

Classical Music

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be, *your* sympathy gladdens my heart. I hope my future works may at least not lessen it. If you wished to bestow public praise upon Clara and me the Frankfurt Journal would be a good place. Still, I fear the editors take too little interest in strangers. Try them, dear friend. If they won't take your article, I would propose the *Evening Journal*, or, still better, the *Journal of Elegance*. I am, to tell the truth, too proud to wish to influence Fink through Härtel, especially as I hate any quickening of public opinion by the artist himself. Any one who is really meritorious will succeed. Do not think I am deaf to solid, skilful criticism, but an artist should not trust to himself for it."

In 1842, Schumann and his wife contemplating a visit to Vienna, the master begged his friend Koszmary to do the needful puff preliminary.—"This brings me" wrote Schumann "to a petition. We (my wife and I) made an excursion a short time ago to Bohemia, and among other places, to Königswart, where Prince Metternich was. He received us most graciously and promised his protection in a very friendly manner if we should visit Vienna. This quite pleased me. Now, I should like the people there to know somewhat of my compositions, and should especially like my first symphony performed, and perhaps one other. The Viennese are ignorant people, and, on the whole, don't know much which goes on outside their own city. However, they are well known in the musical world, and a favourable reception there would be most advantageous to me. Will you not introduce me and my symphonies by an article in Schmidt's paper? In that case I will send you the piano score *à quatuor mains*, and, if you wish, the whole score. The review must be published by October, because, if we go, we must start in November. Write me a friendly 'Yes' if possible, and let me thank you in advance for it." On other occasions Schumann, who deserves all the credit due to perseverance, said, still addressing Koszmary: "With some timidity I inclose a parcel of my old compositions. You will easily perceive how immature and incomplete they are. They are mostly reflections of my agitated youth: the man and musician in me strove for simultaneous expression. It is so even now that I have learned to command my music and myself better. . . . Now don't call me vain if I send you these old things, which I outgrew long ago, and thankfully accept your kind offer to say a word or two about them. I always despised an artist who sent his trash fresh from the press to all the editors as fast as the post could carry it. . . . My works, I think, give food for reflection; and it will be easy for you to write a couple of columns on them. As Härtel published most of them he would be much gratified by a brief notice in your journal. As these early works are to be brought before the public, perhaps it will be well to state that none but the first four have been alluded to in any paper for ten years. I think it would do to write your article independently, and not in the usual style of reviews; but do as you like, dear friend. When you have waded through this first heap I'll send you, if you wish, a second (my lyric period) and perhaps the symphonies and my last chamber music." Concerning such a man as Schumann, and in connection with such music as that referred to above, it would perhaps, be wrong to use the word "bore." Nevertheless, one would much like to know what Koszmary thought of his correspondent at the time.

Schumann's letters contain but few remarks upon the great composers of previous generations. In fact there are only two instances in which opinions with regard to them are frankly stated. One of these has reference to Palestrina. Addressing Franz Bendel

the master said: "I owe you many thanks for the music you sent me, especially Palestrina's. It often sounds like the music of the spheres, and then what art! I think he's the greatest musical genius Italy ever produced." On another occasion, Schumann, addressing Keferstein, discussed Bach at some length: "I have often—dare I confess it?—doubted if you took the same interest in the efforts of the junior portion of the musical world that I once remarked. A remark recently made by you in a Stuttgart paper confirms my suspicion. You said 'From Bach and Kuhnau we first learn the source of Haydn and Mozart's music, but not where the new generation get theirs.' Such, at least, was the idea. But I don't quite agree with you. Mozart and Haydn knew Bach but partially, on single sides, and it is by no means clear how a mere intimate knowledge of him would have affected their productions. But the deep combinations, poetry and humour of the new school of music draws its inspiration largely from Bach. Mendelssohn, Bennett, Chopin, Hiller, and all the romanticists (I mean the Germans) approach Bach much more nearly than Mozart; for they all are thoroughly acquainted with him. I myself bow daily before this lofty spirit, aspiring to purify and strengthen myself through him. Then Kuhnau, honourable and delightful as he may be, should not be ranked with Bach. Even had Kuhnau written the 'Well-tempered Clavichord', he would be but the hundredth part of Bach. In my estimation Bach is incomparable, incommensurable." With these words of truth and soberness I close my extracts from Schumann's most valuable and interesting letters.

As to the man whom our investigation has revealed in the light emanating from himself, there can be no need to say much. He has appeared to us in many phases, in various bodily and mental states, and under all manner of conditions with regard to extraneous things. But he has never lost our sympathy and admiration. Even his littlenesses had their origin in amiability of nature or greatness of purpose, while his peculiarities of constitution, taken together with their reflection in his music, show that art demands for its completeness painful service as well as joyous devoirs. There are birds who sing best in the sunshine, and there are others who must be blinded in order that out of darkness may come their noblest carollings.

CLASSICAL MUSIC.

By CHARLES K. SALAMAN.

CLASSICAL MUSIC is an expression in common use. Its just signification is, however, not as commonly understood. It will be my endeavour to ascertain, and if possible establish, its correct meaning. The ordinary reply to the enquiry,— "What is classical music?" although, to some extent, true, is nevertheless an extremely vague and limited one,—insufficient and unsatisfactory. It is said to be music of a certain standard of excellence composed by the great masters, among whom are specially named, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Spohr, and Mendelssohn. It is affirmed to be music moulded in the form of the modern Sonata—a form which would comprise Sonatas for single instruments, and for one or more instruments in concert; Concertos for solo instruments accompanied by the orchestra,—a form which would also include the modern Overture and the orchestral Symphony.

As in the world of literature there are literary-classics—a classic being understood to signify an author of the highest rank—so, in the realms of music, there are, in an analogous position, music-

classics. It must not be inferred, however, that all music composed by a music-classic must needs be classical; neither does it necessarily follow that every musician who composes classical music may be entitled to take rank as a classic.

How then shall classical music be defined? Speaking in comprehensive terms it may be defined as music composed upon certain established scientific principles, universally recognised by cultured judges of music as true; music, moreover, of great excellence, displaying a high order of musical talent, if not of elevated genius, and originality of musical thought; rich in musical ideas, logically treated, and developed with masterly skill;—music, in fine, which fulfils the conditions that are deemed essential to constitute it of superlative excellence.

Unlike literature, music has no classics of antiquity. Albeit the eldest of the sister arts, music, in its practical results, is the youngest. Leaping over many ages, the sixteenth century must be reached ere a musician qualified as a music-classic, and music which may be justly denominated classical, can be met with. Even at that comparatively late period is found much crude musical erudition devoid of grace and beauty, learned theoretical contrivance, in *canon* and *fugue*, with little or no embellishment of melody or modulation to impart to it the warmth of life and the charm of sympathy.

It is a fact in musical history that music passed from Flanders to Italy, and there took root. Italy, which had long been famous for her priceless treasures in poetry, architecture, sculpture, and painting, welcomed music as her youngest daughter. She was soon patronised and encouraged by the Church, which had already given countenance and support to her elder sisters. Music-composers arose and flourished, and consecrated their genius to religion. Palestrina, Croce, Carissimi, Stradella, Scarlatti, Cesti, Marcellò, Leo, Durante, Clari, and other illustrious masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inspired by the sublimity of their sacred themes, sanctified music, and elevated her to the pinnacle of glory. Italy became the recognised Academy of Music for the entire world, and her musicians were the acknowledged teachers of the "Divine Art." Their sacred works may be justly regarded as the massive pillars of that beautiful and classic temple—the Musical Parthenon of Italy—to which all aspirants for high distinction in music turned for instruction and inspiration.

When music was summoned to the assistance of the drama, in the form of *Opera*, hardly any appreciable difference was perceptible between music composed for the Church and that designed for the stage. The rules for the composition of music for opera, as laid down by the early great musicians of Italy, were stringent, and they were inflexibly maintained by all subsequent composers of Italian opera, whether natives of Italy or of foreign countries; such, for example, as Hasse, Handel, Paer, Simone Mayer, and Meyerbeer—in his earliest dramatic works. Being composed after a high standard of merit insisted upon by the then greatest music-classics of that age, their music was generally accepted as classical.

England, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, could also proudly boast of her music-classics, and of her classical music designed for the service of the Church. The grand simplicity of the Protestant Cathedral Service inspired Tallis, Byrde, Gibbons, Purcell, and other great English musicians to consecrate their musical genius also to religion; and thus England possesses a repertory of ecclesiastical music of transcendent beauty by native composers, which, for sublimity and classic purity in construc-

tion and vocal harmony, is unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled, by the Church-music of any other country. Then the great Madrigal composers of England and Italy claim admittance to the inner circle of music-classics, and their productions claim to be entitled classical. In the category of music so called, must also be admitted the Suites de Pièces, precursors of the early *Sonata*, composed by Sebastian Bach, Handel, Frescobaldi, Rameau, Martini, Couperin, Muffat, Corelli, Geminiani, Tartini, and others for the harpsichord, organ, and violin, introducing ancient dance measures invented in Spain, France, Germany, and England which gave place subsequently to music shaped in another manner, such, for instance, as the early *Sonata*, by Domenico Scarlatti, William Friedemann Bach, Emanuel Bach, Pescetti, Galuppi, Paradies, and other musicians who flourished in the beginning and middle of the eighteenth century. These after a time were superannuated, so to speak; and again, another form of instrumental music devised and richly endowed by Haydn, Clementi, Mozart, Dussek, Steibelt, John Field, Woelfl, Cramer, Beethoven, Hummel, and Moscheles, bearing the classic impress, was accepted as a model for all classical instrumental music. Although Beethoven adopted this form, and used it with more or less variety as the outline of all his Concertos and orchestral Symphonies, he modified it to some extent in many of his pianoforte Sonatas. It is unnecessary to particularise works now so familiar.

About the year 1820, or earlier, a style of instrumental music was introduced by celebrated pianists and other instrumentalists for the purpose of exhibiting their own extraordinary and special executive powers. Fantasias, Capriccios, and endless airs with brilliant *bravura* variations, then astonished and delighted musical audiences for a long period extending to nearly, or quite, thirty years. The music of Moscheles, Henri Herz, Carl Czerny, Pixis, Mayer, Hummel, and countless imitators, reigned for many years in the ascendant, and very little else could obtain a hearing. Although well composed this music did not bear the genuine classic stamp, and after it had served its purpose it gradually went out of fashion and was laid aside to give place to other forms of solo instrumental music which possessed no stronger right to classic rank.

The "Songs without Words," introduced by Mendelssohn nearly fifty years since, were at first received with scant favour, and it is said that it was with difficulty a publisher was found to print them in England. True musicians perceived at once their classic character, and Mendelssohn was soon imitated with more or less success. These lovely movements effected a remarkable revolution in the public taste for pianoforte music, and accustomed audiences to hear short pieces of a few minutes' duration. This was a great and beneficial change after the protracted compositions to which they had so long been doomed to listen. Having assigned to the celebrated "Lieder ohne Worte" the title classical, it will perhaps be asked under what category may be justly placed the shorter pianoforte pieces of John Field, Thalberg, Henselt, Chopin, Ferdinand Hiller, Schumann, Bennett, Stephen Heller, Silas, and Rubinstein, consisting of single movements, respectively entitled Rondos, Nocturnes, Ballades, Romances, Reveries, Scherzos, Toccatas, Aires Variés, Saltarellos, Tarantellas, and short pieces composed in the manner of the old dance measures of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries, which may or may not in every instance fulfil the conditions of classical music?

It may be replied that the music of these delightful composers is of a mixed character—partly roman-

tic and partly classical; inasmuch as the most part of their contributions to the vast repertory of piano-forte music is composed with masterly skill, and rich fancy, displaying the erudition and genius of cultured musicians and the technical knowledge of accomplished *Virtuosi*.

The foregoing views may possibly surprise many, who, from not having given to this subject a due amount of consideration, have hitherto entertained an imperfect apprehension of its correct limits. They will scarcely have conceived the wideness of its range even before the extensive area of vocal music is entered. In this vast space will be found, as in orchestral and solo instrumental music, frequent modifications in design and treatment—every new form being impressed with the classic hallmark. Comparing, for instance, operas by Pergolesi, Alessandro Scarlatti, Leonardo Leo, Buononcini, Handel, and Porpora, with those by Purcell, Cimarosa, Gallupi, Sacchini, Paisiello, Zingarelli, Gluck, Piccini, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Bishop, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Bellini, John Barnett, Verdi, Macfarren, Wallace, Wagner, and Gounod, it will be observed how diverse and marked have been the various modifications in the forms and musical treatment of classic-operatic music at different stages of the art's progress.

If this fact be admitted, who shall decide that the "Alceste," "Orfeo," and two "Iphigenias" of Gluck; the "Don Giovanni," "Idomeneo," "Le Nozze de Figaro," and "Zauberflöte" of Mozart; the "Matrimonio Segreto" of Cimarosa; the "Agnese" of Paer; the "Fidelio" of Beethoven; the "Freischütz" of Weber; the "Jessonda" of Spohr are classical operas: and that the "Semiramide" and "Guillaume Tell" of Rossini; the "Dinorah" and "Les Huguenots" of Meyerbeer; the "Faust" of Gounod; the "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser" of Wagner; the "Mountain Sylph" and "Fair Rosamond" of John Barnett; the "Lurline" and "Amber Witch" of Wallace; and the "Helvellyn" and "Robin Hood" of Macfarren are not classical. Composed in various styles, at various periods, according to the idiosyncrasy of their respective authors, they equally bear the classic stamp although they may be unequal in excellence.

Upon what principle shall it be determined that the Overtures to "Don Giovanni" and "Figaro," to "Der Freischütz" and "Oberon," to "Ruy Blas" and the "Midsummer Night's Dream," are classical? and that the Overtures to "Guillaume Tell" and the "Siege of Corinth," the Overtures to "Lurline," to "Helvellyn," and "St. John the Baptist" are not classical? Upon every true principle of musical criticism it is beyond argument that they are all classical.

The chamber vocal music of Schubert, Thalberg, Fesca, Schumann, Molique, Sterndale Bennett, Macfarren, Rubinstein, Bishop and Gounod may justly assert its right to classical rank. Another style of vocal music must be also considered as entitled to similar distinction. This is the Glee, rendered famous by the learned, harmonious, and graceful compositions of classic vocal harmonists such as Dr. Callcott, William Horsley, Attwood, Samuel Webbe, Beale, Goss, Spofforth, Bishop, and other famed musicians, whose names cannot fail to occur to the reader.

The question is persistently asked, "Is Richard Wagner, the reputed head of the so-called Advanced German School of Music, the composer of the 'Music of the Future,' a music-classic?" Music-critics in their reply widely differ in opinion. From some he receives praise amounting to adulation; from others he receives *dispraise* bordering upon abuse. A man

who has the temerity to think differently from his fellows, and courageously expresses his opinions, must expect to be blamed by his contemporaries. Bold innovators upon established canons in art naturally meet with opposition not less bold. If by a genius we understand one who conceives and carries out new ideas, Wagner is undeniably entitled to that designation. He throws aside with scorn the accepted classic forms of the musical drama, and constructs and arranges his materials after his own fashion in obstinate defiance of precedent. He appears in the two-fold capacity of poet and composer. The legendary subjects he selects for his dramas being of national interest appeal to the national instinct. His operas are grandly imagined and are sumptuously placed upon the stage, and being full to repletion of superb theatrical effects they enforce admiration irrespective of the music. The long continued *musica parlante* unrelieved, as in the old form of opera, by completed songs and concerted vocal pieces, produces a sensation of painful weariness despite the lovely snatches of tuneful melody, the rich, but too frequently introduced eccentric and discordant harmonic combinations, and the great magnificence of the instrumentation, which are leading features of the special characteristics of Wagner's dramatic style. But still the enquiry, "Is Wagner classical?" To this I would reply, according to the generally accepted conditions of classical music, No! But that seeing how often, in the course of time, musical taste has changed; how music distrusted at one period has been welcomed at another; knowing that it is contrary to nature and experience that art should remain always the same; and believing that the resources of music have not yet been fully unfolded, that in fact they are inexhaustible, it is impossible to imagine that our successors will think precisely as we do with regard to musical composition. I am quite prepared to believe, when I reflect upon the chequered course of musical history, that Richard Wagner may possibly be the pioneer of another style of composition which will attract hereafter more general admiration, and that a future generation of musicians may insist upon enrolling his name among the already acknowledged music-classics. We are accustomed to certain forms of composition, the invention of great masters of a past age, which have been accepted as classical models by their successors. But as superlatively fine music was composed before these forms were known, who will assert that they will be enduring, and the only classic forms in which the music of the future will be moulded? This is a question of classical or non-classical music, not one of ugliness or beauty. I repeat what I have stated as my opinion on a former occasion, that the taste for musical ugliness is rapidly on the increase among a certain section of German musicians, who appear to discover not only sublimity, but grace and beauty in ugliness, which, doubtless, is a taste to which it is possible to become habituated by education and time.

From what I have already remarked with reference to classical music, it must be evident that there can be no fixed, unalterable standard as regards form in music to qualify it for classical distinction, because, in accordance with a law of Nature which insists upon perpetual change in all created things, some musical forms accepted at one period as classical give place hereafter to other classical forms.

Taking, then, into consideration this almost limitless view of classical music, embracing as it does so large an interval of time, such various nationalities, such variety in forms and styles, it must be conceded that the meaning hitherto assigned to the term

is much too narrow, and inexpressive of its scope and extent.

Before concluding, I would endeavour to dispel some errors which I hold to be alike unjust and injurious, but which are too often obstinately maintained. It is undoubtedly a fallacy to imagine that Germany or Italy, or any other country possesses a monopoly in the term classical music; that it is an expression which properly attaches only to the music of a particular period, a particular country, or to the celebrated names of a few eminent composers. It is no less a common error to suppose that music cannot deserve the title classical, which is of modern growth, and moreover, the production of native musicians of Great Britain and Ireland. It must be understood to be within the range of possibility that a great musical genius may arise in this country bearing the not uncommon appellation "William Smith," who shall compose music as truly entitled to be called classical as any music written by Mozart or Beethoven. It cannot be too often repeated that classical music is of no special period, form, style, composer, or nation. It must be borne in mind, nevertheless, that to entitle music to be deemed classical it must possess its unmistakable characteristics, and bear a clearly defined, intelligible, classic stamp.

It might be well if those who have hitherto used the expression "Classical music," without having a distinct notion of its true significance, were to substitute for it the terms "Standard works of the music-classics," or "The compositions of the great masters." These comprehensive expressions, which might include the classic works of any, or of all countries, styles, and periods, would be at least understood.

Those who would discover classic beauty in music, who would seek for musical excellence irrespective of its source, must eschew alike predilection and prejudice. They must not turn from the classical musical productions of this country, because, forsooth, pandering to the common or vulgar taste of a large portion of the public the music-market may be glutted with numberless specimens of musical mediocrity, manufactured to supply an extensive unhealthy demand for music of a particular class which is intended only for a wide circulation, and for immediate sale; and thrust into public notice by advertisements, "royalties," and other adventitious means. Good music, like good wine and modest merit, must be sought for. Much excellent music will thus be discovered which may have long lain hidden from public attention; not on account of any deficiency of merit, but for want of favourable opportunities of becoming known. How many musical flowers are born to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air!

A conspicuous instance of unmerited neglect has lately been brought prominently to notice by the generous and spirited efforts of Madame Jenny Viard-Louis. Twice at her now famous concerts has been performed by her magnificent band of instrumentalists, under the able direction of Mr. Weist Hill, an orchestral Symphony by the late young, and now deeply lamented German composer, Hermann Goetz, which has been unanimously pronounced to be not only a work of genius, but one of the finest orchestral Symphonies of recent times. How sad to contemplate this young and neglected musical genius yearning in vain to hear his work executed, and pining for opportunities to exhibit still farther his matured powers in the composition of other great works, which might have given him the right to a niche in the Vallhalla of the Muses as one of the music-classics of Germany!

MUNICIPAL ABOLITION OF SACRED MUSIC.

THE tendency of History to repeat itself has just been curiously exemplified in Paris. Although near upon a century has passed since the event took place, and the effect of distance has toned down its grotesque horror, none of us can forget that the French, in the height of their first revolutionary madness, not only abolished Christianity, and deposed the Almighty, but formally decreed His non-existence. They turned their backs on the Everlasting Goodness, and worshipped Reason as typified by a prostitute. True, the outward and visible expression of this insanity did not last long. Napoleon succeeded to power, and his keen intellect saw that the religious element in humanity could not be ignored even as an engine of statecraft. At a nod from him, therefore, back came the Christian *cultus*, and France had once more a God. The lesson taught was easy, and should have sunk deep into the national mind; but this appears not to have been the case. Nothing has been learned of common sense in matters pertaining to religion by the most energetic spirits of France, and it is only for want of opportunity that they do not revive the heathen zeal of the Convention, and write over the gates of Père la Chaise, "Death is but an eternal sleep." We do not go for proof to the reign of the Commune, but rather to one of the most recent acts of the Municipal Council of Paris. That Council, as everybody knows, faithfully reflects the political mind of the capital. Elected by universal suffrage, it is as "red" as its electors, and loses no opportunity of expressing sentiments which, logically carried out, would overturn the present constitution of society. Rarely, however, does the Council get a chance of showing its contempt for religion, but the zest with which the opportunity is seized when it does come, and even when it can only be got at in a roundabout way, will appear from the extraordinary circumstance to which we now ask attention. The Municipality have long had the laudable habit of encouraging musical composers and societies, by offering prizes for competition, and it appears that, a little while ago, the whole matter of these *concours* was handed over to a Committee with a view to improvement. Having duly considered the subject, the Committee reported, through one of their number, M. Levraud, who, with reference to sacred music, made the following remarkable observations:—

Votre commission, messieurs, pense que l'art religieux a fait son temps. Il a atteint une grandeur incomparable avec les S. Bach, les Haendel, les Haydn, parce que ces hommes de génie ont su exprimer et traduire des passions humaines tout en mettant en scène des êtres imaginaires. Plus l'étendue des connaissances humaines se développe, plus cet art est incompatible, parce qu'il exprime, avec l'esprit scientifique et de libre pensée qui caractérise notre époque; le Conseil Municipal de Paris ne saurait l'encourager, et nous vous proposons en conséquence, d'exclure du concours la musique religieuse sous toutes ses formes. Nous n'entendons pas seulement par musique religieuse la musique d'église proprement dite, c'est-à-dire toute composition musicale écrite sur des paroles faisant partie du domaine de la liturgie, mais aussi l'*oratorio*, que l'ancienne commission, loin d'exclure du concours, offrait au contraire comme modèle à suivre aux concurrents.

We have given these astounding words in the original for the sake of historic accuracy, and now, for the benefit of such among our readers as are not acquainted with French, we supply the equivalent English:—

Your Committee, gentlemen, think that religious art has had its day. It reached the height of grandeur with S. Bach, Handel, and Haydn, because those men of genius knew how to express and convey human passions while dealing with imaginary beings. The more the extent of human knowledge increases, the more this art is incompatible, on account of what it expresses, with the scientific spirit and free thought of our age; the Municipal Council of Paris ought not to encourage it, and we propose to you, therefore, to exclude from competition religious music in all its forms. We understand by religious music, not only church music, properly so called, that is to say, every musical composition having words that belong to the domain of liturgy, but also the *Oratorio*, which the old commission far from excluding, held up as a model for competitors to follow.

So, then, there is an end in Paris of religious music, as far as the Municipality can bring it about. M.