse the digression.

The second volume of the German Bach Society, published in 1894, gives the contents of the music-book which belonged to Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena. In it are various pieces by Bach, copied by her; and according to Waldersee, some of the writing is in the handwriting of Bach himself. Among the pieces is Couperin's 'Les Bergeries' Rondeau, from that composer's second *Livre*, published at Paris in 1717; but it bears no name. As will be seen presently, Anna Magdalena must have copied it from some manuscript; and the opening bars, if compared with those of Couperin in the above original Paris edition, will suffice to show how incorrect it was.

The Bach Society volume in question was edited by Paul Graf von Waldersee, who was quite unaware of the origin of the Rondeau. In his preface he remarks that the third quaver in the bass in the last bar of the quotation below was ambiguous (*mehrdeutig*); in Anna's copy it might be an F or an A. Waldersee

decides in favour of the A, since F would produce consecutives with the upper part—then a terrible sin, though nowadays common enough. Couperin might have hesitated to break the law, but though both notes are in his text, there are no consecutive fifths:

A.M.B.'s Book.



COUPERIN.



In England Suites were called Lessons. During the first half of the 17th century music of this kind was written for lute, viols, &c., though not until 'Musicks Hand-maide,' published by Playford, do we find any published for harpsichord. They are all of very light character, and were announced as 'New Lessons and Instructions for the Virginals or Harpsichord.' The prominence given to songs and country dances deserves notice. Even the place of the Allemande is frequently taken by song-tunes.

There were two important composers who flourished

during the second half of the 17th century: Dr. Blow and Henry Purcell. The former, born in 1648, became a chorister at the Chapel Royal under Captain Cooke, and afterwards studied under Christopher Gibbons. From the latter he no doubt heard much about Bull and Byrd and he must have been familiar with 'Parthenia,' which consisted of music by the two musicians just named and Christopher's father, the great Orlando Gibbons. Blow's harpsichord music is little known, so I am tempted to give two movements from an unpublished Suite. The first is an Almain:

BLOW.



* Thus in the autograph. See the sections on *Time Signatures* and *Barring*, pages xiv. and xvi. of the Introduction to the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.'

† Thus in the manuscript; it may be a mistake in the original copy.

‡ In the original this chord is written G# B D; an evident mistake.



and the second a Jigg :

Second Movement. Blow.

Whether the latter movement was written before or after Purcell's 'Now the maids and the men,' in 'The Fairy Queen,' it is impossible to say. In any case, Blow was influenced by Purcell, or *vice versa*.

Purcell's choice collection of 'Lessons' was published after his death by his widow in 1696. All eight, excepting the last, are regular. The music is fresh and attractive : it shows thought, and is never laboured. They are more effective—as indeed one can say of all clavier music of this century—when played on the harpsichord. The eighth is very mixed. We first have genuine Suite movements in F, and

then come two in C. These are followed by two movements in G minor, the latter a Jigg, and the only one in the eight Suites ; and, finally, two in C. Of those in C and G minor, five numbers are borrowed from plays. Had Purcell himself published these 'Lessons' he would probably have revised them. The widow gave no account of the manuscripts, nor explained whether the movements taken from various works were her selections or those of Purcell. However interesting the music is, Suite-writing was not a branch of the art in which Purcell showed his full strength.

Occasional Notes.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MUSICIANS. The *New Statesman* has recently, in special supplements, been giving prominence to the draft of the fourth report of the Committee of the Fabian Research Department on the Control of Industries. In the April 28 issue a section dealing with 'Professional Association in Literature and the Fine Arts' is contributed by G. Bernard Shaw. The position of painters, sculptors, musicians, actors, and writers is examined. As to musicians and their organization *via* registration, Mr. Shaw is incisive, and occasionally caustic. He says :

The musicians present their own specific problems of organization. A musician may be a composer, and, as such, may be neither executant nor teacher. He may be a conductor, and, as such, neither a composer, executant, nor teacher. Probably most rank-and-file executants do more or less teaching ; but some teachers, notably teachers of singing and composition, undertake to teach what they cannot do themselves, being in effect critical connoisseurs when they are not impostors. All the teachers and executants are specialists differing as much as masons from carpenters ; for there are about twenty types of instruments in use, without counting the varieties which can be played by those who have mastered the type. The circumstances in which they

* See foot-note, p. 253. † This is a warning to a harpsichord player not to play B natural when adding a middle part.