

La Rhythmique Musicale des Troubadours et des Trouvères by Pierre Aubry; Die Melodien der Troubadours by J. B. Beck

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La Rhythmique Musicale des Troubadours et des Trouvères. Par PIERRE AUBRY. Paris: A. Picard, 1907. 4to. 67 pp.

Die Melodien der Troubadours. Von J. B. BECK. Strassburg: Trübner, 1908. 4to. viii + 202 pp.

The object of the first of these books is to show the incorrectness of Hugo Riemann's system of interpreting the melodies of the troubadors and trouvères and to prove the author's own hypothesis that these melodies, though they are not written in mensural notation, belong to the *ars mensurabilis* of the Middle Ages.

According to Riemann, the rules for the measuring of music, which were laid down by the mediaeval theorists, applied only to music written in several parts, and the rhythm of the troubadors' melodies depended entirely on the structure of the verse, each syllable being sung to a note or group of notes of equal time-value. The task of transcribing the old melodies into modern notation becomes a very simple one if Riemann's method is employed, but there is no reason for believing that the musical rhythm of the songs was anything like what he supposes, for the known facts concerning the music of the Middle Ages give no indication of such a rhythm ever having been employed. Riemann's system of interpreting the melodies is indeed an invention of his own.

M. Aubry on the other hand arrives at his conclusion after studying the rules of the mediaeval theorists, examining MSS. which contain two-part music (which was undoubtedly measured) as well as melodies, all the music being written according to the same system of notation, and comparing MSS. which contain the same songs, written in mensural notation in one MS. and not in the other. The conclusion which he draws after a logical examination of all the facts is that the melodies should be measured according to the system of modal formulae, of which frequent mention is made by the old theorists. The musical modes resemble classical metres, the first three, the most often used, corresponding to the trochaic, iambic and dactylic. M. Aubry gives a number of examples of songs from MSS. not written in mensural notation, which he transcribes according to the modal interpretation, and the results are very satisfactory as regards the music itself and the rhythm and meaning of the words.

M. Aubry has always maintained that the melodies of the troubadors and trouvères should be interpreted mensurally, but in the present work, as he admits himself, he departs considerably from his former method of interpretation. He formerly believed that the Old French and Provençal chansonniers, such as Paris Bib. Nat. 844 fonds fr., 22543 fonds fr., Arsenal 5198, etc., were actually *written* in mensural notation. A further study of the MSS. and of the history of mensural notation has led him to discard this belief, and in the present volume he sets forth a method of interpretation for which it may be claimed that it is at once the most satisfying and the most reasonable that has

yet been suggested. M. Aubry has the gift of being able to write on a thoroughly technical subject in really good prose, and the clearness and ease of his style help his readers to follow his arguments without difficulty. That we are convinced by them is due to the solid facts on which he bases them.

It is strange that during all the time that has elapsed since the revival of interest in the poetry of the trobadors which started about a hundred years ago, scarcely any attention has been paid to the music of the songs. Words and music were inseparable in Provençal lyrics, the two halves which made up the whole of the song. The fact that the songs which survive in their complete form are very much less numerous than those the words only of which are in existence is surely no reason for not studying those melodies which do exist. The musical branch of the art of the trobadors was, nevertheless, almost entirely ignored until a few years ago. For some time past it has been studied by MM. P. Aubry, H. Riemann and A. Restori, but the first complete general survey of the subject is contained in the book by Dr J. B. Beck now before us. The value of Dr Beck's book to all students of trobador literature can scarcely be overestimated, and it should do much to give to the study of the music that prominence which has hitherto been denied it. A description of the contents of this volume will give some idea of the thoroughness and care with which Dr Beck has worked at his subject. The first part contains a list and description of all MSS. containing trobador melodies, a complete list, arranged in alphabetical order, of the existing songs with music, with an indication of the MS. or MSS. in which they may be found, notes on this list, and a description of the notation in which the melodies are written in the MSS. with many examples. This part concludes with a survey of the different views of modern students, especially MM. Aubry and Riemann, as to the proper method of interpreting the melodies of the trobadors. The second part consists in an exposition of the writer's theory as to the original rhythm of the songs and the correct way in which to transcribe the melodies, with many examples in the original and in modern notations. The work is not yet complete; Dr Beck announces that he hopes shortly to publish the entire collection of all known trobador melodies. When this collection appears, it and the present volume will form a most important contribution to the study of mediaeval Provençal literature.

The first part of the present volume needs no special discussion. Dr Beck's theory as to the proper method of interpreting the original notation of the MSS. and of measuring the rhythm of the songs is substantially the same as that put forward by M. Aubry in the book just noticed—namely that the actual notation employed gives no indication of the relative value of the musical notes, but that the melodies should be interpreted according to the modal formulae. It is clear that this part of Dr Beck's work was written before the appearance of M. Aubry's book, for he nowhere alludes to the latter, but makes frequent reference to the erroneous view formerly held by M. Aubry, that the trobador melodies were written in mensural notation. No

stronger argument in favour of the modal system of interpretation could be found than the fact that two such zealous and careful investigators as M. Aubry and Dr Beck should, independently of each other and treating the subject from slightly different points of view, have arrived at the same conclusion. Dr Beck lays stress on the importance of the discovery of the modal rhythm in Provençal and Old French songs as a help to the study of Romance metre. The interdependence of metre and musical rhythm on each other is a very interesting question. Dr Beck, while recognising the purely syllabic system of measurement employed in Romance verse, is inclined to attach undue importance to the tonic accent of Romance words. He describes the Second Mode, $\cup -$, as 'der echt romanische Rhythmus' because, though the musical accent generally falls on an atonic syllable, the tonic syllable is compensated by having a note of double the time-value of the accented note—a levelling-out of values thus taking place which he considers eminently suitable to the non-accentuated character of Romance verse. It is not very probable that the trobadors were actuated by consideration of the tonic syllable in words when choosing the 'modes' in which to make their songs. Dr Beck's study of the melodic rhythm of the songs is nevertheless of great interest and value. The modal method of interpreting the music will probably become universally recognised and adopted. Now that Dr Beck has lessened the difficulty of transcribing the melodies, it is greatly to be hoped that all future editions of trobador and trouvère poetry will contain melodies as well as words when the former exist. The songs lose much of their character when the words only are considered and the aesthetic value of the melodies is quite great enough to make them worth consideration. The student of music and the student of Romance literature should alike be grateful to Dr Beck, for his work opens a new aspect on both subjects.

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Grammaire historique de la langue française. Par KR. NYROP. Tome III. Paris: Picard, 1908. 8vo. viii + 459 pp.

Since the appearance of Darmesteter's epoch-making work, *De la création actuelle de mots nouveaux dans la langue française*, in 1877 the study of the subject has so widened that the learned author of the present volume has found it necessary to omit his promised study of semantics altogether, and to reserve for it a volume which we hope will soon be published. It is with great regret that we learn that he is suffering from an affection of the eyes which renders all reading impossible; we sincerely hope, however, that he may be able to complete his volumes on semantics and syntax, both of which are so much to be desired. The present work of Nyrop deals with the methods of formation generally and with those that Darmesteter left untouched, viz., regressive formation, irregular formation and onomatopœia.