

FERRUCCIO BUSONI AS A COMPOSER

By HUGO LEICHTENTRITT

IT is a common experience in the history of arts that the world will fail to appreciate an artist, however famous he may be, as soon as he shows an ambition to distinguish himself in a field of activity alien to the one in which he acquired his first fame. Thus it happened to Franz Liszt. His pianistic genius was admired without reserve, unanimously, all the world over, but in his capacity as a composer he had to combat most serious opposition throughout his life, and even now there is a considerable divergence of opinion on this topic, although the importance of Liszt the composer has become sufficiently manifest. Similarly, Ferruccio Busoni is esteemed as a pianist of the first order, but his remarkable achievements as a composer are hardly appreciated at their full value. It is the purpose of the present essay to analyze the rather complicated character of Busoni the composer, to characterize his art, to show its development and to appraise its importance.

The artistic career of Busoni may be sketched briefly by way of introduction.

Ferruccio Busoni was born on April the 1st, 1866, in Empoli, near Florence. His father was Italian, his mother partially of German descent; this racial mixture in their son is also clearly evident in his compositions, and one of their principal characteristics. He commenced as a child-prodigy, like most of the great musicians. Piano-playing and composition were equally familiar to him, and his skill in both was remarkable even in the years of boyhood. Between eight and thirteen (1874-79) he wrote the compositions which were published as Op. 1-4. He was taught by his mother; later, for several years, he was a pupil of Wilhelm Mayer-Rémy in Graz (in Austria), a pedagogue of considerable reputation, who was also the teacher of Kienzl, Heuberger and Weingartner. In 1882 he was made a member of the celebrated Philharmonic Academy of Bologna. In 1888 he became professor at the conservatory of Helsingfors in Finland. There he married shortly afterwards. This residence in Finland was not without importance for his artistic development; just at that time the

national Finnish school of composition had begun its activity, mustering composers like Kajanus, Järnefelt, and especially Sibelius. In 1890 he was awarded the Rubinstein Prize for composition, and for a short time afterwards he held a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory. His international fame dates from about this time. 1891-94 he spent in America, playing and teaching at the New England Conservatory in Boston. From 1894 up to the present time he has lived in Berlin, his residence there being interrupted, however, by frequent tournées all over Europe and America.

His pianistic development was straight enough; less so his growth as a composer. For a number of years it was doubtful whether his pianistic gifts or his capacities as a composer were more remarkable. Though the success of his compositions was very encouraging, though he possessed a considerable mastery of the technique of composition even as a youth, he still came to the decision that it would be impossible for him to follow his high artistic ideals and to excel both as a pianist and as a composer. From his twenty-fifth to his thirty-fifth year he concentrated his efforts mainly upon his pianistic studies, slowly developing his individual and unique style of playing. These years of artistic growth were not lost for the composer, although he wrote little during this period. It became evident to him that the traditional style of writing which characterizes his earlier compositions was not the way which could lead him to the goal he had in mind. The problem for him was to develop a personal, individual style, to take an active part in all progressive movements. How he solved this problem will be shown by an analysis of the compositions he has written since about 1900. Almost from year to year one can see the advance into regions hitherto inaccessible, the conquest of new means of expression in harmony, rhythm, and colour. Each new composition of these years was of startling novelty at the time it appeared, and met, as was natural, with strong opposition, which, however, calmed down in a comparatively short time.

Of these mature efforts, each one excels the foregoing as regards new technical devices, new effects of sound, new problems of composition. This does not necessarily mean that in æsthetic, artistic value one work is dethroned by the following—artistic value and novel means of expression are not necessarily in equal ratio. The mile-stones marking this progressively ascending path are the following compositions: Piano concerto, *Turandot* suite, opera *Brautwahl*, Elegies and first Sonatina for piano, Berceuse

and Nocturne for orchestra, second Sonatina for piano, Indian Fantasy. From the study of these compositions will be seen what contributions the composer Busoni has so far made to the treasure of the world's musical literature, in what manner he has enriched it, and how he reveals new beauties and impressions which only a mind like his could discover and impart.

Thus the main stress of this essay will have to be laid on these compositions; the rest (the earlier efforts) will be reviewed somewhat summarily, as preparatory to the real life-work of the artist, although necessary for an understanding of the second half.

The earliest published compositions date back as far as 1874-79. These first attempts of the boy were:

- Op. 1. Ave Maria, for solo voice and piano
 Op. 2. Ave Maria No. 2, " " " " "
 Op. 3. Cinq pièces pour piano (Preludio, Menuetto, Gavotte, Étude, Gigue). Op. 1-3, published by Craz, Leipzig.

A *six-part mass, a cappella* was written while Busoni, as a pupil of Mayer in Graz, also attended the Seminary, where he received instruction in church-music.

The second group of compositions, from 1880-85, is much more weighty and ambitious. It comprises a number of pieces, some of which were not published until years afterwards.

Op. 4, 5, 6 (Wetzler, Vienna) are piano pieces, a Scherzo, Prelude and Fugue, and Scène de ballet. The second "Scène de Ballet" (Op. 20), and Variations and fugue on Chopin's C minor Prelude (Op. 22), (both published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipsic) also belong in this group. The close sequence of scène de ballet, prelude and fugue, variations and fugue, is worthy of remark. Two main characteristic traits of the composer Busoni are already displayed in his beginnings: the light dance-rhythms and the intricate contrapuntal style, the Italian and the German manner. A number of songs are attempts in a direction which Busoni later pursued no further. These sporadic lyric compositions comprise Op. 15 (Gutmann, Vienna), two songs; Op. 18 (Kistner, Leipsic), two Old German songs; Op. 30 and 31 (Schmidl, Trieste), Album Vocale, four Italian songs and two German songs. Well made though they be, these songs show nevertheless that instrumental music is the natural idiom of their composer. The piano accompaniments, especially in the Old German songs, are worked out most carefully, but they lack the right proportion to the vocal part, which seems secondary in importance.

The early piano pieces, though hardly original in the higher sense of the term, nevertheless rank with the best piano music written in their time, if one excepts great composers in full maturity like Brahms and Saint-Saëns. The second "Scène de Ballet," Op. 20, shows Italian traits in its lightness, its elegance of treatment;—indeed, the light hand and a distinct Romanic grace are very distinctive features of Busoni's music. One might describe this composition as a Schumann Novelette translated into Italian. It is dedicated "to his beloved mother and teacher, Anna Weiss-Busoni."

During this period were also written Twenty-four Preludes for piano, and following these Seven Études for piano (Op. 16), dedicated to Johannes Brahms, (Gutmann, Vienna). At the age of 16 Busoni wrote a huge score of 300 pages: "Il sabato del villaggio," to a poem by Leopardi, for soli, chorus and orchestra. This cantata, performed in the Teatro comunale of Bologna, has never appeared in print. The "Variations and Fugue on a prelude by Chopin," Op. 22, are the most extended and most ambitious published work of Busoni's younger years. They show the other side of his nature, a meditative mind of German stamp, eager to solve difficult problems. Here Busoni does homage to Brahms, whose famous Händel Variations are clearly recognizable as model. Nevertheless, these eighteen variations deserve to be known on account of their musicianly solidity, their effective construction, their interesting contents.

During the years 1886-91 Busoni turns his attention to a field which later was ploughed and tilled by him with never-ceasing care. The first of a long series of transcriptions appear at Breitkopf & Härtel's: Symphonies by Mendelssohn and Mozart, ouvertures and other orchestral pieces by Schubert; and Gade's then much-admired Novelettes were arranged by Busoni for piano, two or four hands. Still more important are the first transcriptions of Bach's organ compositions, the preludes and fugues in D and E flat. These, as forming a class by themselves, will have to be dealt with in a special chapter.

Of compositions during these five years the following should be mentioned:

- Op. 19. String Quartette No. 1 (Kistner, Leipsic).
- Op. 23. Little Suite of 5 pieces for 'cello and piano (Kahnt, Leipsic).
- Op. 24. Two Songs for low voice and piano (Kahnt, Leipsic).

- Op. 25. Symphonic Suite of 5 pieces for orchestra (Kahnt, Leipsic).
 Op. 26. Second Quartette, in D minor (Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipsic).
 Op. 27. Finnish Folksongs, for piano 4 hands (Peters, Leipsic).
 Op. 29. First Sonata for violin and piano (Rahter, Leipsic).
 Op. 30a. Two Piano Pieces (Rahter, Leipsic).
 Without opus number, "Kultaselle," ten short variations on a Finnish melody (Dietrich, Leipsic) for piano and 'cello.

Of all these compositions, the *String Quartette*, Op. 26, is perhaps the most valuable. In style it stands about midway between the last Beethoven and Brahms. A certain austerity, a lack of sensuous melody, is characteristic of Busoni. It is written admirably for the instruments, with full knowledge of the peculiarities of the string-quartette, all four parts being worked out very carefully. The first movement, *Allegro energico*, is passionate, virile, rhythmically very subtle. The *Andante con moto* is much more quiet, in the manner of Brahms, subdued in emotion. A splendid scherzo follows, of obstinate energy, with a softer intermezzo of brighter colours. An andantino movement introduces the vigorous finale, a lively piece with touches of humor.

The Rubinstein Prize was awarded to Busoni for a number of compositions, among which the *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra is the most extended. It is published as Op. 31a by Breitkopf & Härtel, and dedicated to Anton Rubinstein. A serious, well-made, effective composition, visibly influenced by Brahms's D minor concerto. Busoni's individuality is only dimly noticeable in it.

The two little *Tanzstücke*, Op. 30a (Leipsic, D. Rahter), which also belonged to the group of the Rubinstein competition-pieces, are very characteristic, however, of their composer, especially in the second edition (1914). They are named "Waffentanz" and "Friedenstanz," two little miniatures full of *esprit* and capriciousness. The composer of the *Turandot* music is foreshadowed here. The brisk, alert, cleanly cut, sharply pointed music reminds one of the fine contrapuntal style of old Italian masters like Frescobaldi or Scarlatti. Its pulse beats "staccato" and "vivace."

The *Six Pianoforte Pieces*, Op. 33b (Peters edition, Leipsic, 1896), also belong here. They are not free from various influences,

but already they show the hand of a master in many touches. They are written splendidly for the instrument, and show a very remarkable ability to orchestrate, as it were, in ever-changing colours, without transgressing the pianistic character. No. 1, "Melancholy," is pathetic, sombre, serious, in the manner of Liszt: declamation of the tenor melody apportioned to both hands, accompanied by soft arpeggio passages flowing around it. No. 2, "Gayety," *tempo di Valse, elegante e vivace*, a mixture of Liszt's and Busoni's peculiar Italian manner. No. 3, "Scherzino, vivace e giocoso," a study in tone-repetition, somewhat similar to Saint-Saëns' style. No. 4, "Fantasia in modo antico," gives evidence of Busoni's organistic tendencies, which later were centered in Bach. Here he writes a serious piece in the manner of the classical Italian organists, like Frescobaldi. No. 5, "Finnish Ballad," a sombre piece, of a peculiar fantastic quietness—a souvenir of Busoni's stay at Helsingfors and his familiarity with Sibelius and other Finnish composers. No. 7, "Exeunt omnes," *pomposo, marziale e vivace*, somewhat Schumannish.

Of earlier orchestral works, two deserve special attention, Op. 32a and 34a. The "Symphonic Tone-poem" (Symphonisches Tongedicht, Breitkopf & Härtel, Op. 32a), dedicated to Arthur Nikisch, was written during the American sojourn of Busoni. I remember having heard the initial performance under Nikisch's direction at a concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1893. This date will help to explain the nature of the composition. Busoni's personality is hardly visible here. The score has a marked resemblance to the early works of Richard Strauss, such as *Don Juan, Tod und Verklärung, Macbeth*. This resemblance is perhaps less due to a direct influence, than to the models and starting-points at that time common to Busoni and Strauss: the traces of Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner are easily discernible in both. Busoni's work is not lacking in interesting traits, both in symphonic development and orchestral treatment: one may adjudge it, if not a "Meisterstück," at all events an excellent "Gesellenstück" which proves its author's fitness to be promoted to the dignity of a master in due time.

A decided step forward toward this magistral dignity is taken in the *Second Orchestral Suite*, Op. 34a (Breitkopf & Härtel). This *Geharnischte Suite*, composed in 1895, shows (especially in its remodelled version of 1903) unmistakably the hand of Busoni. Its four movements are dedicated to friends from Helsingfors, Jean Sibelius, Adolf Paul, Armas Järnefelt, Eero Järnefelt. Recollections from northern shores are discernible in the spirit

which breathes in these martial sounds, these rhythms full of obstinate northern energy, these austere, plastic melodies. Technically there is a great advance in the terse form, the economical use of harmonic and orchestral resources, the sureness with which the effects aimed at are reached, the clearness of construction and development. The whole manner of writing shows a considerable resemblance to Sibelius' symphonic work. In all four parts there is a power of working up to impressive climaxes which always assures the effect of this suite. The first piece, "Vorspiel" (Introduction), is severe in measured, march-like rhythms, rather dark in colouring. No. 2, "Kriegstanz" (War-dance), is perhaps the most original part of the whole suite; only the composer of the *Turandot* music could have written this brilliant piece. No. 3, "Grabdenkmal" (Funeral monument), in the rhythms of a funeral-march, very northern in sentiment and colouring; the climax in the middle has a splendid effect, and no less impressive is the gradual descent from it to the close in softest *pianissimo*. The fourth part, "Ansturm" (Assault), is a finale of impetuous energy; here and there a slight trace of motives in the *Brautwahl* music. The soft intermezzo is a wise trait. This *Allegretto marziale*, with its introduction, sounding as if it were a faint echo of far-off fighting, forms a happy contrast to the stormy motion and fiery energy of the close, at the same time preserving the unity of sentiment.

The *Violin Concerto* has of late become somewhat familiar through frequent performance. The young Hungarian violinists Szigeti and Telmányi especially have played it often. The composition dates back to 1898; it was published years afterwards as Op. 35. The rather simple harmony, the less progressive treatment, compared with the piano concerto, and the influence of Brahms and Liszt, are the outward signs of the early date of composition. Of Brahms' violin concerto one is reminded by the key, D major, and the rather Brahms-like principal theme with its effective entrance in the highest octave after extended passage-work on the organ-point of the dominant at the very beginning. In form the concerto follows the model of the Liszt concertos; though written in one movement only, the three sections of the sonata-form Allegro, Andante, Finale are marked clearly, and the thematic material in all three parts flows from a common source. The second section, *Quasi andante*, a hymn-like piece, of broad melodic outlines with an *agitato* intermezzo, is the most striking part of the whole, musically. It has the austere beauty characteristic of Busoni, an elevation of sentiment which

approaches the splendid beginning of the piano concerto. The introductory allegro and the finale are brilliant, effective and spirited violin music, though hardly fully expressive of their author's individuality.

The Second Sonata for piano and violin, Op. 36a (Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipsic), stands on the border-line between the first and second epochs of Busoni. While its technical apparatus does not transgress what was customary at the time of its production, still the individuality of the composer is distinctly visible, perhaps more than in any other work previous to the piano concerto, Op. 39. Indeed, this sonata might be called a prelude to the still greater concerto. There are many points of resemblance between the two works in the mixture of mysticism, fantastic traits, profound seriousness with brilliant romantic *élan*. The lofty and sublime spirit of the last Beethoven sonatas and of Bach's organ works is alive here. Form and idea of this sonata have marked resemblance to Beethoven's Op. 109. It begins with a slow introduction, a meditative piece, sombre, subdued, with accents full of grief, towards the middle rising to a brilliant climax, *assai deciso*, in dotted, march-like rhythm, then again sinking down and disappearing in a murmur, *soavissimo e calmo*. It leads without interruption to a Presto movement of tarantella character, full of incessant motion, ever growing in energy. A second *Andante piuttosto grave* follows, meditative, tranquil, dark, like the very beginning of the sonata. It serves as an introduction to Bach's choral-melody, "Wie wohl ist mir, o Freund der Seelen," which enters with marvellous effect, spreading, as it were, a mild light, bringing consolation to the troubled heart. A series of variations on this choral forms the finale; No. 1, smoothly flowing figuration; No. 2, *Alla Marcia vivace*, reminding of certain parts of Beethoven's last quartettes; No. 3, a sort of perpetuum mobile for the violin, accompanied by short chords of the piano in the style of thorough-bass; No. 4, contrapuntal fantasy on the theme; No. 5, starting very quietly, constructed in broad dimensions, rising to a powerful climax which marks the beginning of the 6th and last variation. Impressive gradual descent from the climax, leading back to the introduction of the first movement and combining with it the choral. The close, *apoteotico, quasi sacro*, of mystic sentiment, religious elevation.

There is hardly anything in this sonata which will help towards making it popular, but serious-minded, musicianly listeners will have to award this sonata a permanent and prominent place in its class.

I have a vivid recollection of the first performance of Busoni's piano concerto at the Berlin Beethovensaal in 1904. Dr. Muck conducted the Philharmonic Orchestra, Busoni played the piano part. The public was dumbfounded at the startling "ugliness" of the music; the verdict of the press was almost unanimous against the composition, which was called barren in invention, a scandalous outgrowth of modernism. Ten years later, the same concerto was greeted with enthusiasm, its ugliness, its modernism seemed no more offensive, a wealth of imagination was seen in it which contrasted strangely to the "barrenness" formerly attributed to it. In short, musical people saw that a rare masterpiece was laid before them which they could not understand a decade before, but which seemed intelligible now, after Richard Strauss's *Salome*, after Debussy, Scriabine and Schönberg had been listened to and more or less appreciated. Nowadays it seems strange that one should ever have had a doubt about the value of this monumental composition, so convincing and logical does it seem. As a concerto this symphonic work forms a class for itself. It is not, like the Chopin concertos, a solo piece with orchestral accompaniment, nor does it resemble the Mozart or Beethoven concerto as a contest between piano and orchestra; and in spite of the importance of the orchestral part it cannot be called a symphony with piano obbligato, like the Brahms concertos. Busoni takes "concerto" in the older sense of the word, as a coöperation of several bodies of sound; the piano, a large orchestra, and a six-part male chorus collaborate to produce a symphonic whole. The solo part is, of course, sparkling with virtuosity, yet without assuming the principal rôle in the ensemble; in an original, novel way it is rather of coloristic, ornamental effect. The thematic framework of this symphony in five movements is furnished by the orchestra. The piano throws over it a flexible, glittering, ample veil, dazzling, brilliant reflexes of light and colour. The real character of piano-style, constant motion, has nowhere been brought out in so brilliant a manner, except by Liszt. There is nothing massive, nothing inflexible, everything is resolved into motion, into flowing figuration. The artistico-technical motive of this style of writing is not the straight line, but the manifoldly broken line. Scale-figures, broken-chord figures, the tremolo, the trill in many new variations, are the elements of this figural technique. A second characteristic trait of Busoni's piano-treatment is his peculiar use of chord-playing, octaves and the *martellato* element, which is of prime importance in piano technique; herein the plastic expression, the sharply marked rhythm, has its

source, being derived from chords, octaves, *martellato*, wristwork and armwork ("schlagendes Spiel") in contradistinction to the gliding manner of playing necessitated by the smooth flow of running passages. This combination of vertical and horizontal lines, this complicated design, obtains shades and colours by the extraordinary art of pedal treatment which this score demands. The ear hears much more than the notes show: long-sustained tones, the intermingling of different resounding chords, produce various new harmonic effects, a sonority rich in gradations of strength and colour. The original sound-effects of this score come from the peculiar combination of piano and orchestra, from the manner in which the piano dives into the waves of the orchestra, works its way to the surface again and glides along, as it were, caressingly; then rushes on like a foaming mountain-stream, challenging the orchestra with an expression now imperious, now plaintive, or alluring, or sobbing, or imploring, or jubilant, while the orchestra pursues its way calmly.

The construction of the concerto is similar to that of a sonata. In place of the regular first "movement" form, a "prologo e introito" is put. The "pezzo giocoso" corresponds to the scherzo, the "pezzo serioso" to the adagio. The fourth movement, "All'italiana," has the character of a brilliant finale. To close the concerto with this bacchantic piece did not, however, agree with the idea of the entire composition. The serious groundtone of the whole was to be brought out yet more strongly, and so the composer added a fifth movement, a solemn male chorus (to pantheistic verses from Oehlenschläger's drama "Alladin"), this "canto" corresponding to the calm and solemn "prologo."

Early in his career Busoni fostered an affection for dramatic music which, later repressed for many years, has recently been revived. His first operatic attempt dates back as far as 1889. This still unperformed opera, *Das versunkene Dorf*, was written to a text by Frieda Schanz, entitled, *Sigune*. Still earlier (as a youth of seventeen years) Busoni had an animated exchange of letters with J. V. Widmann of Berne, the distinguished Swiss writer, concerning an opera-libretto. The poet Adolf Wilbrandt had given young Busoni an introduction to Widmann. The proposed libretto was to be a dramatic version of Gottfried Keller's famous novel, "Romeo und Julie auf dem Dorfe," the same subject which was later taken up by Frederick Delius. Keller, asked about this affair, replied with characteristic roughness, "This novel runs after me like a shorn poodle!" Nothing came of this plan. Widmann then proposed a Spanish subject

from Alarcon, which finally was also abandoned, because in this piece the two lovers never got a chance to speak a word to each other, and because the thousand Marks demanded in payment by Widmann exceeded by far the resources of the ambitious young composer.

Twenty years later Busoni returned to dramatic music with intense interest. The first, successful step in that direction he made with the music to Gozzi's fantastic Chinese fairy-tale *Turandot*. The greater part of the incidental music to this drama has been combined in the form of an orchestral suite, in which shape it can be performed with great effect at any symphony concert. The *Turandot* suite, in its fantastic, bizarre, exotic style, is one of the most picturesque and fascinating productions of our age. It belongs in a class with compositions like Borodine's symphonic sketch, "In the Steppes of Central Asia," Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherezade," Delius's "Appalachia." What attracted the composer was the opportunity to revel in exotic, Oriental colouring. He has been extremely successful in this endeavour. The grotesque, bizarre, noisy or languid music in which the Oriental delights is reproduced here, not so much with realistic fidelity, in imitation of "genuine" Chinese music, but in artistic form, appealing to the imagination. The music sounds as if it were Chinese, though it is in fact the product of an Occidental mind, for whom the exact imitation of the real Chinese model would always be unnatural and unattainable. Here, as often in art, the appearance is more artistic than the real thing would be. The means for suggesting to the imagination the Oriental local colour are the use of scales foreign to our music, of strange harmonic effects, the monotonous *ostinato* rhythms of Oriental dances, and a most brilliant, luxurious, gorgeous and characteristic orchestration; all this is managed with a great economy which heightens the artistic effect. The first piece, "The Execution, the City-Gate, Taking Leave," is founded on a sort of *basso ostinato*, over which a strange wailing phrase raises its penetrating voice. How expressive the flourish at its end, the plaintive scale-figure running up and down! With a few strokes the situation is painted most vividly. This sureness of attack is characteristic of the entire score. The character of each piece is marked clearly and forcibly, developed with admirable logical consistency and technical mastery. No. 2, "Truffaldino," *introduzione e marcia grottesca*, is very different from the merciless, cruel "crimson" coloured impression of No. 1. A humorous piece, vivid and busy, running to and fro with little steps, telling its tale with a thin,

penetrant voice. How grotesque the sound of the march for the wind-instruments alone, with bells, triangle, drum, timpani and bass drum! No. 3, "Altoum" march, is a grave, solemn march to accompany the entrance of the emperor Altoum. No. 4, "Turandot" march, is the principal piece of the score; a mixture of solemnity, capriciousness, enchanting grace, tenderness and passionate expression. It contains passages of rapturous beauty, such as the broad melodic intermezzo towards the middle, where violins and clarinets, viola and 'cello, sing *dolcissimo*, imitating each other in canon, accompanied by a complicated rhythmic design of fascinating capriciousness, trumpets, triangolo, tamburino, tamburo and piatti mixing their sounds. No. 4, Introduction to the third act, "Das Frauengemach," combines the pale sounds of flutes, harps with the clear, ringing trumpets, piano, soft timpani and triangle. The total effect is that of a sugary, languid beauty, just exactly what the drama required here. No. 6, "Dance and Song," is of a soft, effeminate, voluptuous grace, with a languid chorus for women's voices in the middle. No. 7, "Nocturnal Valse," brings a contrasting effect very welcome at this moment. A sombre, fantastic, mysterious piece, very characteristic of Busoni. Bass-clarinets, bassoons, trombones, trumpets, strings *pizzicati*, are combined with a striking, novel effect. No. 7, the closing piece, begins *in modo di marcia funebre*, but soon finds its way into a spirited, frolicsome and brilliant *finale alla Turca*.

The six "Elegies" for piano, published in 1908 (Breitkopf & Härtel), are closely related to the concerto, the *Turandot* music and the opera *Brautwahl*. In fact, several of these elegies are transcriptions or sketches of parts of the *Turandot* and *Brautwahl* music. A comparison with the "Harmonies poétiques et religieuses" and "Années de pèlerinage" by Liszt will show affinities of style as well as differences, points of departure toward new aims. The individual traits of these elegies I see principally in the combination of a masterly polyphonic style in the manner of Bach, with colour-effects of extreme modern sensibility. In this ingenious polyphony Busoni has found new possibilities for the piano, even beyond Liszt. By the alternate use of the hands, by utilizing every little pause and availing himself very cleverly of the pedal, Busoni has shown the possibility of playing the most complicated polyphonic music on the piano, such as formerly must have appeared impracticable. And he gets at his aim in an extremely pianistic way. The two hands learn to play what looks as if three or four hands were required for it; moreover, it sounds

most effective, and combines the maximum of sound-effect with the least possible inconvenience of playing. Every technical difficulty rewards the labour. No. 2, for instance, "All' Italiana," shows in the "Tarantella" a striking example of Busoni's ingenious setting, the hands alternating in the playing of the melody in order to gain time for the chords of accompaniment. Harmonic innovations are the frequent sounding together of the minor and major chords, in successive figuration sustained by the pedal; the strange and fascinating effects obtained by welding different chords into one compound sound. Thus, No. 3, "Preludio alla corale," employs towards the close an arpeggio of seven successive thirds piled upon each other as an accompaniment-figure.

Closely related to the Elegies is a set of piano pieces *An die Jugend* (Jul. Heinr. Zimmermann, Leipzig, 1909). Its title must not induce the belief that these pieces are intended for youthful beginners. They are dedicated (like the Elegies) to some of the pupils and younger friends of Busoni, hence their title; here Busoni has in view the younger, progressive artists. In the main these compositions are studies in polyphonic, contrapuntal writing, after Busoni's individual idea of this style.

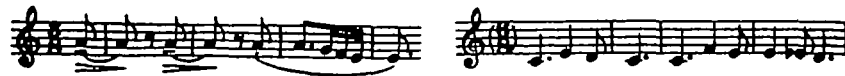
No. 1, "Preludietto, fughetta ed esercizio," was later taken over by the composer into his first sonatina, of which more will have to be said in the sequel. No. 2, "Preludio, fuga e fuga figurata," is a study after the third prelude and fugue of Bach's "Well-tempered Clavichord." The prelude and fugue are first played in their original shape; in the "fuga figurata" Busoni brings a very clever and effective combination of both. No. 3, "Giga, bolero e variazione," treats in a similar manner two brilliant piano pieces by Mozart, the variation at the close combining both. No. 4, "Introduzione, capriccio ed epilogo," starts with a fantasy on a theme by Paganini, for the left hand alone, joins to this the extremely brilliant capriccio in the style of Liszt, and finishes with an *epilogo* in the fantastic manner of Busoni—this *epilogo* likewise forming part of the first sonatina later.

In the same year (1909) a piano piece, *Nuit de Noël*, was published (Durand et Fils, Paris), which might be described as an homage to Debussy, whose manner of writing Busoni approaches here very closely—by the way, an exception. An impressionistic sketch of great charm of sound.

The two *Sonatinas* for piano belong to the class of music called "problematic." Their means of expression are so unusual that it becomes difficult for most listeners to arrive at the essence, the real contents of the composition. The novel sound of the

music is baffling to the hearer, secondary effects tend to distract his attention, so that the way to the artistic contents is barred. In such cases it is prudent to suspend judgment until the new language, its grammar and mode of expression, have become somewhat familiar. There is a very marked difference in degree of progressiveness in these sonatinas, however.

The first Sonatina (published in 1910 by Julius Heinrich Zimmermann, Leipsic, and dedicated to Rudolph Ganz) is by far the simpler of the two, although far from simple in itself. Its title "Sonatina" is justified merely by the small dimensions of its single parts, the intimate character of the music, the absence of "greatness" in the usual sense. But it is difficult enough to play, and not at all fit for beginners, as one might perhaps conclude from its title. What is most striking at a first hearing is the perfection of form, a characteristic trait of Busoni's music in general, but especially impressive in this particular case. Its thematic material is limited to the two simple motives:



All four parts (which are combined into one extended movement according to the Liszt model) are occupied merely with a treatment of these two motives. The first part, corresponding to the first sonata theme, brings the exposition of theme (a), "semplific , commovente," develops it in a working-out section to a climax, and leads back to a varied repeat, thus rounding off the first section. "Pi  tranquillo," corresponding to the second sonata theme (b), is worked out in *fugato* in the second section. The third part, "Allegro elegante," corresponds to the working-out section. It brings quaint figurations in the whole-tone scale accompanying motive b. A resounding *fortissimo* brings this part to a close in the manner of a brilliant cadenza. The fourth part, corresponding to the coda, goes back to motive a, brings a fantastic improvisation which also interweaves motive b, and brings the sonatina to a close, very expressively, in soft *chiaro-oscuro* tints obtained by different chords melting into each other, with passages in parallel fifths. Of these harmonic peculiarities more will have to be said in the section of this essay devoted expressly to that subject. The idea underlying the construction of this sonatina is remarkable. It corresponds equally well to the several parts of the typical first "sonata" movement and to the several movements of the sonata:

- Section 1: first theme—or first movement (Allegro moderato).
 “ 2: second “ —“ second “ (Andante).
 “ 3: working-out part or finale (Allegro).
 “ 4: taking up first theme, and coda or coda (Allegro).

The *Second Sonatina* (1912, Breitkopf & Härtel) proceeds into new regions much more resolutely than any of Busoni's former works. It abandons entirely the maxims of tonality, of regular measure and of harmony based on the triad. This piece has no particular key, it is written without any signature, and every sharp or flat is marked every time it occurs. But quite apart from this manner of writing there is no possibility of determining a certain key even in the single sections. The ordinarily accepted system of cadences, of modulation, cannot be applied here. Chords are not formed in the way of triads, by the superposition of thirds, but rather more frequently by a conglomeration of seconds, fourths, fifths—indeed, hardly a single triad occurs in the whole piece. There is no time-signature; the piece follows approximately the “free rhythms” of the old Dutch composers; it does away with the single bars, dividing a piece regularly. Forsooth, a problematic composition, as problematic as is possible without departing altogether from our system of tempered tuning, our chromatic half-tone scale, the keyboard of the piano. But one feels that this scale, this keyboard, are fetters which the composer would gladly abandon, if there were to be found a practicable way of doing so. What, then, is the effect of this strange composition? One must hear it played by Busoni himself in order to get an adequate idea of its peculiar fascination of colour, its intricate design. It is best characterized by the words which form its heading: “*Il tutto vivace, fantastico, con energia, capriccio e sentimento.*” In fact, these words might be applied to Busoni as a composer in general. His distinguishing characteristics are vividness, fantastic imagination, strong energy, capriciousness and profound sentiment.

In many of his compositions Busoni has evinced an exceptional mastery of the contrapuntal style of writing. The acme of this style is reached in the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* for piano (Breitkopf & Härtel). This composition, dated 1910, was written during the American tournee of the artist. It is based on several fugues from Bach's Art of Fugue, especially that marvellous fragment which Bach was working at during the last days of his life. A number of musicians have tried their wits at the task of completing this grandiose torso. But, while working at it,

Busoni turned the contrapuntal, technical study into an original composition. He aims rather at building a new structure around a ruin than at merely restoring the ruin. Thus he gains peculiar beauties from the contrast of old and new, from the juxtaposition of the severe Bach style and the nervous Busoni style, from the fusing of these heterogenous elements into one compound whole of peculiar aspect. There are two versions of this fantasia. The larger one begins with an extended prelude on the choral-melody "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Dank," a strange piece of music, of sombre, timid expression, with a few moments of brightness interspersed. This weighty choral-fantasy serves as introduction to the series of fugues now following. John Sebastian Bach has the word now for a while. After the two fugues from the "Art of Fugue" the third one (half finished by Bach) on the theme B-a-c-h appears. This fragment Busoni brings to a close in a powerful climax. It is followed by a mystic intermezzo on B-a-c-h, which takes up the opaque colours of the prelude. Three variations follow on the themes of the three fugues. A rhapsodic cadenza leads into the fourth fugue, in which Busoni erects a magnificent structure from the four themes of the different fugues, employing all devices of contrapuntal art, double and triple counterpoint, inversion, augmentation, diminution. This quadruple fugue is worked up to a most impressive climax, after which the choral melody returns, now soaring in ethereal heights above the menacing murmur of the deep *basso ostinato*; a close of majestic power, firm and broad, crowns this astonishing piece of workmanship, elevated to the height of a true work of art by passing through the mind of an artist of boundless aspirations.

The Fantasia contrappuntistica is hardly apt to arouse the enthusiasm of the ordinary concert-public, because its intensity is too uninterruptedly strong. It will be the privilege of the musician to appreciate fully and to enjoy the spiritual loftiness of this composition. A second version of it is not only considerably abridged, but quite different in some respects. The choral-prelude is shorter—in fact, a new composition; the intermezzo with variations and cadenza is omitted entirely.

Two small orchestral pieces, the *Berceuse élégiaque* and the *Nocturne symphonique*, show the fully developed, mature style of Busoni, his individuality clearly marked. The orchestral mass is dissolved here into individual elements. The intimacy, perspicuous clearness, delicacy of tone-colours desired necessitate the suppression of the massive, loud-sounding instruments, like trumpets and trombones. A new kind of "polyphonic harmony"

is used. Not one part is written against the other, not one group of instruments balanced against another, but tone against tone, every single instrument against some other. The music looks very simple, but its proper performance demands an infinite subtlety, otherwise pieces of this kind are easily turned into caricatures. Different chords run into each other, major and minor are sounded at the same time, unexpected chord-combinations clash one upon another. In the Berceuse, for instance, towards the end the celesta plays in A major and the harp at the same time in C minor. The resulting sonority is not, as in arithmetic, the simple sum of the component parts, but something new, totally different, due to the shading of the single *valeurs* of colours, as the painters call it. As in the second sonatina, new chords composed of seconds, fourths, sevenths abound here, showing that chord-effects are possible in ways different from the ordinary superposition of thirds.

The Berceuse is an elegiac piece of extremely delicate sound, in fact, perhaps the most delicate piece to be found in orchestral literature, more so, even, than Berlioz's "Queen Mab" scherzo, or "Will o' the Wisp" menuet, although not resembling these pieces in the least otherwise. The melody is plaintive, sorrowful, frequently interrupted as if by sobbing and moaning, here and there swelled by a sudden, but quickly subdued outburst of grief. These cries of woe wander from one instrument to another; towards the close the piece exhales its breath, so to say, as if dying. From beginning to end the rocking rhythm of the accompaniment figures is maintained, calm in its monotonous motion. "Cradle-song of the man at the coffin of his mother" is the subtitle of this extraordinary composition; it will serve to throw a light on the emotional "Stimmung" poured forth from these tones.

Different from the dusky, twilight colours of this piece are the still darker shades of night which seem to envelop the tones of the "Nocturne symphonique." The polyphonic texture of the nocturne is still denser. The breath of southern skies pervades both pieces. The Berceuse is more in the manner of a monologue, the Nocturne more like a dialogue. Sad, low, trembling in painful emotion, is the speech of both. Just as the eye needs special adaptation in order to perceive gradually the contours of objects in the darkness, so the ear must get accustomed to the dense network of tone-threads which is spun around these melodic fragments, to the peculiar manner in which the tone-colours flow into each other.

To the same group of compositions of Busoni's latest phase belongs the *Indian Fantasy* for piano and orchestra. It is, however, of a much more popular stamp, despite its complexity. A brilliant piano-piece on genuine Indian motives, distinguished by a plastic clearness hard as steel. Three parts passing one into the other form the entire composition: A fantasy, a canzone (of a quite enchanting beauty), and a finale on three Indian motives and an original melody. The endless sweep of the North American prairies is placed before the imagination in this picturesque composition: the father of rivers, the mighty Mississippi; the melancholy of the vast plains; against the distant horizon the silhouettes of the redskins; we hear the trampling of horses on-rushing in furious gallop, the war whoops; we see the glitter of menacing tomahawks; we almost smell the fresh breeze of the prairie, the cool morning air.

One of Busoni's most important and characteristic works is his opera *Die Brautwahl*. Its first performance took place at the Hamburg opera, April 13, 1912. Afterwards it was given in Mannheim, but in spite of these performances it is as yet almost unknown and did not meet with the success it deserves. This "musical-fantastic comedy" is still awaiting a sympathetic performance; only then can an adequate judgment be pronounced. All criticisms of the Hamburg *première* agreed in the opinion that a wealth of music was lavished on a subject which did not repay the labour spent on it. Busoni has his own ideas, however, about the nature of a dramatic text and its musical treatment, which differ from the commonly accepted opinions on this subject. In his thoughtful *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* (English edition, G. Schirmer, 1911) he makes some interesting allusions to this topic (pp. 13-15). At all events, it is certain that the text (by Busoni himself) also shows the hand of an unusual artist, a soulful and thoughtful poet. Perhaps its theatrical verve is not strong enough for the taste of the average theatre-goer, but its artistic qualities are beyond all doubt. What attracted Busoni in the story of E. T. A. Hoffmann, the great Berlin romantic novelist of a century ago, is the atmosphere of a supernatural, fantastic element in its mixture with reality. The scene is laid in the Berlin of 1820, with its atmosphere of well-ordered rationalism; a bright, daylight scene with which the demoniac, mysterious, nocturnal visions of the characters engaged contrast strangely. Here Busoni has found an occasion to give vent to his strong sense for fantastic humour, grotesque, bizarre imagination. And in all these respects the *Brautwahl* score is a masterpiece of the

first rank. In fact one of the most admirable orchestral scores in the exuberant wealth of original ideas, sounds of picturesque novelty, imagery of the most brilliant kind, powerful and enchanting in its mystic depth and the purity of its emotional strength.

The *orchestral suite* of 5 pieces, published separately, will give a good idea of the *Brautwahl* music when transferred to the concert-room. No. 1, "Spukhaftes Stück," is the musical description of a magic trick played by the goldsmith Leonard. He bewitches the entire company, so that they begin a galop, dancing more and more wildly till they are completely exhausted. No. 2, "Lyrisches Stück," is a composition of Fouqué's poem "Ein Flüstern, Rauschen, Klingen geht durch den Frühlingshain"—a most delicate melody, characteristic of Busoni's austere tenderness; in the opera it is sung by the heroine at her spinet. No. 3, "Mystisches Stück," comprises the mystic, solemn actions of the opera. It includes the apparition of the unknown bride to the bridegroom at midnight of a certain autumn day, a piece of music which is also included in the "Elegies" for piano. No. 4, "Hebräisches Stück," gives the portrait of Manasse, the mysterious old Jew who plays such a conspicuous part in Hoffmann's novel. The orthodox and demoniac traits of this fantastic character are expressed in the music, in which a complicated, meditative, sombre fantasy on Hebrew synagogue-melodies is particularly conspicuous, with its strange murmurings, groans, and wild, weird outcries. No. 5, "Heiteres Stück," is brimful of life and motion, descriptive of the first scene of the opera (which is laid in the Berlin park, the "Thiergarten"); the band playing jolly tunes, while the crowd of Berlin people is listening, drinking coffee and eating cake. To this is attached the brilliant "Feuergaukelspiel" which ends the first act, descriptive of magic tricks.

Another piece of the *Brautwahl* music, not contained in the suite, but nevertheless suitable for the concert-hall, is the prelude to the third act, to which may be joined the first scene: a sombre night by the frog-pond in the Berlin Thiergarten; the desolate lover, about to end his life by jumping into the pond, is rescued at the last moment. There is a mixture of impressive landscape-painting and plaintive humour in the tragi-comical situation. The post-horn, sounding from far off, opens the symphonic prelude in a romantic manner. Voices of the night accompany this post-horn melody;—the sighing of the wind, the murmurings of the foliage, strange sounds of the rippling water

and of animals, the croaking of frogs. A symphony in green, as one critic has fitly characterized this piece of music.

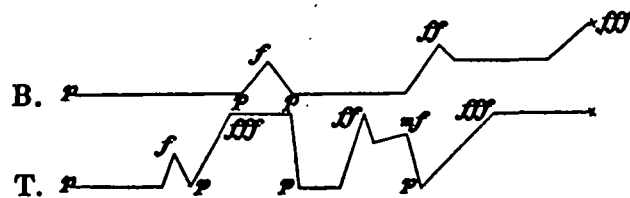
A study of the composer Busoni would be incomplete without taking into consideration his *Transcriptions*, which only a creative mind could have brought to such a perfection.

The number and importance of these transcriptions is so considerable that they form a class by themselves in his lifework, and deserve a detailed appreciation. The art of transcription in a modern sense was a creation of Liszt, who, with admirable skill, adapted to the piano in a most effective and brilliant manner pieces originally written for the orchestra, whole scenes from operas, songs, and pieces for organ and violin. Busoni follows the tendency of Liszt, which may be shortly expressed thus: A really artistic transcription for piano differs considerably from what is generally called a "Klavierauszug," a piano score, inasmuch as it is not satisfied to arrange the music in a playable manner for the piano, but tries to translate the composition into the idiom of the piano. Thus a good transcription ought to sound as if it were written from the start for the piano; like a good translation which should read as if it were written originally in the language into which it is translated. The transcriptions of Busoni differ from those of Liszt in that they are more systematic, more precise, more penetrating. In the main, Busoni's transcriptions are limited to organ compositions by J. S. Bach. His aim has been to translate the organ-works into the language of the pianoforte, while seeking to enrich the idiom of the piano by new turns and expressions derived from the organ. His transcriptions are, in fact, as pianistic as may be desired; moreover, they reproduce in new effects of sound the peculiar organ-style with its sudden changes from one colour to another, from *piano* to *forte*, its powerful, massive chords. Busoni makes a principle of avoiding almost entirely chords struck in the arpeggio manner, as being alien to the organ character and depriving the chords of their organ-like solidity and massive power. It is interesting to see how, by this means alone, his transcriptions get a more organ-like sound than those by Liszt, Tausig and others. By careful doubling of chord-notes, choice of proper octaves, distributing the music to both hands in a practical way, and a refined use of the pedal, he obtains surprising effects. A comparative study of Busoni's and Tausig's transcriptions of Bach's D minor Toccata and Fugue will show the differences clearly. Busoni's manner of transcription is much more subtle, more differentiated, and at the same time more powerful and organ-

like in character. The following two bars are instructive regarding the ingeniousness of Busoni's manner. He avoids Tausig's arpeggio, and gets the organ-like difference of sound between the different parts by a careful gradation of strength in the successive chords, *f*, *fz*, *mf*, *p*—and a wonderful pedal treatment:

The image shows a musical score comparing two transcriptions of a passage. The top part, labeled 'Tausig:', is marked 'Adagio' and shows a series of chords. The bottom part, labeled 'Busoni:', is marked 'Adagissimo' and shows the same passage with dynamic markings *f*, *fz*, *mf*, and *p*. A 'meno forte' marking with a fermata is also present in the Busoni part.

His interpretation likewise, the building of the climaxes, is more monumental, in simple lines, more thoughtful and much more effective than Tausig's. The line of intensity in Busoni's interpretation is much more convincing than Tausig's somewhat arbitrary rise and fall, running thus:



These few indications must suffice to make clear the exceptional qualities of Busoni's transcriptions. The following is the list of his Bach transcriptions, most of them published by Breitkopf & Härtel:

- Bach*, 6 Tonstücke: Organ Prelude and Fugue D major.
- 4 Choral preludes: 1. Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme;
- 2. In dir ist Freude; 3. Ich ruf zu dir; 4. Nun freut euch, liebe Christen.
- Chaconne for Violin.

2 Organ Toccatas, C major and D minor.
 Preludes and Fugues, E \flat and E minor.
 Orgelchoralvorspiele auf das Pianoforte im Kammer-
 stil übertragen.

In close connection with the transcriptions, his editions of Bach's piano-works are to be considered. They are not many, but are among the most valuable and useful of their kind. *Bach's two- and three-part Inventions*, long recognized as a cornerstone of pianistic technique, have been edited most carefully by Busoni (two volumes, published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipsic). Fingering, phrasing, expression-marks, analytical remarks, make this edition of this classical work the one which is most exhaustive as regards usefulness. In fact, the pedagogical importance and the musical design of these Inventions will be more thoroughly revealed in this edition than in any other.

The Inventions serve as an introduction to the vast structure of the *Well-tempered Clavichord*. To the many editions of this invaluable collection of preludes and fugues Busoni has added one which, in many ways, is superior to all. The first part was published many years ago (Schirmer, and the Universal Edition, Vienna); Breitkopf & Härtel are at present publishing the second part. Busoni's aim is not archeological or historical. Though preserving the utmost fidelity to the original text, his edition is made in view of the modern piano, not of the clavecin as Bach played it. As the renaissance of the clavecin progresses in our days, it will no doubt be very valuable to possess an authentic edition of the work in its original intention. Since the modern piano, however, will nevertheless maintain its predominance, it is necessary to adapt Bach's work to the modern instrument, so that its wealth of ideas may be expressed by its means to the best advantage, according to the style of Bach. This problem of translating clavecin-music for the modern piano has been solved by Busoni with an admirable mastery. The old instrument and the new differ so considerably from each other that it is not possible, in most cases, to play the same piece in the same manner on both. Analytical notes, remarks on the proper Bach style, practical fingering, careful marks of expression, adaptations of single pieces as instructive études for the development of modern technique, all this taken together makes this edition unique of its kind.

An edition of the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* (Universal Edition, Vienna) is of like value. Bach's *Capriccio on the departure*

of the beloved brother, four *Duets* for piano, *Fantasy, Adagio and Fugue* arranged for concert performance, have appeared at Breitkopf & Härtel's.

To these have to be added Busoni's versions of Liszt's compositions: *Spanish Rhapsody with orchestra, Fantasy and Fugue "Ad nos ad salutarem undam," Mephisto Waltz, Heroic March, Polonaise* in E major with final cadenza and the *Figaro Fantasy*.

Most instructive and valuable for pianists of advanced technical abilities is Busoni's edition of the Paganini-Liszt Theme and Variations, *Étude No. 6*, "a study in transcription" (Breitkopf & Härtel). It contains the original text by Paganini, the two different versions by Liszt, and Busoni's own version, written in the manner of an orchestral score, so that measure by measure a comparison of these four different versions is possible.

All these transcriptions and editions, these arrangements of Bach's and Liszt's compositions, are intended to be "contributions to the school of advanced pianoforte playing." In one of his prefaces Busoni writes about them thus: "In their entirety they are similar to an educational building which—preferably with Bach music as its basis—seems capable of eventually bearing further and younger superstructures, like unto a sturdy old oak-tree, which, although ever growing older itself, still continues to put forth the greenest and freshest of shoots."

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Surveying, as above, the entire work of Busoni up to his fiftieth year, his development becomes clear. His main characteristics from the start are an Italian sense of clearness, of vivid rhythmical energy, form and proportion, combined with the German sense of architecture, of composition in the proper sense of the word, of endless striving after an ideal of perfection. The source of his creative ability is vivid, passionate southern temperament, an instinct of making music like a fanciful play, and combined with this a gift of profound meditation, an intelligence of the highest stamp, a tendency toward intricate speculation.

In a simple formula: Gay dance-rhythm and learned polyphony, light, graceful motion and weighty thought; Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, the last Beethoven, Bach—these are the masters whose influence is most marked in his earlier works. But his whole love and unbounded admiration from the start up to the present day has always belonged to Mozart. The clearness of

form, the economical use of means, the power of presenting complicated things in the simplest possible manner, traits which strongly characterize Busoni's art, are derived mainly from Mozart. Wagner has influenced him only during a limited period of his youth, less than all the other noted musicians of equal age. His artistic creed has later on rather put him into opposition towards Wagner, felt instinctively at first, expressed logically afterwards. From about 1890 the progressive tendencies become more and more manifest. Slowly Busoni turns towards a new horizon, yet never losing the ground under his feet, always remaining firmly rooted in the past. This circumstance gives a legitimate, natural aspect to his most daring innovations; they are a necessary growth, not whimsical, sensational, or forced.

The sense for new combinations of simultaneous tones, for delicate shadings of tone, is a peculiarity of our nervous age and its most salient characteristic. To this modern development of harmony Busoni has made some very important contributions. Step by step his innovations can be traced. The compositions up to about 1895 hardly go beyond the practice of modern chromatic harmony as we find it in Liszt's and Wagner's works. But from about 1900 new elements of harmony make their appearance in his music. He first exercises his ingenuity to find new effects within the system of chords generally accepted. Some of his processes are the following: Major and minor triad simultaneously, progressions of parallel fifths and fourths, different chords sounding together, different keys at the same time, chords formed by a conglomeration of seconds and fourths, new scales, new forms of cadence and modulation, a more liberal aspect of tonality, disregard for the commonly accepted idea of tonality, a striving aimed at evolving third-tones and quarter-tones. Some examples chosen from his different works may illustrate his use of the harmonic means. In "All' Italia" (in the "Elegies") we find major and minor triads, sustained by the pedal, sounding at the same time. It is strange that composers should not have thought of this effect before, since it is given in the germ by

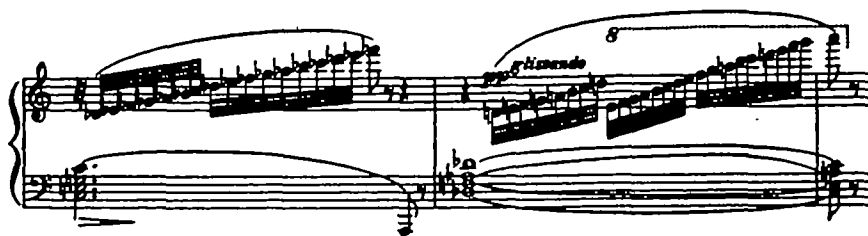


nature in every minor chord. In the chord of *b* flat minor, for example, while *d* flat is heard distinctly, we hear *d* flat faintly at the same time, it being the fourth overtone of the fundamental note *b* flat.

How he manages to produce unusual, striking effects within the commonly accepted tonality may be illustrated by a few quotations from the "Fantasia contrappuntistica."



Different keys at the same time with picturesque effect at the close of the "nocturnal apparition" (No. 6 of the Elegies); C major and *D* flat, *D*-minor scale accompanied by *D* flat-major chord:



The colour-difference of the single "valeurs" in these passages must of course be observed closely, in order to produce the right effect. The strange passage from the "Berceuse" comes under

the same head, *C* minor and *A* major, *E* major and *G* minor, together:

Celesta

Harp

The following measures taken from the close of the first sonatina show the strange effect of different keys sounding into each other, and of parallel fifths:

Molto sostenuto
poco espr.

ppp

pp

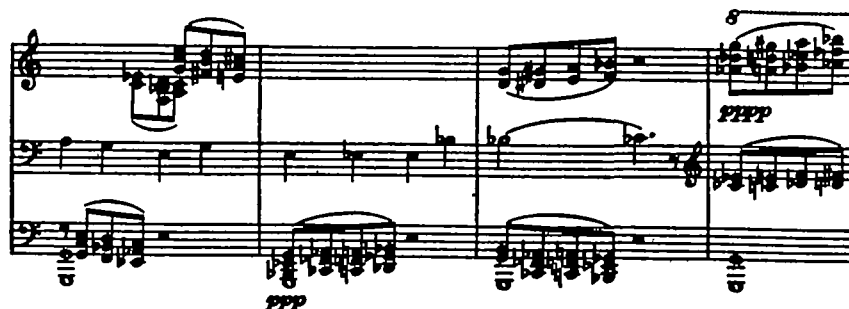
Finally, the following quotation from the second sonatina shows the entire emancipation from our current system of harmony. Tonality is abolished; triads occur, but without regard to a certain key; chords composed of fourths and sevenths are used. If properly played, the passage has a most peculiar effect, shadowy, dusky, of indefinite colour, suggesting mystic twilight:

ppp

ppp

dolente e contendo

ppp



With the Finnish composers, especially Sibelius, the modern French school around Debussy, and Delius, Scriabine, Schönberg, Busoni has some traits in common. Though a superficial observer might perhaps consider him a follower of these musicians, still the differences between his way of writing and theirs are greater than the similarities. The most striking resemblance between Debussy and Busoni is their predilection for exotic scales. The possibilities of our major and minor scale in a melodic and harmonic way are apparently exhausted. Hence the desire of progressive minds to procure new material for music. The mediæval church scales have been utilized more or less by modern composers, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, César Franck, the modern Russians and Frenchmen. As the music of the Oriental nations became more familiar in Europe, it exercised a certain influence. The Pentatonic scale of the Chinese, the ancient Scotch and the North American Indians, the whole-tone scale of the Siamese, found its way into French music, partly by the way of Russia. By experiment, Busoni has found out that there are more than a hundred scales possible, many of which have doubtless never yet been used in composition. Though Busoni and the modern French and Russian writers occasionally meet on common ground in the use of such scales, still, his manner of employing them, his thematic invention, his spiritual capacities and temperament are considerably, in fact fundamentally, different from theirs. Busoni is more austere, more masculine, more exalted and of greater energy, less enchanting, less soft and flexible than Debussy. From Schönberg and Scriabine, the two most radical modern musicians—apart from the futurists in Italy, who so far have not been accepted seriously—Busoni differs by his more organic and sounder art, by the stronger, more legitimate, broader basis, musically as well as spiritually and intellectually. He continues in a straight line the series of the older masters, whereas most

of the radical modernists run the risk of losing their way in a side-path which leads into a wilderness. In solid musicianship, musical erudition and polyphonic art, he surpasses all the other modernists, in fact, he deserves in all these respects the title of "master" in the sense in which it is commonly applied. Among these masters there has always existed, as the history of art shows, a marked difference as regards their attitude towards expression and means of expression. All real masters have always had to express something personal, unique, new. Many of them have found it possible to express their individual feelings within the range of the technical means in use at their time, or without considerable departure from this technical basis. Others have sought their ideal by trying to develop new means of expression, new harmonies, rhythms, forms, sounds. And among these again there are some who come to their discoveries in a naive way, by inspiration, others by a systematic, scientific investigation, by labour of the intellect. Busoni seems to belong to the last class, most emphatically. He meditates profoundly on the possibilities of a change, an advance in form, colour, harmony, rhythm. Like a great inventor he experiments in all these directions, not at haphazard, but with superior intelligence—in this way far superior to revolutionary anarchists like Schönberg and Scriabine—with a certain end in view. With passionate energy he works at his problems. Occasionally, it may seem as if this intellectual labour overbalanced the emotional essence, the soul, as if the means of expression were ahead of the inspiration. But always, so far, he has succeeded in mastering his own progressive ideas, so that his inspiration regains its due prominence; his invention, his ideas, become such that they need just those novel ways of expression. Thus the balance is restored, the basis is found which might be sufficient for a whole series of years. But his restless mind is not content with the result thus gained; he does not care to rest on his laurels; in his next work he is urged forward to try something new. Again he begins experimenting, his fertile mind finds new technical devices, and before long his creative imagination is enflamed, he breathes naturally in the new atmosphere.

His art has often been criticized by superficial observers as being too intellectual, too cool, somewhat soulless. This criticism I consider altogether unjust. He is "problematic," no doubt, because he is in advance of the standard of the day. But his music ceases to be problematic as soon as his listeners have become familiar with his way of expression. He has written

some eloquent words on feeling and emotion in his "Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music," and I quote a few of these sentences at the end of this essay, because they throw light on his ideas of art:—"In art feeling is held to be the highest moral qualification. In music, however, feeling requires two consorts, taste and style. Now, in life, one encounters real taste as seldom as deep and true feeling; as for style, it is a province of art. 'Feeling' is generally understood to mean tenderness, pathos, and extravagance of expression. But how much more does the marvellous flower 'Emotion' unfold! Restraint and forbearance, renunciation, power, activity, patience, magnanimity, joyousness, and that all-controlling intelligence wherein feeling actually takes its rise. What the amateur and the mediocre artist attempt to express, is feeling in little, in detail, for a short stretch. Feeling on a grand scale is mistaken by the amateur, the semi-artist, the public (and the critics, too, unhappily) for a want of emotion, because they all are unable to hear the longer reaches as parts of a yet more extended whole. Feeling, therefore, is likewise economy. Hence, I distinguish feeling as Taste, as Style, as Economy. Each a whole in itself, and each one-third of the whole. Within and over them rules a subjective trinity: Temperament, Intelligence and the instinct of Equipoise. These six carry on a dance of such subtlety in the choice of partners and intertwining of figures, in the bearing and the being borne, in advancing and curtseying, in motion and repose, that no loftier height of artistry is conceivable."