

Picture 1 HECTOR BERLIOZ from a photograph

STUDIES
IN MODERN MUSIC
HECTOR BERLIOZ
ROBERT SCHUMANN
RICHARD WAGNER

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With Portraits

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Dedicated
TO
C. HUBERT H. PARRY

NOTE

THE writer wishes to express his indebtedness to the following works: —

Sir George Grove — 'Dictionary of Music and Musicians,' particularly Dr Spitta's article on Schumann, and Mr Dannreuther's on Wagner.

Dr Parry — 'Studies of the Great Composers.'

Berlioz—'Mémoires' (including the Voyage Musical) Letters, edited by M. Bernard. 'À Travers Chants,' 'Grotesques de la Musique.' 'Soirées de l'Orchestre.'

'Berlioz', by M. Jullien.

Schumann — 'Gesammelte Schriften,' edited by Dr Simon (Weltbibliothek, 3 vols.); 'Letters,' translated by Miss Herbert. 'Music and Musicians' (selections from the Neue Zeitschrift Essays, translated by Miss Ritter. 2 vols.).

'Schumann, Eine Biographie,' by Herr Wasielewski.

'Schumann.' by Dr Reissmann, translated by Mr Algen (Bohn).

'Schumann,' by Mr J. A. Fuller-Maitland. (Great Musicians Series).

Wagner — 'Gesammelte Schriften' (10 vols. Leipsic 1871-1883)*; 'Letters to Liszt,' translated by Dr Hueffer; 'Letters to Dresden Friends,' translated by Mr J. S. Shedlock.

'Richard Wagner's Leben und Wirken,' by Herr Glasenapp.

'Richard Wagner d'après lui-même,' by M. Noufflard (vol. I.).

Wagner, 'by M. Jullien. 'Wagner as I knew him,' by Dr Praeger.

'Wagner,' by Herr Muncker, translated by Herr D. Landmann.

'Wagner en Caricatures,' by M. Grand-Carteret.

Wagner — 'Musiciens, Poètes, et Philosophes,' by M. Camille Benoit.

'Le Wagnerisme hors d'Allemagne,' by M. Evenepoel.

* A detailed table of contents will be found in the article on Wagner in Grove's Dictionary. The essays are in process of translation by Mr Ashton Ellis; while those on 'The Music of the Future', on 'Beethoven', and on 'Conducting,' have already been translated by Mr Dannreuther.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PICTURE 1 HECTOR BERLIOZ FROM A PHOTOGRAPH 1
 PICTURE 2 HENRIETTA SMITHSON FROM A PORTRAIT BY DUBUFE, 34
 PICTURE 3 CLARA WIECK, *FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY F. GIÈRE* 59
 PICTURE 4 ROBERT SCHUMANN, *FROM A DAGUERREOTYPE* 66
 PICTURE 5 RICHARD WAGNER, *FROM A PORTRAIT BY C. JÄGER* 89

CONTENTS

MUSIC AND MUSICAL CRITICISM *A DISCOURSE ON METHOD*4
 I THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROBLEM4
 II PRINCIPLES OF MUSICAL JUDGMENT10
 III PRINCIPLES OF MUSICAL JUDGMENT — *CONTINUED*16
 IV ECURUS JUDICAT ORBIS21
HECTOR BERLIOZ AND THE FRENCH ROMANTIC MOVEMENT27
 I STUDENT DAYS28
 II THE SIEGE OF PARIS37
 III ESTIMATES AND APPRECIATIONS47
ROBERT SCHUMANN AND THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN GERMANY56
 I. THE BEGINNINGS OF A CAREER57
 II. MARRIED LIFE65
 III. SCHUMANN AS COMPOSER AND CRITIC74
RICHARD WAGNER AND THE REFORM OF THE OPERA86
 I. A STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE87
 II ART AND REVOLUTION96
 III THE IMPORT OF THE MUSIC DRAMA108
INDEX119

MUSIC AND MUSICAL CRITICISM *A DISCOURSE ON METHOD*

Sur les objets dont on se propose l'étude il faut chercher non pas les opinions d'autrui, ou ses propres conjectures, mais ce que l'on peut voir clairement avec évidence, ou déduire avec certitude; car la science ne s'acquiert pas autrement.

DESCARTES: *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit.*

Music and Musical Criticism

A DISCOURSE ON METHOD

I THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROBLEM

It has often been observed, in various tones of reproach or protest, that we are all growing into a practice of accepting any statement that we hear frequently or authoritatively repeated. From our systems of government and philosophy down to the advertisements in our daily papers everything bears witness to a policy of reiteration. We are, indeed, inclined to be suspicious of new ideas, especially those of unknown origin or authorship: in dealing with any proposition we like, above all things, to know who framed it, and how many people believe it to be true. But if we are satisfied on these points, if we can see the image and superscription of some recognised potentate, and feel the edges smooth with the usage of many hands, we scruple no longer, but take the assertion for sterling, without examining its reverse side or testing the genuineness of its ring. Hence we are at the mercy of our great men, without even the materials for determining a definition of greatness, and with the risk, if they fail us, of falling into that most hopeless form of poverty which consists in a pocketful of counterfeit coin.

Amid the false currency that has thus been brought into circulation is a belief that perception of the beautiful requires not only special training but certain rare and precious qualities as well. We are always hearing of pictures that are 'not intended for the common gaze,' or of poems which are 'not written with any design of pleasing the public,' until we begin to think that we are outsiders and profane persons who have no right to admire, much less to appraise and criticise. We have been, as Blake puts it, 'connoisseured out of our senses,' browbeaten out of all reliance on our own judgment, and driven at last to the comfortless conclusion that all our ideas of beauty are heretical, and that the only true faith is expressed in the warring voices of our æsthetic cliques.

This doctrine is all the more dangerous because of the half-truth that it contains. No doubt popularity may mean nothing. It may be merely the idle applause of an ignorant mob, ready to burn to-morrow what it adores to-day. But, on the other hand, popularity may mean everything. There is no permanent reputation which has not been built on the suffrages of the people — no lasting Palace of Art which has not national feeling for its corner-stone. The love of beauty, in short, is not the monopoly of a privileged class — it is the universal inheritance of all mankind. And while this is true of every art it is particularly true of Music. The laws by which effects of tone are conditioned have as wide a scope as any principles in human thought, and draw their validity from the most fundamental characteristics of our common nature.

Evidence lies ready to hand in the whole history and record of national melodies. Mozart himself never wrote a finer tune than 'Ye banks and braes' or 'Dear Kitty'; the Volkslieder of Germany and Russia, of France and Italy, of Hungary and Scandinavia, contain gems of purest lustre and inestimable value; Troubadours and Trouvères were writing delightful songs while the accredited professors of the art were quarrelling over tritones; wherever the voice of the people has found free expression there we have a living spring of beauty, a fountain of melodious waters at which generations have slaked their thirst. Undoubtedly the gradual elaboration of scientific rule has been of conspicuous service in musical training, but it has nothing whatever to do with musical inspiration; undoubtedly a misdirection of popular taste has often made a bad tune fashionable, but it has never made one immortal. Time passes, true feeling reasserts itself and the false art vanishes into oblivion: while the songs of the people remain as fresh as when they were created. Nor, as a rule, have these melodies owed their birth to the genius of some celebrated musician; on the contrary, they have sprung from the very heart of the nations that cherish them. In some cases the Composer was an amateur, like Count Rakóczy or Martin Luther; in a far larger number he is

absolutely unknown; some peasant-bard who lived and died in obscurity, with no reward of fame for the priceless gift that he was bestowing on mankind.

To advance this contention is, of course, to join direct issue with Berlioz's famous statement that Music is not made for all, and that a large number of men must always remain outside the range of its influence. But if the matter come to a conflict of authorities, there is Wagner to set against Berlioz, and Shakespeare to overtop them both, and the popular side has no lack of advocates. It is of more moment to examine the brief, and consider the arguments on which this democratic theory may be supported.

All Art aims at the presentation of an idea of beauty in accordance with certain formal laws. These formal laws, though they differ somewhat, according to the medium employed, yet rest on a common æsthetic basis, and appeal, through the different senses, to a common action of the æsthetic faculty. Pure beauty of colour affects the eye in much the same way as pure beauty of tone affects the ear, and both together derive the pleasure that they afford from certain psychological conditions which belong to all the Arts alike. But if we have to consider the nature of the idea presented we shall find that there is one fundamental distinction which separates off Music from all the so-called 'Representative Arts' in a body. It may be expressed briefly as follows: Painting, Sculpture, and Poetry, apart from the media which they employ, necessarily involve some reference to Nature — Music does not. The three former Arts are in a sense dependent for their subjects on material phenomena external to the artist, the latter requires only the bare fact of sound which serves as its medium. So far as relates to its subject, Music could exist if there were no world of Nature at all.

The distinction will be made clearer if we take the Arts in detail. Painting, for instance, whether we hold with Schopenhauer that it is ultimately ideal, or with Plato that it is a mere copy of objects in Nature, we cannot regard as possible without the existence of natural phenomena. However abstract the idea which the Painter has conceived, it requires a concrete fact round which to crystallise before it can be presented in the artistic product. The Dresden Madonna may not be a 'copy' of a beautiful woman, but unless there were beautiful women it could never have been painted. Turner saw in landscape truths so magnificent that they blinded his weak-eyed critics, but to phrase them in language that men should understand he required that there should be the sunset, and the sea, and the long golden haze in the valley. Even a painter whose avowed aim is to 'bring about a certain harmony of colour' must find that harmony on a material keynote, and must fashion his exquisite nocturnes round the piers of Battersea Bridge or along the vague shadows of Chelsea Reach. A picture, in short, presupposes a model, and can be estimated in some degree by the fidelity with which the characteristics of that model are reproduced.

Sculpture is more abstract than Painting, since it is more restricted both in subject and in treatment, leaving out the important fact of colour, and trusting for its effect mainly to graciousness of line and pose. But it is obvious that, however much the Sculptor idealises his facts, he cannot dispense with them altogether. The Farnese Hercules would be unintelligible and unmeaning if there were not thews and muscles to be observed in man. The Venus of Praxiteles was not, as we know, a portrait of the goddess, but even as a 'guess' it must have had some data to work upon. Of course the element of abstract beauty is supreme in Sculpture as it is in Painting, but it is to be found in the representation and treatment of its material subjects, not in their invention or creation. Arts which appeal to the eye may partly improve Nature, as Aristotle says, but there can be no doubt that they partly copy her.

To this rule an exception may perhaps be urged in regard of decorative art: the curves of metal work or the columns and traceries of Architecture. And, indeed, it is true that the art of decoration is only partly representative. Some of its effects are certainly drawn from originals of leaf and tendril, of sloping rock and basalt pillar, and so far it is concrete in subject and bears analogy to Painting and Sculpture. But some are, with equal certainty, expressions of pure beauty in line, and so far it is abstract and bears analogy to Music. Thus, to avoid obscuring the issue, it will be best to omit decoration altogether. The contrast is between Music and the representative Arts: if,