

Brief History of the Development of Music

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I have no expectation but that any man will read history aright, who thinks that what was done in a remote-age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing today." Emerson.

No person can truly say that he is a student in music, unless he is well acquainted with its history. Our experience of yesterday teaches us of the today and of the tomorrow.

Some one has truly said that "history is a great painter with the world for its canvas and life for its figure." We of to-day make the history of those who follow after us. This is especially true of Music. We cherish today the magic flute that the Greeks invented.

Music in its development has been likened to a child learning to walk, stepping slow hesitatingly at first but gradually faster and with more assurance at each succeeding step. Again, musical history reveals to us the history of mankind. The music of different periods, while it is connected in a logical sense; is not a gradual change from first to last but varies with ^{the} different manners and customs of the people of whom and for whom it is written. The personality which formed the sub-

stratum of Wagner's theory in his time, but since his day his work stands unrivalled. Yes, we must understand the individuality of every great composer, in order to interpret his works aright, and this is done by studying the history of their life, country, and customs. After the resources of history have been exhausted, the next important step in development is the comparison of different writers and periods. As comparison in all sciences leads to the fundamental principles; just so it is in Music. Should each writer refuse to accept these general principles and formulate rules of his own, there would be no music, such as we know and love today. It is however that old theory the survival of the fittest, that has made our music what it is today. — That Divine Art!

During the whole period of Grecian history, music was held by them in high esteem. By them it was considered a powerful agent in the formation and development of the youthful mind. It was the instrument always used to arouse patriotism and courage in war. Indeed there is no musical history but that tells of the effect of music on the passions. We read of the Lacedaemonians being urged on to victory by the playing of an animated Phrygian mode on the Lyre. We read of

Alexander becoming so affected by the playing of Phaularch on the flute, that he rushed from a banquet table and seized his arms to destroy the capital of Persia. This influence on the Persians however, cannot be ascribed altogether to music, but was due in part to the words which accompanied the airs. But melody was an agent in the production of enthusiasm. We see records of music in the history of every people. All nature is full of music; the chirp of the cricket, the hiss of the serpent, the cry of the panther, the tones of all birds are all musical in a certain sense.

The history of music says, one historian, is "coeval with the history of our species. The music of the Egyptians flourished in the most remote ages, and it is from them that the Greeks derived their musical instruments. Stringed instruments were introduced by them. Ancient Grecian literature says nothing of a stringed instrument.

The Egyptian harp was a highly ornamented instrument - generally over six feet high and possessing thirteen strings. We know that these instruments must have existed for models or casts of them were found in ancient Egyptian architecture. But we do not know what the Greek music really was, for there exists today only three small frag-

ments of their composition, and this tells us very little. We know from their literature that they had no rhythm and knew nothing of harmony.

We speak now of the progress music has made during the middle ages.

Sacred music as it was adopted from the Greeks. We know this to be its origin for the striking similarity of the nomenclature. Among new devices invented for the advancement of music was a system of notation. The organ for this system did not resemble the organ of today. It was a very large instrument with ~~three~~ pairs of bellows, which required several strong men to operate it. With the institution of this church affair we note the appearance of harmony, but hear nothing of melody at this time except in the popular music of France.

We must not leave the music of this age without a brief mention of a few of the writers whose compositions stand or would stand if all were preserved as standard compositions of today and forever.

The illustrious Palestrina perhaps stands at the head as author of the best church music. His most celebrated composition being: "Missa Papae Marcelli." this is a mass and is studied

by the best writers of today. Josquin Des Pres should be mentioned as the father of modern harmony. Thomas Tallis is noted for his celebrated "Song of forty parts," which is a wonderful masterpiece of harmony. A detailed description of this piece reveals forty different parts - for as many voices as the title suggests.

The seventeenth century marks the birth of the Musical Drama. It had its origin in Italy. This new departure of poetry and music appeared first in sacred oratorios and theatricals. Here appeared the "Messiah" by Handel. Beethoven's works and that ever new and beautiful "Creation" by Haydn. These sacred dramas were events taken from the scriptures and their purpose was to influence and instruct the ignorant about the principal actors and events in sacred history.

These oratorios however, lacked taste and refinement; this is due to the prevailing coarseness and rudeness of the age. But from this time the sacred drama declined; the idea prevailing that sacred music had no place upon the stage.

The first true opera which was produced after the decline of the sacred play, was called "Dafne" and its author named Jacopo Peri. This was written in 1579. Operatic music busied the

minds of Italian composers from this time on,
 but we know of but very few of their operas, for
 they were not preserved. We must not escape the fact
 that these composers exhibited talents—especially
 in cantata composition. These differed from
 the real opera in that a single voice was used
 and the music of course, was written for a single
 voice with violin or violoncello and the harpsichord
 for accompaniment. A fair example of the
 cantata of these times is seen in the now oft-
 heard "Jephtha," by Carissimi. Among cantata com-
 posers of this time Salvatore Rosa the celebrated
 painter should be mentioned. He composed eight
 beautiful cantatas. The only copies which now exist
 are nearly worn out; they lie in the British Museum.

In Germany, the great musical
 centre of Europe today, comparatively little is known
 of its seventeenth century productions. There were
 few composers of renown and of them, very
 little is known.

In England during this century
 much church music was written; some of
 which is available today. No musical dramas
 were written; no musical plays; but songs to be
 introduced into plays and between the acts were
 abundant.

Before the Restoration, sacred music and for that matter the whole field of music suffered a downfall. When the Church of England was abolished, all church books and organs were destroyed and all singers removed from the church.

The meters progressed rapidly after the Restoration. Among the writers of this period we should mention Dr John Blow, Thomas Mace, Nicola Matteis and Henry Purcell. The latter deserves special praise for the many beautiful anthems he has written; the melancholy which pervades them all are found in few other religious compositions.

The seventeenth century boasts of the invention of the violin - i.e. that instrument as it is today or nearly so. True the viola or viola was invented during the middle ages but differed from the modern instrument in that it had six strings with frets to show the position of the fingers, in fact it was very much like our modern guitar, except that it was played with a bow. As to the inventor of the modern string of instruments, there is some dispute; the French and Italians both claiming the honor. The first noted player was an Italian by name of Bolognini. But the celebrated Corelli is

considered the father of the nation. He, it was who founded the first school which boasted as artists such men as Francesco, Geminiani, Tartini, Boccherini and others of equal note.

In our discussion of the development of music during the seventeenth century we think it necessary to give here a short sketch of the life and work of George Fr. Handel. He was born in 1684 in Saxony. His father had intended he should be a lawyer, and did all he could to discourage the young boy in his chosen art; even refusing to allow any musical instruments or associates to enter his house.

Young Handel however invented an instrument which he hid in the garret of his home. It was an old clanchord. Every night would find him in the garret trying to play this crude musical invention. Thus it was that he discovered the power of producing harmony and melody. His father after revealing to himself the nature of this now decided to send him to Berlin to study. Here he attracted much attention. The King hearing him play or rather at first hearing of his talents proposed to send him to Italy; but the boy's father refused the favor. We cannot here give the many interesting events of his life, suffice it to

say that his life history for many years is but a story of many struggles against the difficulties which ever surrounded him. It was in the - in the midst of these struggles that he at last abandoned the opera and took up that beautiful work of sacred music, which has made his name immortal. Of all his sacred Oratorios the "Messiah" is probably the one which gave him his reputation. Handel was the greatest of musicians; and it is not more probable that the lustre of his name shall be dimmed by age or impaired by successful rivalry, than any such thing shall befall the names of Holmes, Milton or Michael Angelo. Yes, his beautiful sacred music is more appreciated now than when he lived.

The beginning of the eighteenth century marks an important advance in Italian music. They it was who said that harmony in all its combinations was subordinate to melody; that the art did not consist of harmony but of a rhythmic and expressive melody.

Of the Eighteenth century writers we can here only mention briefly a few of the most noted. Benedetto Marcello wrote many beautiful psalms. Pergolesi was noted for his comic operas. Nicolo Jommelli wrote many beautiful compositions, both

sacred and secular. Domenico Cimarosa should be remembered somewhat as we remember Mozart, for while his music does not have the melancholy strains which make the latter's productions so beautiful, yet in his excellent style, his simplicity of construction he excels all other Italian writers of his time.

In Germany early in this century we note the illustrious Bach family. There - Gluck and later in the century Joseph Haydn. Of the Bach family, two of them figure prominently in the history of music. Of these two John Sebastian is perhaps of more note - than his son Emanuel. At the age of thirty, John Sebastian Bach was counted the best organist of his time. In 1723, he was appointed director of St Thomas's school at Leipzig and held this place until his death. At the age of sixty - he became blind, the result of relentless night-study of the art he worshipped. Bach was not only a great composer but - an excellent performer on keyed instruments - All his music was sacred. His beautiful choruses are little known in America. They are grand and magnificent - yet very grave and elevated. As one writer puts it "And free from the flound graces of the Opera."

Another eminent German composer of period and one who deserves much credit, is the celebrated Christopher Gluck. At an early age he was left an orphan. He supported himself by traveling from town to town and in this way finally reached Vienna where he was enabled to get a fair musical education. Later he gained the favor of a rich nobleman who took him to Italy where he was placed under the direction of the famous Martini. From Italy he went to England; but here he received little attention for Handel's music was there ^{at} its height. He returned to Italy where he set to music the operas: "Orfeo Armida" and Alcide - which have made him famous. Gluck's music has been called hard and dry, and more given to the understanding than to the ear; but he is unquestionably one of the greatest dramatic composers that has ever lived.

A great gap, a lost interval would be apparent in musical development if we omitted the life and work of Joseph Haydn. Of his early life we must say as we often have in this treatise that his too was one of hardships, and desperate struggles to accomplish that which his immortal genius had lived

him to follow and worship. Born of poor parentage, he had little if any opportunity for advancement. We see him first as a choir boy in St. Stephens Cathedral at Brema. Here he remained until the age of nineteen, when he was dismissed for misconduct in the choir. His misdemeanor was in cutting off the skirt of a fellow choristers gown. x x x Haydn's best works were written in his later life. He began that great work "The Creation" at the age of sixty-three and finished it in a little over ~~two~~ years. He said: "I spent a long time upon it, because I intended it to last a long time," and here his intentions not been proven true!

After the creation came another composition "The Seasons". This was lacking however in sublimity as compared with the "Creation" and failed to make as deep an impression as the latter.

"The Seasons" was Haydn's last work. As a composer Haydn wrote both vocal and instrumental music; although to the latter he owes his great name. Haydn was not only a great composer but an exceptionally good man. As one biographer says "He was a stranger to every evil and malignant passion, and his disposition was cheerful and gentle and his heart was full of kind-

by affections." Always ready to acknowledge and aid the claims of talent in his own art; in all his actions distinguished by the most spotless integrity. He died the thirty-first of May at the ripe old age of seventy-eight.

It is quite-obvious that the development of music lies wholly at the feet of the great artists who in fact have made it what it is and was. Therefore we continue to speak of the works of other men who have contributed to this musical world of ours.

We speak now briefly of the works of Mozart, and Beethoven of the German school. Of these we can only give of their lives that which they have accomplished as regards the evolution of their chosen art, and their most-noted and worthy compositions.

Mozart added to music a list of Italian and German operas, which are prized among the very best of their kind today. He was the founder of the Dramatic Symphony School. In all his works we cannot but appreciate as we do in no other man, save Wagner, the beautiful symphonic style that pervades his works. The form of his music was all for dramatic effect; caring nothing for the length and construct

ion of the air. As mentioned elsewhere in this treatise Mozart - music was of a melancholy order. It would make his hearers weep, but never laugh. He could bring cheerfulness, but never mirth. However Mozart it is agreed by all authority has never been excelled in instrumental music.

Ludwig van Beethoven another of Germany's greatest composers and artists, gave his wonderful works to the world of music at the close of the Eighteenth century.

Beethoven had a deep gloomy character: just so his music. The effect and tone of his symphonies are without parallel in the whole range of music. At times he departs from this gloomy but grand strain and gives us a playful strain, but it is only for a time that his mind is filled with bright, joyous, thoughts. - Yes, his life is woven into his music. No one possessing the most moderate cultivation in music but can appreciate the beautiful "Moonlight Sonata". It fills the listener with that same sad gloomy feeling which existed in the life of its creator. One of Beethoven's greatest powers was in descriptive pieces. "Sinfonia Pastorale" is said to be the finest descriptive piece ever written.

Of his vocal compositions the "Mount of Olives" probably stands first. Time forbids us to speak of the works of Don Weber and Mendelssohn suffice it to say, that they belonged to the German school and each mark a little period of advancement in the music of that Empire.

We have traced the development of music from its earliest known date up to the present century. In this century we note the rapid progress in Italy and advanced by the following artists - Rossini, Meyer, Mosca and Donizetti. The music was mostly of a dramatic character.

In Germany to trace musical history from where we have left it would require more time and space than we have. Volumes might be written of the works of Richard Wagner, but we refrain. May we halt and look backward as we reach the summit of the Eighteenth century and ask What has this divine art been doing for humanity? Who can tell. No one can truly describe its influence. Our lives our world show for it. It has softened and purified the savage mind, it has refined the intellect and elevated the character. Its good work is still going on.

and how like beautiful brook Tennyson
tells about -

"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."