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FRANCESCO MALIPIERO

THE ORCHESTRA



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THE ORCHESTRA

BY

G. FRANCESCO MALIPIERO

Translated from the Italian by ERIC BLOM

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

In acceding to the publishers' request to translate this fascinating little book, I knew that, apart from accepting a most interesting task, I was laying myself open to a certain amount of controversy with the author: a fact that only increased my alacrity in setting to work on this English version.

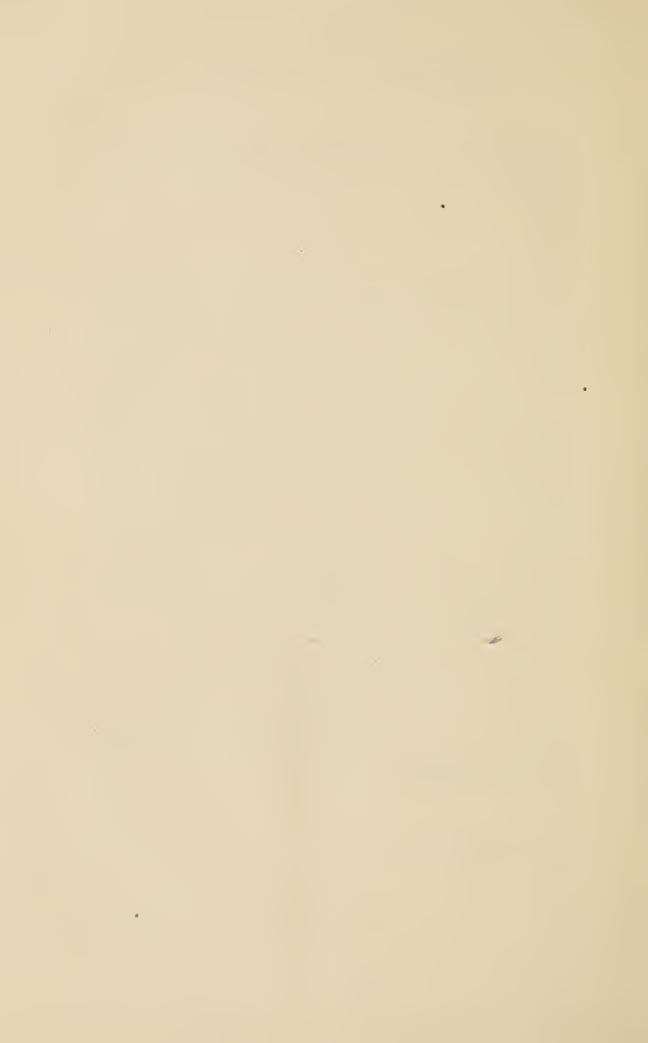
The composer of the "Sette Canzoni," the "Impressioni dal vero," and many other works that have helped to make of the modern Italian school so remarkable a movement, is far too original and trenchant a personality, both as a musician and as a writer, not to raise some differences of opinion on certain points; but it is precisely this fact that makes the present work one of exceptional interest.

The faithful transcription from one language into another of thoughts of so subjective a nature is fraught with some dangers: they are all too easily coloured by the views of a translator who is not content with a purely mechanical literal rendering of every word. The author has been good enough, in many cases, to accept the liberties I have taken with his text in trying to convey his meaning rather than his exact words—a proceeding often necessitated by the varying shades of subtlety between the two languages—but wherever he has been unable to agree with my version, I have yielded to his superior right to claim full responsibility by reverting to a closer adherence to the original.

A book on the orchestra by a writer who is himself one of the most remarkable orchestrators of our time, cannot fail to appeal to all who are interested in the subject; but it should do more than that, for the shrewd and illuminating observations on music generally with which the little work is tightly packed, make it a most valuable addition to every music-lover's library.

ERIC BLOM.

London, September, 1921.



PREFACE.

“Plutarch despises those philosophers who urge us to action but who fail to demonstrate by their works, or their precepts, how the advice is to be carried out; he compares them to a man whose lamp needs refilling with oil, but who rests content to stir it with a small metal point in order that it may still give out light though lacking oil.

“I have often reflected on this very admirable precept, and it has induced me to discourse on the Art of the Goldsmith.”

Thus spoke Benvenuto Cellini in the preface to his “Treatise on the Art of the Goldsmith.”

I have taken the liberty of borrowing from him Plutarch's concept, in order to explain how I came to write about the Orchestra. This little book is not meant to be a Treatise, it is merely a collection of observations which I could have developed on a much vaster scale, if only I had had the desire to do so.

G. F. M.

I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ORCHESTRA.

The origin of the orchestra is not clearly defined from the origin of choral music. The voice, being the perfect instrument created by nature, was the first element of musical expression of which man availed himself and which, from the period of the single voice song to that of the great art of the "polyphonists," has dominated both sacred and secular music.

The great Italian masters of choral music, real symphonists in spite of the fact that they only had the voice at their disposal, were never constrained to renounce any form of musical expression, whether dramatic or descriptive, lyrical or comic. It is therefore not surprising that, having at hand a musical medium that was pliable and very rich in colour, they did not feel the necessity of discarding the voice in favour of the orchestra.

"For the old mosaist masters of music, viols and oboes, flutes and trombones did not bend sufficiently easily to the sinuous windings of a complicated counterpoint." †

With the decadence of choral art appeared the first musical instruments, which only served as a support for the voice; it was on the contrary, "for dances and sumptuous courtly festivities that instruments were reserved, and the use of symphonies and concertos was very frequent during the whole of the 16th century." ‡

The prejudice against the introduction of musical instruments into the churches lasted several centuries, and at the beginning of the 18th century the justification of their presence in Christian places of worship was discussed. San Giustino, the Martyr, in question 107, praises song but excludes "sound." Instruments and singing are condemned in the elegant discourse of San Aelredi Abate, contemporary and disciple of San Bernardo. However, it is granted that musical instru-

† H. Lavois, Fils. Histoire de l'instrumentation depuis le seizième siècle jusqu'à nos jours. Paris, 1878.

‡ Ibid.

ments by no means impair ecclesiastical dignity, nor are they expressly forbidden in Christian churches. §

Notwithstanding obstacles and superstitions, both relating to profane and religious music, musical instruments rapidly gained a foothold, and already at the end of the fifteenth century, choral fragments began to alternate with instrumental ones, and slowly, very slowly, the orchestra emerged.

The rudimentary instruments from which descended the heads of the various *families*, that have helped to constitute an orchestra || may be considered to have undergone a natural evolution, almost like the voice. The orchestra had always existed ; it merely had to be discovered. It represents therefore not so much an invention as a human conquest, made under the impulse of musical intuition and overcoming all the purely material obstacles. In the same measure as the construction of the instruments perfected itself, the ability of the players progressed.

The germs of the orchestra may be found in the 17th century operas of Claudio Monteverde, Lulli, Luigi Rossi and Cavalli, and there are even here and there traces of instrumental combinations with trombones, trumpets, flutes, etc. But as long as the filling in of the figured bass was left to the discretion of the cembalo and lute players, it was impossible to obtain well-balanced and definitely coloured orchestral sonorities.

It was only in the advanced 18th century that a sense of combination and a selection of *timbre* began to develop ; it is certain that from the 16th and during the whole of the 17th century, the instruments were gathered together at random, and although the good taste and the intuition of the players may have imparted a certain balance to the primitive orchestra, it is easy to deduct, from various available indications and vague informations, that the instruments in use during the 16th and 17th centuries, did not blend satisfactorily.

These informations concerning the instruments of the 16th, the 17th and the 18th century are sufficiently precise, although they deal more fully with the art of the instrument makers

§ F. Bonanni, *Gabinetto armonico pieno d'istromenti sonori*, Rome, 1723.

|| Flutes, oboes and clarinets, horns and trumpets, and viols. The invention of the clarinet is recent, dating from 1701 ; the other instruments are of very ancient descent.

than that of the composers, as may be clearly seen in the documents of the time. But nothing more can be deduced from them than that instrument building was highly flourishing during the 16th and 17th centuries. From the indications we have of the blending of instruments, it is, on the other hand, difficult to form even an approximate idea of orchestration, however primitive, especially as plucked string instruments, (theorbo, lute, chitarrone, etc.) being used for improvisation, nearly always predominated, which must have created great monotony and often lack of balance.

The books of the period dealing with musical instruments, with minute descriptions of their marvellous construction, which, by the way, has never been surpassed, only give a minimum of information as to their grouping for performance. From the indifference with which this matter is treated, it may indeed be inferred that the musicians of the time (that is to say of the 16th and 17th century) scarcely took the trouble of paying any attention to the distribution of the parts, although, as in the case of vocal music, the polyphonic style still reigned supreme.

In the preface to his *Rappresentazione di anima et di corpo*, Emilio de' Cavalieri simply states that "the instruments must be well-sounding, and more or less numerous, according to the room, the theatre, or the hall." . . . "The instruments, because they must not be seen, should be played behind the scene, and by persons who can follow the singers, and without diminution, and fully."

These hints become still more obscure when, looking at the music, even at the "symphonies" for solo instruments, not the faintest indication of orchestral distribution is to be found.

Cavalieri merely repeats that "the symphonies and the ritornelli may be played by a large number of instruments, and a violin playing the treble will provide an excellent effect." But how exactly this violin was to be accompanied by "a large number of instruments" remains conjectural.

Giulio Caccini, "the first to introduce solo singing to an instrumental accompaniment,"[¶] does not elucidate the mystery, for he only says in one of his prefaces:—"The harmony of the parts in the present *Euridice* rests upon

¶ S. Bonini, Discorsi e Regole sopra la musica.

a figured bass, where I have marked the most essential fourths, sixth, sevenths, and major and minor thirds, leaving the middle parts to the judgment and the art of the players."

Marco da Gagliano, in the preface to his *Dafne*, is no clearer than Caccini:—"It is above all advisable that the instruments which are to accompany the solo voices, should be so placed in the room that the players can see the singers, in order to secure a better unison; they should endeavour to provide neither too much nor too little harmony, which should never prevent the words being clearly heard; the manner of playing should be without ornaments and the voice never covered, but assisted as much as possible by constantly keeping up the vivacity of the harmony."

It is strange that so much time should have passed before composers saw the advantage of giving each player a definite part instead of endless and complicated instructions. From the documents of the 17th century no practical hint can be gathered that could be helpful in reconstructing an orchestral score.

Every writer observes with great plausibility that "sound has to be considered differently, according to the various manners in which it is to be employed; playing alone is therefore different from playing in company with other instruments, or with a voice, or with voices and instruments together, and different again from accompanying a chorus."

. . . . "In playing with other instruments, the player does not rely so much on the artifices of counterpoint as on the graces of the art; therefore, if the player be good, he is not concerned so much with displaying his own skill as with adjusting himself to the others." "When playing with a voice, what I have said in the case of playing with other instruments applies with still greater force, because the instruments, serving the voice as the principal factor in the music, should have no other end than to accompany it well, the which I see the players of to-day do with the greatest discretion, and I do not think that in this respect they can ever have been surpassed at other times."*

Gevaert, in his *Traité d'Instrumentation*, devotes an entire chapter to the orchestration of the precursors of Haydn and presents a picture that would be accurate, were it not

* Pietro della Valle, *Discorsi* (1640.)

based upon the only existing vague indications, which can never compensate us for the complete lack of the only reliable documents, namely, full scores that clearly reproduce the intentions of the composers, who instead have only left us an abundance of theories that by no means allow us to reconstruct adequately the works that preceded Hadyn.

(§ 122 Gevaert) "The fundamental element of the primitive orchestra is the harmonic accompaniment played on polyphonic instruments: the *clavicembalo* in the theatre, and the organ in the church. This is an instrumental part that has disappeared from the modern orchestra. Being generally reserved for the chief of the band, who more often than not was the composer himself, it was never fully written out; it was improvised at the moment of the performance. In order to fulfil his duty, the accompanist or *maestro al cembalo* had in front of him, in default of the score, the bass part of the harmonic ensemble, which was simply a reproduction of the bass of the string instruments."

Gevaert believes in the possibility of an exact reconstruction of 17th century scores, but when the orchestral music of that period is examined, it is found that scores never existed at all at that time, because the instruments were played *ad libitum*. A perusal of what the contemporary theoreticians have to say, does nothing to supply this deplorable lack of information. The instrumental music of the 17th century has been handed down to us in an incomplete state and we are therefore unable to contemplate it except as a ruin. A vivid imagination might perhaps make use of these fragments for the construction of a new edifice.

As regards the 18th century, a scholar, Padre Zaccaria Tevo (Venice, 1706) wrote as follows:—"Concerning the instruments which are used, the violins, the cornets and the trumpets play the treble. The *viole da braccio* play the alto, and the tenor, the *viole da gamba* and *viole da spalla*, the bassoons and trombones supply the bass, and the violins and the theorbs play the *continuo*." † . . . "It seems that usually two violins are used for the treble part, a *viola da braccio* for the alto, and a viol or bassoon or trombone for the bass; they can also be used in four or more parts and the instruments will simply

† The translation of this passage retains, as far as possible, the quaint punctuation which makes the original Italian text exceedingly vague.—E. B.

be increased in proportion to the voices." . . . " It appears that as an introduction to the compositions there is always a full and harmonious symphony, or at least one based on a subject which is handed on to the different voices." . . . " When there are instruments, one must try to make beautiful symphonies and delicate ritornels." . . . " The quantity of the instruments is more or less left to the composer's pleasure, who can make all the instruments accompany the voice, or use two violins only, or again use part of the instruments, as for instance two violins and a bass viol, or two bass viols with a *viola da braccio* for some pathetic couplet, and a thousand other combinations at his will."

The teachings of Padre Zaccaria Tevo comprise the whole theory of instrumentation in vogue during the 17th and part of the 18th century, and yet they certainly do not throw much light on primitive orchestration.

The acerbity with which Jean-Jacques Rousseau criticised the Paris orchestra in 1764,† shows how the development of instrumental art aimed at that perfection which at last gave birth to the true orchestra:—

"It has been remarked," says Rousseau, "that, of all the orchestras in Europe, that of the Paris Opera, although one of the largest, is the one that produces the least effect. The reasons are not far to seek. Firstly, the bad construction of the orchestra, buried in the earth and enclosed by heavy, massive wood encircled by iron, smothers all resonance: Secondly, the bad choice of the symphonists, of whom the larger number, admitted by favouritism, hardly know anything about music and have no sense of ensemble: Thirdly, their annoying habit of scraping, tuning and preluding continually and noisily, without ever managing to be in tune: Fourthly, the French genius for neglecting and disdainng everything that is in the nature of becoming a daily task: Fifthly, the bad instruments of the players, which, always remaining on the spot, are so much rubbish, destined to bellow during the performances and to rot in the intervals: Sixthly, the unfavourable position of the conductor who, in front of the stage and occupied with the actors, is unable to control the orchestra sufficiently and has it at the back of him instead of under his eyes: Seventhly, the insufferable noise

† J. J. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de Musique*, Paris, 1768.

made by his baton, which covers and drowns the whole effect of the symphony : Eighthly, the bad harmony of their compositions, which, never being pure and choice, makes us hear, instead of good effects, nothing but an obscure and confused padding : Ninthly, not enough double basses and too many violoncellos, the sound of which, dragged after their manner, drowns the melody and pesters the hearer : Tenthly and lastly, the lack of rhythm and the indeterminate character of French music, where it is always the actor who regulates the orchestra, instead of the orchestra leading the actor, and where the descant leads the bass instead of the bass leading the descant."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau must have possessed a certain sense of orchestral sonority, if he could inveigh so violently against the Parisian orchestra of his time.

Notwithstanding the proofs of the wonderful intuition of the "primitives," there exists for us no orchestration of the 17th century, chiefly because we have not the necessary talent of improvisation which was common property among the musicians of those days. Perhaps some great musician, able to identify himself with his precursors, may one day succeed in completing the fragmentary scores, and we may then, instead of having to complain of anachronisms and disfigurements, be able to rejoice in the resurrection of some great masterpiece or another.

It was only in the 18th century that the proportions of the string quartet began to determine themselves, that, little by little, wood-wind, brass and percussion instruments were introduced, that the balance between the different groups established itself, that the character of each instrument began to be studied and turned to account, and that, finally, the all-supporting *clavicembalo* vanished from the orchestra.

Gian Battista Sammartini wrote his symphonies, and Haydn adopted that distribution of instruments which has served as a basis for the great classical and modern symphony.

THE ORCHESTRA FROM BEETHOVEN TO
WAGNER.

In order to demonstrate that the primitive orchestra stood in no just proportion to the musical substance of the works of which it formed the expressive medium,—although many learned people would have us believe the contrary, and although there is no doubt that a certain sensibility characteristic of the taste of the period must have produced a sonority which we, lacking reliable evidence, cannot imagine or reconstruct,—it has remained necessary, in the absence of full scores, to rely solely on whatever information concerning the subject has been left to us by the early composers who first introduced the musical instruments. It is not unlikely that at a time when it was the custom to complete the composer's idea by improvisation, there may have occurred, simultaneously with the development of music, some changes in the art of accompanying from the figured bass. These changes constitute the progressive phase between the primitive indefinite orchestra, and the period which is made known to us through the first complete full scores.

In the second half of the 18th Century, the art of orchestration having discarded the support of the improvising instruments like the cembalo, the lute, etc., developed rapidly ; it is very difficult to determine to whom the honour of priority belongs. The first impulse certainly came from Italy, not only through the symphonies of Giovanni Battista Sammartini, but also through his melodramas. Haydn, about 1790, wrote his symphonies for strings, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets and kettle-drums, and Beethoven strengthened the foundations of symphonic art both by adopting the definite instrumental distribution (strings, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two, three or four horns, two trumpets and kettle-drums) and by developing a feeling for musical invention that was directly and exclusively orchestral.

that at present much importance is attached to the art of instrumentation, unknown at the beginning of last century, and the rise of which many people who passed for true friends of music would have liked to obstruct sixty years ago." It is a fact that in the 19th century, notwithstanding the harmonic poverty which impaired tone-colour, the "art of instrumentation" traced out an ascending curve, beginning with Beethoven and proceeding through Berlioz to Wagner. Berlioz, without having realized all he intended by his researches, is the true precursor of the ultra-modern orchestra.

The *Grand Traité de l'Instrumentation et d'Orchestration modernes*, by Berlioz,* and the *Traité d'Instrumentation*, by F. A. Gevaert may serve as a guide to those who wish to penetrate into the spirit of the 19th century orchestra. The former appeared towards the middle of last century and quotes examples from Beethoven, Weber, Rossini, Meyerbeer and Berlioz, while the latter includes Wagner, from whose scores it gives excerpts.

It would be absurd to imagine that any rules could be established for the blending of orchestral instruments. The theories of combination cannot be set up according to empiric criterions; they represent the individual and inimitable expression of the composers by whom they have been invented. The possibilities of instrumental combination are infinite, both as regards difference of register and variety of harmony and rhythm. Each musical thought, symphonically expressed, is remarkable for the manifold properties that constitute its essence. Even though the classical orchestra is not surpassingly rich in colour, it has nevertheless almost greater instrumental than rhythmic and harmonic variety. It is perhaps for this reason that Berlioz and Gevaert sought to teach certain formulæ representing the most common instrumental combinations. Instead of viewing the whole vertical line of a score, they busy themselves with dividing it into so many horizontal stripes, endeavouring thus to furnish the best "recipe" for bringing out the "principal

* Richard Strauss, in his comments on Berlioz' Treatise, which he republished a few years ago, has only a few additions to make concerning the individual technique of the string, plucked, wind and percussion instruments, and he merely refers to a few new instruments invented in France and Germany (like the alto viola, the violotta, the cellone, the heckelphone, the oboe d'amore, the basset horn and the alto flute).

theme" and if necessary, doubling it in unison or in the octave; but they scarcely ever take into account the importance of the relation between the principal theme and all the rest.† The value of combination depends, however, upon the complete aspect of a full score. For this reason the questions of emptiness and overloading are the most exasperating preoccupations of those who strive to conceal their innate symphonic incompetence under a show of artificial cleverness.

The sonority of an orchestral work infallibly reveals as much of its composers's individuality as the harmonic and thematic context. It is sufficient to compare a few symphonic fragments of different composers who have a certain affinity of intention, to demonstrate their orchestral characteristics which are immediately perceptible to a refined ear. Beethoven, for instance, without the continuous doubling indispensable to Anton Bruckner and without the harmonic support favoured by Wagner, attains to an orchestral intensity equal to that of these two composers. Nothing could be added to the orchestra of Beethoven and nothing subtracted from that of Bruckner or Wagner without causing, respectively, heaviness or emptiness.

A curious change, which possibly might make his own work irre recognizable to the composer, has come about in the Beethoven orchestra: it is no longer possible to tolerate a performance of one of his symphonies with the small number of strings originally intended. To-day the body of violins,

† Every instrument, not considering the extreme high and low registers with their exceptional sounds which are not used in the classical orchestra, has three registers: low, medium and high. (In every treatise on orchestration these sub-divisions are indicated by registers that are proportionate to the range of each instrument). If a musical theme requires doubling in unison on two different instruments, and if the latter can play it throughout in the same register, neither of the two instruments will predominate; the result will be a combination which by its colour will seem to be a third instrument, stronger, fuller and more complete and in certain cases mellower. If two instruments are combined in two different registers, the one that lies in an extreme register, high or low, will invariably stand out in comparison to the one which drags along in the middle register, and the high register will always dominate over the low one. These "natural" rules apply also to the doubling in octaves, to contrapuntal thematic treatment, to passages in consecutive thirds and sixths, and even to sustained chords and more or less full arpeggio motion. It is impossible to throw a theme into relief unless the relations between the registers are carefully weighed. The conventional dynamic signs are merely corroborative and they can only indicate the desired degree of orchestral intensity if the parts are distributed according to the ideas they are to represent. By means of such a "system" every possible combination can be definitely fixed for the purposes of the classical orchestra and it is not necessary to enlarge further upon what could, if desired, be summed up in a tablature as mathematically precise as that of Pythagoras.

violins, violoncellos and double basses is more than twice as numerous in relation to the proportion desired by the composer. And yet (with the exception of those cases where it has been found necessary to double the wind also, when in a *forte* a theme or fragment of theme is assigned to them), no unbalanced combination ever occurs.

Beethoven was destined to inaugurate the orchestral edifice of which Berlioz and Wagner were to take possession, although the modern adaptation of his symphonies proved an expedient indispensable to the satisfaction of present-day audiences.

In the orchestration of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms, there is an all-too frequent inclination, as in the operatic treatment of the voice, to indulge in singing and warbling, and too great a hesitation to explore the possibilities of harsh and crude orchestral colours.

Apart from the different intonations of the themes—often original even in their instrumentation—the conventional repetitions and fixed mannerisms of the development and the phrases forming cadences, many other interpolations that characterize 19th century music become nauseating, all the more so because they have given birth to the shallow virtuosity of conductors which for so long has fossilized orchestral concerts and intoxicated a so-called “serious” musical public.

When a dominant idea is not clearly defined and the colour uncertain, the bridge-passages, always fixed up at the same point of the musical discourse and in the same manner, tend to become vulgar and insipid. Why do Palestrina and Frescobaldi never repeat themselves? Because before the 18th century it was not solely the two “major and minor” modes that were used, and the cadence determining the mode, the key and the modulations in the circle of fifths are heir-looms left by the composers of the 18th century. Bach alone remained free from all mannerism; he is a recluse who kept aloof from his epoch. As regards Beethoven, the contrast between his impressive and his academic side becomes more clearly defined as time proceeds, and while indiscriminate idolatry is gradually being destroyed, his masterpieces remain undisputed.

During the hundred years that succeeded the birth of the symphony, orchestral technique took one single direction, and even its innovators were encircled by an iron girder: the diatonic system, whose influence extended even to musical form.

Of Beethoven's nine symphonies, the pages that best resist and probably always will resist the destruction of time, are those that not only present "thematic development," but have a higher significance, such as the Funeral March in the "Eroica," the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, the first and second of the "Pastoral," the *allegretto* of the 7th, and the first movement of the 9th. Beethoven has foreshadowed impressionism at those moments when he was poet as well as composer, but this does not imply that impressionist music is necessarily connected with a programme. When in the "Pastoral Symphony," at the end of the "Scene by the Brook," Beethoven seeks to reproduce the song of the nightingale, the cuckoo and the quail, he abruptly destroys the effect by too paltry a realistic note to fit in with the rest.

In every true work of art, the mere material should be kept in the background in favour of the idea that animates it, and therefore, in dealing with the orchestra, one cannot establish a hierarchy of instruments and state categories while altering the values. Each instrument, without distinction, can occupy in a score, according to the way in which it is used, first second, or third rank; its importance, as it differs according to the case, cannot be determined *a priori*. †

It is futile to hope that experience could, by reducing the fruits of intuition to a system, establish any concrete and positive rules. The longer the time that has elapsed over a great master's work, the more difficult it becomes to passively adopt his methods. Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, represent a hundred years of

† In the classics, for example, the horns and trumpets were, mainly because of their primitive construction, used solely to sustain the harmony, unless suitable themes like fanfares, hunting flourishes, etc., were assigned to them. Their other resources were unknown. The trumpets, when simply performing the function of marking the harmony, frequently predominated unduly and became disagreeable through underlining the harmonic monotony with their reiterations of the same notes. The kettle-drums were never tuned otherwise than to the tonic and dominant and thus reduced to the limited function of marking the two principal chords in order to define the key. The doubling of oboes and clarinets in unison is but seldom found, but octave parallels between oboes and flutes or clarinets and flutes were more frequently used. The division into first and second violins was perpetually preserved and the treatment of these two groups always made a distinction between the more and the less important one. The violins were reinforced by oboes or clarinets if they did not go too high, and in the latter case by flutes. The bass was nearly always entrusted, even in a *forte*, to the violoncellos and double basses, without the support of the bassoons, and yet it did not appear feeble. Such observations on the classical scores could be infinitely protracted, but what would at first appear as defects resulting from lack of variety in the orchestration and of material resources, on closer acquaintance must be recognized simply as characteristic features of every single composer and of his time.

“classical symphony”; but between the 9th Symphony of Beethoven and the 4th of Brahms there is but an insignificant amount of progress. Brahms, very naturally, could not resist the influence of Schumann § and, by an antithesis, that of Wagner. That does not free his symphonic line from that deliberate austerity which too often makes him ponderous and academic.

Quite another significance attaches to the group of Berlioz, Wagner, Liszt, Bruckner and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Berlioz, in his writings on the orchestra, has foreshadowed more of modern symphonic art than in his musical creations. He has largely contributed to the discovery of new sonorous means, and his discoveries are due, not so much to inventions properly speaking, as to his having more carefully penetrated into the technique of each individual instrument. If the value of his work is not in itself fully representative of the intentions he has laid down, nor commensurate with the bulk of his scores, his importance as a precursor is none the less great. To realise fully his visions as a colourist, he lacked the musical substance worthy of the instrumental material at his disposal. The same might be said of the symphonic poem created by Liszt, were it not for the fact that here the proportion between tentative and achievement is more evenly balanced.

The greatest efforts of all were made by Wagner, who succeeded in fully exhausting the possibilities of the old diatonic system. It is perhaps for this reason that Wagnerism was followed by a state of torpid stagnation, interrupted a little more than twenty years ago, when the modern French and Russian schools invigorated themselves at the sources of new discoveries in the domain of harmony. Even though the tortuous chromaticism of “Tristan” at first created the impression of a harmonic revolution, the language of Wagner was nothing really new; it merely represented the continuation of that of his predecessors, enriched by new elements that were, however, practically all derived from the old resources.

Wagner’s orchestra is doubtless the richest of his century. If to-day we occasionally fail to appreciate completely his

§ From the point of view of orchestration, Schumann is anything but interesting; he merely transcribed for orchestral instruments thoughts which in most cases betray their pianistic origin.

inventive force, it is possibly because, the first astonishment having worn off, a different musical sensibility is growing in us. But this by no means detracts from Wagner's merit in having overturned the entire orchestral organism, from the material point of view as well as that of musical conception. He was a profound poet and painter, but his restless musical spirit made him pass for a revolutionary in a degree unwarranted by reality. He transformed the orchestra by exhausting, far more completely than Berlioz, all the means of expression it is capable of yielding to the composer. ||

But if this material impulse is noteworthy, a greater importance must be attached to the reforms he introduced into the art of orchestration. ¶ The Wagnerian orchestra, from "Tristan" onwards, conveys a feeling of spaciousness that was lacking in earlier orchestras, and the novelties we encounter therein, * which certainly contributed to the making of their inventor's personality, are but small in comparison with their æsthetic influence.

Rimsky-Korsakov has left a magnificent work on orchestration (*Principes d'Orchestration*) which, in spite of having been considerably revised since the author's death, throws a strong light on the criterions and secrets of his technical individuality. But apart from certain revelations which are in exact accordance with the intimate character of his scores, Rimsky-Korsakov makes some incredible assertions which deserve being pointed out.

He exposes, for instance, at the beginning of his book, the brain-work of a composer who is in the throes of a musical idea that has to be orchestrated, and who places before

|| To Wagner are due a large number of instrumental improvements. He introduced the subdivision into several parts of each group of strings, finding it impossible to obtain an indeterminate background sonority by the division into five parts only, and moreover he amply elaborated the different bowings and most of the other phonic effects obtainable from the violins, violas, violoncellos and double basses. He further compelled the other instruments of the orchestra to improve their technique, thus destroying the deficiencies of the older orchestra.

¶ Anton Bruckner was the strongest amongst the German composers of the second half of the 19th century, and the reproach levelled against him of being influenced by Wagner cannot diminish his importance as a symphonist.

* Apart from those already mentioned, the most important are increasing to 3 of the number of string instruments (this being necessary for the obtaining of complete and homogeneous harmony), the use of 8 horns and as many as 6 harps. He thus admits the variability of the means by which a symphonic scope is obtained. In addition, he completed the family of trombones, introduced the tubas and, above all, infused new life into the instruments already in use.

orchestral realization the possibility of a selection of instruments :—a matter of technical order.

It appears unlikely that a symphonist like Rimsky-Korsakov should not have conceived his music directly in orchestral terms and that he should believe in a mechanical and systematic orchestration. Although a score must necessarily contain elements of secondary importance, which yet have their weight, the first symphonic impulse cannot be otherwise than spontaneous or present itself in anything but an unchangeable guise. He dissuades from combinations and proceedings which are of common use and of excellent effect in other composers. And why? Because they do not correspond with his way of thinking!

In reading the *Principes d'Orchestration* it is necessary to penetrate into the most recondite meaning of the author's words and to collate them with the symphonic works to which they allude, in order to fully understand their value, be it only in a negative sense. In fact, with a little discernment, Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic personality may be estimated from his writing. Russian folk-music has supplied him with a starting-point, and the *timbre*, the combinations, and all the typical features of his orchestra, are merely the means of completing his art, which is pre-eminently derived from folklore.

III.

THE MODERN ORCHESTRA

Berlioz, Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov have from the first followed a different path from that taken by the disciples of Beethoven. Wagner in Germany and Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia, have remained the last champions of a type of music that was destined to disappear. Over and above small and feeble satellites of Richard Wagner, dispersed all over the world, the Russian school rallied round Rimsky-Korsakov, and notwithstanding the advantages of being a compound of primeval forces, it became fossilized for a length of time (except in the operas of Moussorgsky), having, alas, in itself the effectiveness of a dead language.

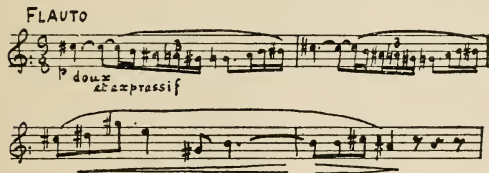
The best example of this exhaustion are the operas of Richard Strauss.* The personality of this Meyerbeer of the 20th century is of undeniable importance because he occupies the foremost position among the post-Wagnerians. Musically speaking, Strauss has an abundant selection of uniforms, liveries and costumes which he dons according to the occasion. In his *Lieder*, small music for the general public, he dresses negligently and seems to be masquerading perfunctorily as Tosti, Schumann, Verdi or Hugo Wolf rather than looking like himself. In the symphonic poem and in the music-drama, on the other hand, he appears clad in his most dazzling uniforms in order to conceal the poverty of his Wagnerian lyricism, or poses as humorist worthy of his namesake Johann, the pirouetting Viennese. The operas of Richard Strauss are full of old, stale tricks propped up by clever *orchestral devices* in order to detract the hearer's attention from all these common-places. He prefers the crude colours of the *extreme registers*, to which he assigns the strongly reinforced thematic material, while gliding arpeggios, scales and other superficialities (varnish and polish) are lavished with great profusion to mitigate the roughness of certain combinations which he uses with undue frequency, or to infuse life into the symphonic line, which too often languishes in a vulgar welter that is devoid of ideas. Although the music-drama of Richard Strauss fails to

* Gustav Mahler may be considered as on a level with Richard Strauss.

make any deep impression and its orchestral orgies leave an almost disgusting aftertaste, the significance of this baroque symphonist is none the less remarkable because in the Wagnerian parabola he marks the extreme limit of this precipitate decadence.

Wagner and Strauss have completely exhausted the resources of instrumental "tone-colour"; the ultra-modern orchestra upholds itself not through the merits of any new phonic means (in fact none of the recently invented instruments have come to stay and the ancient ones taken up again have remained exceptions), but because each instrument, in relation to modern musical sensibility, has completely changed its features and has come to take part in the renovated orchestra, having changed with it, not in appearance, but in substance.

Claude Debussy, as early as "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," has created a distinctive atmosphere *which cannot be repeated*, and has once and for all destroyed the theory of Rimsky-Korsakov† as to the possibility of orchestrating *in more ways than one* a musical idea that has not been directly conceived for the instruments. From the first bar, the flute



does not literally imitate the Faun's pipes, but its impression is outlined with masterly strokes without falling into programme-music. The languor and the drowsiness of the Faun are rendered by a sonority that could not be interpreted by any other impression than that which the composer has found in Mallarmé's eclogue. With a restricted number and very original distribution of instruments (3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, small bells, 2 harps and strings), Claude Debussy succeeds in obtaining an extraordinary "fulness" that is always animated by the

† In the work mentioned in Chapter II.

feverish pulsations characterising the wanton figure of the Faun.

The ultra-modern orchestra has emancipated itself from all the conventional formulæ, and the proportions fixed by Beethoven as the starting-point have now become obsolete, not only because of the larger available number and the technical perfection of the instruments, but also because of the readiness with which the orchestra as a medium adapts itself to any symphonic idea, while the classics adapted their thoughts to the orchestra at their disposal. No two of Debussy's scores are alike even as regards the choice and the number of instruments.‡

In the three symphonic sketches, "La Mer," (each of which is scored for different instruments, according to its exigencies), he attains, with more or less the usual orchestra, to a perfect rendering of the vastness of the sea, and the three titles (*I. De l'aube à midi sur la mer; II. Jeux de vagues; III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer*) give a clue to the composer's impressionistic intentions without rendering them too tangible and without being a programme, allow us to penetrate easily into his own personal symphonic world.

The advantages of the ultra-modern orchestra are due to the harmonic evolution that has regenerated the whole inner organism of music, beginning with rhythm, which of old had been to a great extent sacrificed to a harmony that proceeded by cadences, constraining it to depend on a restricted number of stereotyped formulæ, no phrases or developments being allowed to end otherwise than on a cadence.

The same instruments continually used in the same registers often made it impossible to judge whether the *idea* of which they were the orchestral vehicle was conspicuously original.*

‡ *Pelléas et Mélisande* is an exception for which Debussy conceived an orchestra that, although retaining his characteristic features differed materially from that used in his symphonic works.

* For example, the tone-colour gained by the combination of a *cor anglais*, a horn, a clarinet and a bassoon, even if identically distributed, is not the same if applied to two musical phrases of markedly divergent styles:—

The French school (Maurice Ravel, Paul Dukas, Florent Schmitt, Roger-Ducasse, Albert Roussel, and even Gustave Samazeuilh) has a distinctly "national" character. Debussy makes an exception, for he influenced, even if only indirectly, the contemporary French composers without himself undergoing any influence whatever, while all the others, although expressing themselves in a language made up of individual preferences which have the capacity of revealing their separate personalities, follow a method of orchestration which in former days might have been described as "unique." On the other hand, thanks to the enormous number of possible combinations and to the wealth of colour which the growing development of modern music discloses, we no longer find the conventional repetitions, as in the scores of Beethoven and his contemporaries, where the orchestration always remained the same and the musical thought alone underwent modifications.

Modern orchestration differs from that of the "classics" in that it has conquered the other musical elements without suppressing or sacrificing them, but, on the contrary, developing their expressive qualities. The musical idea (rhythm and harmony) is now the main object, and the orchestration is the light which illuminates it. A single object under different lights can assume an infinity of aspects, while the same light tends to render uniform all the objects it illuminates.

The orchestration of Maurice Ravel is as original as his music, and corresponds naturally with his musical sensibility. If the lively rhythm and the precious harmony already suffice to outline this exquisite musician's personality, his gifts as an orchestrator are no less original.

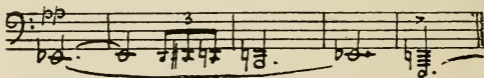
The two ballets, "Ma Mère l'Oye" and "Daphnis et Chloé" must have been composed almost at the same time, || but owing to the difference of their subjects, which move in entirely dissimilar atmospheres, it would be easy to believe that an evolution covering a considerable space of time, both as regards the development of form (harmonic and rhythmic substance) and the orchestration (which is the outcome of form) had been wrought in the composer. Although in both ballets the personal style of Maurice Ravel is very

|| "Ma Mère l'Oye" was performed for the first time in Paris at the *Théâtre des Arts*, on January 28th, 1912, and "Daphnis et Chloé" at the *Théâtre du Châtelet*, in May, 1912.

evident, the diversity of colour gained by means of the very pliable musical material appears to suggest a distance between the respective periods at which they were conceived.

The children's fables of "Ma Mère l'Oye" are realized musically in a most perfect and homogeneous manner, and the orchestra underlines the smallest details. Not only are *rhythm and form* derived from these picturesque tales, but the orchestra itself does its share in completing the fantastic visions with its most ingenious and bizarre orchestral combinations. §

A typical feature of ultra-modern symphonic music is the transformation undergone by the same instruments, which seem to assume, so to speak, the material form of the things they are made to represent. Thus, in the picture of "Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête," the double-bassoon represents the "Beast," and this *characterization* will always remain one of the outstanding features of this musical fable.



In the Ballet "Daphnis et Chloé" a chorus (without words or vocalization) is introduced as an instrumental complement that produces a most successful sonority and provides an appropriate background for the archaic action.

Ravel is undoubtedly the most significant French composer after Debussy, but men like Paul Dukas, Florent Schmitt and Roger-Ducasse must also be recognized as occupying a prominent place in the modern French school, especially because of their symphonic works. Paul Dukas and Florent Schmitt, by their works ranging from "L'Apprenti Sorcier" to "La Péri" and from the "Etude symphonique d'après le Palais Hanté" to "La Tragédie de Salomé" respectively, and all the others by a more or less copious output of orchestral works, have helped to build up the French symphonic school.

There is no need to lose oneself in prophecies as to the the future ; France possesses at the present moment a myriad of composers of indisputable genius, the bulk of whose activity

§ It is strange that "Ma Mère l'Oye" should have been originally conceived for piano duet and subsequently orchestrated. Probably the orchestration *existed* already before the piano arrangement was made, at any rate in its symphonic essence if not materially.

is orchestral because they are born colorists. Their technique cannot be accused of monotony, for it is most individual; the only trait that is common to all is an impressionist tendency, even in the least young and most massive two personalities, Paul Dukas and Florent Schmitt.

Modern German music, although turbulent in appearance, is very nebulous and tends to become fossilized.

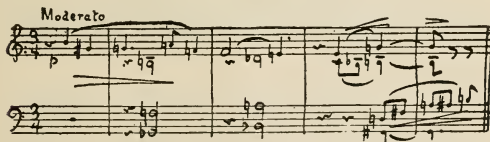
Arnold Schönberg, like Strauss, is not an innovator, but a builder using old materials.

Where the musical matter is not justified by the *thought* to which it should be subservient, the result is artificiality; the abstruse harmony of Schönberg therefore does not belong to a new tendency, it is merely what oxygen is to the dying.**

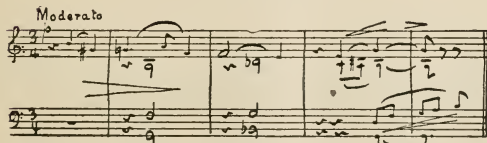
The huge score of the "Gurre-Lieder" (1911) is an intellectual effort to dazzle the *eye*. The exorbitant number of instruments, †† in fact, does not succeed in covering up all the antiquated elements it contains.

The everlasting sub-division of the strings into many parts, the rhythms, too numerous to be heard, and other acrobatics, are as worthless as the lucubrations of the *famous*

** For instance, the initial bars of the first of the Three Pieces for piano (Op. 11) look like a kind of variation on a theme by Mendelssohn.



The same as this:



†† 20 first and 20 second violins, 16 violas, 16 'cellos, 12 double basses, 4 flutes, 4 piccolos, 4 oboes, 2 English horns, 5 clarinets, 2 bass clarinets, 3 bassoons, 2 double bassoons, 10 horns, 6 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 7 trombones, 4 tubas, 4 harps, and an enormous number of percussion instruments.

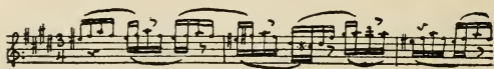
contrapuntists of the 17th and 18th centuries, who combined canons and fugues in 20 to 24 parts, thus gaining, both harmonically and rhythmically, a much less satisfactory balance than by a work in 4 or 5 parts.

The score of the "Gurre-Lieder" belongs to Arnold Schönberg's first manner. His latest scores, including "Pierrot Lunaire" (Op. 20) †† do not reveal him as a symphonist any more than his chamber music has revealed him as an innovator of harmony and form.

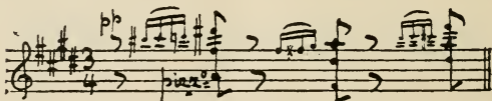
Nothing special can be said of what other modern German composers revealed to us before the war, for it is but a renewal of the Schönberg phenomena: the frantic endeavour to conceal an exhausted musical sensibility *in extremis*.

Russian music has been reinvigorated by Igor Stravinsky, who has saturated himself with the rhythm peculiar to his race, which has generated his vigorous harmony and the rhythmic-harmonic exuberance of his orchestration.

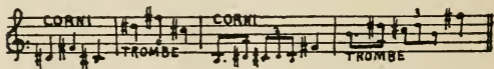
The score of "Fireworks" (1908) still shows some German influence. Although the Russian character is not entirely suppressed in this symphonic piece, the influence of Wagner is very noticeable. The insistent figures of the wood-wind



and those of the strings



remind us a little of the "Ride of the Valkyries," while the theme assigned to the brass



†† With regard to its distribution: "a speaking voice," flute (piccolo), clarinet (bass clarinet), violin (viola), cello and piano, "Pierrot Lunaire" may be classed as chamber music, although it betrays some symphonic intentions owing to which it approaches music for small orchestra.

still more closely approaches that famous Wagnerian fragment.

But his "fires" are not all alike, and a glimpse of the originality of a great but not yet emancipated musician may already be caught. His lively and impetuous orchestration, however, is no more highly coloured than that of his predecessors.

In the two ballets "The Fire-Bird" and "Petrushka," we already have a presentiment of that paroxysmal rhythmic frenzy which is reached in "Le Sacre du Printemps."

The scores of the three ballets, without having the appearance of extravagance, are in reality immensely characteristic. It is Stravinsky's particular gift to hit on rhythms and harmonies which actually *transform* even the most ordinary instruments. While a score inflated by the reckless doubling of parts simply becomes noisy and loses its elasticity, one that is remarkable for expressing a *new sensibility* has no need to resort to an unusual *number* of instruments in order to gain uncommon effects.

Scriabin, for instance, in his "Prometheus," with its orchestral apparatus of 16 wood-wind instruments, 8 horns, 5 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, kettle-drums, bass drum, cymbals, gong, triangle, large and small bells, celesta, 2 harps, organ, piano, strings, chorus and the famous "colour-organ,"^{|||} does not gain more than Debussy did by much simpler means.

But why does Stravinsky *transform his instruments* and why is he always rich in colour without apparently inventing new combinations? Because through the modern harmonic energies and the new rhythmic impulses, every instrument transforms itself and returns to primeval matter.

Stravinsky in "Petrushka" and Scriabin in "Prometheus" make use of the piano, but the same instrument assumes two very different aspects. Stravinsky draws from it curious tints that appropriately fit the tale of "Petrushka," while Scriabin treats it in the manner of a "concerto" and interrupts the symphonic discourse by pianistic diversions that are not always apposite. Not only the piano, but all instruments,

^{¶¶} The "ballet" is a very ancient form of Western art, which is now fully developed in Russia and France. But bearing in mind the restrictions imposed by the scenic action,—they are fairly elastic and by no means a greater fetter than the words of a music-drama,—the symphonic line can unfold itself with freedom and amplitude.

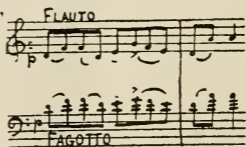
^{|||} The "colour-organ" is Scriabin's own invention. By means of a scale of lights corresponding with musical notes, he adds luminous "tones" to the audible ones.

obey the musical thought they are to express and alter according to the symphonic meaning.

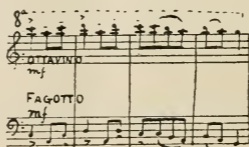
The orchestra does not exist as an independent force, but is strictly allied to the evolution of the whole musical organism. Berlioz, in his treatise, said: "The orchestra may be considered as a large instrument capable of rendering at once or successively a multitude of sounds of various kinds, and whose power is mediocre or colossal according to whether it comprises the whole or a part only of *the means of execution at the disposal of modern music* and according to whether these means are well or ill chosen and rendered under more or less favourable acoustical conditions."

Wagner enquired as far as he could into the instrumental material, and there are very few effects obtainable from the strings, the wood-wind, the brass, etc., with which he was unacquainted.

The few more recent discoveries (the glissandos and harmonics on the harp, the use of mutes with nearly all the wind-instruments, the glissandos and the sounds "on the bridge" in the strings, the celesta and the great array of percussion instruments) have hardly changed the material substance of the orchestra, nor can the most modern symphonic resources be ascribed to new instrumental combinations. The dynamic means of the modern orchestra are certain combinations avoided by Wagner, like the doubling in unison by two instruments in their extreme and mutually opposed registers,



or doublings at a distance of three or four octaves.



The ultra-modern technique has an abundance of means at its disposal, and it would be difficult to fix a limit to its orchestral scope, especially as the revolution of the old harmonic system cannot possibly be succeeded yet by a natural one.

The orchestra of to-day is as far removed from that of Beethoven as a painting by Vivarini is from one by Giorgione, with the only difference that the orchestral palette at present commands the whole gamut of colour, from the most delicate to the most violent.

IV.

VOICE AND ORCHESTRA IN THE MUSIC-DRAMA

To sing for the sake of singing was the aim of 19th century Italian opera, and everything that could in the least obstruct the predominance of the voice was consequently abolished; the orchestra, even the drama itself, were suppressed. The only preoccupation was the voice, which generated a technique that even to-day completely sways the descendants and the followers of the old music-drama. And why has it remained insuperable? Is it because of the acrobatic facility of the singers of those days? Operatic "composers" until our own days were not allowed to give the voice anything but the expressions limited to "sustained notes," "slurred notes," and brilliant passages, which are meant to express pain, joy, and other human feelings, but in reality only amount to a system of false sentimentality. It is only natural that in the development of a drama, situations present themselves which require lyrical, and therefore melodious expression, from the composer, but if the drama offers no such opportunities, it by no means suffers as a work of art. This argument seems old and exhausted, because it has so often been stated with great rhetorical emphasis, and yet it will always remain new and inexhaustible, so long as the greatest enemy of the music-drama, the human voice, will continue to obstruct every attempt at evolution by its seductive power.

Without having been the cause of any real progress, the Wagnerian opera had its influence on the conception of the *libretto*, especially as regards the musical value of the scenic action, and, however strange it may seem, the so-called "verism" is an eminently Wagnerian derivative.

"Verism," then, in order to save the "drama" from foregoing its effect, has suppressed music by distracting the hearer's attention from the stage. It has done so, however, without renouncing vocal effects when, at artificially devised moments, the exploiting of the voice, although hindering the development of the plot, serves to resolve a dramatic situation with a guaranteed effect—a proceeding of doubtful taste.

The aspects of opera are not numerous, and until now they have revealed two tendencies—absolute singing and free declamation. Absolute singing is represented by the 19th century Italian opera and by the “verist” school, already mentioned ; free declamation begins with Wagner’s attempts in that direction and achieves a complete triumph in Debussy’s “Pelléas et Mélisande.” Absolute singing combined with a half-free declamation does not constitute an independent tendency, although it comprises the whole of Wagner’s works and the operas of Moussorgsky. It is inconceivable that two opposed forms of expression should ever be welded together and convey that sense of continuity that is indispensable to the music-drama.

Although Wagner and Moussorgsky have created *fragments* of great and indisputable dramatic force, it was Debussy who first succeeded in fusing drama and music into one complete whole. Wagnerism, although the immediate cause of the whole modern musical movement, is already on the wane ; the operas of the Florentine *Camerata* of Claudio Monteverdi, of Gluck and of the 18th century Italian masters could be resuscitated were they to be exhumed, but they are incomplete ; thus the contest is confined solely to the “verist” school, reinforced by the 19th century Italian opera, who form the retrograde party, and the revolutionary party headed by Debussy’s “Pelléas et Mélisande” and a few other exceptional operas.

The “verist” school, which remains faithful to the barren and traditional forms that are sure of superficial success, seeks to attenuate the breach between various musical pieces by means that disclose an anxiety not to interrupt the dramatic sequence. The “verists” as well as the followers of Wagner and Debussy therefore all agree in respecting the scenic development of the plot, and the really important and hitherto more rarely discussed problem is that of balancing the connexion between the actor-singer and the orchestra, and this is the hub of the whole matter.

As an illustration, it will be convenient to take the Italian opera of the 19th century which, although belonging to the things of the past, still retains a certain importance because, as it has already been pointed out, it maintains by means of its “melodies” the fascination of the human voice, and constitutes the greatest obstacle in the way of a free renaissance of our music.

The voice has its low, medium, high and extremely high registers like any instrument, and without sacrificing the orchestra, it is possible to let it emerge, in combination with suitable instruments, from equivalent and not overcharged registers, in order to express a definite musical idea. The blending of the voice with the orchestra is a problem that can be solved by those who are already versed in thinking orchestrally, because a symphonist will not find it difficult to treat the voice in much the same way as he would treat a solo instrument. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and all the so-called classics abound in examples of that kind, and the modern composers who wish to gain, if only in passing, an effect of vocal supremacy, use exactly the same means. *

In 19th century Italian opera the orchestra hardly exists, because it lacks colour; the instruments are clumsily distributed and reduced to a mere accompaniment without regard for their registers. But the merely conventional indications (*p*, *pp*, *f*, *ff*) are not sufficient to gain light or heavy sonorities; no true *pianissimo* or *forte* can be obtained from a badly distributed score. An orchestra that is treated like a huge pianoforte sounds coarse, vulgar and disagreeable, like a voice that has shrieked too much and can no longer speak naturally. So much for the orchestra that is subjugated to the absolute tyranny of the voice. It must be owned that today the orchestral technique of the followers of the Italian musical melodrama is comparatively more perfect, but from the æsthetic point of view it is by no means changed.

Wagner was the first to enrich the orchestra in colour, but he was obliged, in spite of his masterly technique, to wrap up the orchestra in the "mystic haven," because the verbosity of his *libretti* made the understanding of the words indispensable. The "mystic haven" failed to conceal the prolixity of the Wagnerian drama: on the contrary it accentuated it, because the successful passages are glaringly set off by those which suffer from the undue predominance of the words.

Claude Debussy, with his "Pelléas," has succeeded in creating the most successful music-drama; the intense but not preponderant orchestra follows Maeterlinck's poetry very closely. Without digressing on the latter, which is now beyond dispute, it is clear why Debussy was so eminently

* The precursors of Haydn already had an intuitive knowledge of the balance between voice and orchestra, although it was not clearly defined.

successful : the drama is grey and the composer has woven an orchestral fabric that is equally grey and *could not* predominate and appear disproportionate. But the symphonic-dramatic perfection of "Pelléas et Mélisande" has not solved the problem, for grey is not the only existing colour, and when faced by violent tragedy, the musical theatre finds itself in the conditions of fifty years ago and continues to waver between the "mystic haven" and the renunciation of the orchestra.

Too much research and too much energy has been devoted to the music-drama to make it possible to dismiss it definitely as Utopian, as an unrealisable form of art, nor can it as yet be condemned as a tentative that failed. A careful scrutiny of the two tendencies mentioned above leads to the conclusion that the conflict between voice and orchestra will never cease and that the sacrifice of one of these two elements must deprive the music-drama of its justification. The solutions therefore cannot be sought in the way of treating the voice and the orchestra, but in the valuation of the voice as a dramatic force. But why, then, are we not restricted to the prose drama? Because music has the power of suggesting, much more intensely than mere words, the psychological condition of the characters, imparting to them an atmosphere that does not allow itself to be imprisoned between the material limits of the scenic apparatus. Consequently it is easier to forego the understanding of the positive sense of the word than the music.

The evolution of the musical stage of to-day tends more and more to detach itself from Wagnerian formulæ, and in order to rob neither the word, nor the voice, nor yet the orchestra of their expressive force, the line of the dramatic poem will have to be synthetic, adapting itself to the musical exigencies, while avoiding all superfluous verbosity and robbing the mere word of the function of solving the scenic situations. Poetry does not thereby lose its effect, even when it would appear to be drowned by the wave of music to which it has given rise.

If we do not wish to give up the music-drama, there is only one way of reviving it : no supremacy must be given to either the literary or the musical elements of which it is composed, but they must alternate while obeying the dramatic exigencies, and this must be, musically speaking, practicable. The word

may retain its poetical value even when clad in a rich musical garb, as in Debussy ; the voice may be outweighed by the orchestra and yet intensify the dramatic essence of the characters, as it often does in Wagner's music-dramas ; and again the voice may have a purely musical importance, as in the old opera, on the condition, however, that neither of these forms of expression seek to predominate over the other. In order to avoid dissident tendencies, the present position of the orchestra might be altered, transferring it under or behind the stage, and its tone might be regulated by movable screens which, while attenuating whenever necessary the intensity of sound, should not break the symphonic structure of the drama. There is a great difference between an orchestra that is placed so as to sound muted and one that, without being sacrificed to the voice, permits the latter to emerge whenever it is desirable.

Since "Pelléas et Mélisande," although it is an exceptional opera, has actually given us a perfect blending of the dramatic and symphonic elements, it is not unlikely that a few other exceptional works may succeed equally well even if they have to sacrifice valuable elements. It is at any rate certain that a more fruitful evolution may be expected if words, voice and orchestra will be looked upon as pliable material and as so many factors of equal importance, and if the prejudices that have so far paralysed the music-drama can be extirpated.

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