Brief History of the Development of Music

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I have no expectation but that any man will read history aught, 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 a different manner and customs of the people of whom and for whom it is written. The personality which forms the sub-

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station of Wagner's theory in his time, but since
his day his work stands unrivalled. Yet, no one
must understand the individuality of every great com-
poser, in order to interpret his works rightly.
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 writ-
ers 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 thing
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 then 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 that is no
musical history but that tells of the effect of mu-
ic on the passions. We read of the Sackdemons
being urged on to victory by the playing of an ani-
mated Phrygian mode on the lyre. We read of
Alexander becoming so affected by the playing of Philetarch on the flute, that he rushed from his 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 howl 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 their ancient Greek 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 organs of today. It was a very large instrument with twelve pairs of bellows, which required several strong men to operate it. With the invention of this clumsy affair we note the appearance of harmony that bears 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 masters 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. Joaquin del Pe-
should be mentioned as the father of modern har-
mony. Thomas Tallis is noted for his celebrated
"Song of Forty Parts," which is a wonderful ma-
sterpiece 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
wrote and that ever new and beautiful "Creation"
by Haydn. These sacred dramas were events tak-
en from the scriptures and their purpose was
not 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
first—the 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 entered 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 talent, 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 violins or violoncello and the harpsichord for accompaniment. A fair example of the cantata of these times is seen in the now oft-heard "Jeptha," by Carissimi. Among cantata composers of this time, Salvator 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 these, 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 began to be introduced into plays and between the acts more abundant.
Before the Restoration 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 martial progressed rapidly after the Restoration. Among the writers of the period we should mention Dr. John Blow, Thos. Maw, Nicola Matteis and Henry Purcell. The latter deserves special praise for the many beautiful anthems he has written; the melancholy which pervades them are found in few other religious compositions.

The seventeenth century boasts of the invention of the viola, i.e. that instrument known 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 king of instruments, there is some dispute; the French and Italians both claiming the honor. The first-named player was an Italian by name of Balzarini. But the celebrated Corelli is
considered the father of the modern. He it was who
founded the first school which trained as artists
such men as Francesco, Geminiania, Tartini,
Boerlinia 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 Frideric
Handel. He
was born in 1684 in Saxony. His father had in-
 tended 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 instru-
ments or associates to enter his house.

Young Handel however invested an instrument
which he had in the garret of his home. This
was an old clavichord. Every night would find
him in the garret trying to play this crude mus-
cial invention. Thus it was that he discovered the
powers 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 on a organ at first hearing of his talent
proposed to send him to Italy; but the boy's
father refused the favor. He 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 surrounded him. It was 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 best of his name shall be dimmed by age or impaired by successful rivals than any such thing shall befall the names of Homer, 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 rhythmical and expressive melody.

Of the Eighteenth century writers we can here only mention briefly a few of the most noted. Pergolesi wrote many beautiful psalms, Porpora was noted for his operas, and Nencini wrote many beautiful compositions, both
sacred and secular. Domenico Cimarosa should be remembered somewhat as he resembles 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 were the illustrious Bach family, then Gluck and later in the century Joseph Haydn. Of the Bach family, two of these figure prominently in the history of music. Of these two, John Sebastian is perhaps the more noted—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 Thoman's School at Leipzig and held this place until his death. At the age of sixty, he became blind, the result of relentless night duty of the art he mastered. 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 florid graces of the Opera.”
Another eminent German composer of period and one who deserves much credit is the celebrated Christopher W hic.

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 then in its height. He returned to Italy where he set to music the operas "Ofeo Armida" and "Alcesti" which have made him famous. Handel'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 of our committed times. Life and work of Joseph Haydn of his early life must be seen as we often have in this feature that his life was one of hardships and desperate struggles to accomplish that which his natural genius had lured
him to follow and worship. Born of poor parentage, he had little if any opportunity for advancement. He saw him first as a choir boy in St. Stephen's Cathedral at Vienna. Here he remained until the age of nineteen, when he was dismissed for misconduct in the choir. His misbehavior was in cutting off the skirt of a fellow chorister's 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 have his intentions not been proven true.

After the "Creation" came another composition, "The Seasons!" This was lacking horror, 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 was not great. 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 brimful of kind-
by affection. Always ready to acknowledge and aid the claims of talent—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 is wholly at the feet of the great artists—who in part have made 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 placed 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 manner, the 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 airs. As mentioned elsewhere in this
volume, Mozart’s music was of a melancholy
order. He would make his hearers weep, but
never laugh. He could bring cheerfulness, but
never mirth. However, Mozart—his music 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 virtues to the world of mu-
sic at the close of the Eighteenth Century.

Beethoven had a deep gloomy character just
as his music. The effect and tone of his sym-
phonies 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 possess-
ing the most moderate-education 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 poems
was in descriptive pieces. “Symphony 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 von Weber and Mendelssohn suffices 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 artist: Rossini, Meyer, Mosca and Rossinante. The music was mostly of a dramatic character.

In Germany we 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 minds it has refined the intellect and elevated the character. Its good work is still going on.
and how like beautiful brook Tennyson
lilt about—

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