

Educational Department.

The Development of Instrumental Music From the Sixteenth Century.

It was not till the close of the 16th century that instrumental music was generally cultivated. Although the old Romans, Hebrews and Greeks are lavish in their praise of the indescribable effects of instrumental music, the rude constructed instruments which the old Greeks, Hebrews and Romans used in their temples must have been only used to mark the rhythm and enliven the sacred dances.

Instrumental music was introduced in some churches of the Orient. The different Celts made several species of instruments. The most prominent instruments with the Celts, at that time, seem to have been the Irish harp, and the crwth, or Botta. The rita was made somewhat like our violin. When the Germans came to the southern provinces of Europe, they brought several different makes of instruments. But men of talent did not begin to perfect the mechanism of the different instruments, until the general introduction of harmony.

Instrumental music not used for church services was detested by the most accomplished musicians. The composition of such music was left to the uneducated men and women. They had laws of their own, sanctioned by the king, and enjoyed many privileges. They furnished music for the festivals. The head, or leader, was called "King of the Pipe" or "King of the Fiddlers." Then, the people of the middle ages enjoyed the minstrels and jonglers.

The music-books of the sixteenth century contained many dances, notes, etc. They were composed for the organ, harp, lute and a few other instruments. Instrumental music made very slow progress during the sixteenth century, while vocal music, at that time, had attained to a very high degree of perfection.

The musician selected pieces written in polyphonic style, like motets and madrigals, for music of a serious character. We often find the pages of motets and madrigals, that they may be sung, or played on different instruments. This proves that instrumental music, in its forms, is entirely a modern art, not over three hundred years old. Composers in the sixteenth century, directed more attention to the cultivation of vocal music. But since the three great Vienna masters, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, instrumental music has obtained the ascendancy.

Vocal and instrumental music aim to bring out those feelings, those emotions which move man's soul. The motets and madrigals were first written for the voice and then arranged for the different instruments.

The organ seems to have, first received the attention of composers. The gradual perfection of this instrument went hand in hand with that counterpoint, Landoni, who lived in the fourteenth century, was a great organist, but we have none of his compositions. Bernhardt, a German, (to whom some give the honor of inventing the pedals,) was a much praised organist. Conrad Farnmann, of Nuremberg, made himself master of all the instruments. In the fifteenth century, Paul Hofmann, Wilhelm Leagrant, Ammebach, Bernward, Schmidt, Jacob Paix and a few others, laid the foundation of that great school of German organists, of which J. S. Bach forms the culminating point.

During the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, (pardon me for going farther back than the sixteenth century,) the organ was found in the home for the amusement of the family, as well

as in the church. The Netherlands did a great deal for the advancement of instrumental music.

Our upright grand pianoforte sprang from the virginal, the spinet, the clavichord and the harpsichord. They used wooden picks to strike the strings. The lute seems to have been the most favored of all instruments during the sixteenth century. It had from eight to twenty-four strings, and was made somewhat like the guitar.

Musical art seems to have changed entirely after the introduction of the dramatic element, by Monteverde. He was one of the first masters who used the dominant seventh and the tonic chords, as they are used in our modern sense. The material for our modern music began to develop itself with more freedom and fluency with the major and modes. As time passed, composers devoted more time to the study of instrumental music, and to the perfection of the different instruments.

Dominice Scarlatti composed operatic and church music, but his greatest merit lay in his compositions for the harpsichord. He was one of the finest performers on the harpsichord, that ever lived. Rasseingrave said when he heard him, "When I heard him, I thought ten hundred devils had been at the instrument; I never heard such passages and execution before."

After the beginning of the seventeenth century, instrumental music made wonderful progress in Germany. The talented men of Germany devoted all their energy to the study and development of instrumental music. We see instrumental music gradually growing, till we come to a list of German organists, who revolutionized instrumental music. At this epoch, J. S. Bach, the greatest of all organists, comes forward with his unequalled talent. The vast number of immortal works which he has left for the organ, will serve as the foundation of all true organ playing, as they will also remain the lofty study of every earnest, striving organist for all time to come.

As we come to the epoch of P. E. Bach, J. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, we find that the instrumental fugue, the canon, the suite have reached their highest degree of development. List, though universally admired and acknowledged as the greatest pianist that ever lived, has not yet found general recognition as a composer.

I will close by using the following quotation from Winterfeld: "Art only reveals her deepest secrets to those who cling with true self-denial, and from a pure love, but not to those who desire something different from her, who would make an ostentatious display of her, and to whom she is nothing higher than a charming mistress. Although she may shed around even these artists some reflection of her light, it resembles the brilliant, but swiftly fading glow of sunset, to which a deep obscurity succeeds. May those understand this metaphor who stretch out their arms to her, for they will merely receive from her that which they demand. Only her alluring earthly charms can fade, though even these may appear indestructible; but with those men whose aspirations rise beyond what is merely transitory, the lovely ideal forever remains, forever retaining its seraphic bloom and purity."

W. H. Albright.
Laurel Hill, N. C.

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Sept. 16, 1901.

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