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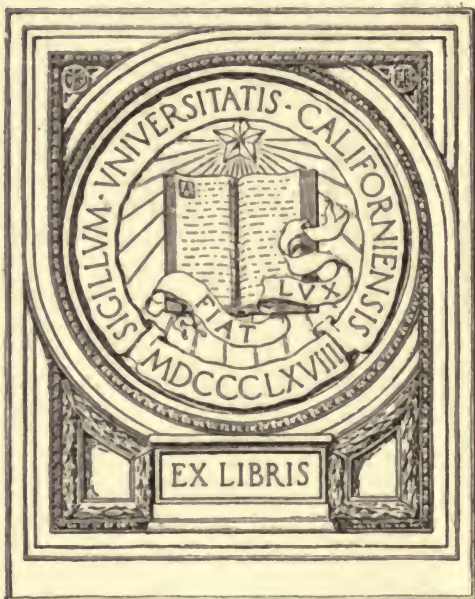
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# FAMILIAR TALKS ON MUSIC

MARY KIMBALL KUTCHIN



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June 1918—

FAMILIAR TALKS  
ON MUSIC

MARY KIMBALL KUTCHIN



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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
MAUD RANDOLPH



## PREFACE

As a member of The Wednesday Club of San Diego, it devolved upon me to lead a class in Musical Interpretation, during the season of 1915-1916. These five Familiar Talks on Music are the result of the performance of my club duty.

The lecture on the Dvorak and Tchaikowski symphonies was given at the request of the Women's Board of the Panama-California International Exposition, on Thursday evening, April 20th, 1916, in the California Building, just before the concerts of the New York Symphony Orchestra, on April 22nd and 23rd. I have included it here in compliance with the wishes of many of my friends.



# FAMILIAR TALKS ON MUSIC

## I

### WHAT MUSIC IS

**I**T IS difficult to speak of music without indulging in platitudes, yet in all platitudes is the germ of truth. But when we say music is the universal language we use a mere figure of speech—a platitude without the usual germ of truth—for, in the first place, music is not universal either as a practice or as an appeal, and, in the second place, it is not a language. The word language means with all races tongue or speech, and in the production of music, per se, the tongue is not used—merely the lungs or bellows, the vocal cords or instrument, and the pharynx or sounding board; the tongue (*langue*, *lingua*, *lengua*) is the instrument of articulation, and music is inarticulate. In that fact lies its wide appeal—it means nothing to those who are tone deaf, and all things to those who can hear and recognize it. Tone deafness is the inability to distinguish musical pitch, and to the tone deaf there is consequently no difference between music and noise—the difference between a musical sound and noise is merely a difference in vibration. In music the vibrations are periodic or regular, in noise the vibrations are non-periodic or irregular; a slight difference in degree to make such a great difference in kind.

Ethnologists say that song came before speech,

which means merely that inarticulate sounds were made by our human ancestors before articulate ones. That these sounds resembled song or music is impossible. Prehistoric man emitted his voice on different pitches, each ejaculation having a primitive meaning, just as an infant does at present. The infant expresses quite a range of emotions in his primitive way—hunger, pain, contentment, anger, pleasure; and while all his ejaculations are inarticulate, they are recognized by his mother, and perhaps to her they mean music, but they hardly do to the unprejudiced auditor.

It is a strange thing that the more civilized man becomes, the more monotonous and less musical his speech is. We actually now eliminate all inflection, and English, the most generally used of all languages, is at the same time least agreeable and the flattest to listen to—in other words, the very least musical. The Continental peoples still speak more or less musically; they use various degrees of pitch and a wide range of inflections; the Chinese language is said to be largely a matter of inflection, the vocabulary being very small and each word having many meanings, conveyed entirely by inflection and pitch. These qualities give a force and color to speech, altogether lacking in English.

Of course, the first music was produced by the human voice. It is the original instrument and man never has been able to improve on it; it is still and always will be the most delicate and beautiful of all instruments, and it possesses a power of appeal to which even the tone deaf are susceptible, although the fact that it is usually allied to words enhances its appeal to the un-

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musical. But it is the sound, not the sense, which the musical crave.

Music, to those who love it, fulfils every emotional need. Agitation is soothed by it, depressed spirits revived; it can and often does move us to tears, but it can also make us inexpressibly happy. Its functions are the noblest of any of the arts. The most lofty and universal of human sentiments, love, religion, and patriotism, always have invoked music to their aid. So natural an impulse is music, that is, song, in the love of the sexes that Darwin was led to believe that the very origin of music is to be found in the love calls of the half human progenitors of mankind. This impulse has evolved into one of the most finished and highly specialized arts, that of singing, a form of music which comes nearer to being universal than any other expression of emotion. It is the only form of artistic expression which any number of people can perform in the same manner at the same time. This fact makes it pre-eminently a social art—it draws men nearer by animating them with a single purpose.

All religious leaders appreciate this. Luther's battle was half won when the people began to sing the hymns of the Reformation. Is not music the chief appeal of the Salvation Army? How many of the fallen and outcast are drawn to listen and later to repent, and maybe even to reform, by the appeal and power of its hymns? Every one who ever has joined in it realizes that there is no stronger spiritual bond than congregational singing. Much of the power of the Catholic church is vested in the musical setting of the Mass, a form of composition which has

appealed to all the greatest composers. For centuries what knowledge there was in regard to music as an art or a science was possessed exclusively by the Church. It has become a secular art only within the last four hundred years, and in these few centuries that it has belonged to and been cultivated by the common people it has developed more than in the thousand years during which it was the ward of the church.

And consider it as an adjunct to patriotism! Rarely has a great crisis arisen in the history of any nation but that the pent up emotions of patriotism, liberty and justice have found expression in stirring music. For example, nothing helped more to promote the French Revolution than the "Marseillaise". It is still the rallying cry of the French nation, as the "Wacht am Rhein" is of the German nation. Martial music is as important in war as arms and munitions. Its rhythm is irresistible; veterans recount wonders of its powers; it banishes fear and welcomes danger; it even helps the soldier to die, for it represents the call of his country.

Some one has said that in times of the greatest trial music has its supreme function. Who can think without a tear of the orchestra on the "Titanic", marshalled together, playing cheerfully and gaily as they went down to death? Or who can think without a thrill of a military band leading its regiment into action and perhaps annihilation? In such instances music reaches its loftiest endeavor.

In the cause of peace its services are equally effective. It wears off the rough edges of life and toil; it is a safety valve for the grief-stricken



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heart; it penetrates all the recesses of our spiritual nature, for it is the one pure pleasure allotted to man. Think how a cheerful song eases labor, how an inspiring melody will restore spent forces (in the ball room, for example!). The reapers' strokes are stronger for the song which accompanies them; the plantation negro forgets the sun, the long hours, when he sings; in fact he is made to sing by his overseer with that end in view; even street laborers are feeling the power of music when their implements pound rhythmically together.

Song always has been an accompaniment to seafaring; sailors from the remotest time have sung at their work. The ancient Greeks had their songs in honor of Thalassa, the ocean. The Greek and Phœnician sailors sang just as the Italian boatmen do at the present time. In the days of the galleys the slaves at the oars were forced to sing, that they might keep time to their rowing. The Norsemen were great singers of sea songs, and we still have a survival of this sea singing in the wonderful "chantey" known to all who sail the seas. The term "chantey" comes from the French word "chanter" and in its genesis this chorus of the sailor was used to induce united physical effort among a number of men, in the same manner that a military march induces soldiers to keep in step and makes them forget fatigue. The strong rhythmic lilt of the chantey enables a handful of men, working thereby in unison, to perform the heaviest tasks of pulling and hauling, reefing and hoisting sails, heaving the anchor, and working the pumps. After the captain and his officers, the most important member of the crew

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is the chantey-man, who leads the seamen in their choruses while at work. Steam is driving the chantey-man and the singing sailor, just as it is driving the sailing vessel, off the seas, and soon these beautiful melodies threaten to be lost if some effort is not made to record and preserve them.

And think of music in the home! What an influence it is in strengthening family ties. A household in which music is a general interest possesses one of the strongest social bonds, as well as one of the greatest common pleasures possible to it. It is a pity that music is not cultivated more for its social influences in our American homes. To hear it as one commonly does in European families, where every member sings, or plays a little on some instrument, and where the enjoyment in it is so mutual, is to realize our loss in not practicing it more generally in our homes.

And last, but not least, consider music's potency as an adjunct to health, as a therapeutic agent! It has a direct and vital power over disease, especially mental and nervous troubles, and is used more and more as an influence to heal the sick. We learned this first when David played to mad Saul and calmed him. Wise indeed was Plato when he taught that as gymnastic exercise was necessary to keep the body in health, so was music necessary to keep the soul in health.

Music is an accompaniment to and expression of every phase of human life. We might paraphrase Shakespeare, who divided man's existence into seven ages, so we can divide music into seven epochs of his existence. Who can

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imagine a mother who does not hush her child with a lullaby? Even though she cannot sing or may be unmusical, she hums or croons over it with a soothing influence nothing can equal. This instinct the girl child repeats, a few years later, with her doll children. Think of the ebullient whistle of the small boy! It is a necessary outlet of his energy. Then comes the age of the musical game. Do we not all remember "Ring around a Rosy," "London Bridge is fallin' down," and "Here comes a Duke a-rid-in'," and others of that care-free period? Following this comes the age of the dance, and then the age of the tender passion, with the Serenade, the Reverie, the Nocturne, the Love-song, and the Rhapsodie. The dance form covers the widest range of expression and includes besides the community dances, the sentimental dances, war dances and all ceremonial dances, the March, which accompanies us through life. Were we not all married to the strains of Wagner and Mendelssohn, and are not the worldly eminent accompanied to the tomb by Chopin and Handel as a rule? Music is a most poignant part of a burial service as it is of a bridal service. It intensifies our emotions as nothing else can.

These forms of which I have just spoken, the lullaby, the game and the dance, are the basis of all folk music, which is a national racial expression and one of the earliest art forms of a people.

Music is the chief national expression of two of the greatest peoples in the world—of Italy, that aristocrat among nations, former ruler of the world, and of Germany, who seems to aspire to be its future ruler.

The distribution of impulses which form the

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national art expression of a people is a most wonderful thing. In some instances we can see why the art impulses evolve as they do, acted upon and determined by the life of the people, by climate and situation.

That the Greeks should have produced the greatest sculptors is due to their national life, which brought the human body to its highest state of perfection; but why, with their tremendous art impulse, should they not have expressed themselves equally in color, too? They were surrounded by the same forms of nature as was Italy, yet the Latins, at a much later period, turned to painting as their national expression of art; and it could scarcely be otherwise, with their wonderful "place in the sun," their matchless geographical outlines and position, they were saturated with form and color. But so were the Greeks; why should not their expressions have been identical?

Then why should the Teuton impulse have been toward music and the Anglo-Saxon toward literature? I am speaking of the main impulse of each of these races. Each has produced great men in all lines, but we think naturally of Greece in relation to sculpture, of Italy to painting, of Germany to music, of England to poetry. Why?

But music is our theme, and I spoke of Italy and Germany as being the ~~two~~ greatest nations musically. They are indeed the aristocrats among the nations, having produced some of the greatest men in all the arts, but it is to Germany alone that we must bow for the highest and noblest expression in music. What other nation has produced a Bach, a Beethoven, a Brahms, a Schumann, a Schubert, a Wagner? Each of

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these men is supreme; no other country has produced a peer to any one of them. What was the national impulse which produced them, for it was no accident that they were born Germans? Geniuses are the fine flowering of the nations which produce them, but back of their individual greatness lie the emotional and intellectual experiences of the race, focussed and crystallized thus for the benefit and advancement of humanity.

The Musical Illustrations for this talk were for the seven musical epochs:

FIRST—

Berceuse, - - - - - Chopin

SECOND—

Rock-a-Bye-Baby

THIRD—

Group of Children's Songs

*a* Ten Little Injuns

*b* London Bridge

*c* Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow

*d* All Around the Mulberry Bush

*e* I put my right hand in, I put my right hand out

FOURTH—

*a* Minuet - - - - - Boccherini

*b* Mazurka - - - - - Chopin

*c* Valse - - - - - Chopin

FIFTH—

Salut d' Amour - - - - - Elgar

SIXTH—

Norwegian Bridal Procession - Grieg

SEVENTH—

March Funebre - - - - - Chopin

# FAMILIAR TALKS ON MUSIC

## II

### RHYTHM



THE basic elements of music in the order of their importance are: rhythm, melody, and harmony. Rhythm is the basis of all music, from the rude beating against a reverberating hollow tree, the stamping of feet, the clapping of hands, the grunts and cries of a savage people when performing any of their ceremonials, to the highest development of our most modern compositions.

Rhythm is an element of nature, and the whole universe responds to it. The periodic movements of the constellations must be rhythmical or the solar systems would be annihilated; the return of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, the rising and falling of the tides, all are rhythmical; the pulse of life is rhythm, for rhythm is the pulsation of every kind of movement and pulsation the rhythm of everything that has life. It is therefore no strange thing that man, when performing any recurring movement, should naturally fall into doing it rhythmically; he cannot avoid it, for rhythm helps him, makes it easier, as it has a momentum of its own.

The march is an evolution of the measured step of warriors or priests, the dance is an evolution of the measured movements of the body under

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mental or emotional excitement, and the most intricate modern musical rhythms have been evolved from these primitive sources.

Walking is the most rhythmical exercise; the free movement of the feet and legs, the relaxed swing of the arms, and the regular inhaling and exhaling of the breath, should produce balanced physical rhythm. When this is not so, there is something wrong with the organism; an un-rhythmical gait is one of the surest symptoms of a mental or physical defective.

Rhythm is simply balance, as necessary in the physical sphere as in the mental and emotional spheres; in music and poetry it is the balancing of one strong beat or part against one or two weak beats or parts. It is necessary to language in the same sense that as a rhythmical arrangement of inarticulate sounds (tones) produces music, so a rhythmical arrangement of articulate sounds (words) produces the cadences of prose and poetry.

If the fundamental idea of rhythm is pulsation, the next idea should be order, for rhythm brings order into every kind of movement. When exemplified in the arrangement of matter into visible objects, as in sculpture and architecture and other plastic arts, rhythm is translated into symmetry. Symmetry is one of the chief requisites of a work of art; it is as necessary to that art which appeals to the eye as to that which appeals to the ear—as in music and poetry. Music is chiefly indebted to rhythm for its order and intelligibility, and consequently its power and effect.

Melody and harmony spring directly from the realm of tone—tone constituting the composer's

material as color constitutes that of the painter and words that of the poet. But a succession of tones with no rhythmical arrangement would be as meaningless as a mixture of colors on a canvas with no perceptible outline, or a succession of words with no inherent sense. To prevent such incoherence in music is the function of rhythm, which some one has termed "that special power which raises the raw material of sound into higher spheres and makes it the intelligent vehicle of the composer's idea."

What is rhythm, then? Simply, regular recurring accent; nothing more and nothing less. We either accent one of two, or one of three beats, and, while there are many kinds of compound rhythms, they are all derived from these two and always resolve themselves into these component elements.

Double rhythm is the natural rhythm—rising and falling, action and reaction, ebb and flow; our chief voluntary and involuntary movements are in pairs. We inhale and exhale; we walk, and, having but two feet, we must do it in double time—therefore all marches are written in double time, usually four simple counts to a measure. Sousa, the "March King", employed a compound double time, two counts to a measure and a triplet or three equal notes to a count, and it is this rhythm which gives such an irresistible swing to his marches.

Although double rhythm is the natural rhythm, at one period (and a very long one, when music was the ward of the Church) triple rhythm was designated the perfect rhythm, because three is the symbol of the Trinity. The sign used for triple rhythm was the circle, symbol of perfec-



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tion, and we have still a relic of this in our modern sign for "common" or  $\frac{4}{4}$  time—the capital C, which stands for that rhythm. The circle O was the symbol for perfect or triple time, so for imperfect or double time the incomplete circle C, one with a segment cut out, was used, and this gradually has been evolved into the letter C. It is curious that the imperfect symbol should still be used while the perfect symbol long since has been discarded. Except for this C, which students who are not better taught imagine to be the initial letter of "common time", we write all our time signatures, which determine the rhythm, in numbers—always two numbers, one above the other; and their significance is invariably the same—the lower figure stands for the kind of notes and the upper figure stands for the number of those notes (or their equivalents) in each measure.

Now, as rhythm is regular recurring accent, there had to be a means evolved of locating that regular recurring accent, and it was accomplished by the bar, a straight line drawn perpendicularly across the staff to divide the music into regular periods called measures. The bar is the division, the measure is the period; and all measures must be of exactly the same duration, although their content can be diversified illimitably. This makes musical metre infinitely richer than poetical metre, which latter has but one positive length and one positive shortness in its syllables, while in music any note may be "length", because it may be subdivided or shortened many times; and any note may be "shortness", because it may be doubled or augmented many times.

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As the bar shows where the measure begins it determines the accent, which in all rhythms falls on the first beat or count. We count *one-two*, *one-two*, *one-two-three*, *one-two-three*; never *one-two* or *one-two-three* or *one-two-three*.

We have a wonderful device in music for diverting this regular accent and thereby producing unlimited varieties of rhythm, and that is syncopation. Syncopation is simply the displacement of the regular accent.

A syncope is an omission, a leaving out; a syncope of the heart is the skipping of a beat. And syncopation in music is the displacement of the regular accent—not by skipping the count, which is as impossible as skipping the second on which the heart leaves out a beat, but by leaving out the note on the accented count. In syncopation of the heart, as in syncopation of music, time goes on but the heartbeat or the note is left out. There is this vast difference in the analogy, however: the heart never recovers its lost beat, but the musical accent is never lost; it is simply displaced and must fall on the first ensuing note following its regular omission. We can artificially place an accent on any beat or count of the measure, and when we place an accent on an unaccented part of the measure we produce syncopation. Syncopation can be produced in three ways: by a rest, by a tie, or by a special accent. If we omit a note and substitute a rest at the beginning of a measure, the natural accent, the energy of beginning, will have to fall on the first ensuing note, no matter which count it falls on. This produces syncopation by a rest. We can tie the first note or notes (if they are the same)

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in a measure to the last one in the previous measure, and the effect is silence on the first count or counts, giving the delayed accent to whichever count has a note to it. This is syncopation by a tie. Then there is the special accent, which can be placed arbitrarily on any unaccented note. This is the third way of producing syncopation.

And now we are arriving at the point where we begin with musical interpretation, which is simply the proper observance of accents. Musical accents are of two kinds: grammatical and musical. The former are metrical and rhythmic and have to do with the form; the latter are emotional and æsthetic and have to do with the content.

Music, the most direct translation of emotion into consciousness in art, is as subject to form as architecture. In the infancy and youth of its development, one may say indeed to its full maturity, music was the creature and slave of form.

Beethoven, the Titan among giants, poured his immortal works into the forms he found, although he moulded them somewhat to his purpose. In Beethoven the union of content and form in its strict classic sense achieved perfection; his matchless emotional intensity filled the classic forms to their uttermost expression. He left nothing further to say in the patterns he so sublimely used.

After him a change had to come, and it came in the forms and in the content which changed those forms. The Classic School culminated in Beethoven. After him came the Romantic School in which form became much more free. The Sonata and Symphony began to be discarded.

Composers fitted the forms to their ideas and invented new forms. Schubert invented the new song-form, or Lied; Chopin and Schumann, the new instrumental forms, the Nocturne, Reverie, Intermezzo; Liszt, the new orchestral form, the Symphonic Poem; and Wagner, the new opera form, the Music-Drama. Thus music was re-born. We are now arriving at a formless age and music seems to be declining as an art. But even now, when the classic forms are entirely discarded and each composer makes his own moulds, music must still retain outlines—for incoherence is death to art—and these outlines are still called form.

The class of ultra-modern composers who endorse the present-day tendencies to elimination of form as the triumph of feeling over convention, and thereby a closer approach to truth, overlook the fact that adaptation of parts to a whole is as much a condition of art as it is of life itself.

Here I must give a short explanation of musical form, that you may have an idea of the shape of a musical composition.

Musical compositions are divided into parts called periods. A period in music is what a completely expressed thought is in grammar. A period usually consists of eight measures, often one or two more or less, but so frequently eight as to make it the standard; two periods embody a melody, usually. Almost all melodies, as most people hear and comprehend them, are of the sixteen-measure or two-period type, the first period ending in what is called a half cadence, the second in a complete cadence. These periods are divided in halves, called phrases, and

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phrases are further subdivided into halves, called sections. Sections usually consist of two measures, followed, figuratively speaking, by a comma; two sections, or four measures, a phrase, followed by a semi-colon; and two phrases, or eight measures, a period, followed by a full stop.

What I have said on the subject of form may be well illustrated by playing the following compositions:

Of the regular 16-measure, 2-period type, familiar examples are

John Brown's Body	Auld Lang Syne
Nearer, my God to Thee	Soldier's Farewell

16 measures, with coda or close of two extra measures  
Sweet and Low

12 measures with 2-measure coda  
My Country, 'tis of Thee

8-measure, 1-period melody  
Old Hundred

Examples of unusual rhythms

Studies in Forgotten Rhythms	-	Arensky
Prelude in $\frac{7}{8}$ time	-	Schuett
Prelude in G min.	- - -	Schuett
Second movement Pathetic Symphony	- - -	
- - - - -	- - -	Tchaikowski
Supplementary Studies in Rhythm		Chopin

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### III

#### MELODY AND HARMONY

**I**N OUR last talk, devoted to Rhythm, we touched on Melody in regard to its form. Now we will examine its nature. A melody is a succession of rhythmically arranged tones, differing in pitch, expressing a musical idea. The relation of the tones to each other and to the whole idea should be so consistent and logical as to make the sequence seem inevitable and inseparable. We realize this when we try to recall a melody; each phrase recalls the succeeding one and we feel how homogeneous they all are. It is said that the power of a melody to haunt the consciousness is a proof of our subjective mind. Have we not all been distracted by a recurring melody in our minds—dominated by it by day, even waking up in the night mentally humming it?

It is curious that a melody, which exists in time and not in space, one of the most evanescent things in life, like a thought or an emotion, makes the deepest impression on the consciousness of any art form. We are able to preserve it in, and evoke it from, the consciousness, whole and with all its details, just as it is in fact. We can hear it with our mind's ear, far better than we can see in detail with our mind's eye a painting, a sculpture, or any form of plastic art, and also far better than we can recall a poem or a

story, of which we usually retain only the idea, not the form, unless we have memorized it. And the reason lies in the fact that in music the form and the substance are one, the matter and the expression identical—in other words, we are concerned with the thing itself and not with the representation of it. It seems remarkable that a direct presentation of life is so much more telling than the most faithful or artistic *re*-presentation of it can be. A melody is not a *re*-presentation of a thing, but the thing itself; hence its power. If rhythm is the foundation of music, melody is its soul, its most universally appealing quality to the musically cultured and ignorant alike.

Rhythm is a sub-conscious or sensuous impression, whereas melody is a conscious or intellectual impression, but the union of the two is necessary to produce music; for rhythm without melody is motion without musical variety, and melody without rhythm is musical variety without order.

Melody in its infancy was a very simple thing, of regular outlines and accents, so few and evenly balanced that the mind could without difficulty follow the design and receive an impression of something definite and complete.

It is a remarkable thing that most melodies are conceived in metrical form and outline, as was explained in our talk on rhythm. The simple melodies which have stood the test of years, such as "Annie Laurie," "Coming through the Rye," "Last Rose of Summer," "Way down upon the Swanee River," "Auld Lang Syne," and countless others, are all of the regular eight measure type; and probably never will be super-

seded in the affections of music lovers and never will become old-fashioned, no matter how taste in melody may progress or evolve.

Wagner contemptuously called these "tunes", to distinguish them from melodies in which such simple proportions are avoided. But these "tunes" are the basis of all folksongs and hymns, and of countless themes of surpassing beauty by the greatest composers—without which music would be poor indeed, and they have a power of appeal altogether lacking in melodies of the modern schools.

Melody has evolved from the monotonous chanting of our remote ancestors (still the practice of barbarous nations), to the most lofty inspiration of a Schubert song. Melody reached its flood tide in and immediately succeeding the Romantic period. Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms, Franz—these are the golden names in melodic inspiration, and their period was also the flood tide of German poetry. Gœthe, Heine, Schiller, Herder, Chamisso, were uttering their immortal lyrics, so perfectly adapted to song. What more natural than that they should inspire the immortal melodies to which they have been set, a priceless heritage for an eternity of musical endeavor?

Up to the period of the Romantic School musical metre was made to conform closely to the poetical metre, so that a sixteen-measure melody would fit a verse; the other verses, no matter how varied their sentiment, were then sung to the same melody, with no variation. Mozart introduced slight changes in the accompaniment, and a coda, or tail, to vary the monotony. This form constitutes the ballad.



## MELODY AND HARMONY

With Schubert and Schumann came the "durch componiertes Lied", the "through composed song". Of this form Schubert's "Erlkœnig" is a great example; although there are eight stanzas, the music is composed to express the sentiment of the poem all the way through; the listener is not conscious of the song being in verse; it is a drama, a tragedy; set to wonderfully suggestive and dramatic music, enriching the poem beyond expression in words.

The "through composed song" is the chief form now used, and the more dramatic and complex the subject the more the appeal to the modern song writer, with his amazing technical skill. Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf, and Carl Lœwe, three of the foremost modern song writers, compose wonderful songs from an expressive and dramatic viewpoint, but the majority of listeners hear little if any melody. As musical beauty lies in the melodic idea, the simpler the idea the more definite the impression produced; as the outline becomes more complex the impression naturally becomes less definite, and in modern melodies the average music lover becomes lost in a maze of confused impressions, and ends by failing to recognize any melodic outline at all, and declares he doesn't understand modern music. We often hear this said by the untaught music lover of classic music. The average listener doesn't *understand* popular music, a march or a waltz, any better, but the definite impression he receives makes him think he does.

Spontaneity and freshness of musical invention are almost lost qualities; composers can and do write highly colored, elaborate songs, but a

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simple melody to touch the heart is the rarest occurrence these days. If melodic invention, however, seems to be in abeyance, composers' minds are running riot in harmonic invention, perhaps to atone for the paucity of melody.

Harmony is the last element to enter music as an art, but it has made the most wonderful strides of all, and it is impossible to prophesy whither it will finally lead us. For over a thousand years the history of music was that of song, at first in unison, then with the reluctant admission of one, two, three and more parts. With these harmony was introduced, and we are still making reluctant admissions to it and no doubt will continue to do so to the end. Harmony always has been a vexed and mooted question—always has broken barriers and is still breaking them and arrogating to itself combinations and methods which would cause even Wagner to sit up and rub his ears in wonder at what he heard.

Harmony is two or more tones sounded at the same time. Music, as I have said, was originally song; instrumental music came later, as instruments were invented and evolved. Song at first was in unison; in primitive times, when people sang together, the first change from the unison was the octave; so the octave is the first musical interval, evolved naturally by the fact that men's voices are lower than women's—and the men whose voices were deep sang the same tones that the women did, an octave lower.

Our modern scale of eight tones has been divided into twelve equal intervals called semi-tones, the eighth tone being a repetition of the first in a higher pitch and called the octave. The eighth tone or octave seems to give the same

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sound in a higher pitch, owing to the fact that it has twice the number of vibrations as the note from which it is counted, one vibration in two being synchronous with each vibration of the lower tone.

The second interval to be adopted was the fifth, which was found to have one and one-half vibrations to one of the key note, or a proportion of two to three, one vibration in three being synchronous. The fifth being consonant with the key note or tonic, it is equally consonant with the octave of the key note, of which it is the fourth below, and the vibrational proportions of the fourth to the octave are as three to four, one synchronous beat in twelve. In these three intervals, the octave, fifth and fourth, the synchronous vibrations occur much more frequently than in any of the others, making them consequently more consonant in their effect, and they are therefore called Perfect Intervals; all the others, the second, third, sixth and seventh, are called Imperfect. After long usage of these combinations, empty to our modern ears, the third, half way between the tonic and the fifth, was admitted. This is one of the most important intervals, as it determines the Mode, Major or Minor; with it came its inversion, the sixth. The seventh, very important from a melodic viewpoint, as it is the "Leading Tone", which instinctively leads the ear into the tonic, was the last interval admitted; with it and its inversion the second, our diatonic scale of eight tones, counting the octave, was complete.

These seven tones of the diatonic scale, each with its sharp and flat, constitute the material of which music is composed. They are named after

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the first seven letters of the alphabet, and underlie the realm of music as the seven primary colors underlie the realm of painting.

It seems a wonderful coincidence that the music scale should be composed of seven tones, and the color scale of seven colors; seven is indeed a potent as well as mystic number in these two arts.

Beautiful melody and harmony have been produced with these tones, and for centuries they have been the chief material with which composers have dealt. Now these diatonic compositions sound crude to our ears attuned to modern chromatic harmonies, just as pictures painted in the primary colors seem crude to our eyes accustomed to modern chromatic coloring.

Music is developing more and more along chromatic lines, (the chromatic scale being all semitones) harmonic combinations are becoming closer, their outlines vaguer. Composers are experimenting with and adopting overtones and fundamental tones in their harmonic combinations, producing exotic effects undreamed of a century ago. It is as though they were trying to express themselves in half tints; while painting seems to be becoming more direct, to be reverting to the drawing and coloring of the earliest infancy of the art.

But to revert to harmony: An interval is the difference in pitch between two tones—we start from any tone and call it our tonic or keynote; the tone above is its second, the tone above that its third and so forth, the eighth tone is the octave and the tone above that the ninth, and so on indefinitely, as long as we keep the same tonic. Before Bach conceived and adopted

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Equal Temperament, the pitch of these tones was quite uncertain, as it was impossible to get instruments in tune, and when they were so as nearly as possible, according to the system that prevailed before Bach, only a few keys could be utilized. To explain one of the chief difficulties, the difference in pitch between any tone and the whole tone above or below it is nine commas, or subdivisions; it is actually five commas from C to C sharp and five also from D to D flat, so that C sharp and D flat are of different pitch. Therefore, if an instrument were tuned in sharps, the keys in flats were horribly out of tune, and *vice versa*. This of course was true only of instruments with fixed tones, like the organ and piano, but they were the most important then, just as they are today.

Bach conceived the perfectly simple but truly wonderful idea of dividing the diatonic scale of seven tones, each with its sharp and flat, making twenty-one semi-tones, into a chromatic scale of twelve equal semitones, as it is today, and will be tomorrow and ever after. In this way, the flats and sharps are interchangeable on the piano and organ and other keyed instruments. This is called the Tempered Scale and Bach wrote a series of wonderful preludes and fugues in all the major and minor scales, to afford practice in all the unfamiliar keys, calling the collection "The well-tempered Clavichord" (Clavichord was what the piano was called in his day), and it was the first time that such chromatic pieces were possible on a keyed instrument. This method of tuning is called "Equal Temperament" to distinguish it from True Temperament, which latter has a wonderful quality entirely

lacking in the former because it *is* true, whereas the former is expedient.

True temperament is what gives such great charm to string music and to unaccompanied part-singing; the players and singers naturally fall into true temperament; when they are playing in D flat for instance, they lower all the intervals and sing in flats, and not in sharps too. All string instruments play naturally in true temperament if the players have a true ear, and it is no joke when the piano is sometimes declared to be out of tune with the singer or instrumentalist it accompanies—it is out of tune not only then, but always.

The basis of our system of harmony is the Common Chord or Triad, i. e., a note with its third and fifth; this common chord may be Major, Minor, Augmented or Diminished, but it is a triad just the same. In the major and minor forms it produces a feeling of repose, and in all save the works of the ultra-modern schools it is the natural close, on the tonic, of every musical composition. The common chords on the tonic, and on the fifth (called the dominant), and the fourth (called the sub-dominant), fix a key or scale, because they contain all the notes of that scale to which they belong; these three chords will also furnish an accompaniment to any simple melody, which may wander around in the scale as it will, but should always conclude on the tonic chord.

A startling innovation in modern music is the elimination of the key signature and therefore any relation to a tonality. It is like building a house without walls or supports; to my mind it is not music, any more than a house can be a

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house without supports. It is bad enough when the modern composer refuses to return to his tonic when he is finished, it is like failing to return home; but it is not so bad as breaking all the ties that bind him to home and becoming forever a wanderer on the earth, as the modern composer is becoming.

The self-expression music affords has degenerated into license and has no longer a reason for being. Music is an art to enrich life, to make it better. If it has no deep message from a musical view-point, it should have from a decorative view-point; this latter is the only message the moderns seem to have; their patterns, their designs are wonderful, elaborate and intricate; so masterly that technique is the end in itself, and for that admirable, but the ultra-moderns do not even offer that excuse. They discard pattern and design, even technique; what they write vapors or storms along, much like "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The illustrations for this talk were:

Annie Laurie	Comin' through the Rye
	Last Rose of Summer
Old Folks at Home	Auld Lang Syne
Auf Fluegeln des Gesanges	Mendelssohn-Liszt
Etude Op. 10, No. 3	- - - - Chopin
Nocturne, Op. 37, No. 2	- - - - Chopin
Song from Sea Pieces	- - - MacDowell
Humoreske	- - - - Dvorak
Intermezzo Eb. Op. 117	- - - Brahms
Variations and Fugue on a Handel Theme	Brahms

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### IV

#### WHAT MUSIC MEANS

**H**OW often do we hear the assertion "I know nothing of music," and how often is it made in an apparently boastful spirit, as though it need not be a subject of regret.

Such an assertion indicates a deeper ignorance than is apparent, for it not only indicates a lack of musical knowledge, but it also betrays ignorance of the important fact that music has a serious claim on the intelligence.

In no other art is such ignorance tolerated. People who boast of any mental culture are presumed to be cognizant of what is greatest in the arts and sciences; at least they should know what the great achievements are, and many use the catch words and technical phrases with some familiarity. This at least is expected of them, but their ignorance of the art of music is in very many cases profound.

Distinguished men of letters often reveal this ignorance in an astonishing degree. Schopenhauer, who knew so much of the nature of music, knew little of the art, and had execrable taste. George Moore, by many considered a literary authority on musical matters because he has written several, so-called, musical novels, makes statements quite at variance with the facts and discourses vaguely regarding his unsound



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musical theories. And there are many others who expose a lamentable ignorance of a subject on which they do not hesitate to expatiate.

The reason lies in the fact that music, the most appealing of the arts, and at the same time the most democratic, is, like the drama, commonly used as a recreation and pastime by all classes; and those who regard it as such never seem to consider that it is of any intellectual profit, or that it can demand any serious mental application. But it has its deeply intellectual side and requires close application and serious study for one to become even an intelligent listener, much more to become an intelligent performer, and most of all to become a composer.

Now what is meant by the listener who asserts that he does not understand music? What does he want? Does he expect a definite story or picture, something with a limited meaning which can be explained in words? Words are symbols which have been evolved by association with certain objects and concepts until the people using them agree that they shall stand for them, but there are no tones or combinations of tones which have been, or ever will be, adopted as symbols of thought or perception. Language defines and limits—music cannot define and does not limit. When appealed to by tone alone we are transported to a boundless sphere, where our imagination is quickened and we can translate any meaning into the sounds we hear.

John Addington Symonds says truly, "The sphere of music is in sensuous perception; music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry which deals with words. We cannot fail to understand what

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words are intended to convey—we may very easily interpret in a hundred ways the message of sound. If music reaches the thinking faculty at all, it is through the fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never be rightly translated into words.”

And Walter Pater says, “Music is the true type and measure of perfected arts, because it presents no words, no matter of sentiment or thought separable from the form in which it is conveyed to us.”

But if music presents no words or definite ideas to us, it is full of suggestion and this suggestion is of many kinds—of rhythm, of pitch, of motion, of sound, of timbre, of tone color.

The most naive form of suggestion in music is the imitation of sounds in nature: the singing of birds, the rushing of winds, the rustling of leaves, the trickling of water, the rolling of thunder. These are familiar things, as are the suggestion of approach by increase and of withdrawal by decrease of tone volume.

The influence of recurring sounds and rhythms has something almost hypnotic in its suggestion. It is the basis of the appeal of the military march; men instinctively move forward to it, just as the feet of one who loves dancing move involuntarily to the lilting strains of the ballroom. This has an analogy in poetry. Poe’s “The Bells” and “The Raven”, and Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” are notable examples of this form of suggestion.

Then we have the suggestion of figure or de-

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sign: the whirring of the spinning wheel, the rocking motion of the cradle song, the rolling movement of the barcarolle; all composers have used similar figures to suggest these things. A spring or fountain or rivulet is suggested by rapidly running scales and arpeggios.

The suggestion of pitch is a very strong one. When vibrations become excessively rapid they cease to be sound, and become light. This all composers feel, and we get the suggestion of light and space from our highest musical sounds, and of mystery and obscurity from our lowest ones. Chopin so wonderfully exemplifies this in his well known Funeral March from the B flat minor Sonata. Sadness and gloom are introduced in the opening phrase, there are slight bursts of hope, of relief from grief and depression as the phrases ascend, but the impression throughout is one of profound sadness. How wonderful the contrast with the heavenly melody of the middle part! Here hope and light come out tenderly and radiantly, the effect being produced by the high pitch of the melody and the diaphanous web of the simple accompaniment.

Then timbre has unlimited powers of suggestion, the timbre of different instruments—as we associate the horn with forests and hunting, the flute with pastoral scenes, and the drum and fife with martial movements, The trumpet has a language of its own in the army, the reveille, the call to arms, and taps which is sounded always at the close of day and also over the graves of soldiers as a farewell.

Modern tone color as exemplified in the modern orchestra, with its multitude of different instruments, was a quality not possessed by the

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classic writers. As I have said before, Beethoven's was the last word in the symphony and the sonata. There have, of course, been great symphonies and sonatas written since: Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and others have written them, but Beethoven towers above them in that his were all masterpieces. Of tone color in its modern sense, however, he knew very little; the time was not ripe and he did not have to experiment for new ways of musical expression. Those who came after him did, among the first being Franz Liszt and his contemporary Hector Berlioz, called "the father of the modern orchestra". The latter was not a great composer but he devised all sorts of orchestral combinations, producing wonderful new effects and setting orchestration on a new level, where, in the hands of the modern school, it is becoming the end and not the means of producing music. Strauss, Debussy and others of the new men, revel in exotic combinations. They play on the orchestra as a great virtuoso plays on his special instrument, and they produce the most wonderful effects in tone color.

Up to Wagner's time writers seldom used violins in more than two parts, whereas Wagner divides them into as many as fifteen. Flutes, oboes and clarinets were used in pairs: Strauss used them in four parts. They say Strauss required every man in an orchestra to be a virtuoso—he makes no concessions to the technical difficulty of the instruments or performance; as Wagner made no concession to the human voice, treating it simply as a means of expression, so Strauss does his instruments. Although Strauss and Debussy create astonishing tonal

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effects with their compositions for orchestra, these are so much the result of tone color that when these compositions are reduced to a piano arrangement, they have a tenuous, almost an empty sound, because the original effect is in the manner of presentation, not the matter presented. This over-elaboration of manner, this super-accentuation of technique, is always a bad sign in art, as it betrays the paucity of real inspiration.

Of course, technique there must be, the greater the better, that a creator's ideas may be presented in the best possible manner, but it is apt to, indeed already largely has, become the end and not the means. In this respect music seems to be declining as an art. It is the history of all art that it has its rise, growth and decline. As mentioned in a former paper, each nation has had its great national and racial art expression. Can we think of a contemporaneous sculptor to compare to Phidias, a painter to compare to Raphael, a poet to compare to Shakespeare, a musician to compare to Beethoven? Music, the oldest of the arts, was the youngest to mature. She has passed her apogee, and judging by her achievements, so wonderful in the short period of their occurrence, it hardly can be hoped that she can duplicate them indefinitely. But if art in all its forms be in its decadence, there is hope in the knowledge that the artistic impulse never dies; it is coincident with human progress.

But to return to musical suggestion. Wagner was the first composer to use a definite form of suggestion by musical characterization. He called it the *Leitmotiv*, or leading motive. Every character in his music drama was designated by a

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musical phrase (I am using the term in its musical, not its metrical sense); this was its leading motive and every time that character appears, is heard or alluded to, his leading motive is announced by the orchestra. He went much further with this idea and attached Leitmotiven to objects and concepts, as well as persons, as the "Rheingold" motive, and the "Power of Expiation" motive in the "Nibelungen Ring", the "Eucharist" and "Faith" motives and the "Good Friday Spell" in "Parsifal". It is a marvelous system that he invented, but so elaborate that it requires not only great mental effort to recognize the leading motives when they are heard, but also prolonged study to learn to recognize them. To do this is one way to learn to understand music.

Music was a quality, by the way, which was denied to Wagner's great music dramas when they were first produced. Naturally his system did away with much of the old architecture of music, strict metrical form, but his genius was such a vital one that it substituted matter for formal manner, and some of the most wonderful music ever written was composed by Wagner. But his neglect of form was such a reproach to him by his contemporaries and was really so largely a matter of ignorance of counterpoint, that he seriously took up its study rather late in life and afterwards wrote the "Mastersingers of Nuremberg", which is considered by many to be his greatest opera, and in which he displays an exhaustive knowledge of strict counterpoint. The overture to this opera is a wonderfully fine example of counterpoint and is a masterpiece of melodic and harmonic beauty as well.

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In spite of his contempt for "tunes", Wagner occasionally lapsed into them. There are several in his earliest operas, "Die Feen" and "Rienzi". We are all familiar with one in "Lohengrin", the Wedding March; this is in regular eight-measure periods and conforms to every requisite of a popular tune, and it is meant to be one, being a striking expression of Wagner's fine sense of the fitness of things musical. This caused him to make the bridal chorus express itself in its own idiom, folksong; and he wrote for it a march which might well be a real folksong, and of such melodic appeal that it has been adopted as the regulation recessional in all wedding ceremonies, as the Wedding March from Mendelssohn's music to the Midsummer Night's Dream has been adopted as the processional.

Wagner's Leitmotiv has become a generally used musical device and is a powerful ally for suggestion, as it gives the opportunity to relate a musical phrase to a definite object; it cannot mean that object, but by association therewith it suggests it, but only that particular object and not the class. Wagner uses a number of love motives in his music dramas, but the love motives in the "Nibelungen Ring" bear no musical relation to those in "Tristan and Isolde", proving that the motive cannot be derived from and has no relationship to the thing itself.

Schopenhauer says in his "Opus Magnum", "The World as Will and Idea", that music alone is the sole presentative art, like life itself a direct expression of the will. All other arts are *re*-presentative, *re*-presenting something the human experience knows, in other words they are imitative. No painter, no sculptor, no writer, can

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possibly present anything on canvas, in clay or in words, which has not been seen, or imagined, or experienced—if not in his own, at least in human experience; the painter or sculptor can visualize beauty more perfect than we perhaps have ever seen; the poet can describe emotions more exquisite than we have ever experienced, or horrors more monstrous than our imaginations have perhaps ever conjured, but their component parts we all know and recognize. So though they idealize or magnify, what they produce must be within the ken of human knowledge, and the symbols must be comprehended to make any appeal.

It is not so with music. It speaks to us directly, and is not limited by human experience, for it has nothing to do with it on its objective side. Music cannot be made to mean anything but music, and when it has to be served with a glossary, in the manner of the modern composer, it is quite outside its function. You cannot describe anything with music, or inspire it with any meaning but its own. As some one has truly said, "its center of gravity must lie within itself."

Schumann says "where a youth of eighteen hears a world famous occurrence in a musical work, a man only perceives some rustic event, while the musician probably never thought of either, but simply gave the best music that he happened to feel within himself just then."

Music is first of all an art of expression, the noblest given to man, but it expresses characteristics, qualities, emotions, moods, not tangible things. It can express grandeur, nobility, charm, tenderness, gayety, humor, sadness. Happy is the composer, like our own MacDow-



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ell, whose imagination enables him to affix a title which will carry with it the suggestion of mood desired for its hearing. This awakens expectation and stimulates the imagination—the listener puts himself in the attitude of receiving the mood suggestion called forth by the composition, but his mind may call up pictures, associations, emotions, never dreamed of by the composer in relation to his piece; and this after all is the true message and meaning of music—it is composed in unconscious sympathy with universal feeling and emotion, and for this reason is enabled to speak to each one of us after our own heart and bring us the message we desire.

### Musical illustrations:

Pan's Flute	- - - -	Godard
To a Wild Rose	- - - -	MacDowell
To a Water Lily	- - - -	MacDowell
Scotch Poem	- - - -	MacDowell
Hexentanz	- - - -	MacDowell
To a Vanishing Race	- - - -	Cadman
Warum	- - - -	Schumann
Barcarolle	- - - -	Whitney
Spinnerlied	- - - -	Mendelssohn
Stimmung	- - - -	Sjægren
Morgenwandrung	- - - -	Sjægren
Lotus Land	- - - -	Scott
Feuerzauber	- - - -	Wagner-Brassin

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### V

#### INTERPRETATION

**M**USIC is unique as an art; existing as it does in time and not in space, it has to be evolved from time and silence with each performance, at the end of which it dies. Thus every musical composition must be reborn, before it can live, except on the printed page, where unperformed it is a dead thing.

The symbols standing for it, the notes, imply movement, but they do not move and they cannot be translated into or by any other medium. No matter how great our powers of description we can give no idea of the effect of music; it has to be performed and heard before the music lover can respond to it.

Think then how dependent it is upon a mediator; no other art, not even the drama, is so at the mercy of those who interpret it. Drama can be read and its power and effect realized in great degree by the reader, but only the specially educated can even approximate such results by the study of the printed page in music, and then it is a very barren pleasure.

As music lives in reproduction and enters fullness of life each time only through its rebirth, it is entirely the creature of its mediator. This should put a heavy responsibility on its inter-

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preters, who should serve music as a goddess, with the best there is in them, for she is an art to uplift man, to enrich his life, and expand his soul.

Musical interpretation is more than a reproductive art, it is almost creative, and for two reasons: first, in that it brings the composition to life again, and, second, in that the performer is not alone concerned with transmitting the intention of the composer, he adds to it a message of his own—for music above all others is an art of self-expression.

In every human being self-expression is a necessity, so we always get a musical composition colored by the performer: a real case of "a bit of nature (human nature!) seen through a temperament", but not always "a work of art", very often not! This is a slight alteration of Zola's celebrated dictum that "a work of art is a bit of nature seen through a temperament".

Music, of all the arts, most exposes what is or is not in its interpreter; as it is the most intimate form of self-expression, its truth or falsity is felt at once.

Emotion is the one moving thing in human intercourse. It is the quality felt in all great natures, and when possessed by the musical artist is fortune's richest gift. With emotion and intelligence the artist can travel far; where these are allied to talent and perseverance, the result is almost genius. It would be very difficult to determine which of these qualities is most necessary to the artist, but surely emotion is the *sine qua non*.

If interpretation be a form of self-expression, it must be properly restrained and directed or it

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may easily become license; the rules governing musical interpretation are as strict as those governing composition, and, if not observed, the result will be caricature. Judging by results, they seem to be little understood and still less observed by many performers; but they are so simple of comprehension that even a child can apprehend them and they should be thoroughly taught with the other rudiments of music.

They embrace three cardinal principles, each of them having innumerable applications. First, in importance, as before stated in the paper on rhythm, is the correct observance of accents; second, the proper modification of the tempo; and third, a complete dynamic control. These are the mechanical means of musical expression and will cover every example. A whole volume might be written on each of these subjects, but we will consider only the chief aspects, beginning with the most important, that of accents.

As before said, accents are of two kinds, grammatical and musical. Grammatical are rhythmical and metrical. Rhythm must be so marked that the listener always can find himself in the measure; if he wishes he must be able to say "what I hear is in double or triple time and here is the second or third beat". He should be able to do this, because the performer marks the rhythm for him by accenting the first beat always, not dominatingly but insistently. The first requisite of good musical performance is correct rhythm.

The next class of grammatical accents is metrical. The musical divisions must be marked, the sections, phrases and periods separated and indicated, so that there is a metrical contour em-

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bracing the rhythmical contour. In this way we get long flowing lines, or short broken ones, as the metrical content demands.

The second class of accents, the musical, is much more complex and embraces a very wide range. First of musical accents are those of the phrase. The phrase in music corresponds to the sentence in language; it is a musical sentence and music is made of phrases; these have to be delivered intelligently and the only way of doing so is by accents.

Phrasing is evolved from song, which in turn is evolved from speech; so a phrase should not be longer than a sentence which can be repeated in a breath. The first note of a phrase should be marked by an accent and the last one unaccented. This is a general rule, subject to exceptions, of course. All the notes contained in the phrase should be delivered smoothly and connectedly unless otherwise indicated; if the phrase is a long one, it should have dynamic variety. The repetition of a phrase should always be varied, either louder or softer, never the same. But, no matter what the length of the phrase, even if only two notes, the first must be accented, the last unaccented.

The singer phrases with his breath, the violinist (or other player of a stringed instrument) with his bow, and the pianist with his touch.

Phrasing is the very essence of artistic musical performance and renders the musical ideas intelligible, as punctuation makes clear a literary work. While the language of music is not definite in literary meaning, it is in musical meaning and it must be studied by the interpreting artist, until he can express its inmost sentiment and

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convey it to his auditors. When he can do this, then and then only is he a real interpreter, one in whose hands a musical composition is safe,

Liszt writes bitterly in one of his letters as follows, and he expresses the feelings of all composers who have the fate of their musical children, their compositions, at heart: "The poet, the painter or the sculptor brings his work to completion in the quiet of his atelier, and when it is completed there are publishers to circulate it, or museums in which it may be exhibited; no mediation is necessary between the art work and its judges. The composer, on the other hand, must have recourse to interpreters who are often incompetent and indifferent, and make him suffer by reason of a rendering that is perhaps true to the letter, but utterly fails to reveal the thought of the work and the genius of the author."

He speaks of a rendering perhaps true to the letter, but failing to reveal the thought of the work and the genius of the author, and this is unfortunately true in many cases. Many musical performers are concerned solely with the notes; if they can be correctly delivered at approximately the right speed, the responsibility of such performers is discharged. This reminds me of a little verse—

With patience and practice  
Little Alice at last,  
Has learned to play  
Both correctly and fast.

This would seem to have been the motto of a pianist who ranks high in the world as a technical player, yet who very often fails to reveal the thought of the work or the genius of the author, Moriz Rosenthal, one of the greatest technicians

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the piano has ever had; he is such a wonderful performer that he actually *deforms* musical works. They are not difficult enough properly to demonstrate his technical resources, so he enhances their difficulties a thousand fold; like Leopold Godowski, who plays two Chopin etudes at once, one with each hand, to show what mere trifles they are! I heard Rosenthal, however, give the most ravishing performance of Chopin's "Berceuse", the lovely figuration of which, so difficult for most pianists, was for him mere child's play, and as it requires no deep amount of sentiment but a vast amount of technical finish, he plays it perfectly.

It is not the artist who talks with his fingers, however, that the public takes to its heart, but the artist who speaks with emotion; who tells you of what he has in his own heart. Emotion controlled by intelligence, so the performance strikes the happy medium between objective and subjective; around which dissimilar styles criticism has always raged.

Must the composition or the performer be the dominating element? I lean to the subjective side, feeling that the personality of the reproductive artist must influence the composition; he should pour his new wine into the old bottles to make them fresh and sparkling again.

It was my good fortune to hear the greatest representatives of these two opposed schools of piano playing, Rubenstein and von Buelow, in the same season, and never shall I forget the impressions they produced in me. Rubenstein was so temperamental, so virile, so magnetic, that he made everything which he played fairly glow; it was as though the composition were

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created warm and palpitating before your gaze, or rather in your hearing. He swept one along, so that there was no disposition to criticism, although he offered many technical opportunities for it.

Von Buelow, on the other hand, had every effect planned and nothing was left to inspiration; all was studied and finished, but cold—there was little room for criticism; the pleasure was intellectual, in a thing almost perfectly done from the artistic standpoint; but with Rubenstein the pleasure was emotional and elemental, to me far the greater. Of course, a perfect balance between the two is the *ne plus ultra*, but it is almost an impossibility. In my judgment Josef Hofmann and Fritz Kreisler come nearest this perfect balance in their playing.

I believe the majority of art and music lovers prefer the subjective style of performance, and that is the reason the world remains so conservative in its art tastes. Its education has been slow; it grows to love the things it knows; and in music, certainly, it is content to listen to practically the same compositions, season after season, with a change of artist. It is again like the drama: the lover of Shakespeare knows every word of his "Hamlet", but he wants to hear it again and again for the new interpretation given it by the actor. So with music, it is what the interpreter can put in the old compositions that the musiclover wants to hear, what new *accents* he has to offer, to revert suddenly to our almost forgotten topic.

We were dealing with the accent on the first note of the phrase. It is an artistic touch to accent and slightly retard on the highest note or climax of the phrase; this is a much abused



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trick in singing. Then we always accent a dissonance; the stronger the dissonance, the stronger the accent, as though to prove it true despite the way it sounds. Ultra modern music, so largely composed of dissonances, is liable to reverse this rule, and make it necessary, in order to avoid a most explosive style of performance, to accent the infrequent consonances!

Aesthetic and characteristic accents are almost impossible to tabulate; they are directed by taste and judgment and can only be taught as they arise in the course of study.

The subject of characteristic accents embraces such a wide range that it cannot be fully treated here. Characteristic accents are national and individual. Almost every civilized country has its national melodies in the form of songs and dances. While most of these melodies have remained local, many of them, particularly the dances, have been appropriated by the great composers and introduced into general musical literature. The notable traits of these melodies are their rhythms and certain distinguishing accents which make them nationally characteristic. We cannot call this characteristic element foreign, because music is cosmopolitan, yet it is so distinctly racial that one familiar with the characteristics of such melodies readily recognizes to what nationality they belong. For example, most of us can recognize Scotch, Hungarian or Spanish rhythms.

The waltz, for instance, is thoroughly German, the mazurka essentially Polish; both are written in triple rhythm, but how different the effect, owing to their characteristic accents. We have the rhythmical accent in both on the first

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beat, but in the mazurka we have also a strong accent on the third beat, alternating with one on the second at the end of a period; this gives it a very different character and removes the languorous undulating effect which waltz rhythm produces.

The rhythm of a barcarolle is invariably in  $\frac{6}{8}$  measure, but Tchaikowski has written a beautiful barcarolle in  $\frac{4}{4}$  measure. Such a change of rhythm would be impossible in dance forms, for the rhythm in these must accompany and be the measure of the rhythmical movements of the body, from which it springs.

The great composers who have employed dance forms have treated them so freely that they have become artistic dance forms, ceasing to be dances in the popular sense. Such are the dances of Bach, the minuets of Mozart and Beethoven, the waltzes of Schubert, the mazurkas and polonaises of Chopin; these are idealized dances for the artistic taste, very different from the dances of Strauss and Lanner and Waldteufel, which are for the masses. But who shall say the "Beautiful Blue Danube" of Strauss is not beautiful music, one of the loveliest waltzes ever written?

Now a few words regarding individual accents. Music as an art recognizes two kinds of music, artistic music, the production of the artist, and national music, the production of the people. Artistic music appropriates and amalgamates in itself the productions of every country, and therefore having no geographical boundaries is universal.

The greatest composers rise above their nationalities and belong to a universal brotherhood,

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but they always retain individual characteristics, so that their compositions are stamped with their style, but not their nationality. Only one composer of the first rank has retained his nationality in his musical speech, Chopin, and it is this very characteristic which constitutes his greatest charm; his characteristic accents spring from his nationality.

Schumann's accents, on the other hand, are individual; he employed syncopation and syncopated rhythms more freely than any other great composer. This makes certain of his compositions unnecessarily difficult; for if a syncopated rhythm be persisted in regularly and long enough, it loses its effect and falls on the ear as a regular rhythm. This is the case with many of Schumann's syncopated passages; they are written against the designated rhythm, but have no syncopated effect except for the poor performer, who must count one rhythm while playing another.

Tchaikowski has taken a fling at this idiosyncrasy of Schumann in his "Original Theme and Variations", Op. 19. He has marked one variation "Alla Schumann" and has given it the time signature  $\frac{3}{4}$  when the content of each measure throughout is two quarter notes. This little sarcasm is much appreciated by the many pianists who have struggled with Schumann's obscure rhythms. Some of Tchaikowski's later editors have substituted the  $\frac{2}{4}$  signature in this variation, perhaps feeling he or they might be accused of a serious error; thus Tchaikowski's witticism is lost and "Alla Schumann" is robbed of its sting.

In turning from the subject of accents to the two other principles of interpretation, the modi-

fication of the tempo and dynamic control, there is much less to be said; not that their applications are less general, but because they are more variable, and therefore less subject to rule. They can be much better illustrated by example than by precept.

Regarding the *accelerando* and *retardando* it is difficult to give many definite rules. One is, however, always to retard in approaching an initial phrase of a subject or melody; another, always to retard in approaching a *fermate*  $\hat{~}$  (pause) that the cessation of movement be not too abrupt. A retard during a modulation before a change of key in a piece, is usually a good musical effect; to retard the climax of a melody is another. In works of the earlier schools, including those of Bach, Handel and their contemporaries, a retard, a general broadening toward their close, is necessary to their style. The musical ear seems to require a slight retard on a complete cadence, with which most compositions of these schools conclude. Leschetizky had a wonderful maxim in his teaching of rhythm, which alone would stamp him a master of style. It was the finest principle I learned from his inspiring instruction. He would say again and again to his pupils: "You can never come in too late on the first beat of a measure, but you can almost always come in too early." He meant, in other words, that a slight retard at the end of every measure produces the effect of perfect rhythm; just as the slight curves in the seemingly straight lines of classic architecture produce the impression of perfect straightness. Retarding, with its impression of poise and repose, would seem, from the number of examples of its use that I have ad-

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duced, to be more essential to interpretation than accelerating. The latter produces the impression of stress and excitement and is very frequently a necessary and brilliant effect, but from its very nature it is often a matter of impulse and caprice arising during performance, and therefore cannot be so well tabulated.

Schumann has marked the first movement of his beautiful Sonata in G minor to be played "as fast as possible", yet throughout the movement occur the directions, "faster"—"still faster"! A study of this sonata movement should furnish a good example of the usage of the *accelerando*.

*Tempo rubato* (robbed time) embraces both the *retardando* and *accelerando* and should, when rightly employed, produce balanced rhythm. It was introduced by Chopin in his piano playing, and is a necessary factor in the proper interpretation of his compositions. It means the robbing of time from one part of a measure, section, phrase or period, to give it to another. *Tempo rubato* is the prerogative of the artist alone; its abuse is the distortion of rhythm, but its legitimate and discreet use is one of the finest aids to musical interpretation.

Retarding is always used to express a calming down, just as accelerating denotes agitation. When we wish to play very softly we involuntarily retard, the slowness adding to the effect; and the converse also is true, as, when we wish to play very loudly we play more slowly, thereby increasing the impression of force.

Here we have the union of our second and third principles, tempo modification with dynamic control; but the union of all three principles is so inextricably fused that it is a most difficult

matter to dissociate them and enlarge upon them singly.

Dynamic control is one of the chief elements of technique, and therefore of mechanical expression, and it is the regulator of all accents and degrees of force in performance. The rules regulating the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* are governed by the context, but a general rule is to increase in volume in an ascending passage and to decrease in a descending one. Leschetizky was very strict about this in all studies, and it gave the Czerny etudes (Leschetizky was a pupil of Czerny and taught his etudes unceasingly) the most lovely and undulating outlines; they sounded like beautiful pieces instead of the dry studies most pupils resolve them into. Of course, very often the reverse is a beautiful musical effect, to increase in volume with a descending passage. Color is lent to musical performance by variation in dynamic force, and this is the most grateful means of giving variety to an interpretation.

But as I have said before, all this can be illustrated much better by example than by precept. In fact it is very difficult to talk about it thus. In teaching, however, it is the easiest thing in the world; every phrase, almost every note, furnishes an example and can be made expressive by the rules of interpretation, which I have reduced to three general ones, more or less elucidated.

For an art which is so elusive (intangible perhaps is better), I have had a great deal to say, and I can only hope, in saying it, that I have helped to make a few things clearer and perhaps to enlarge your vision along the most beautiful

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and soul-satisfying lines given us by either art or nature.

### Musical Illustrations:

Long flowing metrical lines,

Melodie - - - - - Gluck-Sgambati

Short broken metrical lines,

Loure - - - - - Bach-Heinze

Accents against the rhythm: the syncopated episode from the last movement of the Schumann Concerto, in which the accents and therefore the effect are in double time, while the rhythm is written in triple time

Improvisation - - - Edward MacDowell

Lento - - - - - Cyril Scott

Valse-Caprice - - - - - Cyril Scott

Reverie - - - - - Richard Strauss

Intermezzo - - - - - Richard Strauss

Poeme - - - - - Zdenko Fibich

Reverie - - - Margaret Ruthven Lang

Prince Charming - - Mrs. H. H. A. Beach

Fireflies - - - Mrs. H. H. A. Beach

## FAMILIAR TALKS ON MUSIC

### TWO SYMPHONIES

**H**AD Mr. Damrosch searched through the entire literature of the Symphony he could not have found a more striking contrast than in the two works he has chosen for his concerts at our Exposition next Saturday and Sunday. This contrast is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that both composers are of the same race, (the Slav,) both have drawn their thematic material from folk music, both have chosen the same key, E minor, and there are marked similarities of construction.

Each of the symphonies comprises four movements, instead of the customary three, and the first movement of each is preceded by a slow introduction. Instead of the usual two subjects in a movement, each of these has three principal themes. And both symphonies are dominated, perhaps haunted is a better word, by the chief theme of the first movement. These are mere accidental coincidences, however, and serve even better to exemplify the great musical and emotional contrast of the two works. This wide divergence in the treatment is due to the individual temperaments of the composers, which are strongly reflected in their works.

As music is the most intimate and revealing form of self-expression, a musical composition if it be true, sincere, (and good music is always



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true—that is the measure of its worth) if it be true, it must be the reflex of the composer.

Tchaikowski and Dvorak were contemporaries, two of the foremost composers of our time. Both were great symphonic writers, with a mastery of all the resources of orchestration, of tone color, of languishing melody, of thematic development, of polyphonic writing, of all those qualities so necessary to great symphonic construction; and in these two noble works they achieved masterpieces.

Tchaikowski has taken for his principal theme a Polish folksong; but Dvorak has gone far afield and adopted our native American music, as he calls it, our plantation melodies, for his theme. Dvorak spent a number of years in the United States as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City, and during his residence in this country he made a deep study of these plantation songs, declaring that they were the basis of our real folk music, if we developed any; and that the melodies of our Indians were not, Charles Cadman and others to the contrary notwithstanding.

Some one has profoundly observed that a condition akin to bondage is necessary to produce folk music. Those nations in which the lower classes have been the most downtrodden, like the serfs and peasants of Europe, have produced the most beautiful folk music, as though they had found solace in song for the loss of freedom and happiness. This is true of the negroes, who are essentially a musical race, one which might much more truly produce a racial music than our aboriginal Indians, who are not musical.

Tchaikowski, who is typically Russian, was

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sensitive, pessimistic, even morose and morbid, and these qualities are wonderfully portrayed in his symphony; while Dvorak was a true Bohemian, a native of a small village near Prag, temperamentally light-hearted and sunny tempered; so while his compositions may be sometimes sad and plaintive, they are never tragic or filled with unutterable woe, as are Tchaikowski's.

Now a word on the symphony *per se*. It is art in its loftiest expression, like the tragedies of Æschylus or the architecture of the ancient Greeks; it is the acme of musical composition, and is built on architectural lines in strict form, and like every manifestation of art is an evolution. It was brought to perfection by Beethoven in its classic form, but all composers, great and small, have been tempted by its possibilities for musical and technical expression. Although the modern form is much freer, there are still unalterable rules governing its composition, which we will briefly consider.

A symphony is a sonata written for the orchestra and consists of at least three movements, or sections, in contrasted keys or rhythms.

The first movement is almost always a fast one, often preceded by a slow introduction. This movement introduces the chief themes to be worked out and is built usually on two principal themes. In the classic symphonies these themes are called the subject and counter subject, but now we allude to them as the first, second, and third subjects because often they bear little relation to each other. These are announced early and treated in various ways, until the movement reaches the exposition or development stage, when the composer brings to bear all his techni-

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cal skill in presenting the themes under every possible guise. Often this working out section is so elaborate and intricate that the average listener entirely loses the thread of the movement and is hopelessly at sea, until its close brings the recapitulation of the principal subjects in the key of the tonic. The exposition of the first movements of both symphonies under discussion is unusually long and elaborate, that of Tchaikowski in particular being very prolix and involved. This also is the case with his last movement.

The second movement of a symphony is a slow one. Its themes can be evolved from those of the first movement, or they can be of entirely new material; but in the working out section it must bear a relationship to the whole, as must the succeeding movements.

When there are more than three, the third movement is often a dance form, a minuet. In the Tchaikowski it is a waltz, (the only one I know in a symphony) a form in which he is especially felicitous. Or it may be a musette, with a drone bass like a bagpipe; or a *scherzo*, a piece of musical humor. Dvorak has chosen this form. This third movement is developed like the preceding ones.

These middle movements may be in sharply contrasting keys to the others, but the last movement, almost invariably a quick one, must be in the key of the first. In this way, by means of a key or scale, we establish a musical home whence we start out on our adventures, which may lead us into strange and remote places; but at last we must return and thus round out our musical composition and give it a sense of homogeneity

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and completeness, for a work of art must be one thing and not a collection of various things.

The symphony is the noblest expression of absolute music, as distinguished from program music, which simply means descriptive music. Absolute music is becoming almost a lost art. Composers are leaning more and more on literary subjects as props for their feeble utterances, seeking thus to give a meaning which music can never have. So we have symphonies and symphonic poems written on every conceivable subject, from Shakespeare's tragedies to "Thus spake Zarathustra", in which Richard Strauss is credited with expounding the entire Nietzschean philosophy! The center of gravity is thus removed from the musical composition where it belongs and lodged in the literary subject where it has no place.

Music cannot have a definite meaning; its very nature prohibits such a possibility, but it is capable of infinite suggestion, which can often be indicated by a title or a motto.

Very happily these two symphonies possess such indications, and they are all that are needed to put us into the proper receptive mood for their message.

It is known that Tchaikowski wrote his later symphonies with a program in mind, but a subjective not an objective program. They were to him the expression of his subjective moods and for this reason reflect so essentially the man and his nature. This great symphony in E minor is adjudged by leading critics to be the ripest fruit of Tchaikowski's genius, but its composition filled him with distrust—not only during its conception and composition, but even after its suc-

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cessful production. He writes to his brother Modeste at the end of May, 1888: "I have not yet begun to work excepting at some corrections. To speak frankly, I feel as yet no impulse for creative work. What does this mean? Have I written myself out? No ideas? No inclination? Still I am hoping gradually to collect material for a symphony." In June he settled down to earnest work and writes in that month to Madame von Meck, to whom he dedicated his fourth symphony, "I am dreadfully anxious to prove not only to others, but also to myself, that I am not yet played out as a composer. Have I already told you that I intend to write a symphony? The beginning was difficult; now however inspiration seems to have come. We shall see." On August 26th the symphony was finished and it was produced in November at a Philharmonic concert in St. Petersburg, under Tchaikowski's leadership. In spite of its undoubted success, Tchaikowski writes Mme. von Meck in December: "After two performances of my new symphony in Petersburg and one in Prag, I have come to the conclusion that it is a failure. There is something repellent, something superfluous, patchy and insincere, which the public instinctively recognizes. It was obvious to me that the ovations received were prompted more by my earlier work and that the symphony itself did not really please the audience. The consciousness of this brings me a sharp twinge of self-dissatisfaction. Am I really played out, as they say? Can I merely repeat the changes on my earlier idiom? Last night I looked through our symphony (the fourth, the one dedicated to her). What a difference! How immeasurably superior

it is! It is very, very sad!" Yet four months later he was able to write: "I like it far better now, after having held a bad opinion of it for some time." How strange this seems to us, when it has taken its rightful place as one of the greatest modern symphonies, and the composer's most inspired work. It is dedicated to Theodore Ave Lallement of Hamburg. Tchaikowski relates the following in his diary of 1888: "This venerable old man, over 80 years of age, paid me great attention. In spite of his age and infirmity, he attended two rehearsals and the concert. Herr Lallement candidly confessed that many of my works were not at all to his taste, that he could not endure my noisy instrumentation and disliked my use of the instruments of percussion. For all that he thought I had in me the making of a very good German composer. Almost with tears in his eyes he besought me to leave Russia and settle permanently in Germany, where classical conventions and the traditions of a high culture could not fail to correct my faults, which were easily explainable to his mind by the fact of my having been born and educated in a country so unenlightened, and as regards progress, so far behind Germany. I strove my best to overcome his prejudice against our national sentiments, of which moreover he was quite ignorant, or knew them only through the speeches of the Russophobic section. We parted good friends."

It is just this national element which gives the Russian school its great force, vitality, and originality, which has given music a new impetus and produced a leaven very necessary for the emasculated state it was being led into by com-

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posers who had little to say, and an attenuated way of saying it. This very strength, almost brutality, of the Russian school is its power. The Russians have found something new to say, and a large, vigorous way of expressing it.

This great Tchaikowski symphony is built on a theme which constantly recurs in all four of its movements and is called its motto. Ernest Newman says of it, "The gloomy, mysterious opening theme suggests the leaden, deliberate tread of fate", and its sombre influence is felt all through the work; even in the waltz we do not escape it. Tchaikowski's pessimism and brooding melancholy never leave him and in all his compositions we feel and are influenced by these qualities. Beside this motto, which is the chief theme of the symphony, there are two other subjects, and these three form the basis of a most elaborate and ingeniously worked out first movement.

The second movement also has three themes, the first a wonderfully beautiful melody. This has traces of the fateful motto, especially toward the end.

The third movement, the waltz, has two subjects; the waltz proper and a light staccato counter subject, with reminiscences again of the motto. The last movement has a long slow introduction, passing into the main theme marked *Allegro vivace* and later into a broad sonorous march, and at the end it reverts to the motto once more and we hear again "the leaden deliberate tread of fate" and feel its inescapability.

The Dvorak symphony bears the title "From the New World", and we feel the freshness and life of a new world in its opening phrases. It is

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full of our real American contribution to music: ragtime; for syncopation is the very essence of its numerous themes. Syncopation is one of the oldest devices in music for diverting the regular accents all rhythms demand, and has been used by all composers; but it remained for us to make a cult of it, and the result of our distorted rhythms is ragtime. Ragtime may be a natural result of our overstrained nervous mode of life, but it is an artificial growth, designed to put more snap into the music of the masses, by its irregular, spasmodic, jerky accents. The negroes are originally responsible for our present outbreak of ragtime, for syncopation is a natural element of their great musical gift, and it has gradually been absorbed by American song and dance music writers and elaborated to the point of license. Our present addiction to unrestrained ragtime is a positive vice, but in the hands of a master like Dvorak even ragtime becomes a thing of beauty. Most of his themes are syncopated and they sparkle with vivacity and movement and have the true folk music ring. Dvorak is without doubt the most eminent folk musician of all the great composers. He shows such sympathy with and delight in the simple tones and rhythms of popular utterance, and in this New World symphony he has used them for the highest purposes of art.

After the slow introduction, we have the chief theme, a bold and syncopated one, which reappears throughout the work. This is immediately followed by a short answer, then a second theme, almost a jingle, and then a third syncopated theme. These he weaves into a beautiful first movement. This is followed by the slow move-



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ment, which begins *Largo* with a wonderfully plaintive and yearning theme, which might be a negro love song; following this comes a quicker episode, the second theme, which gives way again to the first, which brings the movement to a lovely close.

The third movement, a rollicking *Scherzo*, is built on syncopated themes, three of them, and has a sort of trio. In this movement we have numerous reminiscences of the chief theme of the first movement. In fact it haunts us all through the symphony, as Tchaikowski's motto haunts us through his. In this way, the sense of homogeneity is preserved throughout, and we feel the unity of a composition.

In the last movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, we have a riot of folk tune and dance. The first theme is essentially negro with its flat seventh, and it has a march rhythm, another resemblance to the Tchaikowski. The second theme is rather plaintive, but it is soon swallowed up in the swing of the movement, when suddenly we hear a new theme, but an old tune, "Three Blind Mice". This finale is a gorgeous piece of orchestral writing, filled with catchy melody, elevated to the plane of true symphonic art.

When Dvorak comes to the development periods in his symphony he reverts to his own national idiom, and we get a result of Americanism tinged with Bohemianism or *vice versa*, a really curious mixture, which nevertheless fulfils the formula of beautiful music. For after all music has no boundaries, no limits of nationality or geography. All peoples call it the universal language; its message is for the whole world, and the world is fortunate that in its priceless

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