

# THE Musical Times ESTABLISHED IN 1844

---

Opern-Handbuch by Hugo Riemann

*The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 25, No. 497 (Jul. 1, 1884), pp. 414-415

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3357698>

Accessed: 28/12/2014 13:59

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

engaging mood, while others are such as can hardly be mistaken for the work of any other man. It is as though the name Dvorák were "writ large" upon the page. We should add that the movement is developed at considerable length, and its descriptiveness well maintained. The three pieces in the second book begin with an "Allegro commodo," in F, entitled "Auf dem Anstand." Here again the character of a Fantasia is maintained, with frequent changes of time, key, and rhythm. The composer however, welds the whole together, as it were, by frequently recurring to his main theme. He thus avoids the effect of a mere string of episodes, and attains something of the unity of the Rondo. As usual, he modulates very freely, and is prodigal of rhythmic varieties. The movement cannot be called the most pleasing of the set. Many amateurs will regard the next movement—"Waldesruhe," a "Lento e molto cantabile," in D flat—as among the finest numbers of the set. It is in great part of a meditative character, somewhat discursive as to style, and marked occasionally by the polyphony in which Dvorák delights. Of actual descriptiveness there is none save a single *cor de chasse* passage, and of definite suggestiveness there is little. The music aims to be a reflection of feeling while delighting the ear with ingenious "figuration" and harmonic richness. The last number—"Aus stürmischen Zeiten," an Allegro con fuoco in A minor—is a most animated and vigorous piece, more simple in structure than usual and, therefore, not very strong in Dvorák's special characteristics. Largely developed, and carried out from beginning to end with sustained power, this movement cannot fail to find favour in the eyes of amateurs, quite apart from the question whether or no it justifies the name under which it stands. We end as we began by saying that the repertory of the pianoforte, à quatre mains, receives a valuable addition by the issue of these singularly fresh and unconventional pieces.

*Music and the Piano.* By Madame Viard-Louis. Translated from the French by Mrs. Warington Smyth. [Griffith and Farran.]

THE authoress of this work tells us in her Introduction that she places her observations before the musical public because she considers it the duty of all true artists to be as lamps to the traveller to point out the perils of his road. "I have long observed," she says, "among the greater number of those persons who occupy themselves with music, the astonishing indifference they manifest for what I may call the vital principle of this art. I mean for the thought by which the great composers were inspired. For my part I, who believe in music as a language, cannot understand this neglect; and yet it is too true, and we see it every day, that a vast number of people play upon some instrument or other absolutely as if the producing a noise which is accepted as a pleasant one were all that is desired—whilst probably they are following also a lucrative career." Now we can perfectly recollect the time when these observations would have embodied a truth which was painfully apparent to all lovers of real musical art; yet we cannot but think that Madame Louis must have been somewhat unfortunate in her experience of latter-day pianists if she still cling to this opinion, for assuredly the "pleasant noise" which was so generally accepted as music has long ago ceased to be cultivated, and the striving after the true "reading" of the works of classical composers has really become almost one of the evils of the day. What may be termed the "oratorical" part of music is unquestionably an important study, for certainly those whom Beethoven delighted to call "passage players" have in fact no right to be termed artists. In taking up a work, therefore, which professes to teach, we want to know whether the author has anything new to tell those who crave such information; for, to pursue the simile already referred to, we cannot be made to believe that the "lamps" which point out the road to the traveller can be of any service to those who do not travel the road at all. We can scarcely go so far as to say that the work contains many thoughts which have not often been expressed before; but the earnestness and intelligence of the writer amply compensate for this, and musical students will find much material for reflection in the observations upon the pianoforte works of the great

composers. The book is divided into three parts:—1. General History of the Art of Music; 2. Personal History of the Principal Composers for the Piano; and 3. Advice on Style and Execution. The first part, although necessarily somewhat sketchy, gives the mere tyro a very clear idea of the manner in which the art gradually emancipated itself from its early surroundings. A short extract from this portion of the work will show that the authoress cannot part with the friends of her childhood without a pang of regret. "There came always," she says, "a moment of prayer in all the aspirations of those who are already called the 'old masters,' but whom we should do better, I think, to call 'the immortals.' They remembered that around the altars of the ancients music's earliest strains were heard; now all is reversed. Modern music prays no longer. I do not know whether this is progress, but Art now has become sensualistic, and appeals particularly to the nerves." In the course of the chapters devoted to the history of music, some very good illustrations of the style of the various composers are given in music type. Full justice, as far as the limited space will allow, is done to those who have brought the art to its present state of perfection. Beethoven, as might be expected, receives much attention, and many extracts are made from his works; but we should like to know what is the authority for saying, in speaking of the so-called "Moonlight Sonata," that at one of the *ré-unions* of the Countess Guicciardi the composer, "oppressed by an unspeakable sorrow, went down into the garden, and upon a stone table there, and by the moonlight, he wrote down the 'Adagio Sostenuto,' which begins the work, and which breathes throughout so exactly the dejected calm of a complete despair." By many the title is said to have been derived from a remark made by Rellstab, the critic, that the first movement reminded him of a boat wandering by moonlight on the Lake of Lucerne, and the Countess herself says "Beethoven gave me the Rondo in G, but, wanting to dedicate something to the Princess Lichnowsky, he took the Rondo away and gave me the Sonata in C sharp minor instead." In the part on "Style" there are some excellent remarks upon the method of performing the works of the various composers, and especial stress is laid upon the absolute necessity of having a good teacher at first; but the observation that "to become the artist interpreter you should be endowed by heaven with special gifts," proves that the authoress agrees with us as to the impossibility of guiding those to the right path who, either from inclination or the want of natural talent, prefer the wrong one. Madame Louis is herself a well-known pianist; and coming, as she does, so prominently before the public it is well that we should conclude our notice with an extract which may be said at once to declare her artistic creed, especially as what we have already quoted seems to show that she has an instinctive aversion to what is now known as the "advanced school." After saying that her criticism upon this class of music may be deemed severe, she continues thus:—"I think it is now generally considered that the human mind is at present passing through a sort of crisis, in which all beliefs, all traditions, all laws, everything that has been believed in or accepted are called in question and give rise to active controversy. This century, whether it prove to be the setting of a decaying society or the dawn of a renewed society, this present century is deeply, even passionately, interesting to all minds. But, whatever may be the result, the cry of humanity, as it traverses the ages, is a mighty voice which thrills the heart, and I hear it reproduced so clearly, so unmistakably in music, that I apply all the powers of my soul to endeavour to comprehend it; and it is with a deep and sympathising respect that I greet it on its way, whether it reveals itself in a short leaflet, without any perceptible meaning, or whether it compresses all the marvels of the lyrical drama into three evenings of representation."

*Opern-Handbuch.* Von Dr. Hugo Riemann. [Leipzig: C. A. Koch, 1884.]

THE compilation of a book of reference concerning the more important operas, operettas, ballets, and melodramas ever produced, is an undertaking the more meritorious since it involves an amount of patient labour, and even, in some cases at least, of original research, which raises it far above the level of ordinary book-making. It is partly

for these reasons, perhaps, that no work of a similar scope has hitherto been attempted in any language, and thus, in the publication of the above "Operr-Handbuch," Dr. Riemann is rendering a real service to all interested, either professionally or otherwise, in musico-dramatic art. There exists, indeed, in our own language a somewhat analogous work, entitled, "The Companion to the Playhouse" (London, 1764), which teems with curious and interesting information respecting dramatic works (including operas and melodramas) produced in the United Kingdom; but apart from the fact of its sphere of utility being thus limited to a particular country, the work itself has been long since out of date. Hence our present author—who has already proved himself a most competent compiler in the issue of his "Musik Lexikon," commented on in these columns some time ago—cannot be charged with exaggeration in characterising his new handbook as "a necessary supplement to every musical dictionary." The existing musical dictionaries, in fact, either contain no alphabetical reference whatever to individual music-dramas or, like Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," necessarily confine themselves to the comparatively few which have obtained some special historical significance. It is, of course, obvious that a first attempt at supplying a long-felt want in this direction, however praiseworthy, cannot be otherwise than incomplete, and that, therefore, many an operatic production dear to the musical specialist of one epoch of the art or the other will be missing in the present "Handbuch." It will only be by the active co-operation on the part of all those specially interested in the subject that anything like completeness will be attained in future editions of the work thus courageously undertaken by Dr. Riemann, who, moreover, distinctly solicits the aid of his readers with that view. In the two parts of the entire volume which have so far appeared (and which will be succeeded by six further instalments in completion of the work) the author has already managed to convey a good deal of interesting information to the inquiring student. The final part is intended to comprise any additions or corrections which may have been suggested during the progress of the publication. Having regard to this, and to the general plan adopted by the compiler in his Handbook, we can see no reason why such works as "Arsace," an Italian opera by Paoli Rolli, successfully performed at the King's Theatre, in the Haymarket, in 1721, or the same composer's "Astartus," produced at the same theatre in 1720, should not be enumerated in Dr. Riemann's "Handbuch." Nor do we think that our own Thomas Clayton's opera "Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus," performed at Drury Lane Theatre in 1707, should have been omitted from that register. We may also point out an anachronism on page 76, attributing a setting to music of Goethe's "Claudine von Villa Bella" to Gottfried Weber in 1783, when that renowned theorist and composer was only *four years of age*; and indeed we doubt whether such a composition has ever emanated from his pen at all. It is, however, with no spirit of fault-finding that we venture upon these few random suggestions, and we feel sure that, by the time it is completed, Dr. Riemann's "Handbuch" will be hailed by professional musicians and amateurs alike as a very valuable addition to the existing books of reference in matters musical.

*Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in E flat.* By Frederic G. Cole. [Novello, Ewer & Co.]

WE have no hesitation in pronouncing this setting of the evening canticles one of the best of those recently published. The composer is not only an excellent musician, but he is evidently familiar with the sound English school of church music, the breadth and dignity and the earnest devotional feeling, which are its most precious attributes, being reproduced in his service with just the right proportion of modern feeling. If we may hazard a suggestion, Mr. Cole is a hearty admirer of Sir John Goss, the style of this composer being more distinctly reflected than that of any other of the first rank. One or two false accents may be noted, such as "And His mercy is *on* them," and, in the Gloria to the Nunc dimittis, "World *without* end." But these are trifling defects, and can easily be rectified in performance. The service is full throughout save one verse in the Magnificat, and is quite within the means of ordinary choirs.

*Soft Voluntaries for the Organ.* Book V. Composed by George Calkin. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE present issue of this publication consists of six pieces in various styles though all fairly realising their description as soft voluntaries. There is some similarity of manner between the first, Larghetto in F, 12-8 time; the third, Lento in E flat, 12-8 time; the fourth, Andante in F, 6-8 time; and the fifth, Larghetto in F minor, 6-8 time. Mr. Calkin has an obvious fondness for what is generally known as compound common measure, and he writes therein with ease and a flow of genial and refined melody. The second piece in the book is a ballad-like and taking Allegretto in G, 3-4 time, and the last is a Moderato in B flat, common time, somewhat more bold and vigorous than its companions. The distinguishing quality of Mr. Calkin's pieces is tunefulness, but at the same time the dignity proper to music for the organ is kept in view and therefore no qualifying remark need be employed in recommending them to organists.

#### FOREIGN NOTES.

THE Jubilee meeting of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik Verein*, held from the 23rd to the 28th of May last at Weimar, to which we briefly referred in our last number, presented some features of more than ordinary interest to music lovers generally. The Association, as some of our readers may not be aware, was founded in 1859, at Leipzig, by a few zealous artists in opposition to the rest-and-be-thankful spirit then pervading the musical fraternity in Germany, who considered that with the death of Mendelssohn the chapter of progress in the art had been finally closed. The promoters of the new association, however, thought otherwise, foremost among them being Louis Köhler, the now veteran pianist-composer, and sterling critical author, and Franz Brendel, the editorial successor of Schumann at the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and fiery exponent of the art principles represented by that composer and profound musical thinker during his all too brief earthly career. Soon the representatives of what was then "young Germany" in matters musical—Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt, Hans von Bülow, R. Pohl, H. von Bronsart, and many others—gathered round the nucleus of a compact party of progress thus formed, and assumed prominent positions in the management thereof. Such is the origin of a society which during the twenty-five years of its existence has assumed a truly representative character in Germany, and which, it must be added to its entire credit, has during that time upheld its progressive principles with a due and unprejudiced regard to the cosmopolitan claims of the art, admitting into its programmes, by the side of the latest productions of Wagner, Brahms, Volkmann, Raff, Liszt, and others, those of Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Tschaiakowski, Grieg, and Svendsen, most of them new aspirants to musical fame, and some of them—Berlioz amongst their number—still all but ignored at the time in their own country. All honour, then, to an institution which, during its comparatively brief existence, has done so much in affording, if only once a year, a hearing before a critically qualified assembly to talented young artists, without regard to their nationality or artistic creed! In turning now to the programme of the Jubilee meeting itself, we may allude to the most prominent items the more briefly since our opening remarks have, we hope, in a great measure explained the interest attaching to them from the point of view of the chronicler of contemporary musical history. The meeting was inaugurated by a scenic representation, at the Weimar Hof-Theater, of Liszt's "St. Elizabeth," preceded by a poetic tribute to the composer delivered on the stage, and due to him as the oldest surviving promoter of the Association, irrespective of his numerous other claims of recognition at a gathering of this description. "St. Elizabeth" is admitted on all sides to have greatly gained upon the appreciation of the audience in its present dramatised form. Among other compositions of the veteran maestro, whose personal presence at the gathering considerably added to its representative character, we may mention the Fantasia-Sonata (played, on the second day, by Herr Friedheim) in B minor, dedicated to Schumann. The performance (likewise on the