
A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

MUSIC IN THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION

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IT it claimed that music is the fourth necessity of life, and that the American people are rapidly approaching a full realization of this. This is a musical age. Such statements are undoubtedly true, although much of the music performed today in this country is very poor stuff, and many who attend concerts and musical entertainments do so simply to be up-to-date. During the most musical periods of time there are to be found many unmusical people, who are unable to take pleasure in musical art, because their ears are inaccessible to, and their imagination not fitted for, this kind of impression. For these people, however, the field of musical art need not be a marked off, and barred up territory; they may turn its riches to good account, if not directly for aesthetic gratification, then at least indirectly for theoretic education. Music may be considered not only as an art in itself, in relation to its own peculiar ideal and material, but also as an important factor in the evolution of civilization.

By way of introduction, before we take up the subject proper, let us refer to a name, which is of little or no importance in the field of musical composition, but is great in the field of literature of music, a name which ought to be mentioned in connection with that of Lessing, but is usually passed by with inequitable silence by the historians. Leading investigators of the 18th century have nothing to say about the dashing and original writings of Johann Mattheson, that strange fellow, precisian, charlatan, and great reformer, by his own time overestimated and despised, and by posterity forgotten. Yet Mattheson advanced theories long before the time of Winckelmann and Lessing, which have been incorrectly ascribed to the latter men. During the first half of the 18th century, at a time when the sturdy French classicalism ruled the world and the most absurd conceptions of the nature and object of music prevailed everywhere, Johann

Mattheson dared to talk about the political significance of music, urged a deeper study of the history of music, and referred those who desired to compose noble melodies to a serious study of the plastic art of classical antiquity. Lessing warned against the intermixture of foreign art-styles in painting, sculpture, etc., and Mattheson did the same thing with respect to music, and that much earlier and just as vigorously, if not as scientifically. Mattheson battled boldly against those sophistic musicians who endeavored to transfer the objects of poetry and painting over into music, who sought to interpret the content of Ovid's Metaphors in instrumental symphonies, who endeavored to picture Saul's madness by absurd harmonies and false melodic progressions, etc. Mattheson was influenced by the delusions of his age, but in his writings there are to be found a great many true and noble ideas, which have been of great value to later scientific research in the field of music. We call attention to the following ideas of Mattheson, which may serve as examples of his good thinking. He called pantomime a dumb music, and drew the same parallel between music and architecture which in the writings of Goethe and Schlegel was admired as something new and striking. He also declared that the motto of music ought to be "Discordia Concors" (unity in discord). He enlarged the musical vocabulary of his mother tongue to a very marked extent. We are indebted to Mattheson for a great many technical terms in music, which have passed over to us from the German language.

We do not disregard, nor do we depreciate the value of that conquest in behalf of the philosophy of art which Lessing carried out with far better weapons than Mattheson. The latter does not deserve the same place as the former, but he certainly deserves mention and recognition. In what has been said above, we have only wished to point out how instructive the study of the history of the literature about music may be, and at the same time to show that this study has been neglected by the representatives of the annals of human culture. We shall now

proceed to our subejct—Music in the Evolution of Civilization.

The importance of music in the evolution of civilization is, of course, dependent upon music's own character and object. If it be claimed that music's object is to interpret artistically the inner activities of the soul, in their whole range from pleasure to pain, with all the intervening lights and shades, in their isolation as well as in their mutual harmony and conflict, in their form of quiescent perception as well as of action-begging impulses —then music's place and interest to the historian is absolutely fixed by this its inner character or quality. Emotion is a most indivisible thing, the most individualistic in man, that in which a human being is himself and nobody else. But there are individuals on a large scale, so to speak, there are individuals which we call nations, peoples, races, etc., and these consist, respectively, of many human beings, who feel pretty well in the same way, but unlike all other similar groups. However, it must be observed that they all, since they are all human beings, must feel in some general way, or must possess in all their emotional life some certain unity, which admits some general conception and estimation of things. And what is true of the various peoples, is true also, in a certain sense, of the various periods of time.

Powerfully and directly to assert those inner soul movements and revolutions, those sentiments and passions, which have been the cause of, and which have been reacted against, by the outer, political and social revolutions in history, and to visualize in warm and deep colors for sympathetic thought the individual characteristics of the different peoples and periods of time, *this* is the significance of music as a factor in the evolution of civilization. An inconvenience arises here. Emotional life can never be fully exhausted in any kind of apprehension, not even the apprehension of music. Mysterious in itself, it is indefinite in its expression. Tunes that were originally set to secular poems have been used for church hymns, and vice versa. But if musical works are regarded as a whole, in their mass, origin, details, and co-

herence, with other spiritual and sensuous phenomena in the process and progress of civilization, then the element of inconvenience, above referred to, will largely disappear; and the products of music become an invaluable means for a living conception of the innermost soul of the various peoples and periods of time. No one can deny that Italian music possesses a decidedly different character from French music. The merry sensuousness of the Italians, the dramatic liveliness of the French, the brooding emotionality of the Germans, all these things have found expression in music, just as faithfully, and even more irresistibly convincing, than in poetry and painting. Even within the same nation the climatic and provincial differences may be distinctly reflected in the movable waters of the sea of musical notes; compare, for example, Bach and Haydn, or Schumann and Schubert, and the difference between the northern and the southern German character can be clearly seen.

Music as a well developed art is the youngest in the family of the fine arts, and its real history is not as old as that of Christianity. Classical antiquity was too objective and too plastic to be able to support a richer development of the art of subjective emotion. Emotion in classical antiquity was fettered; Christianity liberated emotion and opened the sluices of the soul. That music did not attain any greater development even during the Middle Ages, was due partly to the obstructive conservatism of the Church, which took music into its work, and partly to the difficulties in the investigation of the mysteries of harmony and counterpoint. However, the study of the music of these two periods of time may be instructive for a correct conception of them. Music's comparatively subordinate significance in Greek art is the strongest indirect evidence that can be given for the preponderatingly plastic talents of the Greeks. On the other hand, the *"cantus firmus"* which was chained to the altar of St. Peter's church at Rome, to prevail for centuries as the standard for the musical part of public worship, is a most eloquent symbol of the great and firm authority of the Roman church.

In Hucbald's atrocious "organum" (parallel intervals of fourths and fifths), of the tenth century, Harmony took its first tottering steps; in the so-called "*discantus*" (singing apart), of the eleventh century, Counterpoint tried its weak wings. Not until the fifteenth century, in the Netherland school of musical composition, did Harmony and Counterpoint attain artistic form. The Netherlanders —as epochmaking in music as in painting—show very clearly in their audacious and sagacious melodies the spirit of the times which gave birth to Gothic art and Scholasticism. We can see in their original melodies the new demand of freedom for the individual, favoured by the rise of the spirit of exploration, advancement in civic matters, and better business; on the other hand, this independence in their music was as yet restricted by the stiff and strictly "canonical" form which it assumed and which unquestionably had a touch of subtlety and hair-splitting—this may well be called scholasticism.

There is much important and very interesting ethnographical material in folk-music, because nowhere has the human race so frankly and so faithfully expressed its joys and sorrows, its love-yearnings and its love of life, as in its songs.

The Reformation brought Christianity, which had degenerated into empty superficialities, back to its original purity. The great step from the legalism of Catholicism over into the inner world of the spirit was taken through the Reformation, and the religious consciousness gained immensely in depth. The popes (excluding Julius II and Leo X) took energetic steps to protect the church against the powerful movements of Protestantism. A regeneration of Catholicism followed. These great movements ushered in the world-historic birthday of musical art, as a higher and greater art. These great movements brought music into social life more fully, and liberated the art from scholasticism. Music became the leading art and the voice of the new spirit, and that to such an extent that in later centuries music gained the most important place in the artistic or aesthetic consciousness. Music, while enjoying very widespread sympathy, stirred

up that which slumbered deeply in the human soul; and brought out those qualities which are common to all.

Protestantism expressed itself very powerfully through a new kind of song, and the regenerated Catholicism found expression in Palestrina's new Masses. In both directions emotion threw off its loosened fetters. In both directions there is to be seen the most fervent and unaffected devotion. And yet how different! It is the devotion of the Protestant and of the Catholic, it is the Teutonic and the Romanic conception of Christianity. On one hand, an unshakable resignation on the part of the subject under the universality of papacy, on the other hand, a free and healthy democracy; on one hand, a boundless peace, an undisturbed seraphic blessedness, on the other hand, a fearless and glorious struggle for salvation, an *"ecclesia militans"* (very clearly seen in the wonderful church music of J. S. Bach, the great master musician and the musical climax of Lutheranism); on one hand, the solemn old Gregorian music, on the other hand a richer harmonic crisis and a good singable hymn-tune. But on both sides, the Catholic and the Protestant, there was great sowing going on, which resulted in a most glorious bloom in the field of musical art.

Palestrina (1526-1594) is the outstanding musical figure of the Roman church. From Palestrina's great Masses to Rossini's Stabat Mater (1830) and Verdi's Requiem (1874) there is a long step which signifies a process of gradual detaching of the subject from the authority of the church, under the influence of a secular art-form which became very popular, although it originated in an exclusively aristocratic circle, namely the Opera.

The Italian opera is a child of the Renaissance. It was supposed to be a restoration of the ancient Athenian drama. This, however, was an illusion. But the new art-form was a matter of great importance, because it brought music out from the dusk of the church and into the world, so that music henceforth could take part in all the joys and sorrows of the people. It liberated music from the domination of the old church modes (the Gregorian music system), and brought about a symmetrical

and well rounded construction of tunes and melodies. The invention of the opera is really a very significant thing in the field of musical art—it was a big thing for music. However, the aesthetic authority of the opera has been much disputed, and the worth and value of the Italian opera, at least during the 17th and 18th centuries, was very low. The Italian opera could not disclaim its kinship with the pseudo-classical pastoral play; and finally degenerated to the most deplorable aberrations, and the most discreditable dependence upon outer, adventitious, and technical attributes. But the Italian opera offers a very instructive field of study to the student of history, and presents splendid illustrations of the corruption of the time and the luxury of the court. Fabulous sums were lavished upon operatic equipment. The people were wild in their enthusiasm over operatic performances. Faustina Bordoni, a famous singer of the 18th century, was called a kitchen-maid of Venus, void of all womanliness. Most admired of all were the male sopranos and contraltos (*evirati*), who retained their boys' voices in consequence of a brutal operation, which was everywhere contrary to law, but encouraged by the theatre and even tolerated in the church. It would be very difficult to find a graver and plainer evidence of the unnaturalness of that time.

German and Italian music are opposites, dependent upon the more abstract nature of the German and the more sensuous nature of the Italian, opposites which are calculated to perfect each other. In Italy the principle of *melody* is foremost, while Germany is the home of *harmony*, polyphony, and advanced counterpoint. France is also represented by its own principle, which seems to occupy a place midway between German and Italian music. French music leans sometimes towards the Italian and sometimes towards the German musical tendencies; but peculiar to French music, in consequence of the French union of sensuous vivacity and abstract wisdom, is the predominance of the element of *rhythm*. The three essential factors of music are: Rhythm (France), Melody (Italy), and Harmony (Germany).

We approach now a time which offers even more in-

terest than the preceding, partly because emotion and individuality appear and develop more freely, and, in consequence of this, the musical notes of Euterpes become richer and fuller; and partly because we can now point to great individual examples of various musical types. The first great musical figure to be considered is Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

A careful study of J. S. Bach and others, and also of the Oratorio, is reserved for a subsequent article.