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The Revival of 'Benvenuto Cellini' in Paris

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really) on the Doh minor side, and that the immense mass of evidence of practical teachers is on the other side. Much is made by Doh minor advocates of what appears to be the necessity of major and minor tonics and dominants, &c., being named alike. This on the unwarranted assumption that the mental effect of a scale degree is wholly derived from its function, if we may so describe it. But surely the interval surroundings of a given scale degree are by far a stronger factor in mental effect? It is absurd to contend that **doh** makes precisely the same appeal to the mind when it has an over-minor third and an under-major third as when its environment is totally different.

If the Doh-minorists are right the Lah-minorists ought to find the minor mode impossible. Yet there is the glaring fact that movable Dohists all over the world sing the greatest music, minor and major, quite freely. They follow instinct and the line of least resistance. The Doh minor plan is largely academic. Before they invite tonic sol-faists to commit suicide the consistent advocates of the Doh minor plan should exact a revision of staff notation key-signatures that will reflect their views, although, at the same time, it will add one more considerable difficulty to the staff notation. Further, we suggest that they should sacrifice time in getting into touch with some of the slum singing classes, the Bands of Hope and, above all, the elementary schools. This kind of spade work need not be, as it is at present, the monopoly of the thousands of humble teachers who find the existing practice adequate for their purpose.

Dr. R. R. Terry has announced that with the co-operation of the Society of Women Musicians he at last sees the realisation of a long-cherished desire—to give a continuous series of performances of the lesser-known works of Bach at popular prices, the conditions being such as the music was designed for (*i.e.*, there will be a small choir and a complete orchestra). Familiar works will be avoided, in recognition of the work of other Bach conductors. It is proposed to give cantatas, chamber-music, concertos, and other orchestral works, preference being given to those least known in England. The choir will be that of Westminster Cathedral and the orchestra that of the Society of Women Musicians. The concerts, of which the first was arranged for June 24, take place at Westminster Cathedral Hall, Ambrosden Avenue, S.W. We hope that the ready public support upon which the continuance of this useful series of concerts depends, will be forthcoming. As Dr. Terry says, it only needs wider opportunities of hearing Bach for the general public to learn that there is no more human composer than—we had almost written 'The Leipzig Cantor'; but never at these concerts, says Dr. Terry, shall this alias be used, either in print or by word of mouth. In this he shows proper respect for Handel's great contemporary. The famous organist of the Thomasschule bears a name that cannot be too much honoured by repetition. The Alexander of counterpoint soars above the rules of modern journalese. None need avoid the baptismal name of the father of modern music.

One would imagine the life of an operatic impresario on tour with a repertory of modern works to be one of the least enviable on earth; yet there are some that seem to hanker after it. The indefatigable Mr. Ernst Denhof intends once more to inundate the provinces with up-to-date opera in English. The following is probably the most ambitious list of operas

ever undertaken by a touring company: 'Rhinegold,' 'The Valkyrie,' 'Siegfried,' 'The dusk of the gods,' 'Tristan and Isolde,' 'The Mastersingers,' 'The Flying Dutchman,' 'Tannhäuser,' 'The magic flute,' 'Orpheus,' 'Elektra,' 'The Rose-cavalier.' We know, however, that Mr. Denhof makes good his word. The tour—of fourteen weeks' duration, from September 15—covers the following towns: Birmingham (two weeks), Manchester (two weeks), Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool (two weeks), Newcastle, Edinburgh (two weeks), Aberdeen, Glasgow (two weeks).

An interesting ceremony was performed at Reading Abbey on June 18, when a monument was dedicated to what is in itself a monument—our earliest piece of English vocal music, 'Sumer is icumen in.' A tablet presented by Dr. Jamieson B. Hurry as a memorial of the song was unveiled by Dr. H. P. Allen, Choragus of the University of Oxford. The tablet, measuring 7 ft. by 4 ft., designed by Mr. W. Ravenscroft, F.S.A., and executed by Mr. W. S. Frith, has a central panel on which a facsimile of the British Museum MS. is carved. The Choral Society of University College, Reading, sang 'Sumer is icumen in,' and the following programme:

The Agincourt song, 'Deo Gracias Anglia,' 1415.
'Pastime with good company' ... *King Henry VIII.*
'Now Robin lend to me thy bow' } *Temp. Henry VIII.*
'By a bank as I lay' ... }
'All creatures now are merry-minded' ... *Benet.*

An amusing story, for the truth of which we can vouch, comes to us from Toronto. An organist had drawn up the order of a Sunday service, and it was in type ready for printing, when the death of an important personage made a change necessary. The organist telephoned to the printer, and instructed him to change the Postlude to 'Funeral march by Chopin.' This is what he found at the end of the list when he arrived at the church:

'A few remarks by Chopin.'

The printed sheet is before us as we write.

'How dreadful is this place. This melodious, thoroughly diatonic little piece . . . is specially adapted for the dedication of a church.'—*Musical Times.*

This is a hard saying. *Punch.*

Yes, very hard, inasmuch as it did not appear in the *Musical Times.*

THE REVIVAL OF 'BENVENUTO CELLINI' IN PARIS.

BY M. MONTAGU-NATHAN.

Writing in the Paris *Temps* of November 22, 1910, Mr. Pierre Lalo, the eminent French critic, son of the composer of that name, asked in tones of challenge: 'We have three Lyric Theatres in Paris; which of them will be prevailed upon to render a belated tribute to the greatest of French composers by mounting "Benvenuto Cellini"?'

The appearance of this invitation in the programme of Mr. Astruc's theatre seems to suggest by implication that his decision to provide modern Parisians with an opportunity of weighing the merits of Berlioz's opera for themselves was inspired thereby. Whether or no, let it be noted that since the disastrous performance in 1838—which event is held not only to have cast a shadow over the rest of the composer's life, but considerably to have impeded the progress of music

in France—'Benvenuto Cellini,' in spite of favours received in over twenty Continental centres, never received another performance in that country until this revival.

Paris has every reason to be thankful for Mr. Astruc's enterprise in providing it with this Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. He has endeavoured in designing it (to use his own words) to combine French taste with Anglo-Saxon comfort. But he has completely transcended the limits of this ideal by a rigid elimination of the superfluous in the matters both of taste and comfort. The expression of French taste by means of the gilded plaster of the Opéra-Comique is conspicuous by its absence, for the theatre is built and decorated on Greek lines—with such success indeed that the presence of black-coated men and osprey-plumed women in its chaste marble vestibule is a striking incongruity. As to comfort, in avoiding a superfluity of over-obsequious and cringing attendants, in designing seats which are scientifically comfortable, and in arranging lights so that one's score is rendered readable during the progress of the piece without in any degree endangering the stage effects, the management has achieved something more than the fulfilment of either French or Anglo-Saxon ideals.

There is something in a sense laconic about the method. There is no suspicion of swagger; those responsible for the creation of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées appear to have been quite satisfied with perfection, irrespective of the capacity of the public to recognise perfection, and there has been no sort of compromise.

And after an expatriation extending over nearly seventy-five years it is here that 'Benvenuto Cellini' has at length been suitably housed in the city of its original production.

In Cellini's memoirs, written (in Mr. Birrell's opinion) 'after a fashion that ought to have brought posthumous justice upon him, and made them a literary gibbet on which he should swing, a creaking horror, for all time,' we read of a statue of Perseus, the casting in bronze of which caused no little misgiving to the Duke of Florence, then the immortal artificer's patron. In 1831, Berlioz recorded in his memoirs that before leaving Florence for Genoa, he took a farewell glance at the statue of Perseus.

In December, 1835, he wrote to Humbert Ferrand acquainting him of the re-publication in Italian of a life of Cellini, advising him to 'read it, if you are not already familiar with the autobiography of that bandit of genius.' He mentioned also that the Paris Opéra Committee had accepted this subject as libretto for an opera, that the music had not yet been begun, but that the book was in the hands of Auguste Barbier and Alfred de Vigny. It seems, however, that Barbier's collaborator was Leon de Wailly, and that de Vigny, the author of 'Chatterton' and, according to Mr. Gosse, 'a convinced Anglophil' (he married the daughter of Sir Edward Bunbury), was merely responsible for its subsequent revision.

From this time until 1838 Berlioz worked upon the opera, and the principal figure in the drama, which was both long and oppressive, was the statue of Perseus, round which the plot really centres. He also included the part taken by Cellini in the siege of Rome, where the adventurer is supposed to have shot the Constable of Bourbon.

In May, 1833, writing to Ferrand, he speaks of representations made by the Paris Opéra authorities with regard to the composition of a work on the subject of Hamlet, but concludes by noting his intention to proceed with 'Cellini,' whose life he remarks has made such an impression upon him. In

a further letter, written in the August following, Berlioz tells that he, Barbier, and Wailly presented themselves, 'like three simpletons,' to Crosnier, an official of the Opéra-Comique, that the work was read before them all, and *refused*. 'We imagine,' he says, 'in spite of Crosnier's protestations to the contrary, that I am the real cause of this refusal. They look upon me as a sort of sapper who wants to undermine the national style, and consequently they have refused the words so as safely to rid themselves of the music of a madman. I have nevertheless written the music for the first scene—the Song of the Florentine Sculptors—everybody is infatuated with it, and it will be given at one of my concerts.'

In April, 1835, came a change of plan. Duponchal, the new Director at the Opéra, entered into negotiations with Berlioz, and made a stipulation that certain changes should be made in the libretto, and in December he again wrote to Ferrand acquainting him that the matter of the book had been agreed upon, but that he could not yet get to work upon the music for lack of funds. 'Like my hero,' he says, 'I am in need of *metal*.' It was his friend, Ernest Legouvé, who came to his financial assistance with the loan of two thousand francs, and thus procured for him the necessary freedom of which he assiduously availed himself, and by the beginning of October, 1836, he was able to tell Ferrand that he had received a written assurance from the Director of the Opéra that his work would be mounted in a short time—the delay being caused by the prior claims of three other works. On March 13, 1838, he wrote to his father that the opera was in rehearsal, and preparations continued throughout the Spring. Finally, after postponement for a week, it was actually performed on September 10 at the Opéra.*

The full house was surging with excitement. Postponements, articles, advertisements, polemical agitations resulting from Berlioz's critical writings in the *Débats*, and the propaganda of Bertin, his protector at the Opéra, the composer's recent nomination by a minister as director of the Italian Opéra, and the opposition of the Chamber thereto—all this contributed to the feverish anxiety with which the performance was awaited by the huge audience. A caricature by Benjamin was published in one of the papers depicting Berlioz as a 'one-man band,' seated on top of a puppet-show on the front of which was written 'Grand and extraordinary performance of "Malvenuto Cellini" † with literary pasquinades and musical harlequinades At the end of the show a big statue will be cast ‡ also the author.'

This hearing of the work has been likened to a life and death contest between a single man and an (artistically) irresponsible horde. It was clear that Berlioz would secure either a complete triumph or an overwhelming defeat.

The overture was very heartily applauded, a circumstance attributed to the fact that Berlioz was already a symphonist of repute. When the curtain rose on the first Act, the scenery was of so drab a kind as to give the impression that the management, anticipating failure, had been making economies in this department. Thus early, from all accounts, we are led to believe that the opera was already pronounced a failure. People began to leave. Teresa's solo in the approved Italian style, according to M. Adolphe Boschot, served but as a temporary

* Grove's Dictionary gives the Académie Royale de Musique as the venue, and September 3 as the date.

† The pun was cribbed from Cellini's memoirs, in which it is recorded that the joke was made by the Duke of Florence in pointed reference to Benvenuto's unpunctuality.

‡ The word *coulée* has the double meaning of 'cast' and 'cast out.'

check to the departing crowds. The Parisian audience professed itself disgusted with the libretto, and reserving to itself the long-established prerogative of ignoring serious music, found a ready pretext for condemning Berlioz's score. The performance was punctuated by hisses, cat-calls, farmyard noises—a hideous concatenation. The opera was given two more representations, and removed from the bill.

Upon a man of Berlioz's temper, the effect of this as the reward of fifteen years of struggle may easily be imagined. He was utterly crushed and humiliated. The period of inertia inaugurated by this defeat lasted several years, during which the composer cut himself off from all contact with the theatre—a calamity which, as has been said, has been the means of retarding operatic development in France.

Writing in 1850, Berlioz says, 'Never shall I forget the misery of those rehearsals. The indifference of the actors, riding for a fall, Habeneck's* bad temper, the vague rumours I heard on all sides, all betrayed a general hostility against which I was powerless. The orchestra . . . were cold and reserved with me. . . . Gradually the larger part of the orchestra came over to my side, and several declared that this was the most original score they had ever played. . . . Still some malcontents remained, and two were found one night playing "J'ai du bon tabac" instead of their parts. . . . It is fourteen years since I was thus pilloried at the Opéra, and I have just read over my poor score, carefully and impartially. I cannot help thinking that it shows an originality, a raciness and a brilliancy that I shall, probably, never have again, and which deserve a better fate.' Conspicuous among the revivals, by the way, is that at Covent Garden in 1853, where, according to Berlioz, the work was hissed from beginning to end 'by a crew of Italians.'

We are thus supplied with the judgment of the Paris public of 1838, and with the composer's opinion expressed after a lapse of years. It is now incumbent upon us to record the impression conveyed by the performance in 1913. In order to facilitate reference, the argument may be briefly sketched.

The scene is laid in Rome during the Shrove-tide Carnival of the year 1532. The first Act takes place in the Salon of Balducci, the Pope's treasurer, who, having been called by his Pontifical master, takes the precaution of forbidding his daughter, Teresa, to show herself at the window during his absence. She disregards the parental injunction, and whilst at the window a bouquet is thrown to her by Cellini, who announces by means of a note hidden therein that he intends to secure a clandestine interview with her that very evening. Benvenuto duly arrives, but during the subsequent love-passages, Fieramosca, a rival both as sculptor and suitor, and a sort of Beckmesser, enters unobserved, secretes himself, and overhears the arrangement of an assignation for the following (Shrove) Tuesday evening in the Piazza di Colonna, the chief centre of gaiety. Suddenly Balducci returns. Cellini escapes without having been perceived by him, but Fieramosca is discovered, and the furious parent, deaf to explanations, calls his servants, and they with sundry neighbours armed with brooms, sticks, pokers, and tongs, fall on Fieramosca, who gets a thorough trouncing.

The second Act is divided into two scenes: the first is that of a corner of the Piazza di Colonna, showing the frontage of a tavern. Shrove Tuesday. Cellini is presently joined by his companions and fellow craftsmen. They call for wine, but the tavern keeper refuses to serve them until his long-due score has been paid. To them, in their thirsty dismay, enters Ascanio,

Cellini's apprentice, who brings from the Pope a bag of gold for his master, but calls upon him to observe the stipulation that the statue of Perseus, which has been so long awaiting completion, shall be cast on the morrow. Benvenuto carelessly promises, pays the innkeeper, and having plied his companions with the required refreshment, sets about plotting with them the abduction of Teresa. She is expected with her father to attend an *al fresco* theatrical performance, during which Cellini proposes to 'rag' Balducci, and reckons that this will have the effect upon him of causing him momentarily to neglect his daughter. Then Benvenuto and Ascanio, disguised as a white monk and a black friar, profiting by the extinguishing of lights which, according to law, follows the firing of a gun in the adjacent fortress, will carry off Teresa. But the plot has been overheard by Fieramosca and Pompeo, a hired ruffian. They resolve on the plan of assuming the same disguises, and hope to frustrate Cellini's design to their own advantage.

The second scene is in another part of the Piazza, in front of the theatre. The Carnival is at its height. Balducci and his daughter enter, and soon after are followed by the disguised Cellini and Ascanio. Placards announce the performance of a burlesque called 'King Midas,' which now begins. The mountebanks, who are friends of Cellini, have 'made up' Midas to resemble Balducci, whose infuriation is increased by the addition of donkeys' ears to his prototype. The maddened original throws himself on the mimes, and with the intention of profiting by the opportunity, the two pairs of monks and friars approach Teresa, who is mystified by the duplication. The rivals engage in combat, and Pompeo is mortally wounded. Just as his assailant is being arrested by the horrified crowd, the cannon is heard. The carnival is at an end, and in the absolute darkness Benvenuto escapes, and Ascanio carries off Teresa.

The first scene in the last Act, which, like the second, is divided, is the workshop of Cellini—the time, Ash Wednesday. In the background is the foundry, and the middle of the stage is occupied by the Perseus. Ascanio and Teresa are consumed with fears for Benvenuto's safety. Eventually he arrives still wearing his disguise, and recounts his adventures. Presently Balducci and Fieramosca enter in search of the ravishers. There is an affray which is interrupted by the appearance of a cardinal, who comes to represent the Pope at the casting of the statue. The cardinal, disregarding the complaints of the outraged father, thinks only of his mission, and having upbraided the sculptor, informs him that if the statue is successfully cast before nightfall, he may marry Teresa; if not, he will be hanged.

The second and last scene shows the foundry, where everything is ready for the casting. Suddenly a workman interrupts Cellini's reveries with the news that there is not sufficient metal. Cellini, thoroughly roused, seizes all the metal ornaments, statuettes, gold and silver vessels which adorn his workshop, and hurls them into the furnace. His statue is saved. He breaks the mould, and the Perseus emerges triumphant. The cardinal gives his blessing to the lovers, and the opera ends with a chorus in glorification of the sculptor's craft.

It should not be difficult to perceive from this recital that the libretto of 'Benvenuto Cellini' is not too well devised for its purpose. It is derived from a chronicle which embraces a whole catalogue of *liaisons* and misdemeanours both social and criminal, and is based upon an incident which its creators have attempted to invest with a sufficient importance by introducing the element of finality. But it contains a certain amount of realistic material which, for different

* Habeneck was the conductor.

reasons, was inimical to its success at the epoch of its production, and is now accounted a defect on its revival. In 1838 the introduction of realism into music-drama was looked upon unkindly, as savouring of revolt against the prevalent Italian mode, which was cherished by a public prone to take its pleasures lightly. In 1838 the realistic in 'Benvenuto Cellini' was regarded as an intrusion. But since that time the representation of life on the stage has been accorded a considerable amount of attention. In no direction is this more noticeable, for instance, than in the management of stage crowds. The crowd in the 'Meistersinger' has its obligations, and as examples of crowds on the later 19th and early 20th centuries stage, which have assisted in demonstrating the feasibility of securing an approach to *vraisemblance*, those of Ibsen's 'Enemy of the People,' Barrie's 'What every woman knows,' Charpentier's 'Louise,' and Galsworthy's 'Strife,' may be cited as shining specimens. In parenthesis it should be noted that whereas the carnival scene in 'Benvenuto Cellini' is a decided success, the hustling of Fieramosca in the first Act is quite unconvincing, and in the matter of 'punishment' (in the idiom of fisticuffs) Fieramosca gets off very lightly.

As to the music, judged from the present-day standpoint, while recognising its value as a historical document it is difficult for the sophisticated opera-goer of our time to arrive at anything like a positive enjoyment of it. The student of opera will recognise certain devices in orchestration which must have been novelties in 1838, but the later works of Berlioz have been instrumental in stamping these innovations as mannerisms of that composer. The cavatinas, arias, and concerted vocal numbers, which were really included as a sop to the contemporary public, have none of the brilliancy of the Italian specimens to which that public was accustomed; in introducing an alloy of refinement, Berlioz has achieved dullness. The choruses are, however, of quite a different order of merit, and this is probably due to the fact that a well-written chorus can hold its own in a state of detachment from the dramatic context. Here, therefore, finding himself in a domain of which he is master, Berlioz secures an easy triumph. (On the occasion of the visit under notice, owing to a misunderstanding, the *finale* of the Carnival chorus petered out in dismal silence—the escape of Benvenuto was made in a blaze of light instead of in darkness, and the conductor, losing touch with the distracted chorus and the bewildered orchestra, had perforce to ring the curtain down. What should have been a triumphant choral and orchestral climax was converted into an ignominious failure.)

The quality of the instrumental music, as commentary upon the action or dramatic interest, is decidedly weak. In certain remarkable instances the accompaniment makes little attempt at description—the hustling of the innkeeper in the first scene of Act 2, for example. Then there are the interminable monologue of Teresa in the first Act, and the dialogue of Ascanio and Teresa in the first tableau of the last Act—in both of which the last degree of tedium is reached.

On the whole, it must be confessed that it is as an opportunity for the student that this revival of 'Benvenuto Cellini' is best justified: the possibilities of its achieving a popular success in the 20th century seem thoroughly remote.

Gade's Trio in F (Op. 42) was played before a meeting of the I.S.M. at Broadwood's on June 14 by Miss Eveline Rudkin (violin), Mr. J. E. Hambleton (violoncello), and Mr. Herbert Hodge (pianoforte).

GEORGE HOLMES.

BY W. H. CUMMINGS.

George Holmes, composer and organist, has received but scant notice at the hands of musical historians. Grove's Dictionary devotes eighteen lines to him. Burney does not mention him, and Hawkins briefly records his name. That he was an accomplished musician is proved by manuscript compositions of his still in existence. He was born in 1681, but his birth-place and parentage are uncertain. His father may have been the *Thomas* Holmes who contributed ten secular Catches and two sacred Canons to Hilton's 'Catch that Catch can,' published in 1652, now a very rare book. It may be well to notice that Grove wrongly gives the name George instead of Thomas Holmes. The youth became a pupil of Dr. John Blow when he entered the choir of the King's Chapel Royal, probably about 1688-89; the date of his leaving the Chapel would perhaps be 1697-98; certainly not later, for in the latter year he was under the protection, and in the employ, of the Bishop of Durham (Lord Crewe). This fact is proved by a manuscript volume now in the British Museum, which contains some twenty-seven pieces for the organ by Purcell, Blow, and Holmes, transcribed by the last-named 'in 1698 in the Bishop of Durham's Palace.'

An interesting volume, in the possession of the present writer, contains several autograph compositions by Holmes, notably 'A Song on the Birth Day of ye Right Honble. The Lady Crewe, 1702.' This piece is scored for harpsichord and string accompaniments with soprano solos and chorus commencing with the words, 'Bring on Thou glorious Sun the day.' One of the solos, according to the fashion of the age, is written on a ground bass. Other compositions by Holmes in the volume are 'Appear yee nymphs, yee rural swains,' a song for voice and harpsichord with obbligato flute accompaniment; 'Love in her eyes triumphant reigns'; and 'Gentle shepherd, leave your flocks,' a soprano solo followed by a duet for soprano and bass, which exhibits the prevailing custom of the time of frequent repetition of some unimportant word, the whole concluding with a four-part chorus.

Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham, the patron of George Holmes, was a distinguished and wealthy musical amateur, who, during his residence at Oxford, became an active member of the 'Musical Society.' Amongst his fellow-members was Ken, afterwards Bishop, remembered for his musical and poetical gifts, and for his Morning and Evening Hymns written for the Wykehamist scholars. Crewe took his part in the various concertos and ensemble pieces, playing on the Viol di Gamba. He was made Bishop of Oxford in 1671, and of Durham in 1674. He took a very prominent part in the troublous political movements of the day; performed the marriage ceremony, at Portsmouth, which united Catherine of Braganza to Charles the Second, supported Queen Anne at her coronation in Westminster Abbey, and died in 1721, leaving vast estates and Bamborough Castle for charitable purposes; the annual income derivable therefrom a few years ago was over eight thousand pounds.

Holmes doubtless led a pleasant life whilst residing in the Bishop of Durham's palace, and it is probable that through the influence of his patron he obtained the appointment of organist of Lincoln Cathedral in 1705, on the death of the previous holder of that appointment, Thomas Allison. That Holmes gave satisfaction to the authorities is shown by his admission to a Junior Vicar's place on November 17, 1707. This appointment was a welcome addition to