

THE TERM'S MUSIC

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Music
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BY

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"Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material. . . . It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form. In its consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire. In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art."

WALTER PATER.

NOTE

The matter contained in this book has appeared in a series of articles in the "Parents' Review." It is now reproduced, with certain additions and alterations, by the courtesy of the Editor of that periodical, to whom the author tenders his grateful acknowledgments. Although the book is primarily intended for use in schools, the author hopes that individual seekers after musical knowledge of riper years, may also find within its pages something to help them in their quest for a better understanding of the music of the great composers.

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INTRODUCTION

THESE little papers were written, term by term, for use in the Parents' Union School, where Musical Appreciation has for long been a subject of regular study. They are designed to cover the normal school life of four years, one composer being allotted to each term. It was found that, while there were a number of excellent books on Musical Appreciation generally, and many invaluable studies of individual composers, there was no book available for use in the school, which assumed the knowledge contained in the elementary books on Musical Appreciation and proceeded to apply it to the music of the great composers. There is of course much useful matter of this kind in the existing books, but usually by way of illustration and not as an end in itself. In this book, therefore, while attention will be drawn to examples in the music under discussion of general principles of composition, the music will be selected rather for its importance in the artistic development of the composer and not for its fortuitous exhibition of matters solely associated with the technique of music.

That most inadequate term "Musical Appreciation" is commonly used to denote the study of music itself as distinct from the study of a musical instrument. In common parlance "learning music" means learning singing or learning to play the violin; "musical" people similarly are those who are able to perform music and have an aptitude for interpreting it. The emphasis

is therefore chiefly on the performance or interpretation of the music and not on the music itself, which becomes of itself merely a vehicle for the display of virtuosity. It is the function of Musical Appreciation to right this balance and to restore the proper relation between the music and the performer. "Appreciation" describes the result rather than the process. People cannot be taught to appreciate good music, unless they have first learnt to discriminate between good music and bad. It is not enough just to play them good music, unless at the same time we can awaken that finer sense, which will enable them to determine why it is good. There is an absolute standard of good in music as inexorable as any ethical standard. The criteria, by which we must judge music, can only be discovered by experience aided by that right feeling, which is latent in everybody. The object therefore of the instruction, with which this book is concerned, should be to foster the natural good taste of the subject, and gradually to build up a fund of experience, which may serve as a standard of right and wrong, incidentally bringing him into contact with some of the great creative geniuses of the world and providing him with a treasure house of beautiful things, which will be a joy to him all his life.

Musical Appreciation must therefore be entirely divorced from the ordinary music lesson. The instruction may indeed be given by a competent teacher of music, but often a parent or governess can act with equal success. Music teachers as a rule specialize in the instruction of some instrument or in the training of the voice; they are not necessarily persons of wide general or even musical culture, and in the nature of things are bound to view the subject from one angle—that of the instrument which they profess. For illustration purposes their assistance is of course invaluable, but, failing the co-operation of a capable executant, recourse can always be

had to the gramophone or the pianola, the former in particular having now established itself as an educational accessory of ever increasing importance. The study of music should rather follow on the lines of the study of literature or history, with both of which it has some affinity. The interdependence of the various channels of human inspiration and thought is a commonplace ; a common direction at any given time is everywhere apparent and may be determined by a synthesis of the constituent factors, whether political, literary or artistic : romanticism is a well developed example of this truth or truism, manifested as much in the support of the Greek war of liberation or the Abolition of Slavery as in the work of the many poets, composers and painters of the movement proper. Composers in particular are very sensitive to the prevalent current of human thought. It is perhaps true that they do not initiate, but they follow closely in the wake of the pioneers, and their testimony is of great value in the study of artistic reaction to the fashionable opinions of the day ; to cite the Romantic Movement in literature once more, no serious student could afford to pass over the work of Schumann in whose music are immortalized so many of the poems of Heine, Eichendorff and the rest : similarly an intimate connection exists between the poems of the French symbolist school and the music of Debussy. The influence of music on history is of course less immediate, but the course of history is largely fashioned by the same ideals and emotions, which elsewhere found vent in the symphony or the sonata ; there exist certain works, like the " Eroica " symphony of Beethoven, which were directly inspired by the political views of the composer, besides a number, which represent the reaction of the composer to some great event in the world around him, a case in point being Debussy's " Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons ".

Music cannot however be raised to a position of equality with the major subjects of the school curriculum, unless it is first assured an independent existence of its own, and is finally emancipated from the tyranny of performance. The generality of mankind still fails to distinguish between the music itself and the performance of the music, that is between the art and the craft. The vast bulk of music therefore, which never receives a performance, has no meaning for them at all. No one would adopt this attitude towards a poem or a play; plays which are never performed can always be read, and poems do not exist merely for the exercise of elocution. The analogy is of course not quite exact: few at present have the inward ear sufficiently developed to enable them to realize the composer's intentions from the printed page alone, though this is by no means beyond the power of the ordinary man. The faculty of score reading is essential for a serious study of music; the day predicted by Sir Henry Hadow is perhaps not so far distant, when all will be able to read their Beethoven as they do their Shakespeare.*

If it is once admitted that music is worth studying for its own sake and that the realization of music into sound is only ancillary, and, though eminently desirable, neither essential nor in many cases possible in practice, it is manifestly absurd to deny the enjoyment, which music brings with it, to those who have neither the physical dexterity nor the artistic sensibility to play it for themselves. It is obviously an advantage for a child, who is temperamentally so inclined, to learn to play an instrument and to interpret music for himself, but too much time is often spent in turning a potentially good

* Since this book went to press, an admirable volume on music by Sir Henry Hadow has been published in the Home University Library. The reader will find therein a further elaboration of this particular theme and an interesting discussion of various issues raised elsewhere in this Introduction.

listener into an indifferent executant, and incidentally stifling the spark of enthusiasm by hopeless and unrewarded drudgery. To limit the study of music to the so-called "musical" is just as reasonable as to close the theatres to all who have no talent for acting, or to forbid the picture galleries to all who cannot paint. With few exceptions everybody should receive sufficient instruction in the history and grammar of music to make an analytical programme intelligible, only those being excluded, who are afflicted with the physical abnormality popularly known as tone deafness, the incidence of which in its extreme form is said to be less than that of colour blindness, though naturally, when present, it is just as fatal to the appreciation of music, as is colour blindness in the case of pictures. The progress of the science of ear training, which is a necessary preliminary to any enjoyment of music, is such that even those who are devoid of susceptibility to sound, and cannot distinguish between the rise and fall of the scale, have in a short time made remarkable progress. Any general assumption of tone deafness would therefore be as unjustifiable as of colour blindness.

The natural corollary is that all children, whether "musical" or "unmusical" should receive some general instruction in music, and that such instruction should ideally be given as an ordinary lesson in the regular curriculum and not as an extra subject. In actual practice this ideal is probably rarely attainable, as the ordinary instructor is at present insufficiently equipped for the purpose. In any case the instruction should be a regular weekly occurrence and not limited by the occasional visit at irregular intervals of an outside music teacher.

The music lesson will naturally fall into several divisions. At least one quarter of the time available should be devoted to Ear Training. Mr. F. H. Shera's

Musical Grammar (Milford, 3s. 6d.) is strongly recommended for this purpose ; it consists of a progressive course of lessons for each term, and is written in a manner comprehensible to expert or tyro alike, being therefore particularly suitable for those who have to train themselves preparatory to training their pupils. After the ear training exercises are completed a short space of time should be devoted to acquainting the pupils with the rudiments of music—the meaning of the commonest musical terms, the instruments of the orchestra, illustrated by the H.M.V. records D. 555 to 558 (each 6s. 6d.) and such like. The information imparted should be of a severely practical nature, such as is contained in Mr. Percy Scholes' excellent handbooks for listeners to music, care being taken not to burden the minds of the pupils with lists of technical terms, which have no general application ; attention should be focussed chiefly on such things as the historical growth of the different musical forms, the evolution of the orchestra and the keyboard instruments, not on the nomenclature of chords or the different species of counterpoint. The remainder of the time available should be devoted to studying the composer of the term. The biographical details in the present volume are reduced to the barest possible outline in order to save space, and should be supplemented by reference to standard authorities, such as Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and by a careful study of the set book of the term, which is chosen with reference to the teacher rather than the pupil. The composer must be made a living personality, and should be linked up as far as possible with any pre-existing facts in the minds of the pupils regarding the times in which he lived, composers being too often regarded as so many isolated figures, entirely dissociated from common experience and knowledge. The connotation of each composer's name should be as wide as possible, the mere mention of it

conjuring up the requisite atmosphere by a host of concomitants. Having prepared the ground, as the climax of the lesson, we turn to the actual music of the composer. Each syllabus consists of five or six works for pianoforte, pianoforte duet, voice, or violin and pianoforte. The music is as a rule selected as much for its concessions to the limited technique of the average amateur player, as for its importance in the artistic development of the composer. As a rule the musical illustrations should be played by the teacher or an assistant and not by one of the pupils. If this is not feasible, a gramophone should be employed, and for this purpose a list of suitable records is appended to every syllabus. In any case the gramophone should be used, if possible, for the orchestral works in the syllabus in preference to arrangements for pianoforte solo or duet.

It is better to work thoroughly at two or three items in the syllabus than to attempt to compass the whole superficially ; the amount of time allotted in the week to the subject will naturally govern the disposition of the work. In any case each piece of music should be mastered before passing on to the next ; the mere playing through of the music is in itself quite valueless and only the vaguest impressions result and as quickly disappear. Before any attempt at a dissection of the structure of the music is made, the pupils should be familiarized with the thematic material of the movement, each tune in turn being played through several times, until the class can hum or whistle it without assistance.

The appreciation of music is partly a function of the intellect and partly of the emotions ; music which appeals wholly to one or the other is never satisfying. Emotional receptivity varies with individual temperament, and is a thing of natural growth, subject always to accidents of age or environment ; some people are immediately

responsive to an emotional stimulus, while others would be quite impassive. The emotions can therefore be evoked by an external stimulus, but hardly controlled (except by the subject) or consciously developed by a course of training. The intellectual faculties on the other hand, which act as a natural check on the emotions, are more easily influenced from outside, and it must be the aim of our instruction to train the pupil to direct his judgment and discrimination on music and to lay the foundations of a standard of right and wrong, which will enable him to accept what is good and reject what is worthless, overriding the unreliable response of the emotions, which are not concerned with values at all.

It is difficult perhaps to distinguish between the intellectual and the emotional stimulus afforded by any given piece of music, but generally speaking it is true to say that the appeal of shape and form should be assigned to the intellect, whereas the appeal of rhythm and the effect of climax are largely emotional. Any attempt to formulate the emotional effect of such an elusive thing as music is however better avoided. It is a useful exercise to reason why a piece of music should appear to us good or bad, but when we attempt to define its appeal, we are on insecure ground. It is sufficient then to aim at stimulating the intellectual curiosity of the pupils, and to leave the latent emotions to develop unchecked and unhindered by outside interference. Interest in the work may be fostered by attendance at outside concerts once or twice during the term, or an occasional performance of opera, where feasible. Some kind of preparation is however desirable, and, if possible, the pupils should be acquainted with at least the subject matter of the principal works, which they are going to hear. Those pupils, who are learning instruments, should be encouraged to get up little concerts devoted to the works of the term's composer, illustrating possibly

some special phase of his work ; as a rule the music set in the syllabus should be avoided. A word of warning is perhaps necessary in this connection ; the syllabus itself is not of course a carefully balanced concert programme, and must never be performed straight through as such.

An informal examination at the conclusion of the term's work will be found expedient ; specimen questions are to be found at the conclusion of the volume. Questions should be rigidly confined to facts, aesthetic appreciation or criticism being eschewed. Nothing is more lamentably contrary to the whole spirit of the subject than sentimental rhapsodizing, high-flown descriptions of concrete images conjured up by absolute music and the like. The pupil who sees Gothic cathedrals in Bach fugues and dancing dervishes in Brahms waltzes has no true appreciation of the music, and is the victim of faulty instruction.

The method employed in the selection of composers for study needs perhaps some elucidation. The number is purposely restricted to twelve, partly to conform to the customary school span of four years, and partly to ensure by means of a short cycle that all pupils at some period of their school life should make acquaintance with the work of the greater composers ; to extend the number far beyond that selected would probably result in some pupils studying a string of minor composers and never reaching Bach and Beethoven at all. Of the composers included, seven—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wagner—would probably be admitted by all, whatever their personal predilections might be. The remainder are more debatable. Whatever the intrinsic value of Handel's music, its inclusion is justified, if only because it sums up the style and tradition of the music of a century, and thus forms a fitting prelude to the study of Bach and the great

Viennese composers, saving hours of tedious drudgery among the host of unimportant composers, who between them fashioned the implements with which their successors were to work. The other composers may appear an arbitrary selection; their respective merits need not be argued here, suffice to say that they have all composed music, which is suitable for study by the musical neophyte and which does not make great demands on the technique of the performer, which is everywhere assumed to be very limited. On this ground alone César Franck has had to be omitted. After some hesitation it was decided to eschew the more modern composers altogether, not so much by reason of their modernity as of the difficulty of adequate selection within so limited a compass. To the rising generation all the paraphernalia of contemporary music should be among the common-places of life, because it can never remember the day when such things were new. The dissonances of Ravel are therefore as much taken for granted by the child of to-day, as were the daring harmonic progressions of Wagner by the child of yesterday. The reader need only look back into his own musical past, if he has one, and compare his impressions of the musical pioneers of that time with the criticisms levelled at them by a still older generation, and then transpose the whole situation to the present day. The characteristics of contemporary music are after all only a reflection of the general consciousness of the present day in one of the many available mediums of expression. The modern child is assimilating these characteristics in every other phase of its existence and gladly recognizes them in music as something already experienced and made its own. Those who have not kept in touch with the more recent developments in music may even find difficulties with Moussorgsky and Debussy—both composers are however firmly established as vital parts of the foundation of

which the music of to-day is being built and, if the idioms, which they employ, are thoroughly assimilated, the transition to the music of to-day, in which our own country is playing so important a rôle, will be facilitated.

In conclusion, a few words of warning on the general position of music in education may not be amiss. Music is bound to play an important part in school life, and the spirit which permeates the appreciation lesson should be present on every occasion when music is played. If the true object of the lesson is realized, anything unworthy or meretricious will be immediately detected and spurned—the touchstone will be applied to hymn tunes, unison songs, pianoforte pieces alike, and those which are obviously insincere, uninspired, trivial and mawkish will be given short shrift. Unfortunately most hymn tunes and a good deal of educational music will not stand the most superficial test. The confusion resulting from a shifting standard of values would be disastrous: this can only be avoided if the faculty of discrimination, which we seek to train in the Musical Appreciation class, is never in suspense and is applied impartially and instinctively, whenever music is heard. A careful censorship should therefore be maintained in all directions: there are several collections of fine hymn tunes from those of J. S. Bach onwards, which will satisfy the most eclectic taste: the standard of educational music has risen enormously of late years and a judicious selection can be made which will not be unworthy to stand beside the music in the term's Syllabus.

Finally, the writer wishes to disarm possible criticism of this little book by emphasizing the fact that it is not meant for the expert professional music teacher. He does not claim that there is anything original in his facts though he trusts that the presentation of them may fill an existing want. He is conscious

that he has left much unsaid that might have been said with advantage: it is difficult to hold the balance. He has consciously, for want of better, adopted the language of the music primer and trusts that the few common technical expressions, which could only be explained by long paraphrases, will cause no difficulties to readers who are not deeply versed in the subject. As little as possible has been assumed and that little can be found fully explained in a hundred and one other books which exist for the purpose. If only a few should be led with the help of this book to a fuller realization of what the best in music can give them, the writer will not feel that his labours have been in vain.