

The Compleat Organist. III. Of Pastors and Masters (Continued)

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Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 54, No. 850 (Dec. 1, 1913), pp. 794-797

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/907711>

Accessed: 02-11-2015 14:18 UTC

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his further statement that music never assimilates itself with the natural, and therefore, even when it accompanies the most ludicrous and extravagant farces of the comic opera, it still preserves its essential beauty, purity, and sublimity; and its fusion with these incidents is unable to draw it down from its height, to which all absurdity is really foreign. Thus the profound and serious significance of our existence hangs over the farce and the endless miseries of human life, and never leaves it for a moment.

If we overlook the last sentence, which is a typical chunk of Schopenhauerian pessimism, it is pretty obvious that the philosopher has run his head against the old question of why people tolerate the conjunction of fine music and banal drama in opera. He is at a loss to explain the wild absurdities that occur in nine operas out of ten, and falls back upon the weak statement about the serious significance of our existence hanging over farce. Surely if there is one thought above another that does *not* enter the opera-lover's head when he is listening to his favourite arias, it is the relationship of our existence to eternal things. The presence of music at operatic and theatrical performances cannot be excused upon these grounds.

It is precisely at such points as this where abstract philosophic systems break down. Schopenhauer's theory fares no worse than any other 'transcendental' explanation of the phenomenon of music. Any convincing system of musical theorizing must settle once and for ever the question as to how far the physical excitements of music can influence our minds apart from æsthetics. Some might urge that music has no substance except in æsthetics. But this is obviously unsound argument. To take a concrete example: the mind of a man who goes to a concert to hear the 'Siegfried Idyll' is vastly different from that of his neighbour who attends a reproduction of, say, Bizet's 'Carmen.' The former goes deliberately from æsthetic motives, fully prepared not only to hear with all his ears, but to read a part of his own personality into Wagner's music. In reality this individual is as important a part of the proceedings as a violoncellist or an oboe player, for the music was intended to be listened to as well as played. On the other hand the man who visits 'Carmen' has no such interest in the music. He merely regards it as a pleasing adjunct to the stabbing and kissing. It is very evident that he does not concentrate his mind upon the music, or he would resent the presence of the drama and spectacle which divert his attention.

But it is not only in the opera-house that these phenomena can be observed. Music is welcome at every kind of social function. The astute hotel-keeper does not disdain the services of a string band. The justices entering the courts of assize do so to the flourish of trumpets. The politician, after some dubious election work, will wish his triumph to be further impressed upon the masses by a brass band. At theatres, exhibitions, and the like we see the indispensable 'orchestra.' And we might extend the list indefinitely to prove that wherever dynamic excitement is wanted, or whenever it is necessary to raise the emotions of a large body of people, music is always called in to play a secondary but highly important rôle. Wherever the masses congregate, there is music welcome, always with this curious proviso: that the mind shall not be asked to concentrate its attention upon the sounds. The latter must imperatively occupy a subordinate position to the politics, drama, pictures, or the mastications of the moment.

These remarkable aspects of music cannot be adequately dealt with by Schopenhauer's system of

philosophy. If we tear away æsthetics from music we shall still have a substantial natural phenomenon which is capable of great influence upon the human mind. But this matter has been quietly boycotted by every thinker except Darwin, and even if the theorist of the future does not accept all the Darwinian conclusions, they will be found to be the only possible grounds upon which we can construct a musical metaphysic which shall cover the complete facts. If we persist in abandoning the physiological and biological elements we shall ultimately founder in the quicksands of transcendentalism. We can see how perilous this course is by studying Schopenhauer's theory of music, always remembering that Schopenhauer was only half a transcendental, and moreover, one who could express himself with a clearness and directness unknown to his fellow-writers. Secret-necessities, things-in-themselves, and inner-significances will not help us.

Was it not César Franck who said that Kant was 'really very amusing'?

Church and Organ Music.

THE COMPLETE ORGANIST.

BY HARVEY GRACE.

(Continued from November number, page 728.)

III.—OF PASTORS AND MASTERS.

The bad old days when it was almost taken for granted that organist and vicar should live in a state of more or less desultory warfare have happily gone, and are never likely to return. Still, from time to time ecclesiastical and musical journals contain bursts of querulous correspondence, showing that difficulties still crop up. Thus, a Church newspaper will for a few weeks contain letters from clergy complaining of tyrannous organs, organists, and choirs, while anon in a musical journal you will find organists wailing about their high-handed vicars. Unfortunately, this method of airing grievances is of very little use, as the contending parties rarely hear the other side. Organists may or may not be ecclesiastically-minded enough to read the *Church Times*, but we may be pretty sure that few of the clergy are sufficiently musical to read journals devoted to that art. This 'writing to the papers' is usually futile for another reason. The difficulties in most cases are purely local and personal, and can therefore be fully understood only by those on the spot. Vicar and organist have been described as 'an autocrat and a bundle of nerves,' but commonly there are *two* autocrats, and in the event of a collision, he who is also a 'bundle of nerves' fares ill. Often the aggrieved organist owes his discomfort to his tactless methods of dealing with those who differ from him. He takes rather a pride in his wrongheadedness. 'See,' he says, in effect, to the creatures of grosser clay with whom he has to deal, 'I am an artist, and of more fiery stuff than your huckster. To prove the which, I will show you how the artist negotiates yonder wall. There is a convenient gate, which I leave for the feeble among you. I myself shall proceed to knock my head against the wall, and you will see it, like those of Jericho, fall down flat.' So saying, he lowers his head, shuts his eyes, and does his part of the programme: the only part which may be written down a success. For his pains, he has a valuable lesson and a bloody coxcomb, both of which he will promptly forget at the next obstacle.

On the whole there is only one course open to an organist who cannot get on with his vicar—he must seek ‘fresh woods and pastures new,’—to vary a well-known quotation. It may be a hardship, but no good work can be done in organizing and maintaining a choir if the musical and ecclesiastical heads are in conflict.

What are the most frequent points of difference? Probably more often than not the matter is one respecting the choice of music, and especially hymn-tunes. It is of course very trying to a musician to be asked to play and teach his choir mission tunes of a tawdry and debased type. His vicar thinks that such tunes make a service attractive to the humbler folk, and no other consideration has much weight with him. In such cases the ‘bundle of nerves’ often comes to grief. He declines to play the tunes, or plays them under protest, and he will complain to his choir, and make satirical references to the clergy in general and his vicar in particular. Having thus undone (in the matter of discipline) the choir work of months, he will write to his pet musical paper on the subject.

The compleat organist does none of these things. He will make an appointment with his vicar, and having got him snugly ensconced in his arm-chair, pipe in mouth, will proceed to administer the word in season. As this question of choice of music is just now very much in the air, I propose to go into it rather more fully than the title of this article warrants. It is, as I said above, one of the most frequent causes of friction between organist and vicar. It may be useful to summarise a few quite simple and obvious arguments on the organist’s side, which are not so often brought before the clergy as they should be. I shall consider the question principally in relation to hymn-tunes. *Mutatis mutandis*, what follows applies to all other poor Church music.

The compleat organist meeting his vicar, and the pipe of peace having been produced, the proceedings will run on the following lines.

C.O.—‘My dear Vicar, you are so accustomed to deal faithfully with your flock, that I hope you will allow one who, though an official, is still one of them, to do the like with you. We are at cross purposes over the use of mission and other unworthy types of hymn-tunes. I am going to put before you the musical side of the question, that being the only one on which I have the right to speak. I object to these tunes, as I would to shoddy anthems or services, not because I or the choir dislike them, but simply on the ground of their not being good enough for use in Church.’

V.—‘But that’s just the point! I don’t want elaborate music. I want something simple and bright, so that the service shall be hearty and go with a swing.’

C.O.—‘There you follow the bulk of the cloth in supposing that good music is necessarily elaborate. Organists who are keen on the improvement in Church music are trying to hammer into the heads of all concerned the fact that good music may be quite simple, and the simple quite good. There is more than one kind of simplicity,—there is that of the genius, and that of the idiot. So in music you have on one hand an old psalm-tune such as ‘St. Ann’s’ or ‘Dundee,’ and on the other the revivalist type of tune. Both kinds are simple, especially the old tunes, but there can be no question as to which kind is good. What is needed in the Church is the good, simple thing done well,—the good, strong hymn-tune, versicle, and chant well sung. So much for the “elaborate” bogey. Then you demand that the service shall be “hearty” By that you mean it must be loud.’

V.—Well,—er,—I hadn’t—er—aren’t you rather crude?’

C.O.—‘Precisely! It is not a case for subtleties, but facts; and facts are crude. You, as well as ninety-nine per cent. of your fellow-clerics, mean “loud” when you say hearty. Now, your “Nuttall,” conveniently at hand, tells me that “hearty” means “proceeding from the heart; full of heart; with heart; healthy; strong; having a keen appetite”—nothing about “proceeding from the lungs,” you will notice. Good congregational singing, I agree, may well be loud and strong, but the loudness is nothing in itself. It is a mere by-product. To prove to you the absurdity of this fetish of noise, I need only to remind you that of all choral effects, the most thrilling is a real *pianissimo* by a big choir. So much for your heartiness. Then you demand that a service shall be “bright,” and shall “go with a swing.” Now I do not desire, any more than you do, that the service on its musical side shall hang fire. But I must point out that again much depends upon what we mean by our terms. There is tremendous swing about an old psalm-tune or chorale sung with proper breadth and weight. There is also swing—our less expensive Press is fond of calling it “vim” and “verve”—about most of our popular music-hall songs. Have you ever heard “I’m one of the bhoys” sung by a crowd? If not, you have missed a good example of brightness and swing of the latter kind. But you will not want that particular variety in Church. The other kind is much less obvious and, like most good things, improves on acquaintance. In this matter of “brightness and swing” I am going to risk your anger by pointing out that we do not find in the clergy as a body any great anxiety about making *their* part of the service conspicuous for these qualities. Instead, we have the too often slovenly reading of the lessons and prayers, and careless intoning; and as for the pulpit part, I have even known, and that frequently, one cleric to be overtaken, like Bully Bottom, with “an exposition of sleep” while one of his colleagues had been preaching! A clerical demand for “brightness and swing” is likely to come home to roost in many churches!

‘Coming now to the actual matter in dispute—mission hymns—let me put before you a few points. You have asked me to include some of them because a certain percentage of the congregation will like them. Most of our other hymns, you say, are too severe, though you admit their excellence. Now, I am going to reply by making a few suggestions. We are justly proud of our beautiful parish Church, but I have long felt that many of the poorer people of our district do not fully appreciate its architectural excellences. How should they? Fine architecture, especially ecclesiastical, repels, rather than attracts, the uneducated mind. It is too severe, too much outside their everyday experience. Take them to the Hipposeum or some other mammoth place of amusement, and they will feel quite at home, and will remark on the beauty of the building. If you canvassed your congregation, I fancy you would find that to seventy-five per cent. the Hipposeum, as a mere building, gave more pleasure than our Church. Then why not make such structural alterations as shall bring our grand Norman pile into line with popular taste? This argument, if it errs at all, does so on the side of mercy, for the Hipposeum is a good building for its purpose and of its kind, whereas the hymn-tunes on which you set such store are bad both in kind and quality. Their use is as much an offence to the musician as the painting of our beautiful oak choir-stalls with stripes of red, white, and blue would be to you. Yet I doubt not that many of the less educated members of our congregation would think

the carving vastly improved with some such scheme of decoration. You would quote in vain the line about "painting the lily." They prefer it painted, regarding it as a tame and chilling bloom otherwise. When I find you decorating the Church to suit their taste, you will hear no protest from me in the matter of hymn-tunes. I think I may safely promise that !'

V.—'But who is to decide that these tunes are bad? Surely it is a matter of taste, about which there can be no argument.'

C.O.—'I grant that it is not always an easy thing to decide, especially in the case of examples that hover near the border line. But how do we decide in other arts? In a dispute as to what constitutes a good book, you will consider the opinion of a dozen literary men of standing worth that of ten times the number of the ordinary reading public. Nor, in the matter of pictures, do you hang on the walls of your Church or vicarage crude oleographs or cheap prints such as you find in the poorer homes of your parish. Very few of your parishioners would thank you so much for a beautiful etching as for a highly-coloured print in which the bluest of policemen and the reddest of soldiers are seen ogling the most apple-cheeked of housemaids. Most educated people are quite clear as to the difference between the good and bad in literary and pictorial art. In music, the distinction is equally clear to all who have received a musical education worth the name. They, surely, should be arbiters enough for you. Do you realise, too, that music has its grammar—a code of rules as definite in most cases as those governing language? You would be horrified if I suggested that the choir should sing a hymn, the first lines of which ran :

"I is a awful sinner,
And you be iust the same."

You would point out that while the lines contained a statement about which there could be no dispute, the grammar was so hopeless as to render the hymn unfit for use, and I should agree with you. Do you know that most hymn-tunes of the popular type contain breaches of musical grammar every whit as excruciating to a musician as the above lines are to you? I open one of these books (the "Mirfield" Mission Hymn Book) and find this progression :



This brief passage contains more mistakes in grammar than those two awful lines. The rules broken are founded on practical common-sense, as you will find if you ask your choir to sing the "harmony."

'If you defend those hymns on the score of melodiousness, I can easily point to some that are popular, but which, judged as tunes, carry their poverty on their face.

'Here is a succession of notes from the refrain of another tune from the same collection :



After the pause on the top note, the "tune" ambles back in pretty much the same way it went up, reminding one of the exploit of a famous general, who, after gallantly marching up the hill, marched down again. Nothing happened on the way up, or down, or at the top. You set great store by these tunes for use at children's services. It may be worth while pointing out that our children in elementary schools now learn, as a rule, songs that musically are of a more satisfactory type. Are they to come in to Church on Sunday, and find that what would not be tolerated by the London County Council and their teachers is good enough for the Church? Try to look at the matter in this light. If you still think that the attractive power is the only consideration that matters, be consistent, and let us have a rainbow-striped lectern, the architecture and lighting arrangements of the Hipposeum, and let a committee of clergy who agree with you give us a paraphrase of the Bible and Prayer-book, in which the noblest of English is exchanged for the much more understandable and popular language of the halfpenny press.'

The above is less a discussion than a monologue. In this case there is no vicar's side to the question at all. There is no more defence for bad music in Church than for any other form of sacrilege.

A very fruitful cause of trouble is the behaviour of choir boys during the service, when the organist is usually ignorant of what goes on. An organist who passes over complaints because the offender has a good voice and his suspension would be inconvenient is hopelessly in the wrong, and will soon have the fact brought home by a lowered tone in the whole choir. These and other debatable matters will invariably be settled amicably if organist and vicar will discuss them fairly, the former from the point of view of the musician who is a churchman, and the latter remembering that nothing but the best, however simple, is good enough for the Church.

The vicar should no more presume to tell a capable organist how to do his work than to superintend the operations of the man who comes to attend to the drains. Asked to choose between musical and unmusical vicars, most organists would probably prefer the latter. They are less likely to interfere with the choir work, whereas the former, whose claim to musicianship usually rests upon the slenderest foundation, will rush in and wallow out of their depth on every possible occasion. An organist in such a case needs infinite tact and courage. On the whole, he will be well advised to make it clear from the start that if the clergy and churchwardens consider he is able to do his work, he must be allowed to do it. If not, he must go. There would be very few cases in which a thoroughly capable man would be allowed to go.

While the organist has but one pastor, his masters are many. He will find no lack of members of the congregation willing—even eager—to give him advice. Men who would hesitate before committing themselves to a criticism of architecture, painting, or literature, have no such backwardness where Church music is concerned. It is quite sufficient for them that such and such a detail of the service is not pleasing to them. It rarely occurs to them that the deficiency may be, not in the music, but in their own taste. The compleat organist will

never argue with these critics from the nave. Argument is impossible, because the common ground on which the disputants can meet is the merest pinpoint in area. He will listen with the courtesy due to one who perhaps subscribes a half-guinea towards his salary, and when the other (a successful business man, let us say) has finished, he will quite pleasantly remark, 'Anything in your suggestion that is worthy consideration shall have it, I promise you. In return, I propose calling at your office to-morrow to give you my views on book-keeping or some other matter connected with your business. I feel sure there must be many points on which a musician can suggest improvements.' The discussion will end, at once, in quite a friendly way, and there are not likely to be any more criticisms from that quarter. At the same time, while the organist must have the courage of his opinions, and maintain the dignity of his office, there are certain matters in which he should not merely welcome criticism and suggestions, but even ask for them. From his position at the console, it often happens that he is the least able of all present to hear the effect he is producing. There are in every congregation at least a few people whose musical knowledge and taste are sufficient to make their opinion of value, and the wise organist will from time to time seek their advice on such matters as balance between organ and choir. Without some periodical check of this kind, he will almost certainly drift into using too much organ in accompanying.

Nothing will test the organist's tact more than an attempt to reform the musical arrangements in a parish where the standard has been low. He must make haste slowly, compromising here, tacking there, but all the while making a little headway. He must not expect his choir and congregation to arrive at one bound at a standard of taste that he himself has arrived at only after long training. This blunder is often made. People can be no more dragooned into refinement than into righteousness. Wherefore let the organist go delicately to work in superseding a favourite hymn-tune, no matter how superior the new one may be. Nothing rouses the man in the pew more than such a change. A law-abiding citizen, a mild man all the week, becomes a very Berserker on the Sunday if you defraud him of a tune he has sung from boyhood. He will not care how bad it was, or how good the new one is. Such changes must come, but the tactful organist will find a way to bring them about with a minimum of annoyance all round. In such a case as the one just mentioned, for example, the solution is found in the alternate use, for a time, of both old and new tunes. The excellences of the new will have a chance to make their appeal, and the comparison between the two will inevitably end in the majority of the congregation preferring the better. In these and many kindred difficulties, the organist will save himself unlimited worry and unpleasantness if he will constantly try to get the point of view of the congregation. He will do his work better, and in the long run get his own way oftener. To attempt a reform at one fell swoop is as mad a proceeding as a cricketer's attempt to score a century in his first few overs. In building up a choir, or founding a good tradition, it is the long game that pays.

Sunday, October 26, was a busy day with Nonconformist choirs at Northampton, no fewer than four holding festival. College Street Baptist gave Hiller's 'Song of Victory'; Mount Pleasant, the second part of 'Elijah'; and at Primrose Hill Congregational Mendelssohn's '42nd Psalm' was the principal item in a scheme which also included works by Wagner and Elgar.

NOTES ON SOME INTERESTING ORGANS AT MAGDEBURG.

BY ERNEST E. ADCOCK.

(Concluded from November number, p. 730.)

3.—ST. JAMES'S CHURCH.

The Church of St. James is, next to the Cathedral, the largest in Magdeburg, being twelve feet longer and two feet wider than St. John's, and moreover it boasts of a tower 205 feet in height. In 1550, in a small inter-state war, when Moritz of Saxony bombarded the town with three small cannon, this building suffered (as also did the Cathedral and other churches), and traces of the damage are still visible, and are pointed out to visitors. It was on that occasion that the old organ was destroyed, and on August 3, 1568, a new one, built by Hans Bockelmann, of Hamburg, was used for the first time.

A heavy thunderstorm in 1613 did much harm to both church and organ, and the lightning scorched some of the pipes of the latter and melted others.

Then came the trouble of 1631, but the destruction wrought upon the edifice does not seem to have been quite so complete as in the case of St. John's, for we read that the walls, arches, &c., were left standing in a fair state of preservation. Nevertheless the organ was totally destroyed. It took some years for the church to recover from such a blow as this, and it was not until 1659 that a small organ built by George Schuler was set up.

In 1678 a larger one was commenced by Herbst, of Halberstadt, but he kept the work hanging about so long, and was so awkward a man to deal with, that the church authorities, who had given him every chance, at length lost patience, took the contract from him, and awarded it to Schnitger. The instrument was completed in 1698, and had twelve stops on the Ober manual, seven on the Brust, twelve on the Hinter, and a Pedal of thirteen stops. The case which enclosed this organ still does duty, and is almost as fine as that in St. John's Church; but the instrument lacks a Ruck-positiv or Choir organ case, and in 1844 was unfortunately liberally picked out with gold.

Various additions and improvements were carried out from time to time, but, roughly speaking, Schnitger's work stood for 150 years. Among the additions was a 32-ft. Posaune supplied in 1741 by an organ-builder named Trautmann.

Finally the instrument was rebuilt and enlarged by Reubke in 1853, and up to 1909 still remained much as he left it, and, unless it has since been rebuilt, still retains the old-fashioned stop-jambes at right angles to the player, with the stops arranged in vertical rows.

The following is the specification :

MANUAL I. (14 stops).

Feet.		Feet.	
Principal	16	Octave	4
Hohlflöte	16	Gemshorn	4
Principal	8	Quinte	2½
Schweizerflöte ..	8	Octave	2
Hohlflöte	8	Cornett, 4 ranks.	
Gedackt	8	Mixtur, 6 ranks.	
Quinte	5½	Trompete	8

MANUAL II. (12 stops).

Feet.		Feet.	
Bordun	16	Hohlflöte	4
Principal	8	Quinte	2½
Gambe	8	Octave	2
Doppelflöte	8	Mixtur, 4 ranks.	
Gedackt	8	Cymbel, 3 ranks.	
Octave	4	Clarinette	8