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DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES OF PIANO WORKS

FOR THE USE OF TEACHERS,
PLAYERS, AND MUSIC CLUBS

BY

EDWARD BAXTER PERRY

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My Keys

I.

To no crag-crowning castle above the wild main,
To no bower of fair lady or villa in Spain;
To no deep, hidden vaults where the stored jewels shine,
Or the South’s ruddy sunlight is prisoned in wine;
To no gardens enchanted where nightingales sing,
And the flowers of all climes breathe perpetual spring:
To none of all these
They give access, my keys,
My magical ebon and ivory keys.

II.

But to temples sublime, where music is prayer,
To the bower of a goddess supernally fair;
To the crypts where the ages their mysteries keep,
Where the sorrows and joys of earth’s greatest ones sleep;
Where the wine of emotion a life’s thirst may still,
And the jewels of thought gleam to light at my will:
To more than all these
They give access, my keys,
My magical ebon and ivory keys.

III.

To bright dreams of the past in locked cells of the mind,
To the tombs of dead joys in their beauty enshrined;
To the chambers where love’s recollections are stored,
And the fanes where devotion’s best homage is poured;
To the cloudland of hope, where the dull mist of tears
As the rainbow of promise illumined appears;
To all these, when I please,
They give access, my keys,
My magical ebon and ivory keys.

Only an Interpreter

The world will still go on the very same
When the last feeble echo of my name
Has died from out men's listless hearts and ears
These many years.

Its tides will roll, its suns will rise and set,
When mine, through twilight portals of regret,
Has passed to quench its pallid, parting light
In rayless night,

While o'er my place oblivion's tide will sweep
To whelm my deeds in silence dark and deep,
The triumphs and the failures, ill and good,
Beneath its flood.

Then other, abler men will serve the Art
I strove to serve with singleness of heart;
Will wear her thorned laurels on the brow,
As I do now.

I shall not care to ask whose fame is first,
Or feel the fever of that burning thirst
To win her warmest smile, nor count the cost
Whate'er be lost.

As I have striven, they will strive to rise
To hopeless heights, where that elusive prize,
The unattainable ideal, gleams
Through waking dreams.

But I shall sleep, a sleep secure, profound,
Beyond the reach of blame, or plaudits' sound;
And who stands high, who low, I shall not know:
'Tis better so.

For what the gain of all my toilsome years,
Of all my ceaseless struggles, secret tears?
My best, more brief than frailest summer flower,
Dies with the hour.

My most enduring triumphs swifter pass
Than fairy frost-wreaths from the window glass:
The master but of moments may not claim
A deathless name.

Mine but the task to lift, a little space,
The mystic veil from beauty's radiant face
That other men may joy thereon to see,
Forgetting me.

Not mine the genius to create the forms
Which stand serenely strong, thro' suns and storms,
While passing ages praise that power sublime
Defying time.

Mine but the transient service of a day,
Scant praise, too ready blame, and meager pay:
No matter, though with hunger at the heart
I did my part.

I dare not call my labor all in vain,
If I but voice anew one lofty strain:
The faithful echo of a noble thought
With good is fraught.

For some it cheers upon life's weary road,
And some hearts lightens of their bitter load,
Which might have missed the message in the din
Of strife and sin.

My lavished life-blood warmed and woke again
The still, pale children of another’s brain,
Brimmed full the forms which else were cold,
Tho’ fair of mold.

And thro’ their lips my spirit spoke to men
Of higher hopes, of courage under pain,
Of worthy aspirations, fearless flight
To reach the light.

Then, soul of mine, content thee with thy fate,
Though noble niche of fame and guerdon great
Be not for thee: thy modest task was sweet
At beauty’s feet.

The Artist passes like a swift-blown breeze,
Or vapors floating up from summer seas;
But Art endures as long as life and love:
For her I strove.

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DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES OF PIANO WORKS

Introduction

The material comprised in the following pages has been collected for use in book form by the advice and at the earnest request of the publisher, as well as of many musical friends, who express the belief that it is of sufficient value and interest to merit a certain degree of permanency, and will prove of practical aid to teachers and students of music. A portion of it has already appeared in print in the program books of the Derthick Musical Literary Society and in different musical journals; and nearly all of it has been used at various times in my own Lecture Recitals.

The book is merely a compilation of what have seemed the most interesting and valuable results of my thought, reading, and research in connection with my Lecture Recital work during the past twenty years.

In the intensely busy life of a concert pianist a systematic and exhaustive study of the whole broad field of piano literature has been utterly impossible. That would require the exclusive devotion of a lifetime at least. My efforts have been necessarily confined strictly to such compositions as came under my immediate attention in connection with my own work as player.

The effect is a seemingly desultory and haphazard method in the study, and an inadequacy and incoherency in the collective result, which no one can possibly realize or deplore so fully as myself. Still the work is a beginning, a first pioneer venture into a realm which I believe to be not only new, but rich and important. I can only hope that the example may prompt others, with more leisure and ability, to follow in the path I have blazed, to more extensive explorations and more complete results.

Well-read musicians will find in these pages much that they have learned before from various scattered sources. Naturally so. I have not originated my facts or invented my legends. They are common property for all who will but seek. I have merely collected, arranged, and, in many instances, translated them into English. I claim no monopoly. On the other hand, they may find some things they have not previously known. In such cases I venture to suggest to the critically and incredulously inclined, that this does not prove their inaccuracy, though some have seemed to fancy that it did. Not to know a thing does not always conclusively demonstrate that it is not so.

To the general reader let me say that this book represents the best thought and effort of my professionally unoccupied hours during the past twenty years. It comes to you with my heart in it, bringing the wish that the material here collected may be to you as interesting and helpful as it has been to me in the gathering. The actual writing has mainly been done on trains, or in lonely hotel rooms far from books of reference, or aids of any kind; so occasional inexactitudes of data or detail are by no means improbable, when my only resource was the memory of something read, or of personal conversation often years before. With the limited time at my disposal, a detailed revision is not practicable, and I therefore present the articles as originally written. Take and use what seems of value, and the rest pass by.

The plan and purpose of the book rest simply upon the theory that the true interpretation of music depends not only on the player's possession of a correct insight into the form and harmonic structure of a given composition, but also on the fullest obtainable knowledge concerning the circumstances and environment of its origin, and the conditions governing the composer's life at the time, as well as any historical or legendary matter which may have served him as inspiration or suggestion.

My reason for now presenting it to the public is the same as that which has caused me to devote my professional life exclusively to the Lecture Recital—namely, because experience has proved to me that a knowledge of the poetic and dramatic content of a musical work is of immense value to the player in interpretation, and to the listener in comprehension and enjoyment of any composition, and because, except in scattered fragments, no information of just this character exists elsewhere in print.

It being, as explained, impossible to make this collection of analyses complete, or even approximately so, it has seemed wise to limit the number here included to just fifty, so as to keep the book to a convenient size. I have endeavored to select those covering as large a range and variety as possible, with the view of making them as broadly helpful and suggestive as may be.

It is my intention to continue my labors along this line so far as strength and opportunity permit, in the faith that I can devote my efforts to no more useful end.

Edward Baxter Perry.

Esthetic versus Structural Analysis

It has been, and still is, the general custom among most musicians, when called upon to analyze a composition for the enlightenment of students or the public, or in the effort to broaden the interest in their art, to think and speak solely of the *form*, the *structure* of the work, to treat it scientifically, anatomically—to dwell with sonorous unction upon the technical names for its various divisions, to lay bare and delightedly call attention to its neatly fashioned joints, to dilate upon the beauty of its symmetrical proportions, and show how one part fits into or is developed out of another—in brief, to explain more or less intelligently the details of its mechanical construction, without a hint or a thought as to why it was made at all, or why it should be allowed to exist. With the specialist's engrossing absorption in the technicalities of his vocation, they expect others to share their interest, and are surprised and indignant to find that they do not. They forget that to the average hearer this learned dissertation upon primary and secondary subjects, episodical passages, modulation to related and unrelated keys, cadences, return of the first theme, etc., has about as much meaning and importance as so much Sanskrit. It is well enough, so far as it goes, in the classroom, where students are being trained for specialists, and need that kind of information; but it is only one side,—the mechanical side,—and the general public needs something else; and even the student, however gifted, if he is to become more than a mere technician, must have something else; for composition and interpretation both have their mere technic, as much as keyboard manipulation, which is, however, only the means, not the end.

Knowledge of and insight into musical form are necessary to the player, but not to the listener, even for the highest artistic appreciation and enjoyment, just as the knowledge of colors and their combination is essential to the painter, but not to the beholder. The poet must understand syntax and prosody, the technic of rhyme-making and verse-formation; but how many of his readers could analyze correctly from that standpoint the poem they so much enjoy, or give the scientific names for the literary devices employed? Or how many of them would care to hear it done, or be the better for it if they did? The public expects results, not rules or formulas; effects, not explanations of stage machinery; food and stimulus for the intellect, the emotions, the imagination, not recipes of how they are prepared.

The value of esthetic analysis is undeniably great in rendering this food and stimulus, contained in every good composition, more easily accessible and more readily assimilated, by a judicious selection and partial predigestion, so to speak, of the different artistic elements in a given work, and a certain preparation of the listener to receive them. This is, of course, especially true in the case of the young, and those of more advanced years, to whom, owing to lack of training and opportunity, musical forms of expression are somewhat unfamiliar; or, in other words, those to whom the musical idiom is still more or less strange. But there are also very many musicians of established position who are sorely in need of something of the kind to awaken them to a perception of other factors in musical art besides sensuous beauty and the display of skill; to develop their imaginative and poetic faculties, in which both their playing and theories prove them to be deficient; and the more loudly they cry against it as useless and illegitimate, the more palpably self-evident becomes their own crying need of it.

Esthetic analysis consists in grasping clearly the essential artistic significance of a composition, its emotional or descriptive content, either with or without the aid of definite knowledge concerning the circumstances of its origin, and expressing it plainly in a few simple, well-chosen words, comprehensible by the veriest child in music, whether young or old in years, conveying in a direct, unmistakable, and concrete form the same general impressions which the composition, through all its elaborations and embellishments, all its manifold collateral suggestions, is intended to convey, giving a skeleton, not of its form, but of its subject-matter, so distinctly articulated that the most untrained perceptions shall be able to recognize to what genus it belongs.

Of course, when it is possible, as it is in many cases, to obtain and give reliable data concerning the conception and birth of a musical work, the actual historical or traditional material, or the personal experience, which furnished its inspiration, the impulse which led to its creation, it is of great assistance and value; and this is especially so when the work is distinctly descriptive of external scenes or human actions. For example, take the Schubert-Liszt "Erlkönig." Here the elements embodied are those of tempest and gloom, of shuddering terror, of eager pursuit and panic-stricken flight, ending in sudden, surprised despair. These may be vaguely felt by the listener when the piece is played, with varying intensity according to his musical susceptibility; but if the legend of the "Erlkönig," or "Elf-king," is narrated and attention directly called to the various descriptive features of the work,—the gallop of the horse, the rush and roar of the tempest through the depths of the Black Forest, the seductive insistence and relentless pursuit of the elf-king, the father's mad flight, the shriek of the child, and the final tragic ending, all so distinctly suggested in the music,—the impression is intensified tenfold, rendered more precise and definite; and the undefined sensations produced by the music are focused at once into a positive, complete, artistic effect.

Who can doubt that this is an infinite gain to the listener and to art? Again, take an instance selected from a large number of compositions which are purely emotional, with no kind of realistic reference to nature or action, the Revolutionary Etude, by Chopin, Opus 10, No. 12. The emotional elements here expressed are fierce indignation, vain but desperate struggle, wrathful despair. These are easily recognized by the trained esthetic sense. Indeed, the work cannot be properly rendered by one who does not feel them in playing it; and they can be eloquently described in a general way by one possessing a little gift of language and some imagination; but many persons find it hard to grasp abstract emotions without a definite assignable cause for them, and are incalculably aided if told that the study was written as the expression of Chopin's feelings, and those of every Polish patriot, on receipt of the news that Warsaw had been taken and sacked by the Russians.

Where such data cannot be found concerning a composition, one can make the content of a work fairly clear by means of description, of analogy and comparison, by the use of poetic metaphor and simile, by little imaginative

word-pictures, embodying the same general impression; by any means, in short,—any and all are legitimate,—which will produce the desired result, namely: to concentrate the attention of the student or the listener on the most important elements in a composition, to show him what to listen for and what to expect; to prepare him fully to receive and respond to the proper impression, to tune up his esthetic nature to the required key, so it may re-echo the harmonious soul-utterances of the Master, as the horn-player breathes through his instrument before using it, to warm it, to bring it up to pitch, to put it in the right vibratory condition.

The plan of esthetic analysis, in more or less complete form, was used by nearly all of the great teachers, such as Liszt, Kullak, Frau Schumann, and others, and was a very important factor in their instruction. It was used by all the great writers on music who were at the same time eminent musicians, like Liszt, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Wagner, Berlioz, Ehrlich, and many more. Surely, with such examples as precedents, not to mention other good and sufficient grounds, we may feel safe in pursuing it to the best of our ability, in print, in the teaching-room, in the concert-hall, whenever and wherever it will contribute to the increase of general musical interest and intelligence, in spite of the outcries of the so-called “purists,” who see and would have us see in musical art only sensuous beauty and the perfection of form, with possibly the addition of, as they might put it, a certain ethereal, spiritual, indefinable something, too sacred to be talked about, too transcendental to be expressed in language, too lofty and pure to be degraded to the level of human speech. 20

Who, I ask, are the sentimentalists—they, or we who believe that music, like every other art, is *expression*, the embodying of human experiences, than which there is no grander or loftier theme on this earth? Trust me, it is not music nor its subject-matter that is nebulous, indistinct, hazy; but the mental conceptions of too many who deal with it.

If art is *expression*, as estheticians agree, and music is an art, as we claim, then it must express something; and, given sufficient intelligence, training, and insight, that something—the vital essence of every good composition—can be stated in words. Not always adequately, I grant, but at least intelligibly, as a key to the fuller, more complex expression of the music; serving precisely like the synopsis to an opera, or the descriptive catalogue in a picture gallery. This is the aim and substance of esthetic analysis. 21

Musicians are many who see in their mistress
But physical beauty of “color” and “form,”
Who hear in her voice but a sensuous sweetness,
No thrill of the heart that is living and warm.

They judge of her worth by “perfection of outline,”
“Proportion of parts” as they blend in the whole,
“Symmetrical structure,” and “finish of detail”;
They see but the body—ignoring the soul.

She speaks, but they seem not to master her meaning,
They catch but the “rhythmical ring of the phrase.”
She sings, but they dream not a message is borne on
The breath of the sigh, while its “cadence” they praise.

Her saddest laments are “melodious minors”
To them, and her jests are but “notes marked staccato”;
Her tenderest pleadings but “themes well developed,”
Her rage—but “a climax of chords animato.”

In vain she endeavors to rouse their perceptions
By touching their brows with her soul-stirring hand
They measure her fingers, their fairness admire,
Declare her “divine,” but will not understand.

Away with such worthless and sense-prompted service;
Forgetting the goddess, to worship the shrine;
Forgetting the bride, to admire her costume,
Her garments that glitter, and jewels that shine:

And give us the artists of true inspiration,
Whose insight is clear, and whose brains comprehend,
To interpret the silver-tongued message of music
That speaks to the heart, like the voice of a friend;

That wakens the soul to the joys that are higher 22
And purer than all that the senses can give,
That teaches the language of lofty endeavor,
And hints of a life that ’twere worthy to live!

For music is Art, and all Art is expression,
The “beauty of form” but embodies the thought,
Imprisons one ray of that wisdom supernal
Which Genius to sense-blinded mortals has brought.

Then give us the artist whose selfless devotion
To Art and her service is earnest and true,
To read us the mystical meaning of music;

Musicians are many, but artists are few.

Sources of Information Concerning Musical Compositions

During my professional career I have received scores of letters from musical persons all over the country, asking for the name of the book or books from which I derive the information, anecdote, and poetic suggestion, concerning the compositions used in my Lecture Recitals, particularly the points bearing upon the descriptive and emotional significance of such compositions. All realize the importance and value of this phase of interpretative work, and many are anxious to introduce it in their teaching or public performances; but all alike, myself not excepted, find the sources of such information scanty and difficult of access.

First, let me say frankly that there is no such book, or collection of books. My own meager stock of available material in this line has been laboriously collected, without definite method, and at first without distinct purpose, during many years of extensive miscellaneous reading in English, French, and German; supplemented by a rather wide acquaintance among musicians and composers, and the life-long habit of seizing and magnifying the poetic or dramatic bearing and import of every scene, situation, and anecdote. If asked to enumerate the sources from which points of value concerning musical works can be derived, I should answer that they are three, not all equally promising, but from each of which I myself have obtained help, and all of which I should try before deserting the field. These are:

First, and perhaps the most important, reading. Second, a large acquaintance among musicians, and frequent conversations with them on musical subjects. Third, an intuitive perception, partly inborn and partly acquired, of the analogies between musical ideas, on the one hand, and the experiences of life and the emotions of the human soul, on the other. I will now elaborate each of these a little, to make my meaning more clear.

While there is no book in which information concerning the meaning of musical compositions is collected and classified for convenient reference, such information is scattered thinly and unevenly throughout all literatures, —a grain here, a nugget there, like gold through the secret veins of the earth,—and can be had only by much digging and careful sifting. Now and again you come upon a single volume, like a rich though limited pocket of precious ore, and rejoice with exceeding gladness at the discovery of a treasure. But unfortunately, there is usually nothing in the appearance or nature of such a book to indicate to the seeker before perusal that this treasure is within, or to distinguish it from scores of barren volumes. And the very item of which he may be in search is very likely not here to be found; so he must turn again to the quest, which is much like seeking a needle in a hay-mow, or a pearl somewhere at the bottom of the Indian Ocean.

Musical histories, biographies, and essays—what is usually termed distinctly musical literature—by no means exhibit the only productive soil, though they are certainly the most fruitful, and should be first turned to, because nearest at hand. Poetry, fiction, travels, personal reminiscences, in short every department of literature, from the philosophy of Schopenhauer to the novels of George Sand, must be made to contribute what it can to the stock of general and comprehensive knowledge, which is our ambition. I instance these two authors, because, while neither of them wrote a single work which would be found embraced in a catalogue of musical literature, the metaphysical speculations of Schopenhauer are known to have had great influence upon Wagner’s personality, and through that, of course, upon his music; while in some of the characteristics of George Sand will be found the key to certain of Chopin’s moods, and their musical expression. But even where no such relation between author and composer can be traced, I deem one could rarely read a good literary work, chosen at random, without chancing upon some item of interest or information, which would prove directly or indirectly of value to the professional musician in his life-work. And this is entirely apart from the general broadening, developing, and maturing influence of good reading upon the mind and imagination, which may be added to the more direct benefit sought, forming a background of esthetic suggestion and perception, against which the beauties of tone-pictures stand forth with enhanced power and heightened color.

I know of no better plan to suggest to those striving for an intelligent comprehension of the composer’s meaning in his great works than much and careful reading of the best books in all departments, and the more varied and comprehensive their scope the better. In the search for enlightenment concerning any one particular composition, I should advise the student to begin with works, if such exist, from the pen of the composer himself, followed by biographies and all essays, criticisms, and dissertations upon his compositions which are in print. If these fail to give information, he should proceed to read as much as possible regarding the composer’s country and contemporaries, and concerning any and all subjects in which he has become aware, by the study of his life, that the master was interested. The chances are that he will come upon something of aid or value before finishing this task. Still very often the quest will and must be in vain, because about many musical works there exists absolutely no information in print.

I can perhaps better indicate the course to be pursued by giving some illustrations in my own experience. The following will serve: During a trip in New York State I was asked whether Grieg’s “Peer Gynt” suite was founded upon any legend or story, and if so, what. Though familiar with the composition in question, I had never played it myself, nor given it any particular attention, and in point of fact was as ignorant on the subject as my interrogator, and obliged to confess as much. This was before the composition had become familiar in this country and before the drama on which it is founded had been translated into English. Being, however, convinced, from the names attached to different parts of the suite, of the probability of its foundation upon some literary or historic subject, I determined to investigate. I first read several biographical sketches of Grieg, but found no special mention of the “Peer Gynt” suite; then everything I could secure on the subject of Norwegian music in general and Grieg’s compositions in particular, without avail. As I knew Grieg to be, with the possible exception of Chopin, the most intensely national and patriotic of all composers, I inferred that if he had taken any legend or story as the basis of this work, it was undoubtedly Norwegian in character. I read, therefore, several articles on the history of Norway, the Norsemen, and the Norwegian language and literature, watching carefully for the name of Peer Gynt, but in vain. I next undertook some of the *sagas* or ancient Norse traditions,

with the same result. Having exhausted my resources in this direction, I began to investigate modern Norwegian literature. Here, of course, I encountered, in large type, the names of Björnson and Ibsen, and almost at the outset I found among the works of the latter the versified drama of “Peer Gynt,” and my search was at an end. Having procured a German translation of this drama, I found scenes and characters to correspond exactly with those which figure in Grieg’s music, and a reference in the preface to an orchestral suite, by this composer, founded upon “Peer Gynt.”

Now had I been as well informed as I recommend all my readers to be, I should have known at the outset of this Norwegian drama, and been at once upon the right track. But being only familiar with those prose dramas of Ibsen which have been translated into English, I was obliged to undertake all this extra labor, to ascertain a single fact; which only proves once again, that the more the musician’s memory is stored with miscellaneous facts and ideas, even such as do not seem to have any connection with music, the lighter and more successful will be his labors in his profession. 28

The second main source of information concerning musical works is found among musicians themselves. There is a vast amount of tradition, suggestion, and knowledge appertaining to the masterpieces in this art, which has never got into print, and lives only by passing from mouth to mouth, much as the early legends of all countries were orally handed down among minstrels and skalds from generation to generation. Every great interpreter and every great composer becomes, with the passage of years of a long and active life, a vast and valuable storehouse of all sorts of hints, facts, and ideas on the subject of various compositions, which usually die with him, except such portions as have been orally transmitted to pupils and associates. In this respect the late Theodor Kullak was worth any three men I have ever known, and those of his pupils who had tastes and interests similar to his own, and were of retentive memory, have all derived from him no mean portion of their material. To cull from every musician and musically informed person all the odds and ends of information in his possession is a valuable, though perhaps selfish habit. And here let me emphasize to all students the importance of not allowing the memory to get into that very prevalent bad habit of refusing to retain anything which is not presented in print to the organ of vision. The ear is as good a road to the brain as the eye, and every one should possess the faculty of acquiring information from conversations, lessons, and lectures, as readily as from books. 29

The third resource of the seeker after truth of this nature is to be found within himself. The musician should early accustom himself to grasp clearly the essential essence, the vital principle, of an artistic moment, a dramatic situation. For some such moment, mood, or situation, however vague or veiled, underlies every true art work; and unless the performer can perceive and comprehend this inner germ of meaning clearly enough to express it intelligibly, though it may be crudely, in his own words, he will find that many a hint has been lost upon him, and many a bit of knowledge, that might have been his, has escaped him. This is not a musical faculty merely; it is a mental peculiarity. Every person, whatever his profession, should train himself to catch, as quickly and clearly as may be, the real drift of a book, of an argument, of a chain of circumstances, of a political situation, of history, of character, and to place his finger instinctively upon the germ upon which all else centers.

The power to feel instinctively the real mood and meaning of a musical composition is by no means confined to the musical profession; indeed, is often strongly marked in those ignorant of the very rudiments of the art. I remember once playing to a rough old trapper, of the early pioneer days in Wisconsin, who had drifted back to civilization to “die in camp,” as he expressed it, the Revolutionary Etude of Chopin, Op. 10, No. 12, already cited in illustration, written on receipt of the knowledge that Warsaw had been taken and sacked by the Russians. “What does it mean?” I asked when it was finished. He sprang from his chair in great excitement. “Mean?” he said; “it means cyclone in the big woods! Indian onslaught! White men all killed, but die hard!” His interpretation, I need not say, was not historically correct, but for all artistic purposes it was just as good, though expressed in the rough backwoods imagery familiar to him. He caught the tone of rage and conflict, of desperate struggle and dark despair, which sounds in every line, and he had truly understood the composition, to the shame of many a well-educated musician, whose comment would probably have been, “How difficult that left hand part is! De Pachmann plays it much faster, and with such a beautiful pianissimo!” 30

This particular study is simply a vivid mood picture. It is not in any sense what is called descriptive or program music; yet it has a distinct meaning which can be more or less adequately expressed in words, for the aid of those who do not readily grasp its expression. I wish to reiterate here what I have before stated, that I would not be understood to hold that all music has or should have some story connected with it. I merely believe that every worthy composition is the musical setting of some scene, incident, mood, idea, or emotion. Long practice in perceiving and grasping what may be termed the “internal evidence” of the music itself will develop, in the musician, a susceptibility to such impressions, which will often lead him to a knowledge elsewhere sought in vain, and greatly lessen his labors in arriving at knowledge elsewhere to be found. 31

I have now thrown all the light in my power upon the *modus operandi* of obtaining information and ideas relating to musical compositions, and have, I think, demonstrated the difficulty of such an undertaking. For my own Lecture Recital programs I often select works about which I happen to be well informed, and have more than once spent an entire summer in reading and research concerning others which I wished to include. It will be seen from the nature of the case, that because one possesses full information in regard to a certain ballade or polonaise, it by no means establishes a certainty, as is sometimes inferred, that he will be equally enlightened concerning all others. There never was and never will be any one man who can furnish information on the subject of all compositions, and it is equally impossible that any glossary or cyclopedia will ever be compiled which can refer the student to books containing points in regard to any musical work one may chance to be practising, or wish to perform.

Traditional Beethoven Playing

How often of late years we hear this expression: Will some one who claims to know kindly tell us what it means? For one, I confess myself, after a decade of careful, thoughtful investigation, utterly unable to find out. We hear one pianist extolled as a wonderful Beethoven player, as a safe, legitimate, trustworthy champion of the good old classical traditions; and another equally eminent artist condemned as wholly unworthy to lift for the public the veil of awe and deep mystery enshrouding the sublimities of this grandest of tone-Titans. The late von Bülow, for instance, was well-nigh universally conceded to be the representative Beethoven player of the age, for no better reasons, so far as I can discover, than that he was generally admitted to be a failure in the presentation of most works of the modern school, and that cold, calculating, cynical intellectuality was the predominant feature of his personality and his musical work, which made him the driest, most unideal, uninteresting pianist of his generation, in spite of his phenomenal technic, memory, and mental power.

On the other hand, Paderewski, with all his infinitely magnetic personality, his incomparable beauty of tone and coloring, his blended nobility and refinement of conception, is decried as a perverter of taste, a destroyer of traditions and precedents, because, forsooth, he plays Beethoven too warmly, too emotionally, too subjectively.

De grace, messieurs, what does it all signify? Are we then to accept perforce as final, in spite of our better instincts, the dictum of the long since petrified Leipsic School, which holds technic of the hand and head, not only as the supreme, but as the sole element in musical art—which relegates all emotion and its expression to the despised limbo of sickly sentimentality, and which epitomizes its highest encomium of an artist in the words "He allows himself no liberties"—that is to say, he plays merely the notes, with the faultless precision and soulless monotony of a machine? Is this, then, *traditional* playing of Beethoven, or any other composer? Is it art at all? If there is any such thing as an authentic, authoritative musical standard concerning any given composition, upon what does or should it rest? Surely either upon the way its composer rendered it, or desired it rendered, if that can be ascertained, or upon the way it was given by its first great public interpreter. Let us examine the scanty available data concerning Beethoven's piano works from this point of view. How did Beethoven himself play his own works?

This question reminds one of the century-old dispute among scholars as to the propriety of the so-called English pronunciation of Latin, an absurdity on the face of it. Fancy talking of the English pronunciation of French or German! Of course, we do not know and have no means of learning exactly how the old Latins did pronounce their language in all the niceties of detail, but one thing we do know with absolute certainty, and that is that they did not Anglicize it, for the one good reason that our language did not come into existence until centuries after the Latin tongue was dead. Similarly, as there is no one now living who can remember and tell us just how Beethoven did play any given sonata, and as, unfortunately, the phonograph was not then invented to preserve for us the incalculably precious records of his interpretations, we have no means of ascertaining just what his conceptions were, even supposing they had been twice alike, which they probably were not. But this we may be sure of, beyond a question or a doubt: He did not play them according to von Bülow. Furthermore, there is no ground for believing that his performances were at all such as the conservative sticklers for classic traditions insist that our renditions of Beethoven must be to-day. We know this from a study of the life and characteristics of the man, from the internal evidence of his works, and from the reports given us by his contemporaries of his manner of playing them and their effect upon the hearer.

Beethoven was preëminently a romanticist, in the content, if not always in the form of his works; a man of pronounced, self-loyal individuality and intense subjectivity, who wrote, and consequently must have played, as he felt, and not in accordance with prescribed rules and formulas; a man who can reply without immodesty when criticized for breaking a preëstablished law of harmony, "I do it," with the calm confidence in the divine right of genius to self-utterance in its own chosen way which always accompanies true greatness and has been the infallible compass of progress in all ages. The man who was the fearless, outspoken champion of artistic sincerity and profound earnestness, whose scorn of shallow, pedantic formulas was as uncompromising as it was irrepressible, whose watchword was universality of content, who believed that music could and should be made to express every phase of human emotion, who could venture on the unheard-of innovation of beginning a sonata with a pathetic adagio, and introducing a chorus into the last movement of a symphony, in open defiance of all established tradition, who was repeatedly accused by the critics of his day of being unable to write a correct fugue or sonata, and whose music was declared to be that of a madman by leading musicians even as late as the beginning of our century—this is surely not the man whose artistic personality can be fairly represented by a purely intellectual, stiffly precise, though never so scholarly reading of his printed scores. How is that better than the bloodless plaster casts of the living, breathing children of his genius? The printed symbols represent audible sounds and the sounds symbolize emotions. The mere sounds with the emotions left out are no more Beethoven's music than the printed notes if never made audible.

Of his own playing, we are told that it lacked finish and precision, but never warmth and intensity; that, like his nature, it was stormy, impetuous, impulsive, at times even almost brutal in its rough strength and fierce energy; that he often sacrificed tone quality and even accuracy in his complete abandonment to the torrent of his emotions, but never failed to stir to their profoundest depths the hearts of his hearers. Is this the man, this hero of musical democracy, this giant embodiment of the Titanic forces of primitive Nature, this shaggy-maned lion, with the great, warm, keenly sentient human heart, whose nearest prototype among modern players is Rubinstein; is this the man with whom originated the severely classical school, the cold, prim, stately interpretations which we are told to reverence as traditional, in which the head is everything, the heart nothing —form all-important, and feeling a deplorable weakness? It is impossible, incredible!

I honestly believe that if Beethoven himself could revisit the world and appear *incognito* in the concert-halls of our musical centers to give us an ideal, authoritative rendition of his great works, one-half of his audience and

nine-tenths of his critics would hold up their hands in holy horror at his untraditional and un-Beethoven-like readings, and would declare that while he was an interesting and magnetic artist, and an enjoyable player of the lighter, more emotional modern school, his renderings of the revered classics were dangerously perverting to the public taste and could not be sufficiently condemned.

But if not with Beethoven himself, with whom did these so-called traditions originate? Was it with the first great 37
public interpreters of his works, who introduced them to the world of concert-goers and so earned the right to have their readings respected? Who was the first, most enthusiastic, courageous, and efficient champion of Beethoven's piano works? Who did most to introduce them to the concert audiences of Europe, to force for them first a hearing, then a reluctant recognition? Who first and oftenest dared to present Beethoven's serious chamber music to the frivolous sensation-loving Parisians, and to risk his unprecedented popularity with them upon the venture? Who but Franz Liszt! For nearly two decades, during the whole of his phenomenal career as a virtuoso, the vast weight of his musical influence and example, the incalculable force of his fervid, magnetic personality, and his inexhaustible resources as an executant, were all brought to bear in behalf of his revered Beethoven, in the effort to render his best piano works familiar and popular with the European public. It is safe to say that during that period Liszt introduced more Beethoven sonatas to more people than all other pianists combined. He then established such traditions as there may be regarding the proper interpretation of these works; and surely no one who heard him play, no one who is even slightly familiar with his life, characteristics, and art ideals, will think for a moment of classing him with the conservative school, with the inflexible, puritanical adherents to cut-and-dried theories and the cold dead letter of the law as represented by the printed notes.

But we are told that precisely these printed notes and signs should be our only and all-sufficient guide. We are 38
commanded to stick to the text and not to presume to take personal liberties with so sacred a thing as a Beethoven composition. I wonder if the advocates of this idea, which does so much credit to their bump of veneration and so little to their artistic insight, ever took the trouble to examine the text of these same Beethoven compositions in the earliest editions, as they came first from his own hand; and if so, whether they noticed the conspicuous absence of marks of expression. When they urge that Beethoven probably knew best how his works should be rendered and that we ought to follow exclusively and religiously his indications, do they know how very few and inadequate these were? So few, in fact, that if only those given by the composer are to be observed, even the most rigid of our sticklers for classical severity are guilty of the most flagrant breaches of their own rule. Are we then to suppose that Beethoven wished his music played without varying expression, on one dead monotonous level? Not at all; but simply to infer that, like many great composers, he felt such indications to be wholly unnecessary, and was far too impatient to stop for such mechanical details. To him his music was the vital utterance of the intense life within. The meaning and true delivery of each phrase were vividly, unmistakably self-evident, needing arbitrary marks of expression as little as a heart-felt declaration of love or outburst of grief. He rightly assumed that to be played at all as it should be, such music must first be felt, and that visible marks of expression would be as needless to the player with intuitive comprehension, as they would be useless to the player without it. Just as Chopin omitted the indication "tempo 39
rubato" from all his later works, declaring that any one who had sense enough to play them at all would know that it was demanded without being told.

True, Beethoven's works have been edited well-nigh to death since his time, but of course without his sanction or revision; and as no two editions agree, who shall decide which is infallible? And why, I ask, is not the audible interpretation at the piano of a Liszt, a Rubinstein, or a Paderewski just as likely to be legitimate as the printed interpretation of a Bülow or a Lebert? Has not one artist as good a right to his conception as another? And in heaven's name what possible reason is there for assuming, in regard to an intensely emotional composer and player like Beethoven, that the coldly, stiffly scholastic reading of his works is more in accordance with his original intention than a more warm and subjective one?

Moreover, even if there were a complete, corrected, authorized edition of Beethoven, carefully revised by the composer himself, any one who has ever written out, proof-read, and finally published the simplest original composition knows well by experience how utterly impossible it is to indicate definitely, with our imperfect system of marking, just how each strain should be rendered. A general outline of the whole effect desired can be given; but try as we may, all the more delicate shades, the finer details of accent and inflection, must always be left to the taste, insight, and temperament of the individual performer; just as the intelligent reading of a poem depends upon much besides an observance of the punctuation marks. It is not within the limits of human 40
ability to edit a single period of eight measures so perfectly that no variations or mistakes in the interpretation are possible.

In view of these facts, I am bold enough to maintain that there is no such thing as an absolutely correct traditional rendering of any single Beethoven composition, one to be followed inflexibly. It might be said of Beethoven, and in fact of any great composer, as aptly as of Shakespeare, that he is always on the level of his readers. Those possessing neither natural nor acquired appreciation for the best music will find in Beethoven nothing but a series of unintelligible and more or less disagreeable noises, like Humboldt. Those who by nature, training, and habit of mind are fitted to perceive and enjoy only the physical and intellectual elements in tonal art,—its sensuous effect upon the ear, its rhythmic movement, its ingenious intricacies of structure and symmetry of form,—will seek and find, and, if they are players, will emphasize in Beethoven only these factors, and will vehemently protest that there is nothing else there, and that any attempt to find or to introduce anything else is presumptuous and morbid. But those to whom music is the artistic medium for the expression of the strongest, deepest, and best of human emotions, who demand that every strain shall come fresh and warm from the heart of the composer and speak directly and forcefully to the heart of the hearer; those to whom the brain, no less than the hand, is a servant to that higher, subtler ego we call the soul, and form and technic alike 41
mere vehicles for soul utterance, will strive, with humble, self-abnegating fidelity, to read between the lines of the printed music that unwritten, unwritable spirit of their composer; will infuse for the moment their own pulsing, revivifying life into the symbolic forms until they glow with at least a faint suggestion of their original warmth and vitality, as when freshly born of the passion and the labor of genius. These alone can give us, in the

light and truth of spiritual intuition, the only approximately *traditional Beethoven playing*.

BEETHOVEN
1770 1827

Beethoven: The Moonlight Sonata, Op. 27, No. 2 (C Sharp Minor)

There is probably no composition for the piano of any real merit, by any writer, which is so universally known, at least by name, as this sonata. Every one has heard of it, read about it, and most persons are more or less familiar with the music, or at any rate with portions of it, especially the first movement, which is, technically, easy enough to be *executed*, in the literal sense, with the greatest facility by every school-girl.

According to strict requirements of the law of form it is, in reality, not a sonata at all, but a free fantasia, in three detached movements, of a very pronounced but widely diverse emotional character. There has been considerable questioning on the part of the public, and much discussion among musicians, as to the origin of its name, its relevancy to the music, and the true artistic significance of the work.

There is little, if any, suggestion of moonlight, or the mood usually associated with a moonlight scene, in any of the movements; but there are several more or less credited traditions concerning it afloat, legitimatizing the title and explaining its origin. Of these, the one that seems to the present writer most fully authenticated and best sustained by the content of the compositions as a whole is the following. It is given, not as a verified fact, but as a suggestive possibility, a legendary background in keeping with the work.

It is a well-known matter of history that, during his early struggles for existence in Vienna, while experiencing the inevitable period of probation, well named the “starvation epoch,” common to the lot of every creative artist, and the equally inevitable heritage of great genius, born fifty years in advance of its time,—lack of appreciation and scathing abuse from the self-constituted, self-satisfied foes of all progressive art, called critics,—Beethoven had the additional misfortune to fall deeply, but hopelessly, in love with a beautiful and brilliantly accomplished, though shallow, young heiress, of noble birth and lofty social position, Julie Guicciardi by name, who was, for a short time, one of his pupils. She is said to have returned his affection, but the union was, of course, under the then prevailing conditions, utterly impossible; and even if it could have taken place, would doubtless have proved most incompatible and uncongenial. She was a countess, accustomed to luxury and splendor; he an obscure musician fighting for the bare necessities of life, hardly higher in the social scale than her father’s valet and not so well paid. It was absurd; and blind Love had blundered once again in his marksmanship. Or was it an intentional, cruel shaft from the tricky little god? In any case, Beethoven was deeply smitten; and this unlucky passion darkened and saddened his life for many years, and is accountable for much of the somber tone which we find in his compositions of that period.

So much is fact. The story goes that one evening, when wandering in the outskirts of the city, on one of those long, solitary walks, which were his only relaxation, he chanced to pass an elegant suburban villa in which a gay social gathering was in progress. Some one was playing one of his recent compositions as he went by—a rare occurrence in those days. His attention was attracted and, half unconsciously, he stopped to listen—stopped, as luck would have it, in a full flood of moonlight, was recognized from within, and a laughing company of the guests, Julie among them, sallied out, surrounded and captured him, and fairly compelled him to come in and play for them. They insisted that he should improvise and should take for his theme the moonlight which had been the cause of his capture and their unexpected pleasure. The usually reticent, intractable, not to say morose, Beethoven at last consented—under who shall say what subtle spell of Julie’s voice and eyes?—and seated himself at the piano.

But those who are at all familiar with his music know that Beethoven was, except in a few rare instances, an emotional, not a realistic writer; a subjective, not an objective artist; reproducing not the scenes and circumstances of his environment or fancied situations, but the emotional impressions which they produced upon his own inner being, colored by his own personality and the mental conditions of the moment, often just the reverse of what might naturally have been expected. What he most keenly felt on this particular occasion was not the soft splendor of the summer night, or the opulent luxury and careless, superficial gaiety about him, but the bitter and cutting contrast which they afforded to his own struggling, sorrow-darkened, care-laden existence, full of disappointments and humiliations, of petty, sordid, yet unavoidable anxieties, with those twin vultures ever at his heart—a hopeless love, an unappreciated genius. The result was moonlight music in which no gleam of moonlight was reflected; only its somber shadow lying heavily and depressingly upon the stream of his emotions, which poured themselves out through the harmonies of this composition with an unconscious power and truth and a pathetic grandeur which have justly made it world-famous.

The first movement expresses unmingled sadness, but without any weakness of vain complaint; a calm, candid, but hopeless recognition of the inevitable.

The second seems to be an attempt at a lighter, more cheerful strain, a fleeting recollection of his ostensible theme; but it is only partially successful and very brief, and is followed by a reaction into a mood far more intense and darkly fierce than the first.

The last movement is full of indignant protest, of passionate rebellion, with occasional bursts of fiery defiance. In it we see the strong soul, surging like the waves of a mighty sea against the rocky borders of fate, striving desperately to break through or over them, and returning again and again to the fruitless attempt, with a courage only equaled by its futility. It is the Titan Beethoven battling with the gods of destiny.

It is, of course, unlikely, even impossible, that this improvisation,—the tradition being true,—was precisely the music of the Moonlight Sonata in its present form. It could but furnish the themes, outlines, and moods of the various movements, subsequently developed into the composition so widely known and admired.

Beethoven: Sonata Pathétique, Op. 13

With the exception, perhaps, of the “Moonlight,” this work is the best known to the world at large, and the one most frequently attempted by ambitious students of the Beethoven sonatas. Its familiar title was not bestowed by Beethoven himself, but by some publishers later, and seems to me inaptly chosen; in fact, not at all justly applicable to the composition as a whole. It was probably suggested partly by the minor key, but mainly by the second movement, which is gravely pathetic in mood. As a whole the work is far too strong, intense, and dramatic to warrant the name. *Sonata Tragica* would have been better. I have not been able to find any authority for attributing to it definite descriptive significance in the objective sense. It is the forceful expression of a pronounced emotional condition, or rather, sequence of experiences, embodied with all the fervent glow and impetuous power of early manhood, yet with the precision and finish of maturity. Every measure is replete with intense feeling as well as intrinsic beauty. There is not a superfluous note or a meaningless embellishment in it from beginning to end; not an ounce of sawdust stuffing to fill out the defective contours of a stereotyped form—which, alas! is not true of many of Beethoven’s piano works; and, all in all, it seems to the present writer to be the most musically interesting and evenly sustained composition for the piano from Beethoven’s pen.

The broad, impressive introduction marked *grave* is full of strength and somber majesty. It is gloomily grand rather than pathetic, like the epitome of some stern fatalist’s philosophy of life, and reminds one of Swinburne’s lines:

> “More dark than a dead world’s tomb,
> More high than the sheer dawn’s gate,
> More deep than the wide sea’s womb,
> Fate.”

The first subject of the allegro movement is anything but pathetic. It is full of fire, energy, and restless striving; of fierce conflict and desperate endeavor; of the defiant pride of genius exulting in the unequal combat with the world’s stony indifference, and the inimical conditions of life.

The second theme is warmer and more nearly approaches the lyric vein. It is half pleading, half argumentative in tone, strikingly suggestive of the mood so common to young but gifted souls, in the bitterness of their first pained surprise at the cruel contrast between the ideal and the actual in life. It seems to strive to reason with unreasoning and unreasonable facts, and to touch the heart of a heartless fate with its tender pleading. The continually reiterated embellishments upon the melody notes here should be given distinctly as a *mordente*, with marked accent on the last of the three tones in every case, not played as a triplet with accent on the first, as is so often done, and even so indicated in many standard editions, thus materially weakening the effect of the passage, rendering it trivial and characterless as well as out of keeping with the general mood. This is what Kullak used to call “the lazy way” of playing it. The striking contrast between the first and second subjects should be maintained throughout, with greatest possible distinctness, and the closing chords must be given boldly, defiantly, like a challenge proudly flung to all the powers of darkness, to fate, no matter how adverse.

With the second movement comes a radical change of mood. The first impetuous vigor has been expended in the struggle; the first joy of combat and self-reliant consciousness of strength have ebbed away like a receding tide, leaving the soul exhausted, discouraged, but not despairing. There is a moment of truce in life’s battle, a moment of calm, though sad reflection; a moment in which to contemplate the impassable gulf between the heaven-piercing heights of ambition and the petty levels of possible human achievement, in which to dream, not of victory and happiness,—those are among the unattainable ideals,—but of rest and sweet forgetfulness, and to say with Tennyson—

> “What profit do we have to war with evil?
> Let us alone.”

There is an occasional hint of the volcanic fires of passion, slumbering beneath this surface calm of a spirit sent to earth, but not broken, gathering its forces for a fresh uprising. But as a whole it is tranquilly thoughtful, gravely introspective, and should be rendered with great deliberation and profound earnestness.

The last movement is hardly up to the standard of the other two, either musically or emotionally. Still it is interesting, symmetrically made, and not devoid of depth and intensity. It is perhaps a logical conclusion to the work, if we regard the whole as a sort of tone-poem on life. With most of us in youth, our boundless courage and aspiration lead us to dare all things and believe in the possibility of all things; to hurl ourselves into the fight with destiny, with the limitless presumption of untried powers and unwarrantable hopes. Later comes a period of depression and discouragement, in which nothing seems worth effort, so far do realities fall below our expectations. Then, if we are reasonable, we learn, at last, to adapt ourselves in a measure to things as they are, to content ourselves in some wise with the flowers, since the stars are out of reach, and to measure achievement relatively, not by the standard of our first glorious, ever-to-be-regretted ambitions, but of the possible, the partial and imperfect, under the limitations of inflexible earthly conditions; and we quench our soul’s thirst as best we may with the meager, mingled draught of bitter-sweet that life offers.

This movement is light, rapid, and would be cheerful but for its minor key and its undertone of plaintive sadness. It seems like an attempt to take a brighter view of life, but is still shadowed by past experiences,—a touching gaiety dimmed by the mist of recent tears,—and this is, perhaps unintentionally, the most nearly pathetic of the three movements. It should be given with life and warmth, and, despite the pedants, with a free use of the rubato, but not with extreme velocity.

Beethoven: Sonata in A Flat Major, Op. 26

This sonata, like the “Moonlight” and several others in the collection of Beethoven’s piano work bearing this name, is not cast in the usual sonata mold; in fact, it is not a sonata at all, according to the modern technical application of the term. But as the name sonata was originally derived from the Italian verb *sonare*, to sound, or, in musical parlance, to cause to sound, to play upon a musical instrument, and was used to designate any piece of instrumental music whatsoever, in distinction from that which was intended to be sung, it is perhaps as correctly employed in this connection as in any other.

The first movement of this work consists of a simple, beautiful, melodious, noble lyric theme, followed by five strongly contrasted and strikingly characteristic variations, and an exquisitely tender and expressive little coda.

The *theme and variations*, not only in this, but in every case where the form is well wrought out, is a musical illustration of the natural, logical process of evolution. The simple, vital germ of thought or feeling, inherent in the theme, as the life principle inheres in the germ of wheat, is seen to expand gradually and develop through the successive variations into new and changing forms of ever-increasing beauty and suggestiveness until every latent possibility of expression has been matured and exhausted, and the idea has been presented to us in every practicable light and from every attainable standpoint; just as the gradual growth and ripening of the wheat, subjected to nature’s infinite variety of conditions and her ceaseless alternation of day and night, cold and heat, sun and rain, calm and storm, present to us daily some change of form and hue, some new phase of its progressive existence, until complete maturity is reached and its utmost limit of development attained.

A still better analogy may be drawn from human experience itself, from the constant modification and development of a given character, subjected to the shifting vicissitudes and changeful, often conflicting influences of daily life. It is interesting and helpful, in studying or listening to any work in the *theme and variation* form, to conceive of the theme as symbolizing a definite personality, as of hero or heroine in a narrative, a personality clearly marked, but undeveloped, distinct to the mind of the composer, and which the performer or hearer should endeavor to grasp with equal definiteness. Each variation may then represent some varying phase of life, some different experience or influence, or emotional condition, bearing upon this typified personality. The peculiar mood and suggestive characteristics of each variation must be clearly perceived and strongly emphasized, and its due relation to the whole work preserved, while the underlying, all-pervading theme must be kept intelligibly recognizable through all its most capricious and widely contrasting modifications, to give purpose and continuity to the whole; just as the strongly marked individuality of a well-drawn character is traceable through all the manifold vicissitudes of life and may be counted on to follow out its own inherent laws of evolution, no matter what the circumstances or conditions to which it may be subjected.

Let us, in the case of this sonata, conceive of the first simple theme as suggesting, through the subtle symbolism of tone effects, the character of our hero, gravely tender, calmly resolute, nobly, warmly, generously affectionate, with much of innate strength, tempered by gentleness and latent passion, refined by ideality.

In the first variation life presents itself to him as a serious but interesting and agreeable problem, possessing the charm of mystery. He investigates, speculates, reflects, lingers fascinated upon the threshold of the shadowy unknown, enjoys the vague delight of its dim but inviting perspective.

In the second he faces storm and conflict, revels in the discovery and fullest exercise of his own strength and courage and in his successful wrestle with danger and difficulty. The mood here is bold, heroic, full of life and energy.

In the third our hero is suddenly confronted by the twin giants, death and despair. The shadow of their sable forms envelops him with impenetrable gloom. His soul is crushed by a weight as of a leaden pall, and from the depths it sends up a half-stifled cry of unutterable, inarticulate anguish, equaled by nothing in literature, unless it may be by the verses of Edgar Allan Poe entitled “The Conqueror Worm.”

The fourth variation brings a reaction toward a brighter mood, flashes of sunlight through parting clouds, fitful gleams of spasmodic gaiety, half hope, half defiance, showing intermittently against the somber background of grief.

Finally, the fifth and last variation is a tender, cheerful love poem, telling, with a charming intermingling of fervent warmth and playful brightness, of the sovereign magic of human affection, in which the tried spirit has at last found solace and repose; while the brief but significant little coda seems like a dreamy retrospect, a tender reminiscence of bygone joys, and griefs, and struggles, tempered by distance and brightened by the light of present happiness.

If the work ended here it would be well rounded and complete, and it may be, in fact often is, presented in this form, entirely omitting the other three movements. But though not indispensable to the symmetry of the composition, the remaining three movements of the sonata are all intrinsically interesting and enjoyable, and embody three radically differing types of emotional life. In them we are dealing no longer with an individual experience, but with general moods, with abstract elements and conditions.

The principal subject of the scherzo is bright, piquant, exhilarating; expressing unmixed, uncontrolled gaiety, toned down for a moment in the trio to a touch of arch tenderness, but immediately breaking away again into rollicking hilarity. It should be given with great clearness and crispness, very little pedal, and a clean, sparkling tone, like sharply cut glass icicles with the sun behind them. The term *scherzo* is an Italian word, signifying a jest, and all that is most capricious, sportive, and humorous in music finds expression in this form.

The third movement is one of the two great funeral marches for the piano in existence, the other being that in the sonata, Op. 35, by Chopin. This one by Beethoven is so forcefully characteristic in mood and movement, so full of gloomy grandeur, of dramatic intensity, of depth and richness of somber harmonic coloring, that it may

be ranked among his very ablest artistic creations. It should be played with the utmost fullness and sonority of tone, but not extremely loud even in the climaxes, and never hard or rough; so as to convey the impression of suppressed power and of a noble, sustained sorrow, not a spasmodic, petulant distress. Its inflexible, unvarying rhythm throughout should suggest, not only the slow, solemn movement of the funeral procession, the heavily tolling bells, the awed, hushed grief of the mourners, but as well the more abstract and universal thoughts of the slow but relentless march of time and destiny and the might and majesty of death.

The last movement of the sonata is in the usual rondo form, light, graceful, ethereal, with a certain subdued cheerfulness, telling of dreamy aspiration and vague, intuitive faith in ultimate good, of the airy, upward flight of light-winged hope toward a brighter realm beyond the grave, where pain and death shall be remembered only as the minor cadences and passing dissonances which lead to the enhanced beauty of the final major harmony.

The sonata as a whole is one of the most interesting productions of Beethoven’s second period, and is technically within the reach of most good amateurs.

Beethoven: Sonata in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2

This is not usually considered a descriptive composition, but Beethoven, when questioned regarding it, answered: “Read Shakespeare’s ‘Tempest.’” With this hint from the most authoritative of all sources, the composer himself, we may easily trace, if not a strongly realistic, at least a suggestive reference in the music to that most romantic drama by the greatest of English play-writers. And we may also find a pertinent rebuke for those who are inclined to sneer at the idea of descriptive suggestion in music in general and in Beethoven’s works in particular, in spite of Beethoven’s own words: “I always have some picture in mind when I write.”

The first movement of this sonata opens with an extremely simple theme, consisting merely of the notes of the common triad—*do-mi-sol-do*—a theme so bald, so apparently devoid of beauty and latent resources that only Beethoven would have ventured to use it; and only his genius could have given it any degree of interest. It is evidently chosen with deliberate intention to indicate naïve simplicity and natural primitive conditions of life in the island, as Prospero found it, with that half-animal, half-savage man, Caliban, as the most prominent figure in it. His singular, ludicrously grotesque personality may have suggested some of the clumsily rollicking passages in this movement. The tempest is only hinted at, not vividly portrayed—a tempest in miniature, a storm in fairyland. Still, it is unmistakable, though divested of all its terrors, just as it must have appeared to Prospero himself, whose magic power and complete mastery over the elemental forces placed him above and beyond all fear.

The second movement, full of sweet repose, of grave, tranquil happiness, is like the hearts of the two lovers in the drama, safe in the loving and powerful protection of Prospero, living close to the gentle, passionless breast of Mother Nature, childlike in their simple trust, their spontaneous affection, their simple joy in the passing hour. It seems at first rather tame and colorless to our modern ears, accustomed to the ceaseless stress and din of complex and conflicting elements, warring together in the life and art of our own day; but if we can forget for a moment the intensity, the restless questioning and striving of the present and go back in spirit for a century or two to more normal conditions, we shall find this music restful and soothing as the green sweep of woods and meadows on a June morning in the country, after the glare and fever of a city ball-room.

The closing movement, with its light, tripping rhythm, its playful, half-facetious mood, is evidently intended to recall the pranks of that merry, tricksy sprite, Puck, so brimming over with good-natured fun and laughing mischief, yet so ready and able, at his master’s command, to “put a girdle round the world in forty minutes.”

The whole is a work of delicate fancy rather than emotional depth or dramatic force. It shows us a somewhat unusual phase of Beethoven’s genius, and is but one more proof of his versatility, one more justification for his title, “The Shakespeare of Music.”

Beethoven: Sonata, C Major, Op. 53

This is one of the best and justly most beloved of the pianoforte works from what is known as Beethoven's Second Period; that is to say, the period when his creative power was at its zenith, when his genius had reached its fullest maturity, yet showed no sign of waning; when, in its individual development, it had outgrown all youthful crudities, all reminiscent suggestions of older masters, occasionally to be found in his earlier writings, yet before it had lapsed into that somewhat obstruse, metaphysical vein to which some of us are inclined to object in his latest works, in which individuality is sometimes exaggerated into eccentricity. The present writer is not among those who regard his latest sonatas for the piano as in any sense his greatest works, and it is something of a question whether any pianist would play or any audience tolerate the Op. 111, for instance, if it bore any signature but that of Beethoven. The works of his second or middle period are instinct with far more genuine spontaneity and true musical effect.

The Op. 53 is familiarly known among musicians under two names. It is often designated as the "Aurora Sonata," because of its suggestive reference to, not to say actual description of, those wondrous fireworks of the heavens, the northern lights. The first movement particularly, with its constant change of key, its well-nigh infinite variety of light and shade, above all, its constant flash and play of scintillating embellishment and brilliant passage work, cannot fail to call up before the imaginative mind the varying hues, the shifting, intermittent splendors of the aurora borealis, with its flashes of crimson and orange, and its flickerings of softest violet and rose.

The second movement forms a distinct and restful contrast and quiet background to the brilliancy of the first. It is slow, reposeful, and gravely impressive, symbolizing the hushed solemnity of the quiet, frost-clear, winter night.

The last movement, a prefect rondo in form, returns to the mood and general style of the first. It is bright and crisp, full of brilliant ornamentations and striking contrasts, and should be given with the idea of the northern lights again distinctly before the mind. Its airy, buoyant melody, floating lightly upon swiftly flowing waves of accompaniment, reminding one of that Wotan's bridge which the ancient Northman fancied he beheld in the glittering, far-spanning arch of the aurora, that bright, but perilous, path of heroes from Earth to Walhalla.

This composition is also known as the "Waldstein Sonata," because dedicated to Count Waldstein, of Vienna, one of Beethoven's best friends, during his earlier years in the Austrian capital. Count Waldstein was a descendant of the famous general and most prominent Catholic leader, who figured so prominently during the thirty years' war in Germany, that sanguinary struggle between Catholics and Protestants, from 1618 to 1648. The name of this brilliant leader, a Bohemian noble of vast wealth and power, and commander of the Austrian imperial forces, is usually spelled Wallenstein; but the name and lineage are identical with that of the Count to whom this sonata is dedicated—the confusion arising from the difference between the German and Bohemian orthography. The original Wallenstein, though unquestionably a man of pronounced intellectual ability and a devout, enthusiastic Catholic, was a firm believer in what we term the obsolete science of astrology and an earnest student of its mysteries. He had fullest faith in all the mystic auguries and prophetic omens of the skies, and never undertook any important step without first carefully consulting them, aided by the profounder knowledge of a trained, professional astrologer, whom he always kept close at hand. It is of interest to note that the famous German scientist, Kepler, served for many years as the private astrologer of Wallenstein, In the researches and belief of Duke Wallenstein he included every manifestation of the aurora borealis. In fact, he seems to have laid particular stress upon these as bearing directly upon his own life and career, as fraught with special prophetic import for him personally. It is a curious coincidence, in view of these facts, that the most brilliant display of the northern lights recorded for the first half of the seventeenth century took place on the very evening on which Wallenstein was assassinated, only a few hours prior to his murder. In the light of his theories it would almost seem like an attempt of his old friends in the skies to warn him of impending peril. At all events, the aurora was, according to his belief, an important factor in his life. His descendants, who naturally treasured all the facts and traditions concerning their brilliant ancestor, would therefore regard the aurora with special interest as being, in a certain sense, connected with their own family history. It was for this reason, as a delicate and appropriate compliment to his friend, that Beethoven, in writing a work which was to be dedicated to him, chose this theme and embodied it in a composition which, for his time and in view of the then prevailing musical conditions, as well as the necessary limitations of the strict sonata form, is remarkably, even graphically, descriptive.

Beethoven: Sonata, E Minor, Op. 90

This composition is one of the shortest, easiest, and, from the standpoint of magnitude, least important of Beethoven's later works. It has but two movements, neither of them of extreme technical difficulty, and in structure it fails, in various essential respects, to fulfil the requirements of the conventional sonata form. Indeed, the same may be said of many of his best known and most played sonatas, which are sonatas only in name, according to the generally accepted technical significance of the term, notably the Op. 26, Op. 27, No. 2, and others. Yet this little Op. 90, in E minor, is among his most genial, interesting, and gratefully musical compositions. In spite of an occasional touch of pedantry, it is full of melodic charm and emotional suggestiveness. It is not descriptive in the sense of portraying either actual scenes or events. It deals not with action, but with a series of varying, strongly contrasted moods.

It is dedicated to Count Lichnowsky, a resident of Vienna, with whom the composer was intimately acquainted, and of whose touching little love story it is a musical embodiment. The Count's personal experiences of mind and heart suggested the work and formed its emotional content. He was a member of one of the most aristocratic Viennese families, belonged to the highest nobility, and had inherited a proud old name and vast estates. He occupied a lofty position in both social and diplomatic circles, but he had become seriously and profoundly attached to a young actress of unquestioned talent and rising fame, but of obscure and very humble origin—a girl of exceptional beauty, sterling character, and refined, winning personality, but, considered from the standpoint of worldly position and class traditions, a wholly unsuitable alliance for the great noble.

It is difficult for one educated in democratic America to grasp the conditions involved in such a situation, or to understand and to sympathize with the painful struggle in the mind of the Count, the maddening doubts, the heart-sick vacillation on her account, as much as his own, before the final decision was reached; the obstacles to be overcome, the opposition of friends and relatives to be met or defied, before the path could be cleared to his desired goal. On the one hand, love and happiness with the woman of his choice; on the other, social ostracism for his future wife, certainly, and for himself, probably; serious detriment to his promising career; a life of constant battle with class prejudice, of incessant petty slights and mortifications; a position necessarily trying and humiliating to both. At last, however, love triumphed over all doubts and difficulties, as it always should and must if genuine, and the wedding took place.

It is said, "All the world loves a lover," and certainly the story of true love victorious over all opposition is the oldest and to most people the most interesting ever told. This story, or at least the emotions underlying it, expressed in music, Beethoven gives us in the two strongly contrasted movements of this little sonata: a simple drama of hearts, in two acts, written in the language of tone.

The first movement deals with the period of doubt and indecision, of mental conflict and moody alternation, of resolve and depression. Its strong, passionate minor first subject in chords expresses the struggle and unrest, the indignant protest against petty prejudice and inflexible conventionality; while its plaintive little counter-theme tells of tender longings, of sad discouragements, of hopes deferred and desire thwarted. In the development it reaches a vigorous, rough, almost dissonant climax, as of bitter defiance and fierce scorn of the world and its trammels.

The second movement, calm, fluent, and sweetly melodious, full of rest and tranquil content, deals with the period after love's victory, when hope has been fulfilled and the heart's unrest has been transformed to peace and happiness, where life flows onward like a placid stream, its waters brightened and purified by the glad sunlight of perfect love and full-orbed happiness, its waves murmuring the old yet ever new refrain, the simple, natural, yet magically potent melody, to which the symphony of the universe is harmonized.

There is an occasional brief suggestion of past strife and remembered trial, just sufficient to give enduring zest to the present, reposeful joy; but, as a whole, this last movement, with its constantly reiterated tender yet cheerful major melody, seems to sing over and over, with trifling variations of form, but untiring delight in its essential burden, the song of love's completeness. A song without words it may be, but with a meaning passing words.

Beethoven: Music to “The Ruins of Athens”

This composition, or rather series of fragmentary musical sketches, containing some very original and telling movements, is wholly unknown to the American public, and unfamiliar to most musicians, except for the “Turkish Grand March,” the only number that has gained any considerable popularity. “The Ruins of Athens” is the name of a curious but very ingenious production for the stage, once quite popular in Germany—a sort of combination of the spectacular play, the musical melodrama and classical allegory, designated “A Dramatic Mask” by the author, a playwright of Vienna. It was written and produced at a time when the sympathies and interest of the Christian world were strongly enlisted for the Greeks in their gallant and desperate struggles for freedom from Turkish domination and oppression which ended successfully in 1829, after a contest of seven years.

The scene is laid in Athens, then practically in ruins. The characters, situations, and environment are all, of course, Greek. To this work Beethoven furnished the music, originally scored for orchestra, some numbers of which have since been transcribed for the piano. Of these, only two are of any real value or importance to the pianist.

Turkish Grand March

First, the “Turkish Grand March” referred to, written to accompany the march of the Turkish troops across the stage in one scene. Rubinstein, when in this country years ago, scored many of his greatest popular successes with his own effective arrangement of this number. It contains no great originality or musical depth, in fact is quite primitive in both content and structure, but is brilliant and pleasing, with a strongly marked, rhythmic swing and a shrill, strident melody which, in its intentional, bald simplicity, strongly suggests the rude but spirited martial music of a half-barbaric people, given by fife and drum. Its artistic effectiveness depends upon the skilful handling of an old but ever popular device, the audible illusion of approach and departure. The music, beginning with the softest possible pianissimo, swells in a gradual, almost imperceptible crescendo, to the heaviest obtainable triple forte, and then as gradually diminishes to double pianissimo, tapering off at last into silence; thus simulating the approach of marching troops from a distance nearer and nearer, till they pass across the stage in immediate proximity, and then their gradual receding till lost again in the distance. It is a device of which many composers have availed themselves, and makes great demands upon the player’s self-control and sense of proportion and gradation, as well as his command of the tonal resources of his instrument.

The Dance of the Dervishes

By far the most original of these numbers is “The Dance of the Dervishes,” the second one referred to. This brief but complete composition is full of striking originality and graphic realism. It is one in which Beethoven’s genius seems to have anticipated by half a century the pronounced modern trend toward descriptive or program music, and is as realistic a tone-painting as we might expect from the pen of Saint-Saëns, Wagner, or any of the recent writers. The dance was introduced into the play as an interesting local feature,—the dervishes being numerous in connection with the Turkish army,—and Beethoven naturally selected it as an effective subject for musical treatment. But, before speaking of their dancing as illustrated by Beethoven, it may be of sufficient historical interest to give a brief sketch of the dervishes themselves.

They developed as a sect or order from Mohammedanism after it was well established in the world. The name “dervishes,” which they assumed, comes from a Russian word which means “beggars from door to door.” The Arabic word which means the same thing is “fakirs.” So they are called dervishes or fakirs in different localities, but are the same body. They declared themselves Moslems, but their doctrines, in many respects, differed widely from those of Mohammed. Their beginnings are in obscurity, but they were a well-established order by the eleventh century. Their expressed beliefs, as we earliest come to know them, were chiefly and decidedly religious. They seemed to represent the spiritual and mystical side of Islam, having a philosophy much like that of the Hindus, and perhaps borrowed from them. Their central idea seemed to be that the soul is an emanation from God, and that man’s highest aim is to seek a total absorption in Him. Their various and strange rites and ceremonies seem only different ways by which they sought for union with the deity. In this way they claimed that they secured miraculous powers. At first they largely lived in convents, under rules and orders, giving themselves up to meditation and penance, observing the rules of poverty, abstinence from wine, and celibacy, in the higher classes. Their growth was rapid; but in time they largely fell away from their highest estate, ceased to be so strictly a religious body, broke up into various ranks and sub-orders, became more free from conventional rules, more nomadic, and more wild and fanatical; but their social and political influence ever increased, so that they have long been regarded as a dangerous element in the state. There are crowds of them all through the East that seem to belong to no society, wandering mendicants, and, though often skilled in trades, largely subsisting by professional jugglery, bigoted in their fantastic beliefs, and varying in their rites and strange ceremonies. And yet always and everywhere there is still some general adherence to the old appointed religious ways, a peculiar tie or affiliation with the distinctive body or sect, however differing in certain notions or modes of worship. The lowest devotee of them all claims that the dervishes or fakirs constitute a distinct body of religious believers in spite of all divisions and varieties in manifestation. They acknowledge no authority but that of their spiritual guides, as that of the Mahdi in the Soudan, where these fanatics have been so lately fighting the English. They agree also in not following the letter of the Koran, or the general teachings of its interpreters. As a whole body, in all its orders, all over the world, they seek, as an act of worship, to get into an ecstatic state. They do this in various ways: Sometimes by drinking hasheesh, but more

generally by some physical or mental ways, and while under the excitement they perform astounding feats in jugglery or mysticism that really seem almost miraculous. We cannot stop to detail these different methods. One of them is the dance of a certain order which has received the name of the “dancing or whirling dervishes.”

This is the dance of Beethoven—an ingenious method of excitement and self-torture, and at the same time a strict religious ceremonial. It consists of little more than an exceedingly rapid gyration upon an imaginary pivot, spinning round and round like tops, with almost incredible velocity, till overcome by dizziness from the protracted rotary motion, or by physical exhaustion, they fall in a swoon, after passing through all the successive stages of delirious frenzy always attending intense fanatical religious excitement, no matter what the race or faith. The dance is accompanied by frantic gestures, wild cries, and doleful groans, and often by a species of weird oriental music, adapted to its rhythm, and intended to stimulate the dancers to greater excitement, and consequently greater exertion and speed.

This music, as well as a portrayal of the dance, Beethoven gives us in this composition, which has been admirably transcribed for the piano by Saint-Saëns. It begins softly and a little slowly. As the dancers gradually get under way and warmed to their task, it gradually grows in speed and power as the frenzy increases, till it reaches a furious, almost insane climax; then rapidly diminishes as, one by one, the dancers, exhausted or swooning, drop out of the circle.

It demands great freedom and facility in octave playing, and endless verve and abandon of style; and needs, to be comprehended and enjoyed by an audience, some explanation of its character and artistic signification, either given by the player or printed on the program.

WEBER
1786 1826

Weber: Invitation to the Dance, Op. 65

Critics have generally ascribed to this composition the honor of inaugurating a new and important department in the realm of tonal creation—namely, that of descriptive or program music; that is to say, music which attempts to embody in tone something more than mere ideal beauty of metrical form and rhythmic symmetry, and to express something more than vague emotional states, too intangible for utterance in words; music which conveys not only sensuous pleasure and indefinite moods, but a distinct, realistic suggestion; which gives, against a background of harmony, with its general emotional coloring, an actual picture of some scene in nature or experience in life; music, in a word, which takes its place in line with the advanced position of the other arts, in progress toward dramatic truth and worthy realism. Descriptive music, like landscape painting, has been the latest, and in some respects the loftiest, phase of the art to be developed.

We can scarcely with justice credit to Weber, as a strictly original departure, the opening of this new path in the domain of musical art, which was in modern times to lead so far and to such important and magnificent results. Descriptive music, of a more or less pronounced character, had already appeared from time to time, though rarely so labeled, and mostly in detached fragments, in the works of most of the greatest composers, preëminently in those of Haydn, Mozart, Gluck, and Beethoven. Even the austere Handel was not entirely free from occasional digressions into this field. But we may safely ascribe to Weber the honor of being one of the first to have the full courage of his convictions and to declare himself boldly for this phase of creative art, by giving to this distinctly descriptive composition an unmistakably descriptive title, thus fearlessly unveiling and emphasizing its realistic intentions.

The work opens with a simple but serious passage of recitative in single notes, in the baritone register, conveying the “Invitation to the Dance” as if by a mellow masculine voice. Then comes the reply, in a soft soprano, brief, kindly, but as if offering some playful objection, as the lady, true to her sex, waits to be asked a second time before saying yes. The invitation is repeated more urgently, followed by the assenting treble, as the lady steps upon the floor on the arm of her partner. A brief dialogue ensues, in which the two voices can be distinctly traced by their differing registers, alternating and interwoven, as the pair pace the polished floor, exchanging those airy nothings of the ball-room. Then the orchestra enters, with a passage of brilliant resonant chords, full of spirited life and gay challenge, calling the dancers to their places, and the waltz proper begins. Its crisp, piquant rhythm and free elasticity of movement, its bright, graceful melody and cheerful major harmony, all express youthful elation, fresh, joyous excitement, thoughtless, hence unmixed, gaiety.

As the steps and the pulses quicken, there comes on that exhilaration of mood familiar to all dancers, caused by the lights, the flowers, the perfumes, the music, the gay costumes, the beauty and the gallantry of a ball-room, the rhythmic exercise of the muscles and free circulation of the blood, all acting together to produce upon the senses and the fancy an effect amounting almost to intoxication; an echo of which is awakened in every breast, which has felt it often and keenly, on catching a strain of distant dance music, to the end of life. This mood is depicted in the composition before us by an exuberance of runs and ornamentation, following the first simple enunciation of the waltz melody.

After rising to quite a little climax of ecstasy, this mood lapses abruptly into the second waltz theme, slower, more lyric, dreamy, languorous, almost melancholy in tone, conveying that impression which every susceptible person feels, to the verge of rising tears, after listening long to waltz music, which is quite different from its first inspiring effect, and which every devoted dancer feels equally surely in the prolonged waltz. The time has come when one has grown so accustomed to the waltz movement as to be scarcely conscious of it, seems rather, in a state of rhythmic rest, to be floating on the atmosphere, which ebbs and flows to a three-four measure. Thoughts, breath, pulses, flying feet, the murmur of voices, all existence has adapted itself to this waltz tempo, as to its normal element, and the very planets seem to swing through space in triple rhythm. The true waltz has but two moods, which touch the opposite poles of emotion—that of joyous elation and of dreamy languor. We may call them the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso* of the waltz. And Weber, in the “Invitation to the Dance,” has recognized this and woven his composition of but two themes, representing the contrasting phases of feeling described.

In the midst of the second warm and sinuous melody, we hear again the masculine voice, in less conventional accents, and the soft responses of the treble, through quite a colloquy, while the accompaniment keeps ever steadily to the undulating waltz movement, till the two voices merge gradually into the general murmur and are drowned in the flourishes of the orchestra, as our couple disappears in the whirl, with which the waltz, taking up again the first sparkling melody with accelerated pace, draws with increasing confusion to its close. When the dance has ceased, and the orchestra is silent, the introductory theme recurs, as the gentleman leads his lady to a seat and expresses his thanks with the sedate courtesy of his first greeting; and thus ends this charming composition and this glimpse into that gay social world, where the hand some, talented, but rather dissolute young composer was only too great a favorite in his early years.

In spite of a certain baldness and primitive naïveté noticeable in the treatment at times, the “Invitation to the Dance,” so widely and justly popular, is one of Weber’s ablest pianoforte compositions, both from a musical and a dramatic standpoint. Regarded from that of pure music, it is especially interesting from the fact that it was the first composition to raise the waltz, used up to that time only as an accompaniment for dancing, to the level of

legitimate and recognized artistic musical forms. In the hands of Schubert, Chopin, Strauss, Rubinstein, and Moszkowski, these successive kings of the waltz, it has since reached its present development.

The “Invitation to the Dance” was written a few months after Weber’s happy marriage with the opera singer, Caroline Brandt, and is dedicated to “My Caroline.”

Weber: Rondo in E Flat, Op. 62

The rondo is the most ancient, simple, and natural form of homophonic musical construction. It is based upon the folk-song and is always in one or the other of the more or less complex song forms. It consists of a simple melodic period, usually eight measures in length, bright and cheerful in character, alternating several times, virtually unchanged at each reappearance, with one or more subordinate subjects, in a more lyric or dramatic mood, for the sake of variety and contrast.

An apt but homely illustration of the rondo may be found in that most laborious and indigestible product of American cookery, that culinary absurdity, originating in our natural tendency toward display and dyspepsia, the layer cake. In the most primitive form of rondo, or more strictly speaking, rondino, the first theme appears but twice, corresponding to a first and second layer of cake, with the filling of cream or jelly between, represented by the second contrasting subject, of a more piquant and savory flavor, between the first theme and its reappearance—a sort of musical Washington pie. In the more extended forms, the principal melody recurs several times, occasionally with slight changes of treatment, but without radical transformation or development, like a successive series of cake layers of slightly different flavor, but the same fundamental material and an entirely different filling between them, each time; and a coda, or musical postscript, is occasionally added by way of frosting over the whole.

The rondo form is by nature adapted to the expression of the lighter, more pleasurable emotions. Graceful fancy, playful tenderness, arch coquetry, sparkling vivacity, here find their most ready and appropriate embodiment. The form is sometimes employed to express pensive sadness or restless, impatient longing, but never effectively to utter grave, profound thought or grand and lofty sentiment. Hence it most frequently appears as the final movement of symphony or sonata, a sort of light, pleasant dessert after the more substantial repast.

Rondo is one of those words of many relatives, both in our own English and other languages. Probably the great-grandfather of them all is the Latin *rotundus*, and probably the first emigrant to America, in the musical line of descent, was the old-fashioned *round*, familiar to our ancestors. Cousins and other close connections of the rondo are in music the *roundelay* and in poetry the *rondeau*, *rondel*, and *roundel*, all bearing a striking family resemblance both in external features and inward characteristics.

The poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, in his “Century of Roundels,” presents to us many charming representatives of this most modern branch of the family. The following verses, quoted from the work mentioned, are the best possible descriptive illustration of the form, scope, and characteristics of both the roundel in poetry and the rondo in music:

“THE ROUNDEL.

“A Roundel is wrought as a ring or a star-bright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
A Roundel is wrought.

“Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance or fear—
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

“As the bird’s quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught.
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A Roundel is wrought.”

The E flat rondo of Weber is a fine specimen of its class, perfect and considerably complex in form and charmingly exhilarating in mood, with just enough of dramatic suggestion to give the necessary contrast of shading. It is neither distinctly descriptive nor deeply emotional. It pleases like a piece of rare old lace or hand embroidery, rather than like a picture or poem, by its delicate workmanship, its fine finish, and its beautiful, skilfully combined materials. Its mission is to charm the esthetic taste, like some dainty little Italian villa of variegated marbles, half hidden in a grove of olive and orange trees, by its symmetry of outline, its harmony of varied colors, and the simple, joyous, sunshiny life and love of life which it suggests, rather than to arouse the intellect or stir the depths of feeling by historic or legendary association with vivid or tragic human interests.

This composition should be played freely and fluently, with a certain gaiety and vivacity, but at a reasonably moderate tempo, with a tone crisp and sparkling, not dry, yet not too legato; clear, but not heavy. The player should employ few, if any, of the modern rubato effects and be careful to avoid blurred or too close pedaling, especially in the first subject. A somewhat slower tempo and more decided lyric effect should be introduced when the left-hand theme in B flat major occurs, and still more during the suggestion of dramatic recitative, alternating between the two hands, which opens with the half note in the right hand on G flat, A natural, and E flat. But, as a whole, the tempo should be kept very steady, and a strongly marked rhythmic distinctness and precision are absolute essentials in the proper presentation of this, as of all Weber’s works.

Weber: Concertstück in F Minor Op. 79

Although written for piano and orchestra, and still occasionally given as a concerto in symphony concerts, this work is more familiar and more frequently heard as a piano solo merely, or with the orchestral parts arranged for second piano, in which form it is very popular, especially for use in pupils' recitals and music schools. It is one of the best and most effective of Weber's compositions for piano, and one of the most successful of his attempts in the line of descriptive music, in which he was a pioneer; for as Sir George Grove well says, "His talent shone most conspicuously whenever he had a poetical idea to interpret musically." On the subject of this concerto, he continues: "Though complete in itself as a piece of music, it is prompted by a poetical idea, for a whole dramatic scene was in the composer's mind when he wrote it.... The part which the different movements take in this program is obvious enough, but a knowledge of the program adds greatly to the pleasure of listening."

It is rare indeed to find in print any accurate and detailed information concerning the artistic and dramatic content of any particular composition; but in regard to this Concertstück by Weber, we are fortunate enough to have the whole story on which the music was founded given in the words of Benedict, who had it from the composer himself.

"The châtelaine sits alone on her balcony, gazing far away into the distance. Her knight has gone to the Holy Land. Years have passed by, battles have been fought. Is he still alive? Will she ever see him again? Her excited imagination calls up a vision of her husband, lying wounded and forsaken on the battlefield. Can she not fly to him and die by his side? She falls back unconscious. But hark! What notes are those in the distance? Over there in the forest something flashes in the sunlight—nearer and nearer! Knights and squires with the cross of the crusaders, banners waving, acclamations of the people. And there, it is he! She sinks into his arms. Love is triumphant. Happiness without end. The very woods and waves sing the song of love. A thousand voices proclaim his victory."

The composition is in four movements, and it is hardly necessary to add that the first, *larghetto*, represents the sorrowful meditation of the lonely châtelaine upon her balcony; the second, *allegro*, her lively imagination picturing her lord upon the field of battle; the third, *march*, the tramp of the returning crusaders with flying banners; and the fourth, *finale*, the reunion when "the very woods and waves sing the song of love."

Those Philistines who contend that program music is but a mushroom growth of the last decades of the nineteenth century will hardly care to come face to face with this instance of it, backed by the authority of Grove, Benedict, and von Weber, and nearly a hundred years old.

Weber-Kullak: Lützow's Wilde Jagd, Op. 111, No. 4

Among the better class of rather old-fashioned but effective transcriptions for the piano, which have fallen somewhat into neglect of later years, Kullak's pianoforte version of Weber's "Lützow's Wild Ride" deserves attention.

The original ballad, which formed the text of Weber's song, was one of the best of many of similar character by Karl Theodor Körner, that trumpet-voiced Swabian poet, the popular idol of his time in southern Germany, who sounded the notes of patriotism, conflict, and heroism in simple but ringing verses, which still echo in the hearts of his countrymen, and which describe the scenes, and glow with the fervid spirit of the century's dawn.

Major Lützow, the hero of the ballad, was an officer in the Prussian Hussars during the brief and disastrous struggle with Napoleon in 1813, when his country went down, crushed well-nigh out of existence, by the invincible power and iron hand of the all-conquering Emperor. When Berlin surrendered, the Prussian army was disarmed and disbanded, and the King, Frederick William III, was forced to accept with thanks the most humiliating conditions of peace; and even the beautiful Queen Louisa, the people's beloved divinity, had to humble herself in her despair to beg from the generosity of the victor the most ordinary concessions to the vanquished. Major Lützow indignantly repudiated the disgraceful treaty and openly defied the vengeance of the great Napoleon. Rallying a few of his gallant riders about him, he escaped to the forests, and there organized a guerrilla band, for months waging a phenomenally desperate but successful war on his own account with the world's conqueror and his matchless army.

Lützow and his "Black Riders" were soon known far and near, the hope and pride of friends, the terror of foes; and hundreds of the best martial spirits of Germany flocked to his standard. He pushed his daring raids even across the Rhine into France, sweeping down like a whirlwind apparently from the sky, at the most unexpected times and places, leaving consternation and destruction in his track, and was gone again before the French could rally to oppose him. Soon the belief spread that the "Black Riders" were a supernatural phenomenon, an incarnation of the bloody spirit of the time, half men, half demons, bearing charmed lives, ignoring time, distance, and other human limitations, and liable to appear at any moment, without warning, in the midst of the imperial camp, or in the heart of Paris. Their very name was enough to shake the nerves of the bravest veteran.

This element of the supernatural Körner has ingeniously worked into the ballad, and it adds materially to the thrilling power of the heroic narration, though it is used, and very judiciously, not in the form of positive statement, but in a mood of shuddering inquiry and doubt.

Weber, in his vocal setting of the ballad, with his usual ability in grasping and utilizing every realistic suggestion of his subject, has emphasized both the martial and the spectral phases of the theme, treating with equal skill the spirit of martial daring and heroic patriotism which spoke in Lützow's deeds, and the supernatural terrors which they awoke. One moment the "Black Huntsmen" sweep by us across some open moonlit plain, with a wild haste, with the clang of saber, the ring of bugle, and the tramp of rushing steeds; the next they flit before us through the gloom of the forests, vague, mysterious, like the indistinct phantoms of war. The distinct imitation of the rhythmic beat of galloping hoofs, so frequent a device in descriptive music, is effectively utilized here in accompaniment, while the melody of the song, full of trumpet-like suggestions, is raid to consist in part of actual bugle calls which were used among Lützow's raiders.

Kullak, in his instrumental transcription, while preserving with artistic fidelity the composer's intention in all the original effects of the song, has broadened, enriched, and intensified them, and at the same time adapted them cleverly to the resources of the piano. In places they may be still further enhanced by playing, as I would recommend to those possessing sufficient technic for it, all the scale passages for both hands in octaves, instead of single notes, as they are written, thus adding volume and brilliancy to the work as a whole.

The introduction, in rapid triplets, with marked accentuation, reproducing the exact rhythm of the gallop of horses, should begin softly, as if distant, and rise in a steady crescendo to a strong climax, suggesting the swift approach of a troop of riders; then the melody enters, bold and distinct, as if in trumpet tones, or given by the resonant voices of the dashing troopers. The piece must be varied by frequent and marked contrasts; now a trumpet-call, clear and sharp, answered by a distant echo; now a whispered hint of spectral terrors; again the sweep and rush, the clash and clamor, the delirious excitement of the impetuous charge.

The exultant climax, at the close, well expresses the sentiment of the final verse of the ballad:

> "The Fatherland is free, famous, and triumphant,
> Glory to the heroes whose blood has bought the victory!"

This composition of Weber's, when given by a rousing, ringing, full-voiced male chorus of Germans, stirs the martial spirit in every breast, just as the Marseillaise fires the blood of the French. In its piano transcription, by Kullak, I recommend it to every player and teacher who is seeking something which is very difficult to find—namely: a good and effective number, martial and rhythmic in character, which is of real merit, and is a novelty to the audience of to-day, and yet has a classic name attached. It is admirably adapted to close a program or to end a group of several shorter compositions of varying mood.

SCHUBERT
1797 1828

Schubert: (Impromptu B Flat) Theme and Variations, Op. 142, No. 3

Franz Schubert, the golden sands of whose brief existence, rich with the jewel gleams of genius, ran all too swiftly through the glass of time, between the years 1797 and 1828, may be considered, if not the strongest, certainly the most genial, fluent, and spontaneous composer of the modern Romantic School, which arose and flourished so luxuriantly during the vigorous youth of our own century. He is most generally known as the master of the German "Lied" or song. This brief, concise, epigrammatic form of condensed musical expression, though not, of course, original with Schubert, received at his hand its fullest development, its highest perfection, both as regards intrinsic beauty and dramatic precision; while in quantity, as well as quality, he far surpasses all competitors in this vein of creative work. There are something like 600 of these songs from his pen, and such was his fluent versatility of production, that he is known to have completed seven of these inimitable musical gems in one day. His instrumental compositions, whether for orchestra or piano, though far less numerous, are for the most part equally able and effective, and deserve a much more frequent hearing in the concert-room than they at present receive, displaying, as they do, to the full, his inventive spontaneity, his inexhaustible fund of fresh, original melody, and the peculiar, tender, poetic grace of his style.

Most of Schubert's best known pianoforte works, like the composition under discussion, belong to the smaller, more modest, and unpretentious forms. They are eminently soft, sweet, and winning, rarely exhibiting that breadth, grandeur, and passionate intensity with which such composers as Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt have made us familiar. But who would despise the wood anemone because it chances not to possess the voluptuous perfume of the queenly rose or the gorgeous hues of the wizard poppy?

The "theme and variations," of which this work is an excellent example, is one of the most ancient, natural, and logical forms of musical construction. A simple melody, clearly enunciated at the beginning, is used by the composer as the musical germ of his work, from which he evolves, as by the process of spontaneous growth, all its manifold possibilities for varied expression and contrasted effect; much as the skilful orator expands from his tersely stated thesis or text, by means of elaborate comparison, analysis, antithesis, and peroration, all that far-reaching sequence of deduction and argument latent in his thought-germ. It is always fascinating to watch this growth, this gradual evolution, this play of many colored lights over the familiar theme, under the skilful and ingenious manipulation of a master hand. But there is, I claim, a deeper interest and a higher pleasure to be derived from seeking, beneath the smoothly flowing harmonies and graceful, rippling embellishment, for the allegorical significance or suggestion mirrored in their clear depths, as scenes and faces are reflected in the tranquil stream, and which are rarely, if ever, wanting in the true art work.

The "theme and variations" in music, which owes its origin to the first crude attempts of early composers to elongate and develop a musical idea into a symmetrical art form, corresponds to a very early phase of another art. I refer to the series of progressive pictures carved on the friezes of many ancient Oriental and Grecian temples, portraying successive episodes in the life of some god, hero, king, or prophet. The central figure is ever the same, however attitude, action, mood, and environment may vary, to suit the stage of his story represented in each scene. No smoke of battle, strangeness of garb, or storm of emotion can so obscure or distort the familiar lineaments that they are not recognizable, though they take contour and expression from circumstances, those variations in the theme of life. The same idea is carried out in pictorial art in the interiors of more modern edifices, when the walls of cathedrals are adorned with frescoes representing the life of Christ, in numerous consecutive panels, from the infant in the manger to the death upon the cross. Painting can tell a story, within certain limitations, as well as words, and more powerfully. The same is true of music, for those who have ears to hear.

As already stated in connection with the Beethoven sonata, Op. 26, to me the "theme and variations" always seems to represent a given character or personality, met at different times, amid varying scenes and circumstances, in many moods and situations, as would be the case in real life; developing with the progress of acquaintance and contrasting experiences, showing now one aspect, now another, according to the changes of inner emotion or outward environment, but always preserving the same individuality, an identity which lends itself to, but does not lose itself in, the vicissitudes of human existence. In the particular work before us, let the first fresh, simple, tender theme symbolize a maiden, the heroine of the story we will call her, fair, with the delicate freshness of first youth, full of the winning grace, the naïve simplicity and the dreamy poetic fancy of one of Lytton's heroines: a young girl,

> "Standing with reluctant feet
> Where the brook and river meet—
> Womanhood and childhood fleet."

All the manifold vicissitudes of life are lying untried before her, with the latent possibilities of her nature waiting to be unfolded and developed by experience, that climate of the soul.

In the first variation, with its tremulous yet flowing embellishment, all is vague, uncertain, conjectural. She seems in a mood of speculation, of reverie, to be gazing forward down the dim vista of the years, and wondering, with a thrill at heart, what they promise or presage for her. It is the first rosy, dawning twilight of as yet indefinite hope and desire.

In the second, her pulses beat to a swifter, stronger measure. She has begun to taste the zest of life and is borne along impetuously on the stream of youthful exhilaration and unbroken confidence, out into the broad, full sunlight of the first great happiness. Light ripples of laughter, quick-drawn breaths of delight, a sunny circuit of bright and blithe fancies, envelop the theme and well-nigh conceal it.

The mournful melody, somber minor harmonies, and sobbing accompaniment of the third variation, so full of passionate pain, express the all too certain reaction from the former hilarious mood, the coming of that inevitable shadow of all great joy—its corresponding grief. The hour has come when the first great, crushing sorrow surges in upon the soul, in a resistless, overwhelming tide; and our heroine, from fancying that her life's pathway was to be all roses and sunshine, is forced to find it, for the time at least, all thorns and midnight darkness, and to match her single strength with the might of woe in that struggle for supremacy which must come soon or late to all.

The fourth again changes wholly in character; is bold, energetic, spirited, almost martial. The struggle of life is in full progress. The resolute, forceful bass tones, with which the left hand enters from time to time, seem like the impetus of a strong will giving momentum to earnest purpose. This variation tells in stirring trumpet tones of victory, of the dauntless courage and the elastic strength born in noble natures of endurance and endeavor, of a character invigorated by conflict, deepened and matured by adversity; and it leads us back, at its close, through many winding ways and devious modulations, to a later happiness, expressed in the fifth and last—a happiness hard-won, but more complete than the first, though less exuberant, more ethereal and spiritual, with something in it of the mellow sunset glow.

The work closes with a tranquil coda, a brief evening retrospect, grave and thoughtful; but, on the whole, cheerful in tone, as if the backward glance were, all in all, fraught with satisfaction. Here we find the opening theme, the character melody, in all its first simplicity, but given an octave lower, in slower tempo and in full chords. Our heroine has not altered; the contours are clear, the proportions identical, not a note is wanting; but the *leit-motif* of her personality is deeper, broader, and fuller for the experiences of life behind her, and seems to bear the imprint as of an epitaph, "I have lived and loved and labored. All is well."

Emotion in Music

Not long since, when urging upon a pupil the necessity of bringing out the deeper mood and meaning of a certain composition, the present writer received this response: “I am afraid to make it say all that, to put so much of myself into it; people will call me sentimental!”

The reply voiced a prevailing and thoroughly American weakness. It is far too common here to find, especially among our girls, a bright, warm, impulsive nature, full of genuine sentiment and poetic fancy, choked and perverted, turned shallow and bitter, by this same paralyzing fear of ridicule; to meet persons who take a morbid pride in concealing and repressing their better selves so effectually, that even their most intimate friends shall never suspect them of being one degree less frivolous and heartless than their companions, who in their turn are doubtless vying with them in this deplorable, misguided effort to belittle themselves, their lives and influence.

It is one of the most significant and lamentable signs of the time, that any allusion to or expression of a warm, true, earnest sentiment is met in society with more or less open and bitter derision, even by those who are secretly in sympathy with it, admire the courage and sincerity of its champion, and would gladly take the same bold stand in its defense, but dare not, and so add their coward voices to swell the majority. This is the more deplorable, since this tendency is at once cause and effect. The continual and systematic denial and suppression of emotion and ideality result finally in their complete extinction in most cases, or leave them deformed and feeble, to struggle for a precarious existence in some dark, hidden recess of the soul, whose highest throne is their rightful heritage.

George Sand says, somewhere, speaking of the French, “We once had sentiment, but the sirocco of sarcasm has scorched it from our hearts, and where it grew is a desert place!” Alas for the people of whom this is true! Alas for the young man or maiden who can say, “I have no sentiment,” and speak truth. And let me here caution any young person against a light and frequent, even though purposely insincere, denial of any characteristic of value; for there is a strange and subtle sympathy between the heart and the lips, which works steadily, if stealthily, to bring them more and more into accord. A lie is in every sense a violation of the laws of nature; and what is first uttered as a conscious, flagrant falsehood, becomes less so with each repetition, till unawares a day will come which shall see it transformed into a glaring truth. Such a person, no matter how highly organized, or perfectly trained otherwise, is no better than a machine. He does not live, he simply runs.

One may not be to blame for a natural deficiency in those higher qualities which make a life warm and rich and attractive, which mark a personality as something more than an animated clod, or even a well-adjusted mental mechanism; he must be pitied even though instinctively shunned; but he who wantonly draws the fatal knife of sarcasm across the throat of a true sentiment or a lofty ideal, however feebly or imperfectly embodied, commits a crime against humanity at large, more injurious and far-reaching in its effects than slaughter of the body only. Above all, let us beware how we tamper with the natural, essential relations between art and the emotions. Good-by to the artist who has no place or use for sentiment in his work; he should turn his attention at once to some more practical and creditable branch of mechanics.

One grievous mistake in our American system of training is that we ignore almost altogether this phase of culture. We develop the conscience, the reason, the memory, but do nothing for the taste, the imagination, the esthetic sense, the whole ideal and spiritual side of the character. The faithful, protracted study of music, or other branch of art, even though it never result in any financial profit or the smallest degree of professional success, will develop faculties and tendencies of more advantage to the student and to all who may come in contact with him in private life, than any amount of algebra, or any number of Greek roots. The German methods of study, especially for young ladies, might teach us a valuable lesson in this connection.

He who would attain the best results in art should remember that we do not gather dates of thorns, nor figs of thistles; that “only life begets life,” and that after its own kind; that an art product, to be really good and great, must be the concentrated, crystallized essence of the best that is in him, the epitome of his highest moods and aspirations, of those rare, intuitive glimpses of a loftier existence, to which in favorable moments he can lift himself, the distilled perfume of weeks, it may be years, of living. He should subject himself to every possible cultivating, elevating influence, should train, not only hand and head, but heart as well; for these three are the inseparable trinity of art. He should increase his resources, widen his experiences, expand his horizon; not by cramming a quantity of facts, or by the conquest of mere technical means—what use in commanding words, or tones, if one has nothing to express withal?—but by increased familiarity with and capacity to appreciate and exercise the qualities so constantly requisite in his work.

Let us remember, too, what the scientists tell us, that light and heat radiated from a given center are dissipated in force and intensity in proportion to the square of the distance to be traversed. The same is emphatically true of emotion. If one would stir his audience to a pleasurable excitement, he must himself be shaken as in a tempest; to warm them, he must be at white heat.

Should the question arise, How shall one learn to feel music more deeply and make it more expressive? my answer would be, Read, think, feel, dream, love, live! Read—not musical history and biography—these give information, not culture; they are valuable, but not in this connection; read poetry, especially the lyric and dramatic, and good prose literature. A person entirely unaccustomed to understand or to utter anything in tones, will often find the key to this unfamiliar medium of expression by the following indirect method: Find some work, a poem is best, because briefer and more concrete, which expresses, approximately at least, the sentiment of the composition to be studied. Most persons are more familiar with the language of words than with that of tones, and will reach a given mood more directly and easily through that channel. Let the poem be well studied, not only with the mind, but with the imagination, dwelling upon it, trying to feel its meaning and

beauty as deeply as possible; then throw the same emotional content into the music, making the tones tell what the words have said. The present writer has found this course in teaching very effective with all sensitive natures, even with those who have but the rudiments of an artistic temperament.

Above all, artist or amateur, teacher or pupil, fear not to use in your work to the full all the emotional power you have or can acquire. It may be the injudicious application of force that sometimes impairs artistic results; it is never the excess. Vital energy should be controlled, regulated, but never stinted. Ill-timed frenzy is not art, of course; but where intensity is demanded and proper gradations and proportions are observed, no dirge is ever too deeply gloomy, no dramatic climax too strong. The danger is always of tameness, rather than of excessive fervor.

Let us, then, be genuine, earnest, whole-hearted, open, in our allegiance to the ideal; and as for those who sneer at sentiment in art or in life, why, let them rave. We adhere to the creed which T. T. Munger has beautifully formulated for our profession in his “Music as Revelation”: “Emotion is the summit of existence, and music is the summit of emotion, the art pathway to God.”

CHOPIN
1810 1849

Chopin: Sonata, B Flat Minor, Op. 35

Whether regarded from the standpoint of musical form, of intrinsic beauty, or of dramatic intensity, this work may safely be pronounced Chopin's masterpiece; and in the present writer's opinion it ranks as the greatest composition in all piano literature. Chopin's ability to handle the strict sonata form successfully has been sometimes called in question; but whatever may be said of his other two sonatas, this one will certainly bear comparison with the most perfect models of symmetry, finish, and architectural completeness, by the best known and most universally recognized classic masters. In the *allegro* movement, upon which the distinguishing character of the sonata form always depends, the first and second subjects are well contrasted and admirably balanced, the development is logical, ingenious, and forceful, and the statement of the dramatic content is clear, concise, and strong, without a single irrelevant phrase or superfluous measure.

The work is founded upon an ancient Polish poem of a semi-legendary, semi-allegorical significance, by a once prominent, now well-nigh forgotten Polish writer. It consists of four movements, corresponding to the four cantos of the poem, of which it is, in a sense, a musical translation, treating successively the principal moods and situations in the story. The fact that in the first two movements the incidents are treated symbolically, emotionally, in accordance with the composer's usual subjective mode of expression, rather than with the descriptive or imitative devices of the modern school, does not in the least detract from the poetic impression or suggestive power of the music.

In the last two movements he has recourse, for obvious reasons, to the direct method of definite realism. The first movement pictures the life and feelings of the hero, a Polish knight of the middle ages, facing storm and conflict, danger and hardship, in camp and field, fighting for king and country, cheered now and then, in lonely hours of vigil at the camp-fire, by waking visions of his distant home and his waiting bride.

The opening measures of the brief introduction tell of stern courage and inflexible resolve. Then the first subject enters, stirring, impetuous, fiery, full of the ring of trumpets, the clash of steel, the fierce exultation of desperate combat. The tranquil second subject suggests memories of the happy days of youth in his quiet home —dreams of a future brightened by the light of promised love, but still enveloped in the softening haze of distance and uncertainty. The development, with its complex, conflicting rhythms, its resistless, tempestuous sweep, thrills with the excitement of sudden onset, the rush of charging squadrons, the battle cry of struggling hosts. The closing chords express a somber triumph, the proud but sorrow-shadowed elation of a hard-won victory, purchased by the blood of many a patriot comrade.

The second movement, the scherzo, gives us the triumphant return of our hero crowned with laurel, accompanied by the jubilant strains of martial music, and the glad acclamations of the crowd. Yet, in the midst of his pride and well-earned glory, he finds time to dream again; this time more tenderly, sweetly, hopefully; to dream of his home-coming, and the fond greeting that awaits him in his own native village, where, through the difficulties and dangers of the campaign, his promised bride has been watching, and hoping, and praying for his return in faithful but anxious affection.

Here again we find two contrasting and strongly characteristic themes: The first, full of martial pride and exultation, the thoughts of victory, the glad tribute of applause to a nation's hero; the second, tender, dreamy, pulsing with love's anticipation. After this soulful trio melody, the first martial strains are repeated; but in the coda, a brief recurrence of the trio theme seems to emphasize the idea that with him the love thought dominates. This brings us to the third movement, the Funeral March, unquestionably the best funeral march ever written for the piano, the most intrinsically beautiful, the most touchingly, intensely sad, and the most complete, finely finished, and perfectly sustained, from first measure to last; the strongest, noblest, deepest expression of heart-crushing sorrow to be found in all piano literature.

As it is published and most often heard by itself, many who have played and listened to it have not even been aware that it affords the third chapter, so to speak, in a great tone epic, for as such this sonata must be considered.

As our hero approaches home, his heart swelling with anticipation, he is greeted by the distant, solemn tolling of cathedral bells, too evidently funeral bells, and soon is met by a slowly moving, somber procession of black-robed monks and mourners, bearing to her last resting-place in the church-yard the very bride to whose fond greeting he has so ardently looked forward. The music, soft and muffled at first, like the toll of far-off bells, gradually grows in power and intensity as the procession advances, assuming more and more the heavy, measured, inflexible rhythm of a funeral march, and swelling at last to an overwhelming climax of passionate pain.

Then the procession comes to a stand by the open grave. After a brief pause, the sweet, plaintive trio melody enters, pure and tender as a prayer, touched and thrilled to warmth and pathos by memories of happier days; after which the march movement is resumed, as the procession slowly and sadly returns to the village; the music, heavy, crushing, inexorable at first as the voice of fate, gradually recedes, diminishes, dies in the distance; and then follows the last movement, the presto, in some respects the most original and most impressive of all, the lament of the autumn night-wind over a forsaken grave, one of the few cases in which Chopin chose to be distinctly realistic, a literal and graphic imitation of wind effects; yet woven through it is an

unmistakable suggestion of the mood of the hour and situation, the chill, the gloom, the wild despair, and a hint of that ever darker thought that will arise at such moments; after death, formless void, chaos.

There is an important vein of allegory underlying this whole story, like a deep substratum. The hero is a personification of the typical Polish patriot, struggling, in a forlorn hope, for his native land; the bride is Poland, and the mighty, overwhelming grief expressed is more than a personal sorrow: it is for the death and burial of a nation.

The authority for connecting the poem referred to with this sonata has been frequently questioned. I wish to state here that the poetic background to this great work is by no means hypothetically sketched in by my own imagination, however fully justified by the inherent character of the music. I have my data in full from Kullak and Liszt, the latter having been a personal friend of Chopin, as is well known, and having first presented the sonata in public to the musical world. We may safely assume, therefore, that he was correctly informed with regard to it, and that this interpretation is authentic and authoritative.

The Chopin Ballades

Probably no class of musical compositions ever presented to the world by any master has been so little understood, and consequently so much misrepresented as the ballades by Frederic Chopin. Even so standard an authority as Grove, in his "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," writes as follows: "*Ballade*, a name adopted by Chopin for four pieces of pianoforte music, which have no peculiar form or character of their own, beyond being written in triple time, and to which the name seems to be no more applicable than that of sonnet to the pieces which others have written under that title"—a statement which proves that he had little information and less interest in regard to the subject.

The French word *ballade*, which Chopin used as title for these compositions, is derived from the Provencal *ballata*, a dancing song, which in turn comes from *bellare*, to dance; and our modern English words ballad, ball, ballet, all descend to us from the same source. In Italian, *ballata* meant a dancing piece, in distinction from *sonata*, a sounding piece, and *cantata*, a singing piece; and the *ballade* and *ballata* originally meant a piece of music to be sung while dancing or accompanied by dancing. The dance element, however, was early lost, and ballade in French, like ballad in English, came to mean a short and popular narrative poem adapted for singing or recitation. The ballad is a tale in verse. It differs from the epic in being briefer, less dignified in tone, and in concerning itself with actual practical events in the lives of individuals, instead of with historic and mythological subjects, which form the main province of the epic. The true ballad treats of some knightly exploit, some national episode, or some tale of love and adventure; and, as we shall see, Chopin, in adopting this title for instrumental compositions, adhered strictly to its definition and its literary characteristics and significance.

The Chopin ballades, four in number and ranking among his most strikingly original and effective contributions to pianoforte music, introduced an entirely new and distinctly unique musical form, well-nigh limitless in its possibilities of expression and application, its facile adaptability to every phase of emotional and descriptive writing. As was natural, they opened the way for a host of more or less worthy followers, bold, independent free lances, heedless of the forms and rules which bind in rank and file the more orderly conservative compositions; all bearing a strong racial resemblance, but variously designated by such special clan cognomens as ballade, novelette, legend, fable, fairy-tale, and the like. They now constitute a complete and markedly individual school of composition, of which Chopin in his ballades was the originator, and which is differentiated from all others by its distinctly declamatory, narrative style.

Chopin used the name ballade in the sense in which it is employed in modern literature—to designate a short, poetic narrative, a miniature epic, as distinguished from the lyric, didactic, and dramatic forms of poetry. He intended the ballade in music to be a counterpart of the ballad in poetry, and his inventive genius and unerring taste supplied and perfected a form precisely adapted to the end in view; a form which is strictly akin neither to the rondo, the sonata allegro, nor the free fantasia, though having certain points of resemblance to all three, still less to any of the dance forms. It reminds us more of some of the larger, more complex song forms, as, for instance, the musical settings by Schubert and others of the more pretentious German ballads by Goethe, Berger, and Uhland; but its development is broader and ampler, at once more extended and more logical, evincing a greater degree of constructive musicianship.

Chopin's able biographer, Karasowski, says of the ballades: "Some regarded them as a variety of the rondo; others, with more accuracy, called them poetical stories. Indeed, there is about them a narrative tone (*Märchenton*) which is particularly well rendered by the six-four and six-eight time, and which makes them differ essentially from the existing forms." In view of these facts, patent even to the superficial student of Chopin's life and works, it seems very strange that we should so often hear and even see in print sneering insinuations to the effect that the composer christened these works ballades for lack of any better or more appropriate name; that the title has in reality nothing of significance or distinctness, which is justified either by the form or the content of the works.

As a matter of fact, all four of these ballades, according to Chopin's own statement to Schumann during an interview at Leipsic, are founded directly upon Polish poems by the greatest poet of that nation, Adam Mickiewicz, the father of the romantic school in Poland, a contemporary and personal friend of the composer, a man whose fervent patriotism and unswerving fidelity to national themes, as well as the warmth, tenderness, and power of his creative genius, specially endeared him to the heart of his compatriot and brother artist, the tone-poet Chopin. It is difficult, not to say impossible, to estimate the stimulating influence of Mickiewicz and his works upon the creative activity of Chopin. That the music of the latter has attained world-wide celebrity, while the poems of the former are scarcely heard of outside of the small and cultured circle of his own countrymen and women, is due perhaps not so much to the superiority of the composer's genius over that of the poet, as to the more universal intelligibility of his chosen idiom, his medium of expression, Polish being a language understood by few persons even of cosmopolitan tendencies, and one which is ill adapted for translation into non-Slavonic tongues. Certain it is that Chopin himself was quick to acknowledge his deep indebtedness to his gifted countryman, and rose to some of his loftiest flights of creative effort when translating into his own beloved language of tone ideas, experiences, incidents, and situations which had already been molded and vivified into artistic life and beauty by the hand of the poet, as in the case of the four ballades under consideration.

Though the origin of these ballades as musical transcripts of certain poems by Mickiewicz is indisputable, it has always been a mooted question, and one fraught with the keenest interest, at least to some of us, upon what particular poem any given ballade is founded; what special experience or incident, national, personal, or imaginary, found its first embodiment in the verses of the Slavic poet, to thrill with its power and beauty a limited circle of Polish readers, and was later reincarnated by Chopin, to find a far wider sphere of influence throughout the musical world; and what may be the peculiar subtle karma of romantic or dramatic association

which this vital art germ has brought with it in its transmigration from a former existence; in a word, whence and what is the essential artistic essence of each ballade?

If we could trace it to its fountain head and familiarize ourselves with the sources of Chopin's own inspiration, the task of rightly comprehending and interpreting any one of these compositions would be vastly facilitated. This no one has hitherto done successfully. Few among English-speaking musicians are able to read Mickiewicz in the original Polish; translations of his works are meager, imperfect, and very difficult to obtain. It is therefore not without a certain glow of satisfaction that the present writer is able, after diligent, unwearying inquiry and voluminous reading, covering a period of some fifteen years, confidently to affirm that he has at last traced back 123
to their inspirational sources three at least of the four ballades; and he submits to the reader the results of his research, in the hope that some degree of the interest and pleasure he has himself derived from this line of investigation may be shared by others.

Should any question arise with regard to the accuracy of the statements and conclusions here advanced, I would say that the authority on which they are based is derived partly from definite historical data, existing, though widely diffused, in print; partly from direct traditions gathered from those who enjoyed the personal acquaintance of the composer; and partly from the carefully considered internal evidence of the works themselves, when critically compared with the poems to which they presumably had reference. I will say further that concerning the fourth ballade, in F minor, I am still as completely in the dark as any of my readers, and would gratefully welcome any information or suggestion which might tend to throw the smallest light upon the subject.

Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23

The first ballade, Op. 23, in G minor, was published in June, 1836, perhaps written a year or two earlier. It was suggested by and is founded upon one of the most able and forceful, as well as extended, patriotic historical poems by Mickiewicz, often called the Lithuanian Epic, entitled "Konrad Wallenrod," and published in 1828. The following is a brief synopsis of its plot:

During the latter half of the fourteenth century, the Red Cross knights, a powerful religious, political, and 124
military order, controlling large dominions on the Baltic, in territory now included in modern Russia, were at fierce feud with Lithuania, then an independent principality, later united with Poland by a marriage of its reigning prince, Jagiello, to the heiress of the Polish throne, thus founding the dynasty of the Jagiellos, the most illustrious of the royal houses of Poland. Long and desperate was the struggle. The Lithuanians, though vastly outnumbered and frequently outgeneraled and defeated, defended every inch of their beloved fatherland, now absorbed in western Russia, with heroic valor. At last their ruling prince and idolized leader fell in battle, their army was routed and cut to pieces, the scanty remnant taking refuge from their merciless pursuers among the fastnesses of the mountains; and the country was for a time practically subjugated and forced to submit to the most cruel and tyrannical oppression. The conquerors, being Crusaders and Christian knights, considered every species of atrocious spoliation and barbaric violence, when practised against the infidel Lithuanians, as justifiable, even laudable, and for some years the sufferings of the conquered knew no limit.

Among the prisoners taken and carried into virtual slavery by the Teutonic Order, was the little seven-year-old son of the fallen prince—a bright, precocious, winsome lad, who, after serving for some time as page in the household of the grand master of the Order, so completely won the heart of the old knight, that he adopted the boy and educated him with his own children, in all the courtly and martial accomplishments of the time. Years 125
passed. Young Konrad grew in manly power and promise, and came to be ranked among the flower of Teutonic chivalry, first in the tourney, first in the field, and first in the ladies' hall. But ever at his side, as strange friend and secret counselor, was seen the somber figure of the aged Wajdelote, or bard, a venerable minstrel, who had come none knew whence, and, despite his proud and gloomy bearing, had won high favor at the court by the magic of his voice and lute. Ostensibly a wandering singer, he was in reality a Lithuanian noble of high degree, a former friend of Konrad's father, the fallen prince, and stood high in the confidence of the Lithuanian people and nobility as an able, devoted patriot. He came as an emissary from them to find and win back their lost prince Konrad to his own true flag and his native land. They were still hoping and fitfully struggling to throw off the tyranny of the Red Cross knights and wanted Konrad for their leader.

Under the cloak of his minstrelsy, the Wajdelote plied this secret mission. With all the fiery eloquence of his poet's genius, he wrought upon the spirit of the young man, rousing it to duty and action, to honor, ambition, and patriotism, to sympathy with the wrongs of his oppressed fellow-countrymen, to vengeance for the death of his slaughtered father, stirring its latent heroism, steeling it to steadfast purpose. And as his influence strengthened day by day, the open brow of the young prince grew clouded, the smile vanished from his lips, and his sunny eyes grew deeper and darker with stern resolve.

At last the occasion came. In a foray against a band of insurgent Lithuanians, Konrad and his mentor detached 126
themselves from their companions, and feigning to be taken captive, joined the forces of their own countrymen, where they were welcomed with the wildest enthusiasm. The two years that followed were the happiest of Konrad's life. He threw himself heart and soul into the fierce joy of combat for his native land, devoting to her service all his personal courage and ability, and all the military skill so carefully acquired at the court and camp of the Red Cross knights; yet found time in the brief pauses of activity to woo and win as wife the fairest and truest of the Lithuanian maids. For a time the pulses of his life throbbed with a full but fluctuating tide, in the swift interchange of love's delights and the thrill of gallant deeds. Caressing whispers alternated with the clash of swords, and the tender light of the honeymoon with the lurid gleam of the camp-fire; but his happiness was destined to be as transient as his valor was vain. A sterner duty, a more self-sacrificing devotion claimed him, and his veteran mentor was still at his side to mature the plan and urge its execution. His beloved Lithuania, enfeebled, broken, disorganized for so long, was wholly unable to cope in open field with her powerful, disciplined, and well-equipped antagonist. Some daring, subtle, and far-sighted stratagem alone might save her; and such a one had formed itself in the mind of the old minstrel. Again his eloquence rang in the ears of Konrad,

like the voice of fate, “Behold, this is to do! Thou art the man!”

A heart-breaking farewell to his bride, and Konrad disappears utterly from the scene for ten years; then returns irrecognizably altered in appearance, under an assumed name, with wealth and fame and following, acquired in wars with the Saracens of Spain. The old grand master of the Red Cross knights is dead, and Konrad with little difficulty secures his own election to that office; and then begins the work of vengeance. By his absolute power as grand master, and his cunning diplomacy, he involved the order in bitter internal dissensions, depleted its treasury, wasted its resources, weakened its garrisons, and in every possible way sapped its strength, and finally led the flower of its army to complete annihilation in a winter campaign against the Lithuanians, into whose snares and ambuscades the Red Cross knights were mercilessly thrown by secret and preconcerted arrangement with his countrymen. 127

Thus by a course of treachery, which for daring, subtlety, and sustained purpose, both in conception and execution, has hardly a parallel in history, was accomplished what could not have been done by force. The power of the order was effectually broken and Lithuania set free. But Konrad’s life, as well as his happiness, paid the price of his patriotism. His beloved bride he never saw but once again, and that only for a moment of agonized parting through dungeon bars, just before his execution. And it is said he never smiled from the hour when the voice of the stern old minstrel first stirred his heart with the trumpet call of inexorable duty, till the hour when its proud pulses were stilled forever by the daggers of the secret tribunal. For his identity was discovered; he was, of course, tried and condemned as a traitor to the order, and died in disgrace by the hands of his former comrades. 128

Such is the story, sad but stirring, which Mickiewicz handles in his poem, and which Chopin reëmbodied in the G minor ballade, not following literally its successive steps, but emphasizing to his utmost its spirit, character, and moral. I think no one ever played this composition, or listened to it attentively, without feeling that its mood was not of our day and land. The time it represents is the middle ages, its scene is laid in stern and rugged Lithuania, among warlike knights and resentful rebels, and its whole spirit is therefore medieval and military.

It opens with a brief but scornfully defiant introduction, a call to arms, reminding one of the first lines of that familiar address to the Roman gladiators: “Friends, I come not here to talk; ye all do know the story of our thraldom.” Then the first and principal theme enters, symbolizing the forceful personality and stern mentor voice of the old minstrel, in its somber yet resolute phrases, solemn, inflexible, relentless as fate; telling of wrongs to be avenged, of a nation in bondage awaiting its deliverer; of the imperative call of duty and patriotism; and it constantly recurs all through the composition as its leading motive, whenever, as is vividly suggested by the other contrasting, conflicting themes and passages, continually introduced, the young prince wavers in his purpose, deterred by doubts and forebodings, lured by seductive temptations from pursuance of the desperate and soul-trying venture; whenever his mind wanders, as it must at times, to regretful memories of happier days, to the splendors of feast and tournament, to the pomp and pride of a martial career under the adopted flag of the order, to the blithe hunting-horns of his gay companions in youth, and tender dreams of the first great love of his manhood, all sacrificed to a grand but pitiless cause. He is ever recalled to the heroic mood, to the proud but rugged path of duty, by this mentor voice—gravely insistent, quietly determined, which will not be gainsaid; and which finally triumphs over all other considerations. The impetuous presto which closes the work portrays the fierce excitement and fiery rush of conflict, the utter self-abandon that hurls itself jubilantly into the arms of an ignominious death for a cherished ideal; and it ends with the savage but triumphant shout of a blood-bought victory. 129

This ballade, though comparatively an early work, is one of Chopin’s most darkly grand and dramatically powerful efforts; and the subjective personal moods of the exiled Polish patriot are voiced in its gloomy indignation, its desperate courage, and its fierce defiance.

There is an undercurrent of political meaning in “Konrad Wallenrod,” which fortunately escaped the notice of the Russians, who allowed its publication at St. Petersburg, but which appeals to every native and friend of Poland and has had no small share in making its popularity. Lithuania in the fourteenth century, broken and crushed, represents Poland in the nineteenth, and the tyrannical Teutonic Order stands for Russian oppression. The Wajdelote’s recitals of the wrongs of a dear but downtrodden land, the indignation and resentment under a foreign yoke, and the appeal to arms for freedom and revenge, are all spoken in the cause of Poland, and are so felt by the native reader. Konrad’s dire vengeance on the conqueror is a picture of the secret hope of all Polish patriots of the final overthrow and punishment of the tyrant and the reëstablishment of Polish independence. 130

Ballade in F Major, Op. 38

The second ballade, in F major, is, of the three under consideration, the least of a favorite and the least played; probably because the radical extremes of mood which it presents, in abrupt, almost painful contrast, its apparent incoherency, and its sudden, startling, seemingly causeless changes of movement, render it difficult to comprehend and still more so to interpret, and difficult to follow with intelligent sympathy even when well rendered.

It opens with an exceedingly simple, undemonstrative theme, in the major key, almost too lucid and childlike in the naïve directness of its utterance, and singularly devoid of the glowing warmth and color which usually characterize the melodies by this writer. Cool, pure, and passionless, yet velvet-soft and delicately sweet, it floats upon the gentle pulsations of the simple accompaniment, like a snow-white, freshly fragrant water-lily, upon the crystal ripples of some glacier-fed mountain lake. Then suddenly, without warning or apparent reason, there bursts a furious tempest of rage, pain, and conflict, as if some vast Titanic embodiment in bronze of lurid war had been melted by a world-conflagration into a stream of fluid destruction, and poured out upon some fair scene of pastoral peace and happiness. 131

Almost as suddenly the storm of fury abates, or rather seems to recede into distance, sounding still for a time, but far and faint, as if its tumult reached us muffled by intervening walls. Then the first simple theme returns,

sweetly calm in its pristine innocence, but soon merged into a series of plaintive minor cadences, as of pathetic pleading, of earnest, insistent supplication, interrupted by a brief and startlingly abrupt climax, in full massive chords, like the confident defiance hurled by the children of light at the hosts of darkness, certain of victory, in their reliance on the omnipotent arm of the God of battles. Once more the gentle first theme, followed by those imploring minor cadences and a repetition of the strong, courageous climax, and then the tempest breaks again with renewed intensity, the stress of desperate strife, the agony of terror, a seething, surging, rushing torrent of tone, as if men and demons were struggling for life in a swirling vortex, where the elemental forces of ocean and fire had met in a death-grapple.

The *finale*, in presto movement, an impetuous sweep of gloomy, exultant harmonies, suggests the mood of a brave but sorely tried spirit, dominating distress, rising superior to disaster, and proudly triumphant in spite of seeming defeat. At the close, in form of a coda, a few measures of the first melody return, saddened, but still gentle, ending plaintively in the minor, as if to say, “There have been great wrong and suffering and bitterness, but now is peace.”

Unquestionably this work presents two radically opposing elements in sharpest contrast; the one, reposeful purity; the other, infuriate passion. Of this much we are sure in simply listening to the music, without searching for historical origin or collateral information. It is interesting to note Rubinstein’s words with regard to it, and to see how near his art instinct led him to the discovery of its realistic significance, presumably without the aid of any definite knowledge as to its actual origin. He writes of it: 132

“Is it possible that the interpreter does not feel the necessity of representing to his hearers a field flower caught by a gust of wind, a caressing of the flower by the wind, the resistance of the flower, the stormy struggle of the wind, the entreaty of the flower, which at last lies broken there? This may be paraphrased: the field flower, a rustic maiden; the wind, a knight.”

Let us now examine the substance at least of the poetic material from which Chopin derived the mood and suggestion of this musical work. Again it is a ballad upon a Lithuanian theme, from the pen of Mickiewicz. But this time it is a legendary and not a historical subject which is treated. The Polish ballad is entitled “The Switez Lake,” and its substance is here given in a somewhat abbreviated and simplified form:

In the heart of Lithuania lies the beautiful, sequestered Lake Switez, its forest-mantled shores rarely visited by the foot of a stranger, but peopled by the peasant fancy with wild legends, shadowy traditions, and wraith-like memories of bygone days. Its blue waves murmur, at the foot of giant oaks, their strange tales of nymphs and sprites and water-kelpies, while through the long and still summer nights the sleepy branches make answer, in dreamy whisperings, of elves and gnomes and the uncanny doings of the little people of the forest. At least so the belated countryman affirms, overtaken by nightfall in this haunted region; and many are the tales of that awesome place and hour with which he terrifies his companions around the winter fire. 133

Once, many years ago, a gallant knight, of a most ancient and lofty lineage, with dauntless courage and a pious heart, whose castle crowned a neighboring height, resolved to sound and solve the mystery hid in its depths; and, taking with him a mammoth net of stoutest cords, a score of brawny henchmen to draw its meshes, and a venerable priest, to bless the catch and exorcise spirits, he proceeded to the shore. Prayer was said, the net was flung and sank, and mighty was the struggle that ensued. The tightened meshes strained to bursting, the taut ropes writhed and moaned like things alive, and dragged upon the arms that strained to draw them shoreward. The water raved and churned against the trembling banks, and black clouds, thunder-voiced, concealed the sky. The pious father’s constant prayers at last prevailed, and the net, with its strange burden, was safely landed. A pale but exquisitely lovely maid, with sweet, calm dignity in face and mien, a wreath of snow-white water-lilies on her shining hair, arose from out the tangles of the net, and in a voice like the low murmur of soft waves at twilight, thus she spoke:

“Rash knight! Thy lineage and piety combined protect thee, else hadst thou found a grave, with all thy following, in this adventure. But as thou art of godly mind and as we are akin by blood, through long descent, it is vouchsafed to me this once to break the mystic silence of the centuries, and to reveal to thee the secret of the lake, and mine, its lily queen. 134

“Know then, where now is forest dark and dense, a noble city reared its lofty battlements in former years. My sire, its ruling prince, held all but regal sway; and I, his child, a princess well beloved by all, counted my sunny years beside the Switez waves, as blithe as they. One morning, in that ne’er-to-be-forgotten spring, the trumpet voice of war through all our streets rang out the call to arms. Our royal master, Mindog, Lithuania’s king, had summoned all who wielded lance, to join him in the field, against a horde of merciless Russian barbarians, wasting all the land. And forth my father hastened, with him all his goodly company of knights and men at arms, and left us women, trembling and defenseless, in the town, trusting in God and in our innocence, till their return. That very night, by a circuitous route, evading Mindog’s might and my stout father’s sword, the Russians came, many as the sands upon the shore, ruthless as wolves in winter’s dearth. Our gates unguarded proved an easy prize, and in they poured, thronging our streets, demoniac in their lust for blood, exulting in the havoc of our homes. My maidens, wild with terror, crowded round, imploring succor; while I, as weak as they, saw our dishonor, worse than death, stalking upon us from the barbarian ranks.

“Then, in the frenzied panic, some one cried, ‘Our only hope is mutual destruction! Let us slay each other, cursed be she who falters!’ Like sudden inspiration, the mad purpose seized us all. And then was seen a sight to set red war atremble with affright, and blanch the lurid sun to sickly pallor. Fair hands, used only to the lute and broidery frame, unsheathed the dagger and made bare the breast. With clinging arms and lips together pressed, and sad eyes beaming love-light through their tears, each sought to find her sister’s heart and still its throbbing with her poniard’s point. Yet strength and courage faltered at the fatal stroke. In my great agony I raised my voice in prayer to Him who guides the storm-clouds’ wrath and curbs the tempest in its wild career. ‘Prevent,’ I cried, ‘this awful crime, and save us in this hour of direst need! Send us in mercy the swift death we needs must find, but let not maiden blood by maiden hands be shed!’ 135

“The prayer was heard. An earthquake shook our city, until it rocked and reeled, crumbling and sinking like the

snow-drifts in a springtime rain; while from the lake a mighty wall of water rose and rushed upon us, whelming alike pursuer and pursued, foeman and friend; hushing the din of war and shriek of victim in one common flood of cool, safe silence.

"So our city fell. My maidens, all transformed to water-lilies, blossom here in happy purity through long summers, and palsy-withered is the impious hand that strives to drag them from the friendly shelter of the waves; while I, their lily queen, within my crystal realm hold quiet sway, safe from the rude approach of man's destructive passions. Now thou knowest the story, all save this. My father fell by Russian spears. My princely 136
brother, on returning from the wars, found all his realm a waste, his capital destroyed, found home and sister vanished in the flood; and wandering in other lands, when years had passed, he wedded a stranger bride. From this their union, through a long, illustrious line of heroes, thou art sprung. Hence thou art safe upon these shores, despite this day's temerity, so long as with a pure heart and noble mind, thou dost guard our name and honor in the world. Remember this. But seek no more to pierce the kindly veil of mysteries, not meant for mortal eyes; and never hope or strive to see again the lily queen of Switez."

So speaking, with a smile of saddest sweetness, she turned slowly to the lake, and vanished in its whelming waters, which closed with laughing ripples round her.

No one familiar with Chopin's ballade in F can fail to perceive the close and accurate application of the music to this romantic tale. It begins at and deals with the appearance and story of the lily queen, and her gentle, pure, and winning personality, and soft-voiced narration, figure symbolically in the opening melody. The sudden burst of the terrific war cloud, the maiden's trust in and confident appeal to a higher power, the final whelming of the city in the friendly flood, follow successively in almost literal portrayal, the work closing in the mood of the maiden's final farewell and warning to the adventurous knight who had disturbed her repose.

Viewed from the standpoint of the subject-matter, the startling, almost drastic, contrasts of the work seem not only intelligible, but legitimate and artistic.

Ballade No. 3, in A Flat, Op. 47 137

This is the best known, the most played, and most popular of all the Chopin ballades. Its warm, lyric opening theme, its strikingly original rhythmic effects, its piquant, bewitching second subject, full of playful grace, as well as its magnificently developed climax, one of the finest in the piano literature, have all endeared it to the hearts of Chopin lovers and rendered it one of the most effective of concert solos.

Like the second ballade in F major, this composition is founded upon an ancient legend of Lake Switez, which seems to be a center about which cluster many of the Lithuanian myths. The one in question had been previously treated by Chopin's friend and compatriot, Adam Mickiewicz, in the form of a ballad in Polish verse, and the substance of the story, briefly and simply told, is as follows:

A young and fearless knight, whose ancestral castle crowned a forest-covered eminence above the beautiful blue lake, was wont to wander on its lone and wooded shores at evening and to meet there clandestinely his radiant, beautiful, mysterious lady-love, whose name, home, and origin he was unable to discover, and which she persistently refused to disclose. She always appeared to him suddenly, without warning or visible approach, as if born anew each night of the filtering moonlight and shifting forest shadows, or as if drawing her ethereal substance at will from the floating mist wreaths above the lake. And she vanished as miraculously, when she chose to end their interview, dissolving from his very arms into mist once more. Perhaps the very mystery which 138
enveloped her enhanced her charms. In any case, her power grew upon the knight till he became most desperately enamoured, pressing his suit with growing ardor. At first she coquetted with his passion, laughing at his fervor and meeting his fiery protestations with playful, incredulous mockery; but, finally touched by his fiery eloquence, she made him a conditional promise. If he would prove his fidelity, would remain true to her and her memory during her absence, no matter what temptations might arise, for the space of just one little passing moon, she would then return, reveal her identity, and become his bride, if he still desired it.

Of course, he swore eternal fidelity, and she, with a little half-sad, half-incredulous smile, vanished into the night mist. For several evenings he wandered, lonely and disconsolate, on the shores of the lake, longing and vainly seeking for his absent love and cursing the tardy hours of his probation. Then, when his patience was about exhausted, he was met there, on the selfsame spot, in the same mystic moonlight and with the same suddenness and mystery, by another maiden, even more beautiful than the first, and not inclined to be so distant. She jeered at him for his depression, for his useless and stupid fidelity to an absent prude, while with many lures and graces she beckoned him on to join her in the moonlit mazes of the dance.

At first, remembering his promise, he made some show of resistance, but very soon he yielded completely to her seductions, declaring his admiration for this new beauty in ardent terms, and followed her with extended arms, 139
as she flitted on before him, keeping always just a little out of reach; followed, heedless where his steps might lead, reckless of consequences, conscious only of her tender glances and her beckoning hand, till, borne up and on by the spell of her enchantment, she had led him far out upon the treacherous surface of the lake, whose placid ripples seemed magically to sustain both pursuer and pursued. Then, when midway across the lake, she turned upon him, indignation blazing in her eyes. With a single impatient gesture she flung off her disguise and faced him, poised upon a curling wave, in all the airy grace and winsomeness of his first abandoned love. "False lover!" she cried, "where is now thy true love, thy sworn love? Forgotten, forsaken, ere the moon that witnessed thy plighted vows hath run one-quarter of its little circle. Behold thy doom! So perish the faithless!" Her white arms waved in mystic incantation, a sudden storm-wind swept the lake, the billows heaved and swirled beneath him, and a yawning chasm opened at his feet. With a last passionate appeal he sank to its chilly depths, while she, laughing in mocking derision, vanished in a shower of silver spray.

The peasants declare that to this day, on quiet moonlit nights, one may still see the white form of the Switez maid wandering, as if in search, among the shadows of the forest-mantled shores or gliding over the surface of the lake; while mingling with the whisper of the wind among the trees and the murmurs of the waves upon the

strand, one still hears the echo of her words: “Forsaken, forsworn. So perish the faithless.”

Such is the story of the Switez maid, as told by Mickiewicz in inimitable Polish verse, and translated into the symbolic language of music by the Polish tone-poet, Chopin, in the A flat ballade. 140

The first warmly emotional theme of the composition, with its tender, persuasive cadences, its ever-growing passionateness, symbolizes the ardent and impulsive hero of the legend; while the bright, piquant second theme admirably portrays the arch, coquettish heroine, with her airy witcheries and playful grace. It cannot be mistaken, for it compels attention as it enters, after a moment of suspense, in radical contrast to what precedes, with the dainty rhythmic effect, so difficult to render for most players. Its introduction later in a different key, with different accompaniment and embellishments, represents the disguise with which the maid attempts to cloak her identity, but the same melody is distinctly traceable through all changes. The superb climax near the close of the work forcibly depicts at once the swift approach and resistless sweep of the tempest upon the lake and the intensity of the emotional situation at the moment of the final catastrophe. Here, too, is heard again the first melody, the hero theme, in a brief return, as he makes his last, vain appeal, and we even catch the vanishing ripple of the maiden’s mocking laughter.

The details of the story are not so literally worked out in the music, or followed with so much realistic fidelity, as would have been the case with Liszt or Wagner, or with some other more recent writers. Chopin’s art is always rather suggestive than descriptive, dealing directly with the moods evoked by a given situation or event, rather than with the physical aspect of the events themselves; with the awe and terror produced by the tempest, for instance, rather than with the audible or visible phenomena of the tempest. In this particular case he deals mainly with the general emotional and mental elements which underlie the legend and the characteristics of the two personages who figure in it, instead of treating its successive incidents in detail, or in definite chronological order. The work is therefore sketched on broad, fundamental lines, and leaves the setting and filling in in large measure to the imagination of the hearer. This must always be the ideal method in an art so ethereal and, in one sense, so vague as that of music. Still, the connection between the music of this ballade and the actual scenes and development of the legend is distinct enough to be easily traced by those familiar with the story, and players or listeners will find, as always, that the purely musical interest of this and all the Chopin ballades is materially deepened and increased by the background of relevant facts—by an acquaintance with the material on which they are based and which gave to the composer the impulse for their creation. 141

Chopin: Polonaise, A Flat Major, Op. 53

Interesting from a historic as well as a musical standpoint is the origin of the polonaise. In the year 1573, when the Polish throne became vacant on the extinction of the royal dynasty of Jagiello, a national assembly of electors was convened at the then capital, Cracow, to decide upon a new sovereign. The candidates for the throne were all of royal blood—Ernest of Austria, Henry of Anjou of the house of Valois, brother to the ruling king of France, a Swedish prince, and Ivan the Terrible of Russia. But the real struggle lay between the Austrian and French princes. The choice fell at last on Henry of Anjou, later himself king of France as Henry III.

In the following autumn he ascended the Polish throne, and among the many gorgeous ceremonials attending his coronation, was one quite natural and proper under the circumstances—a formal presentation to the new monarch, of the leading dignitaries and personages of his realm. It took place in the vast and magnificent throne hall of the royal castle at Cracow. The nobles and officials, each with his lady on his arm, defiled before the throne where the monarch was seated, in a stately procession, and as they passed before the king were presented by the master of ceremonies. This formal march was accompanied by suitable music, written expressly for the occasion and performed by the royal band. Whether this embryonic polonaise is still in existence, no one knows; probably not; but two distinct ideas were, or should have been, before the composer's mind in penning the harmonies for this solemn ceremonial.

First, of course, to write music eminently suited to the occasion, to embody, and, if possible, enhance all the pomp and splendor of the magnificent, august assembly; second, to portray through the music, so far as might be, something of the national characteristics of this Polish race which the Frenchman came as a stranger to rule over. The music in its own way was to serve as a species of introduction.

Little by little, from this crude but characteristic beginning was developed through the centuries the peculiar national dance, or, more strictly speaking, march of the Poles; and the music performed during its progress came to have among dance forms the same title. It partook of the various stages of evolution to which all music was subject at different epochs, and within the last hundred years has been modified to keep pace with the general development of musical resources. But however it may vary in minor details of form and treatment, every polonaise which is true to itself must express the original ideas upon which the form was primarily based —on the one hand a splendid ceremonial, on the other Polish national life.

In the present day the polonaise is a universally accepted musical form, common property with the composers of all nations. But Chopin, Polish by birth, education, and sympathies, found it strictly within his scope, and has easily surpassed all other writers in number, quality, and characteristic force as a polonaise writer.

Of his many works in this vein, the Op. 53, in A flat, is in my opinion decidedly the best, both as regards virile power and direct, forceful expression of the original polonaise idea. It begins with a wild, impetuous introduction, brief but stirring, a sort of fanfare of drums and trumpets, intended to call the people to order and to establish at the outset the tonality of the mood, so to speak. Then follows the swinging, pompous measure of the polonaise proper, readily suggesting by its splendid martial harmonies the proud military bearing, the gorgeous armor, and the stately tread of those steel-clad feudal heroes, as they defiled before the throne.

In place of the trio, usually of a more quiet nature in works of this kind, Chopin has introduced a very singular passage, the most strikingly original portion of the whole composition—a long-sustained, stupendous octave climax of the left hand, consisting of a little rhythmic figure of four notes, constantly reiterated with growing power, against a sort of trumpet obligato in brilliant measured chords for the right. The movement vividly suggests the tramp of cavalry. The composer had in mind the Polish light-horse of medieval fame, a very aristocratic body of picked horsemen, composed of the flower of Polish chivalry and disciplined in constant warfare with the Turks. A number of the brilliant officers of this division were necessarily present at the coronation ceremony when the polonaise form originated, and these with their exploits Chopin endeavors to introduce by means of this singular passage.

There is a curious anecdote afloat concerning the effect of this movement on the composer himself. On one occasion, when playing the nearly completed work, his nervous organism enfeebled by illness and his imagination intensely excited by the fever-glow of composition, he was seized by a peculiar hallucination. He fancied that a band of the knights he had been attempting to portray, came riding in from the gloom of the outer night, in through the opening walls of his apartment, arrayed in their antique war panoply, horse and rider just as they might have arisen from their century-old graves in Poland. He was so overcome by this self-invoked apparition that he actually fled from the room, and it was some days before he could be induced to re-enter it or resume work on the mighty polonaise.

Immediately following the great octave climax referred to is a subdued, vague, fearsome little passage in light running figures, totally foreign in movement, mood, and even key to the remainder of the work, for which we would be at a loss to account if unacquainted with the circumstances narrated, but which, with the light just thrown upon it, is readily understood. The author seems to have lost for the time the thread of the composition, to have drifted far from its martial mood and swinging rhythm, but after a period of groping indecision, through which we hear the trepidation and reluctant fascination with which he again approaches this monster of his own creation, with a sudden boldness of attack he regains the clew, resumes with energy the march movement, and the work sweeps to its close with even more than its original power and splendor.

Chopin: Impromptu in A Flat, Op. 29

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Light, graceful, dainty, capricious, full of playful tenderness and delicate fancy is this little work, written for and presented as a wedding gift to one of his favorite pupils, La Comtesse de Lobau, to whom it is dedicated. The first movement embodies the joyous, hopeful, congratulatory spirit of the occasion, expressed with all that refined elegance and polished perfection of style of which Chopin was so preëminently the master, both in music and language. It is the most unqualifiedly optimistic strain from his pen with which I am acquainted.

The trio, in F minor, brings a touch of half-veiled sadness and irrepressible regret, as if called forth by the thought that their art work together is now to end. She has been for years one of his most talented, diligent, and interesting students. She is, like himself, a Polish exile in a foreign land, and their community of sympathies and sorrows, combined with her charming personality and congenial temperament, have tended to merge the relations of teacher and pupil into the closer bonds of a life-long friendship. He is naturally reluctant to lose her, 148
but this mood of depression is soon subordinated to the thought that she has found the philosopher’s stone, the fabled blue flower of the German poets, the subtile, yet supreme panacea for all human ills—love. This idea is expressed in the last half of the trio as only Chopin could express it; and the work ends with a repetition of the first strain, brightly, happily, with a certain restful completeness of fulfilled desire in the reiterated closing chords.

Chopin: Fantasie Impromptu, Op. 66

Among other manuscripts found on Chopin's writing-table after his death was the original of this composition, complete in every detail, but written across the back, in his own trembling hand, were the words, "To be destroyed when I am gone."

It is difficult to account for this injunction, except upon the theory that he feared that both the form and the content of the work were too original, too subtle and complex, and too wholly unfamiliar to the musical world of his day, to be readily comprehended, and that it would either suffer from incorrect rendition or be condemned and ignored. So he preferred a quick death by fire for this child of his sad later days, to a slow death by mutilation or cruel neglect.

Fortunately the request was disregarded by his friends. The work was published and has become one of his most beloved, as it is one of his most faultlessly beautiful compositions. The peculiarity of form referred to is familiar to all who have attempted the study of this impromptu. The whole first movement, consisting of a continuous rapid figure of four notes in the right hand against three in the left, is one of the most unusual and difficult musical problems to solve satisfactorily, and only to be mastered by long and special practice—a case, as I have often said, where it is well to remember the biblical injunction, "let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth." But when smoothly played, it produces just that sinuous, interwoven, flowing effect which the composer desired, and which could not have been obtained, in such perfection, in any other way.

The content of this composition, like that of many of Chopin's smaller works, is purely emotional, like a strictly lyric poem, by his literary counterpart Tennyson, for instance; it is a wholly subjective expression of a mental state, an emotional condition, not of any scene or any action. It touches the minor key and sounds the plaintive harmonies to which his heart-strings were tuned and vibrating at the time when it was written. It voices a soft summer twilight mood, half sad, half tender, full of vague regrets, of indefinite longings and aspirations, of fluttering hope, never destined to be realized, and bright fleeting memories that rise and pass, dimmed by intervening clouds of sorrow and disappointment, like the shifting forms and hues of a kaleidoscope seen through a misty glass, or the luminous phantoms of dead joys and shadowy suggestions of the "might have been," against the gray background of a sad present and an uncertain, promiseless future. It is a strange, delicately complex mood, a mood of life's sunset hour, colored by the pathetic glories of the dying day, and the depressing, yet tranquilizing shadows of the coming night—a mood well-nigh impossible to express, but perfectly embodied in the music.

The following simple little verses, in which, as will be seen, has been made a somewhat free use of the suggestive symbolism of nature, may serve to illustrate, though by no means to the writer's satisfaction, his conception of the artistic significance of this composition:

THE FANTASIE IMPROMPTU.

The sigh of June through the swaying trees,
The scent of the rose, new blown, on the breeze,
The sound of waves on a distant strand,
The shadows falling on sea and land;
    All these are found
    In this stream of sound,
This murmuring, mystical, minor strain.

And stars that glimmer in misty skies,
Like tears that shimmer in sorrowing eyes,
And the throb of a heart that beats in tune
With tender regrets of a happier June,
    When life was new
    And love was true,
And the soul was a stranger to sorrow and pain.

Chopin: Tarantelle, A Flat, Op. 43

Brilliant, effective, and not excessively difficult though it be, this admirably constructed and thoroughly characteristic *tarantelle* in A flat is but little played; perhaps because it appeals less to the love of the “true Chopinism of Chopin” than most of his compositions, as being out of the recognized Chopin vein, deficient in the special melodic and emotional elements usually distinguishing his works. Nevertheless, considered objectively as a tarantelle, from the standpoint, not of Chopinism, but of what the true tarantelle should be, it is one of the best ever written,—hence one of his masterpieces,—and furnishes another proof of the almost infinite versatility of his creative power, both in style and in mood.

The origin of the tarantelle, as a musical form, is interesting and must be considered in judging the real merit of this or any similar work. The name is derived from that of the tarantula, that venomous denizen of southern climes, of the spider species, whose bite is usually fatal. There is a generally prevalent belief among the peasants of both Spain and Italy, a belief founded, no doubt, upon centuries of experience, that there is but one reliable cure for this poison, and one which Nature herself prescribes and imperatively demands—that of violent and protracted bodily exercise, and the consequent excessively profuse perspiration, enabling the system to throw off the poison through the pores. The idea has the same pathological base as the ancient Arabic cure for hydrophobia, recently revived with great success in this day of resurrection of buried wisdom—an extremely hot and long-continued steam bath.

It is claimed that the victim of the tarantula is seized by a delirious desire, an uncontrollable madness for dancing, which, if fully gratified, in fact encouraged and stimulated to the utmost, may save his life by means of the prosaic but practical process above suggested. So his friends assemble in haste, form a circle on the village green or plaza, strike up the wildest, most furiously rapid and exciting music possible, on any instrument that may be at hand, preferably the mandolin and tambourine, as the most rhythmic and inspiring, and take turns dancing with him, until each is exhausted and gives place to the next, and until the victim recovers or dies of fatigue. The faster the tempo, the more intoxicating the music, the better the purpose will be served, and the greater the hope of a successful cure.

From this crude and primitive germ the modern musical art form, known and used all over the world, has gradually developed, retaining, of course, as must every characteristic dance form, the spirit and fundamental element of the situation and circumstances which gave it birth.

The true tarantelle may be either in a major or minor key, the latter being most common; but it must be wild, stirring, exceedingly rapid, with a strong rhythmic swing and a certain dash and go, irresistibly suggesting the fever of the dance at its most delirious ecstasy. It is always written in six-eight time, which is somewhat singular, as it has none of the usual rhythmic peculiarities of that measure, but invariably produces the impression of twelve-eight, or, perhaps still more strongly, that of four-four with the beats divided into triplets. In fact, this is generally the best method of counting it for the pupil. It should contain no harmonic or technical complexities to distract the attention of either player or listener from the regular rhythmic swing and form and movement of the dance; and the melodic trio, occasionally introduced by some composers, is always an incongruous artistic absurdity, wholly out of place.

Though the musical form is common property of all composers in all lands, the actual dance, as such, is specially identified with southern Spain and Italy, and is rarely used elsewhere. To the tourist one of the most unique and vividly interesting episodes of his sojourn in these localities is the performance of the tarantelle by one of the trained dancing girls, which may be witnessed almost any evening, given with all the dash and verve of the southern temperament, a perfect embodiment of grace and fire and dance frenzy.

This tarantelle by Chopin possesses all the essential characteristics in a high degree, with not a single lapse or irrelevant digression in mood, in form, even in the details of accompaniment. It may be taken as a model of the true tarantelle, spirited, well sustained throughout, and eminently playable.

Chopin: Berceuse, Op. 57

The Chopin Berceuse (which is the French word for cradle-song) is a most unique as well as most ideally beautiful composition, standing alone in all piano literature, as regards its form and harmonic structure, the only one of its species. It is beyond all question or comparison, the finest cradle-song ever written for the piano, an exceptionally perfect example of that rare blending of spontaneous genius and mechanical ingenuity, for which Chopin was so preëminent, resulting in a work matchless in its originality, its suggestive realism, its delicacy of finish, and its poetic content. An organ point on D flat, which is its only bass note, sustained throughout the entire composition, and a couplet of the simplest chords, the tonic and dominant seventh, alternating back and forth in a swinging, rocking motion, form the accompaniment, continued practically without change, from first measure to last, portraying naturally, easily, yet unmistakably, the soothing monotony of the rockaby movement. The left hand may be said to rock the cradle throughout the whole composition, while in the soft, continually intertwining melody in the right hand, like an endless, infolding circle of maternal love, we find the lullaby song of the mother, sung as she sits there in the hush of the twilight, rocking her little one to sleep.

Around and over this melody Chopin has flung, with his own inimitable delicacy, a silver lace-work of embellishment, falling soft and light as the moonlight spray from fountains in fairyland, as through the idealizing summer haze, half veiling a distant landscape, we seem to catch dim glimpses of the dream-pictures, the fleeting fancies, the changing phantasmagoria of prophetic visions, that drift through the brain of the mother as she sits there in the gathering dusk, waiting for the little eyes to be tightly closed, and wondering vaguely to herself on what scenes they will open in the far future years.

Slower and gentler grows the motion of the cradle, softer and lower the lullaby song, further and further the dream pictures drift into the shadows, until at last the wings of slumber are folded about the little one. Silence reigns. The mother’s daily task of loving ministry is ended and she, too, may rest. The two lingering closing chords, soft and slow, suggest the moment when she rises from the cradle and spreads her hands in silent benediction over the sleeping child.

Infinite tenderness and delicacy are needed for the interpretation of this composition; a tone like violet velvet, and a light, fluent finger technic, to which its really extreme difficulties seem like dainty play.

Chopin: Scherzo in B Flat Minor, Op. 31

A very familiar, yet always fresh and intensely interesting composition is this scherzo. The name is an Italian word signifying a jest, and we find in musical nomenclature a number of derivatives from it, as *scherzino* (little jest) and *scherzando* (jestingly, playfully). The term is used by most composers to designate compositions that are bright, playful, humorous in character. Nearly all the leading composers have written more or less in this vein. Mendelssohn particularly excelled in it, and even serious old Beethoven became quite jocose at times in the scherzo movements of his symphonies; though it always reminds one of the sportive dancing of an elephant.

Chopin applied the name to four of his greatest, most intense and impassioned works, seemingly without the smallest reason or relevancy. Why, no one can even surmise, unless it may have been in a mood of sardonic perversity, of sarcastic bitterness, purposely to mislead the public as to the real artistic intention and significance of the music, and see if they would have sufficient perception to discover it for themselves. It is a sad commentary on the insight of many of our so-called musicians, that they have not done so even to this day, and persist in playing the Chopin scherzi jestingly and as trivially as possible, which may be the subtle, covert jest which Chopin intended. Who knows? In reality these four works, especially the first three of them, are among his greatest and grandest. They are broad, heroic, seriously and profoundly emotional productions, marking the high-water line of his creative power; full of the strength and virile energy which those acquainted only with his nocturnes and waltzes are inclined to deny him altogether, but in which he far exceeds all other composers, past or present, with the possible exception of Beethoven and Wagner. Jests only in name, or, if in fact, then in the sense of bitterest satire, aimed at the world and at life, jests written in the heart's blood of the composer; written when Poland, his beloved native land, lay in her death agony, when three great European powers had combined to write the word *finis* in Polish blood and tears, across the last page of her history. What wonder that the music throbs with intense but conflicting emotions—fiery indignation, fierce defiance, bitter scorn, and, in the next breath, pitiful tenderness for the wronged and the suffering, heart-breaking sorrow for the unavailing heroism and wasted lives of his countrymen!

All these moods will be found in swift and sharply contrasting succession in all the four scherzi, but notably in the one in B flat minor, which I regard as the best of the four. The seeming incongruity between its name and its musical content, its ostensible and its real significance, always recalls to me famous lines:

> "The lip that's first to wing the jest
> Is first to breathe the secret sigh;
> The laugh that rings with keenest zest
> But chokes the flood-gates of the eye."

Chopin: Prelude (D Flat Major), Op. 28, No. 15

A unique position in pianoforte literature is occupied by these Preludes, Op. 28. They derive their name rather from their form than from their musical import. Like the usual preludes to songs, or more extended musical works, they are short, fragmentary tone sketches rather than complete pictures; each consisting, as a rule, of a single, simple movement, and embodying but a single concrete idea, and seeming to imply by its brevity and its suggestive rather than fully descriptive character, that a more elaborately developed composition is to follow, to which this has been but an introduction and in which the idea, here merely outlined, will receive more exhaustive treatment. In reality, however, each of these preludes is complete in itself; an exquisite musical vignette containing, like some dainty vial of hand-cut Venetian glass, the distilled essence of dead flowers of memory and experience from Chopin's past; particularly of scenes, episodes, and emotional impressions of his romantic life on the island of Majorca. Just as a painter might have sketched, with hasty but truthfully graphic pencil, on the pages of his portfolio, the fleeting impressions produced upon his senses and imagination by this novel, picturesque environment, so the composer has preserved in these bits of offhand but vivid tone painting, glimpses into his daily life, his moods and experiences during that winter of 1838-39.

Banished by his physicians to this Mediterranean isle, in the hope of benefit to his fast failing health, and refused shelter in any hotel or private residence, on account of the there prevalent belief that consumption was contagious, Chopin and the little party of devoted friends who accompanied him (most notable among whom was the famous French novelist, George Sand) were forced to improvise a temporary abode in the semi-habitable wing of an old ruined convent, which had been abandoned by the monks. It was picturesquely situated on a rocky promontory, commanding a view, on the one side, of the open sea, dotted with the countless white sails of Mediterranean commerce; on the other, of the sheltered bay, the village beyond, and the lofty volcanic mountains in the background. Here they spent the winter, and here nearly all of the preludes, with many others of Chopin's most poetic smaller works, originated—artistic crystallizations of passing impressions and experiences, concerning which and the life in which they originated, George Sand writes: "While staying here he composed some short but very beautiful pieces which he modestly entitled preludes. They were real masterpieces. Some of them create such vivid impressions that the shades of the dead monks seem to rise and pass before the hearer in solemn and gloomy funeral pomp. Others are full of charm and melancholy, glowing with the sparkling fire of enthusiasm, breathing with the hope of restored health. The laughter of the children at play, the distant strains of the guitar, the twitter of birds on the damp branches, would call forth from his soul melodies of indescribable sweetness and grace. But many also are so full of gloom and sadness that, in spite of the pleasure they afford, the listener is filled with pain. Some of his later tone-poems bring before us a sparkling crystal stream reflecting the sunbeams. Chopin's quieter compositions remind us of the song of the lark as it lightly soars into the ether, or the gentle gliding of the swan over the smooth mirror of the waters; they seem filled with the holy calm of nature. When Chopin was in a despondent mood, the piercing cry of the hungry eagle among the crags of Majorca, the mournful wailing of the storm, and the stern immovability of the snow-clad heights, would awaken gloomy fancies in his soul. Then again, the perfume of the orange blossoms, the vine bending to the earth beneath its rich burden, the peasant singing his Moorish songs in the fields, would fill him with delight."

The Prelude in D flat, No. 15, which I select as one of the most beautiful and characteristic of these sketches, embodies a strange day dream of the composer in which, as he says, "vision and reality were indistinguishably blended."

One bright, late autumn morning the little party of friends had taken advantage of the weather, and of the fact that Chopin seemed in unusually good health and spirits, to make a long-talked-of excursion to the neighboring village, promising to return before sunset. During their absence a sudden tropical tempest of terrific severity swept the island. The wind blew a hurricane, the rain descended in floods, the streams rose, bridges and roadways were destroyed, and it was only with extreme difficulty and considerable danger that they succeeded in reaching the convent about midnight, having spent six hours in traversing the last mile and a half of the distance. They found Chopin in a state bordering on delirium. The physical effect of the storm on his shattered nerves, combined with his own depression and his keen anxiety for them, had combined to work his sensitive, and at that time morbid, temperament up to a state of feverish excitement, in which the normal barriers between perception and hallucination had well-nigh vanished. He told them afterward that he had been a prey to a gruesome vision of which this prelude is the musical portrayal.

He fancied that he lay dead at the bottom of the sea; that near him sat a beautiful siren singing in exquisitely sweet and tender strains, a song of his own life and love and sorrow. But though her voice was soothing in its dreamy pathos, and though he felt oppressed by a crushing languor and fatigue and longed for rest, he could not lose consciousness, because tormented by the regular, relentlessly monotonous fall of great drops upon his heart. As the drops continued increasing steadily in weight and in importunate demand upon his attention, as if burdened with some great and sad significance which he must recognize, he became aware that they were the tears of his friends on earth whom he had loved and lost. With this knowledge, vivid memory and poignant pain awoke together, and his anguish grew to an overpowering climax of intensity. Then, nature's limit being reached, the force of his tempest of grief finally exhausted itself, and he sank gradually into a state of dull, despairing lethargy, and at last into welcome unconsciousness, the last sound in his ears being the soothing strains of the siren, and his last sensation the now faint and feeble, but still regular falling of his friends' tears upon his heart.

This composition should be conceived and executed so as to render, to the full, its intensely emotional character. The first theme in D flat major, with its sweetly languorous tone, should be given quite slowly, with pressure touch, producing a penetrating, but not loud, singing quality of tone, while the reiterated A flat in the

accompaniment, which, throughout the whole work suggests the falling drops, must be at first vaguely hinted rather than distinctly struck. The middle part in chords should be commenced very softly with a whispering, mysterious tone, affecting the hearer like the first shadow of an approaching thunder cloud, or the presentiment of coming woe. Then the power should steadily increase—gradually, relentlessly, like the stealthy, irresistible rising of the dark cold tide about some chained victim in an ocean cave, where the light of day has never penetrated; mounting steadily—not rapidly—to the overwhelming climax of the reiterated octave B in the right hand.

In the repetition of this passage the same effect should be produced, with the climax still more intensified. Then 166
let the power as gradually decrease, till at the return of the siren's song it has sunk into pianissimo and the closing measure should fade away into silence, like the echo of dream bells.

I have dwelt at some length upon this prelude because it is the best known of the set; the most complete and, generally speaking, the most effective; and because, in connection with the suggestive quotation from George Sand, it will serve as a helpful illustration to the student in arriving at an intelligent comprehension of the others. But a few words in further elucidation of some of them may be in place.

The first, in somber, sonorous chords, expresses Chopin's initial impressions of the stately, but half-ruined monastery in which he and his little party had found refuge, and the solemn thoughts called up by its decaying grandeur, its silent loneliness, its vast, gloomy, memory-haunted halls and cloisters.

The third represents an evening scene, with the setting sun kindling to crimson and gold the spires and picturesque whitewashed cottages of the village of Majorca, a mile away across the little bay, while the gentle breeze, like the sigh of departing day, brings the sound of silvery bells from the little village church ringing the vesper chimes.

The fifth and sixth embody the same mood, in an almost identically similar setting. They may be effectively combined into one picture of a dark, depressing, late autumnal day; a day of gray skies and leaden sea; of heavy, windless calm, the calm of exhaustion and utter weariness, with the low, sad rain dripping monotonously 167
upon the roof like the tears of the gods for a dying world. In one, the melody expressing the element of human sorrow is in the soprano, plaintively, touchingly, sweetly pathetic. In the other, it is placed in the lower register of Chopin's favorite orchestral instrument, the 'cello, which it reproduces, throbbing with a more passionate intensity, a more poignant pain. But in general character and treatment the two belong together.

No. 8 tells of the gay carol of the birds at dawn, floating in at the open windows of Chopin's chamber. No. 17 is a rustic dance of the Majorcan peasants. No. 24, the last, is a graphic description of a tropical storm with the flash of lightning and the ominous roll of the thunder literally portrayed.

Space does not permit of a detailed analysis of all the numbers, but each has its special character and suggestive import, and is a picture of some episode or mood during that winter's sojourn on Majorca.

Chopin: Waltz, A Flat, Op. 42

Every dance, the waltz included, is based upon and adapted to some particular dance movement. All its effects, whether of melody, harmony, rhythm, or embellishment, are carefully calculated by the composer to meet the requirements of this special movement, to conform to and express its general character and be governed by its usual rate of speed. Each of these dance movements embodies in itself some peculiar quality or characteristic, such as stately grace in the minuet, martial pomp in the polonaise, impetuous vivacity in the galop, which the music must indicate and supplement. The Chopin waltzes are no exception to this rule. They are distinctly and preëminently waltzes; and though of course not for actual dance purposes, they are intended as idealized tone-pictures of the waltz, and of ball-room scenes and experiences.

The one in question, Op. 42 in A flat, is planned upon a broader scale, contains more variety, and taxes more thoroughly the resources of the accomplished pianist than any other work of Chopin in this vein. Its tender, floating melodies, bright, delicate passage work, and swinging, swaying rhythms are replete with all that eloquent, gliding grace, that arch coquetry, that passionate warmth of mood, which we so invariably associate with the festive scenes,

> "Where youth and pleasure meet
> To chase the glowing hours with flying feet."

Lights sparkle, delicate draperies are afloat, like perfumed clouds, upon the languid air, bright eyes scintillate with mirth or soften with emotion, and

> "All goes merry as a marriage bell."

And yet throughout all there runs a half-hidden undertone that tells of deeper, sterner thought and far intenser feeling; that tells of dark forebodings, of distant alarms, of sudden trumpet calls; so that the work in its entirety cannot but seem to us the counterpart in music of that familiar, almost hackneyed, but immortal word-picture of Byron, describing the great ball on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, to whose thunderous music the fate of nations was reversed, like the steps of the dancers in a ball-room, and France changed monarchs as a lady shifts her partners.

The somber trio strain, about the middle of the composition, suggests to us "Brunswick's fated chieftain," who sat apart and watched the dancers and listened to the revelry with "Death's prophetic ear." Later, where the rhythmic pulsation of the waltz is abruptly and violently interrupted in the midst of its flowing cadences, by a strong emphasized G natural F, repeated twice by both hands in unison, we are forcibly reminded of the line—

> "But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!"

After a moment of consternation and suspense, the waltz movement proceeds, appearing almost flippant by contrast, and seeming to say, like the verse which follows,

> "On with the dance, let joy be unconfined!"

Lastly, the breathless, impetuous finale indicates the "hurrying to and fro," the "mounting in hot haste," and "marshalling in arms," with which the dance broke up at midnight, as cavaliers rushed from the ball-room to the battlefield. Both Chopin, the greatest musician of Poland, and Mickiewicz, her greatest poet, were powerfully impressed by the personality and poetry of Lord Byron, and there is no doubt that our composer had the stanzas of the contemporaneous English writer in mind in the creation of this work.

The first duty of the performer in rendering this composition should be to suggest irresistibly to the listeners both the mood and movement of the waltz, and to force them to feel, as far as may be, the elastic swing of the rhythm and the warm, voluptuous mood of the music. The tone quality employed should constantly change to suit the contrasting colors of the different strains; now warmly lyric, now sparkling and vibrant, at times deeply somber, and again strikingly dramatic and declamatory.

As to tempo, I would caution the player against an extreme rate of speed. Remember that the usual waltz step is, approximately at least, our guide in choosing the proper movement. I am aware that many pianists, of the greatest skill and reputation, are guilty of the cardinal error of playing one of these beautiful poetic little compositions of Chopin's at *prestissimo* tempo, so as to display their phenomenal finger dexterity at the expense of all musical and artistic truth; so fast, indeed, that even if the notes were all struck with accuracy, which is by no means always the case, its graceful rhythmic swing and all its melodic and harmonic effects are utterly lost, leaving nothing but an incoherent, formless, purposeless whirlwind of tone, as dry and unlovely as the eddies of dust in a September gale, suggesting neither the mood nor movement of a waltz.

Chopin’s Nocturnes

In derivation and general significance the term nocturne coincides with our English word nocturnal. It is music appertaining to the night, a night piece, suited to and expressing its usually quiet, dreamful, pensive mood, and frequently portraying some nocturnal scene or episode. The name nocturne was originally used as synonymous with that of serenade, and they were virtually identical in character. But in later times it has come to have a much broader application, and to-day, though every serenade is of course a nocturne, all nocturnes are by no means serenades.

The serenade is a real or imaginary song of love, and presupposes a fair listener at a lattice window and a lover singing beneath the stars, to the accompaniment of a harp, mandolin, or guitar. The nocturne may legitimately embody any phase of human emotion or experience, or any aspect of inanimate nature, which can rationally be conceived of as appropriately emanating from or environed by nocturnal conditions.

It must not be supposed that this vein of composition was Chopin’s only or even his most important field of activity. To judge him exclusively by his nocturnes and waltzes is precisely like judging Shakespeare solely by his sonnets. But it was a vein in which, owing to his peculiarly poetic temperament and fertile imagination, he far excelled all other writers, no less in the quality than in the number and variety of his creations.

Chopin: Nocturne in E Flat, Op. 9, No. 2

This perhaps is the easiest and certainly the best known of Chopin’s nocturnes. Scarcely a student but has played it at one time or another. In fact, it has been worn well-nigh to shreds; yet still retains its simple, tender charm, if approached in the proper spirit. It is replete with melodic beauty and warm harmonic coloring, and is an excellent study in tone-production and shading, as well as a model of symmetrical form. It was one of his early works, and the glow of first youth still lingers about it, in spite of its over-familiarity and much abuse. As a teaching-piece it sometimes surprises the weary teacher with a waft of unexpected freshness, like the fleeting odor from an old and much-used school-book in which violets have been pressed.

It is a pure lyric, a love-song without words, but to which a dreamily tender poetic text can easily be imagined and supplied; and the very evident suggestion of the harp or guitar in its accompanying chords facilitates the effort and brightens the poetic effect. So far as I can learn, it has no definite local background, either in fact or tradition; no special place or persons to which it refers. It is an abstract idea treated subjectively, the embodied emotional reflex of imaginary conditions. The scene is a garden—any garden, so it be beautiful, rich with the vivid luxuriance of the South, fragrant with the breath of sleeping flowers, with the South summer-night hanging fondly over it, and the summer stars glittering above. The melody is the song of the ideal troubadour, pouring out his heart to the night and his listening lady, while the accompanying chords are lightly swept from vibrant strings by the practised fingers of the minstrel. The cadenza at the close is intended as a mere delicate ripple of liquid brilliancy, as if the moon, suddenly breaking through a veil of evening mist, had flooded the scene with a rain of silvery radiance.

Chopin: Nocturne, Op. 27, No. 2

This nocturne, though one of Chopin's most intrinsically beautiful compositions for the piano, is even more frequently heard upon the violin. It has been, for decades, a favorite lyric number with all the leading violinists of the world, and adapts itself admirably to the resources and peculiar character of this instrument.

For this there is an excellent reason, far other than mere chance. On a certain evening in the early thirties were assembled in an elegant Parisian salon a company of the musical and literary *élite* of the French capital, to meet several foreign celebrities and enjoy one of those rare opportunities for intellectual and artistic converse and companionship, of which we read with envious longing, but which are practically unknown in our busy, prosaic age.

There were present Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn, the latter then in Paris on a brief visit, besides many local musicians of note, including some of the professors of the Conservatoire, also George Sand, Heinrich Heine, Alfred De Musset, with some lesser literary lights, and a brilliant gathering of social leaders. It was an evening long to be remembered for the sparkling wit and repartee, flashed back and forth from these brilliant intellects, like the rays of light from the glittering jewels of the ladies, for the occasional bursts of glowing eloquence and poetic thought from the profounder minds, and especially for the music, which was plentiful and of the best.

It may have been on this very occasion that Rossini made his famous, but most unfriendly, hit at the expense of Liszt's marvelous powers of improvisation, which he, Rossini, was inclined seemingly to doubt. Liszt was being pressed to play and to improvise, and Rossini called out across the room: "Yes, my friend, do improvise that beautiful thing that you improvised at Madam —'s last Friday, and at Lord So and So's the week before."

In the course of the evening a local violinist of prominence played for the company a new composition of his own, a sweet, long-sustained cantilena, with a more involved second movement in double stopping. When he had finished and the applause had subsided, one of the ladies was heard to remark, "What a pity that the piano is incapable of these effects! It is brilliant, dramatic, resourceful, what you will; but only the violin can stir the heart in that way."

Chopin rose, bowing with one of his equivocal smiles, half-sad, half-playfully mocking, stepped to the piano and improvised this nocturne, a perfect reproduction of all the best violin effects, cantilena and all, including the double-stopping in the second theme, with a certain warmth and poetry added, which were all his own. Of course, it was afterward finished and perfected in detail, but in substance it was the same as the D flat nocturne which we all know so well and which the violinists, though most of them unconscious of the reason, have singled out as specially adapted to their instrument.

The player should keep the violin and its effects in mind in rendering it, the lingering, songful, string quality of tone in the melody, the smooth legato, the leisurely, well-rounded embellishments; and the tempo should never be hurried. It may be well to say, in this connection, that in these Chopin nocturnes, and in all other lyric compositions, the embellishments, grace-notes, and the like should be made to conform to the general mood and character of the rest of the music. Symmetry and fitting proportions are among the primal laws of all art.

In a Liszt rhapsody, a cadenza should flash like a rocket, but in a Chopin nocturne it should glide with easy, undulating grace, should float like a wind-blown ribbon, a fallen rose-leaf. Too often we hear the ornamental passages in a lyric played as if they were wholly irrelevant matter, dropped in there by accident out of some other entirely different compositions,—a bit of vain, noisy display in the midst of a poetic dream, breaking instead of enhancing its charm, utterly incongruous. Harmonize the embellishments with the subject! Fit the trimming to the fabric!

Chopin: Nocturne, Op. 32, No. 1

Although technically easy and thoroughly musical, this little work is strangely enough but little played. It is technically no harder than the Op. 9 referred to, though it requires more intensity and stronger contrasts in its treatment.

It is singular that a comparatively simple composition, of such intrinsic merit, by one of the great composers, comprising, as it does, so many attractive elements in such small compass, should be so little used. Possibly, to those not acquainted with its subject, the closing chords, with their sharp, almost painful contrast, and utter dissimilarity to the preceding movement, have seemed incongruous and unintelligible; but, when the theme and purpose of the whole are understood, it is seen in what a masterly manner, and with what simple material, Chopin has produced the most striking dramatic results.

The subject of this nocturne is the same as that of Robert Browning's later poem, "In a Gondola"; an episode to be found in the annals of Venice, when, at the height of her pride and power, she was nominally a republic, but from the large legislative body elected exclusively from among the nobility, an inner, higher circle of forty was chosen, and they, in turn, selected from their number, by secret ballot, the mysterious, potent Council of Ten, gruesomely famous in history, who wielded the real power of the State, often for the darkest personal ends, the Doge being little more than a figure-head. Highest and most dreaded of all was the Council of Three, chosen from their own number by the Ten, by an ingenious system of secret ballot so perfect that only those selected knew on whom the choice had fallen, and they did not know each other's identity. They met at night, in a secret chamber, in which the three tables and three chairs, and even the blocks of marble in the pavement of the floor were symbolically triangular. They entered at the fixed hour, by three separate doors, disguised in black masks and long black cloaks, conferred in whispers only, and their decrees, like those of the Greek Fates, were inexorable and inevitable. Veiled and shielded by mystery, they worked their awful will, from which there was no escape and no appeal.

The story runs that once a beautiful and high-spirited heiress, the daughter of a former Doge, and the special ward of the Council of Three, as the disposal of her hand and fortune was an important State matter, had the courage to brave their prohibition and secretly to welcome the suit and return the love of a young, gallant, but fortuneless knight, who risked his life to obtain their brief, stolen interviews, or to breathe his love in subdued but heart-stirring melody beneath her window. One night, when a great ball at the palace seemed to afford an opportunity for her to escape unnoticed, he came disguised as a gondolier, and for a few sweet moments they were alone together upon the moonlit water.

The first theme of this nocturne suggests the scene in the gondola, with its softly swaying motion as it feels the faint swell of the great sea's distant heart-throb, while the melodic phrases embody the tender mood of the lovers as if in a sweet, low song. Browning expresses the mood in his opening lines:

> "I send my heart up to thee, all my heart,
> In this my singing;
> For the stars help me and the sea bears part;
> The very night is clinging
> Closer to Venice's streets to leave one space
> Above me, whence thy face
> May light my joyous heart to thee, its dwelling-place."

The second theme is somewhat more intense, though still subdued. It tells of greater passion and also of deeper sadness, with an occasional passing thrill of suppressed terror. Browning sings it:

> "O which were best, to roam or rest?
> The land's lap or the water's breast?
> To sleep on yellow millet sheaves,
> Or swim in lucid shadows, just
> Eluding water-lily leaves.
> An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
> To lock you, whom release he must;
> Which life were best on summer eves?"

To which the lady answers:

> "Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow deep,
> As I do; thus; were death so unlike sleep,
> Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
> Or poison, doubtless; but from water—feel!"

The last measures of the lyric melody, full of lingering sweetness, are like the parting kiss. Then suddenly, brutally, with the G major chord against the crashing F's in the bass, the voice of fate breaks the tender spell. Death enters with swift, heart-crushing tread, and his icy hand snatches his victim from the very arms of love; and the closing chords, brief, but impressive, voice the shock, the cry of anguish, and the swift sinking into black despair, which were the lady's more bitter share in the tragedy. For too soon the time had passed. Their brief happiness had been saddened and softened to deeper, graver tenderness by the knowledge of impending danger, by the ever-recurrent cloud like the passing thought that Browning voices in the line:

> "What if the Three should catch at last thy serenader?"

They must return or be detected. Reluctantly he guides the boat back to the landing, and just in the moment of their farewell he is surprised, overpowered, and stabbed to death by waiting assassins, dying in her arms.

The closing of the nocturne as just described is, to my thinking, more dramatic, more realistic, and far stronger than the last lines of Browning's poem:

> "It was ordained to be so, sweet! and best
> Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
> Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
> Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
> My blood will hurt! The Three I do not scorn
> To death, because they never lived; but I
> Have lived, indeed, and so (yet one more kiss) can die."

Chopin: Nocturne, Op. 37, No. 1

Opus 37, No. 1, in G minor, was written during Chopin's winter sojourn on the island of Majorca already described. On this occasion also the composer had been left alone to occupy himself with his piano, while his more active friends went for a sail on the bay. The sun had disappeared behind a western bank of cloud. The evening shadows were fast closing around him, filling with gloom and mystery the distant recesses of the vast, irregular apartment where he sat, and the columned cloister beyond, which led from the ruined refectory of the monastery to the chapel where the priests and abbots of ten centuries lay entombed. The ruins of a dead past were on every side. The silent presence of Death seemed all about him. He felt that, like the day, his life was swiftly declining, and the mood of the place and the hour was strong upon him. It found utterance in the sorrowfully beautiful, passionately pathetic first melody of this nocturne, with its falling minor phrases, like the cry of a deep but suppressed despair, and its somber, sobbing accompaniment, like the muffled moan of the surf on the adjacent beach. A precisely similar mood is powerfully expressed in Tennyson's poem "Break, break, break," especially in the closing lines,

> "But the tender grace of a day that is dead
> Will never come back to me."

Suddenly, in the midst of his melancholy reveries, Chopin was seized by one of those deceptive visions, so frequent at that time. The shadowy forms of a procession of dead monks seemed to emerge from beneath the obscure arches of the refectory, in a slow funeral march along the cloister behind him to the chapel, where their evening services were formerly held, solemnly chanting as they passed their *Santo Dio*. This impressive chant, as if sung by a chorus of subdued male voices, is realistically reproduced in the middle movement of the nocturne. The very words *Santo Dio* are distinctly suggested by each little phrase of four consecutive chords.

When the monks have vanished, and their voices have died away in the distance beneath the echoing vault of the chapel, Chopin recovers himself with a shudder and resumes his sad dreaming, symbolized by a return of the first melody. But just at its close the sun sinks below the western bank, its last rays gleam for a moment on the white sail of the boat just rounding up to the landing. His friends return. His lonely brooding is cheerfully interrupted. His mood brightens and the nocturne ends with an exquisite transition to the major key.

The player should strive in this work for a somber intensity of tone, and should render each phrase of the melody as if the pain expressed were his own, making the undertone of the sobbing sea distinctly apparent in the accompanying chords. In the middle movement, where the monks' chant is introduced, the imitation of a muffled chorus of male voices should be made deceptively realistic. All the notes of each chord must be pressed, not struck, with a firm but elastic touch, and exactly simultaneously; and each little quadruplet of chords must rise and fall in power, so accented as to enunciate the words *Santo Dio*. This is at once the saddest, the deepest, and the most descriptive, while technically the easiest, of all the Chopin nocturnes.

Chopin: Nocturne, Op. 37, No. 2

Graceful, tender, and cheerful is the general tone of the Nocturne in G major. It was written the following summer after Chopin's return to France, during a visit of some weeks at Nohant, the beautiful country seat of George Sand, where in the midst of a smiling rural landscape, bright and winning, rather than awe-inspiring, breathing the mild but invigorating air of his beloved France, surrounded by cheerful and congenial companions and by every possible physical comfort, our composer's health and spirits temporarily revived. To this epoch, brief as it was, we owe some of his most genial and attractive compositions.

Again it is evening and Chopin is alone, but this time it is in his own familiar, cozy room, where the perfect appointments and tasteful arrangement tell of loving feminine hands, glad to minister to every fancy of his delicately fastidious nature. The scent of flowers floats in through the open window, and mingled with it the low voices of friends in the garden below. He watches the play of lights and shadows among the swaying branches of a tall, graceful willow tree just outside his casement, the vaguely outlined, fleecy, floating gray clouds, ghosts of dead storms, silently passing on into the infinite unknown spaces of the sky. He listens to the night wind sighing among the tree-tops, to the good-nights of sleepy birds, to the vesper bell of a distant village, and embodies his dreamy impressions in the first movement of this nocturne, with its wavering, undulating murmurous effects, and its faint, intermittent melodic suggestions, like the half-remembered music of a dream.

The second movement, twice alternating with the first, though in different keys, is distinctly a slumber song in rhythm and mood, a restful, gentle, soothing lullaby to the composer's own weary heart, to his momentarily slumbering griefs, and forebodings; peaceful, tender, pensively sad at times, but entirely free from that ultra-bitterness and gloom which color most of his later works. His Polish biographer calls this the most beautiful melody Chopin ever wrote, and it reminds us strongly of Tennyson's lines in the same mood:

> "There is sweet music here that softer falls
> Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
> Or night-dews on still waters between walls
> Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
> Music that gentler on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes."

An extremely light but fluent legato touch, and an ethereal delicacy and grace of conception are demanded for the first movement, and the ever-present curve of beauty should be indicated in each little passage of three measures. Let the player imagine a brightly tinted feather ball, tossed lightly into the air and fluttering softly and slowly to earth again.

For the second movement, a singing lyric tone, a subdued warmth of color, and a steady, reposeful, rocking rhythm are a necessity, and the lullaby mood should be kept in mind.

LISZT

1811 1886

Chopin’s Polish Songs, Transcribed for Piano by Liszt

Six of these songs, transcribed for piano, with all Liszt’s wonted skill, render this charming vein of Chopin’s work available to the pianist. I cite two as illustrations:

These Polish songs by Chopin are, comparatively speaking, unknown, even among musicians, overshadowed and hidden as they have always been by the number and magnitude of his pianoforte works, like wood-violets lost in the depths of a forest. Yet, though small and unpretentious as the violets, they are among his most genial and poetic creations. Seventeen of them have been published, as genuine bits of vocal melody as ever were penned or sung; and there are many more which have never been printed, scarcely even written out in full; hasty pastime sketches, the fair daughters of a momentary inspiration, wedded to stray verses of Polish poetry which caught Chopin’s fancy, from the pen of Mickiewicz and other national bards.

The Maiden’s Wish

“The Maiden’s Wish,” the first of the two songs presented, is one of the earliest and most popular, so far as known; a dainty, capricious little mazurka song, half playful, half tender. The words embody the fond wish of a merry, winsome maiden, whose life is touched to seriousness by the shadow of first love upon her pathway, the wish that she were a sunbeam to leave the high vault of Heaven and desert the flowers and streams of earth to shine through her lover’s window and gladden him alone; or that she were a bird to leave the fields and forests and fly on swift pinions to his window at early dawn and wake him with a song of love.

The music accurately and closely reproduces the spirit of the words, in all their warmth, archness, and grace. The short but continually recurring trill, “ever on the self-same note,” in prelude and interlude, suggests the thrill which the maiden feels at heart as she flits singing about the house and garden, unconsciously keeping step to the rhythm of the mazurka, the native dance of her province.

The Ring

The second song selected resembles in form the ordinary folk-song, with its single, reiterated musical strophe, and also in its simplicity, its fresh, unaffected sincerity of mood. But it shows far more perfect workmanship, and is of a much more refined and poetic quality. It is plaintively sad, tenderly pathetic in every phrase, a pale, delicate blossom of sentiment, dropped upon the grave of youth and first love. It describes the early betrothal of a youth, full of faith, hope, and happiness, to his playmate and child-love. On departing into strange lands, the youth gives the maiden a ring and she gives him in exchange a promise to become his bride on his return. After years of weary wandering, during which his heart has been ever faithful to his early love, he returns to find she has forgotten ring and promise and lover. But in spite of her perfidy and the hopelessness of his attachment, his constant thoughts cling ever to the little ring he gave and the little playmate with her childish grace and garb. A very old story and a very simple one, but none the less sad for that.

In addition to its intrinsic charm and artistic merit this little composition possesses a personal interest in its subtle reference to Chopin’s own experience. The great tone-poet knew a love other and earlier than that destructive passion for George Sand which blasted his life and broke his heart. But his beloved Constantia, to whom he was betrothed before leaving Poland, at twenty years of age, to seek his fortune in the great world, forgot her plighted vows and the little ring he gave as their visible token, and married another; and it is the composer’s own grieved and disappointed heart that speaks in this tenderly beautiful song, saddened by the first of the many swiftly gathering clouds which obscured the brightness of his sunny youth, and in a few short years rendered the name of Chopin synonymous to his friends with grief and suffering.

The Poetic and Religious Harmonies by Franz Liszt

Liszt's reputation in this country as a pianoforte composer has hitherto rested, in the main, upon his brilliant and popular operatic fantasies, a few of his études, and his unique and world-famous Hungarian rhapsodies; all of which, though effective and by no means to be despised, are, after all, only the bright bubbles tossed off in playful mood from the surface of his genius, like the globules that rise from the sparkling champagne.

That there is a deeper, more serious, and far more important vein of strictly original work of his, which has as yet scarcely been discovered, still less exploited, few persons, even among the musicians themselves, seem to be aware. Of course, in the large cities, his orchestral works—that is to say, some of them—have been occasionally given and his concertos have become fairly well known; but elsewhere he is chiefly known as the leading manufacturer of musical pyrotechnics, the inventor of the best pianistic sky-rockets and the best articles in tonal thunder and lightning thus far put upon the world's market. But the fact is that his future fame as a creative musician is destined to stand upon a much firmer and more lasting basis—namely, that of the original work referred to; and I believe in a much higher niche in the temple of art than it at present occupies.

Among these original works, and forming an important and distinct division of them, peculiar to itself both in form and subject matter, the "Poetic and Religious Harmonies" claim our attention. These were written under rather singular circumstances.

All through his life, from early boyhood, Liszt was subject to occasional moods of intense religious fervor,—devotional paroxysms, one might almost call them,—sweeping over him like a tidal wave, submerging, for the time, all other thoughts and impulses, and then receding, to leave him about where they found him. Their transitory and spasmodic nature has led many to believe that they were not real, but assumed, simulated hypocritically for effect, or for a purpose; as, for example, to escape the importunate claims of his several mistresses.

But those who knew him best are inclined to make allowance for his impulsive, erratic, unbalanced temperament, his undeveloped oriental nature, half barbaric in spite of its immense and manifold powers, and to concede that, while they lasted, they were very genuine and very profound. Under this impelling force he was several times on the point of giving up his worldly career and devoting himself to a monastic life, and was only restrained by the efforts of his many friends and admirers.

In 1856 came the last and most enduring of these impulses, and, in obedience to it, he abandoned his life as a concert artist, which, for phenomenal success, has never had a parallel before or since, retired into rigorous seclusion in the Vatican at Rome, where he was the guest and pupil of the Pope himself, and devoted nearly five consecutive years to religious study and contemplation, receiving the title of Abbé in the Catholic Church, which he retained till his death, and writing a considerable number of compositions, all of a distinctively religious character, all based upon religious themes, either incidents narrated in the Scriptures, or in the lives of the saints, or subjective experiences connected with his own spiritual life and development.

Among these, his great "Legend of St. Elizabeth" is preëminent, and this series of nine poetic and religious harmonies; each a complete composition, having no connection with the others except in its general character, bearing a special title indicating its nature and subject. Some of them are of very great musical worth and importance, and are among his best productions, notably, the No. 3, Book 2, entitled "The Benediction of God in the Solitude." It is one of the subjective, emotional compositions referred to, giving us a glimpse into the heart life of the composer during this epoch of profound and intense religious experience.

It opens with a subdued but strongly emotional, 'cello-like theme in the left hand, expressing the first discontent and vague longings of a soul whose best aspirations and highest needs have found no real satisfaction in worldly things, yet which has no certain grasp, no safe reliance on any life beyond and above the present; a soul adrift on the dark ocean of doubt and skepticism, with no guiding star of hope, no beacon-light of promise, not even the compass of faith in things unseen by which to shape its course. This mood grows steadily in intensity, through the successive stages of unrest, agitation, distress, despair, to an overpowering climax. Then it is followed by a short, quiet movement in D major, literally imitating the tranquil strain of the organ and the distant sound of cathedral bells; thus symbolizing the promises and proffered consolations of the Church; then a period of grave pondering, of thoughtful examination and introspection, and then the first theme repeats, but with less vehement treatment, in a gentle though still agitated mood, like a recapitulation of his former state from a newly acquired standpoint, a softened memory of the old, stormy, desperate mood.

The work closes with a tranquil, flowing movement, a complete inundation of the spirit by a flood of that "peace which passeth understanding," the benediction of God in the solitude. He has found, as he believes, safety, rest, and reconciliation with divine law and will. This closing strain, in its reposeful happiness, forms a fitting and most beautiful ending to this serious, ideally suggestive composition.

Other numbers of this set are almost equally interesting, but I have not space for more of them. This one will serve as a good example, and I may add that it was regarded by Liszt himself as the best of his piano compositions.

A little French poem from Liszt's own pen, which stands as motto at the head of this music, sums up its significance. I append a nearly literal translation.

> "Whence comes, O my God, this sweet peace that surrounds
> My glad heart? And this faith that within me abounds?
> To me who, uncertain, in anguish of mind,
> On an ocean of doubt tossed about by each wind,
> Was seeking for truth in the dreams of the sage,

And for peace, among hearts that were chafing with rage.
A sudden—there flashed on my soul from above
A vision of glorified heavenly love;
It seemed that an age and a world passed away
And I rise, a new man, to enjoy a new day.”

Liszt’s Ballades

While speaking of Liszt’s original compositions, we must not omit his two ballades, which, though musically a little disappointing, are works of considerable magnitude and marked individuality, and possess no small degree of descriptive interest. They are in the same general form and vein as the Chopin ballades, and were evidently suggested by them, though they cannot be compared with them either for beauty or for strength.

First Ballade

The first, in B minor, is decidedly the more vigorous of the two, and the more difficult. It is based upon the pathetically tragic story of the Prisoner of Chillon, so ably told in Byron’s poem, which the player should read with care, so as to familiarize himself thoroughly with its incidents and moods. The poem tells of that nameless captive chained for life to a pillar in a rock-hewn dungeon beneath the castle of Chillon, on Lake Leman, below the surface of the lake, so that he listens day and night to the dull thunder or mournful murmur of the changeful waves above his head, as his only indication of the shifting moods of Nature in the living world, her passing smiles and storms, her slowly circling seasons as they come and go.

> “A double dungeon, wall and wave
> Have made—and like a living grave.
> Below the surface of the lake
> The dark vault lies, wherein we lay:
> We heard its ripple night and day,
> Sounding o’er our heads it knocked,
> And then the very rock hath rocked,
> And I have felt it shake unshocked:
> Because I could have smiled to see
> The death that would have set me free.”

Years drag themselves out to eternities. One by one his few companions die of cold and hunger, leaving him alone in that living tomb, with his endless, changeless, unutterable misery.

> “I had no thought, no feeling—none.
> Among the stones I stood a stone.
> It was not night, it was not day,
> For all was blank and bleak and gray:
> A sea of stagnant idleness,
> Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless.”

His only gleam of comfort were the occasional visits of an azure-winged bird that came now and then and perched on the window ledge outside his dungeon bars, a fair and gentle companion symbolizing for him all the beauty and tenderness and sweetness in the life he has lost; and on which he comes to concentrate the love and interest of his famished heart.

> “A lovely bird with azure wings,
> And song that said a thousand things,
> And seemed to say them all to me!
> I never saw the like before,
> I ne’er shall see its likeness more:
> It seemed, like me, to want a mate,
> But was not half so desolate;
> And it was come to love me, when
> None lived to love me so again.”

The opening movement of the ballade, representing the thunder of the waves reverberating through the gloom of that cavern-like cell, and the later lyric, which might be called the bird theme, suggesting his tender communing with his little friend, are the best movements in the work. The details of the story are not carried out, but its outlines, and especially its moods, are clearly given.

Second Ballade

The second ballade, in D flat major, is more melodious and attractive, but less strong. It is dedicated to Liszt’s life-long friend and powerful patron, the Duke of Weimar, and, out of compliment to him, treats of an episode in the Duke’s family history, back in the days of the second Crusade.

A young and gallant chief of the house of Weimar stands in the rosy light of early dawn, on the highest turret of his castle, with his newly wedded bride, taking a long farewell of her and of their fair domain, for at sunrise he leads his knights and men-at-arms to the crusade, and the return is years distant and uncertain. Their mood is full of sadness and yet of a strong, religious exultation and trust. His mission is a grand and glorious one. Heaven will surely guide and protect its faithful knights, and his lady bids him Godspeed, though with tearful eyes. From the castle court below, sounds of gathering troops and martial preparation rise to their ears, at first faintly, then with growing din and clamor, till a burst of trumpets greets the rising sun; the gates are flung open and, hastily descending, he takes his place at the head of his forces and they march away to the strains of inspiriting military music. The lady still stands alone on her turret, waving her greetings—stands there, as he

sees her last, flooded with the glory of the morning, an embodiment of love and hope and promise—a vision to haunt his waking dreams in far-away Palestine, to cheer his lonely camp-fire vigils and lead him to victory on the field of action.

As she still stands dreamily watching the last gleam of the spear-points, the last flutter of the receding banners, the sanguine fancy of youth leaps the intervening years, and she thinks she hears the strains of the martial music at the head of the returning army coming in triumph back from a successful campaign.

The successive moments in the story above sketched are given with realistic distinctness in the music, and can be followed without difficulty.

Transcriptions for the Piano by Franz Liszt

The peculiar aptitude required for successfully rewriting a song or orchestral composition for the piano, so that it shall become, not a mere bald, literal reproduction of the melodies and harmonies, as in most of the piano-scores of the opera, interesting only to students, but a complete and effective art-work for this instrument, may be a lower order of genius than the original creative faculty, but is certainly more rare and almost as valuable to the musical world. It demands, first, a clear, discriminating perception of the essential musical and dramatic elements of the original work, in their relative proportions and degrees of importance, distinct from the merely idiomatic details of their setting; second, a supreme knowledge of the resources and limitations of the new medium of expression, so as at once to preserve unimpaired the peculiar character and primal force of the original composition, and to make it sound as if expressly written for the piano. It is one thing to write out the notes of an orchestral score so that they are, in the main, playable by a single performer on the piano; but it is quite another thing to readjust all the effects to pianistic possibilities, so as to produce in full measure the intended artistic impression. There is practically the same difference as in poetic translation between the rough, verbal rendering of a Latin exercise by a school-boy, and the finished, artistic English version of a poem from some foreign tongue, by a gifted and scholarly writer like Longfellow.

Whatever may be thought or said of Liszt as an original composer, in his piano transcriptions he has never had an equal, scarcely even a would-be competitor. His work in this line is of inestimable importance to the pianist, both as student and public performer, and forms a rich and extensive department of piano literature. Think what a gap would be left in any artist's repertoire if Liszt's transcriptions, including the rhapsodies, were struck out of it; for the rhapsodies are only transcriptions of gipsy music. Practically all of Wagner's music that is available for the pianist he owes to Liszt's able intermediation. True, Brassin has done some commendable work in his settings of fragments from the Nibelungen operas, but of these the "Magic Fire" music is the only really usable number; and this, though playable and attractive from its own intrinsic merits, is hardly satisfactory, either as a genuinely pianistic setting or as a reproduction of the artistic effects of the original. One feels that it is an interesting attempt, not a complete success; and the "Ride of the Walkyrie," which ought to be the most effective of all the Wagner numbers for piano, is wholly unusable for concert purposes. One is practically restricted to Liszt in this direction, but finds in him a mine of highly finished, admirably set gems, accessible, though technically not easy to appropriate.

Wagner-Liszt: Spinning Song, from the "Flying Dutchman"

Take, for example, the familiar and ever-enjoyable "Spinning Song" from the "Flying Dutchman," definite and symmetrical in form, perfect in every detail as a piano composition, eminently playable and pianistic, yet preserving the original dramatic intention with absolute completeness and integrity. Those who are familiar with the opera will need no explanation of its contents; but for the many piano students who are not, I give a brief synopsis of the scene of which this music is at once an accompaniment and a picture; for Wagner's music is all intended to intensify, by reduplicating in tone, scenes and moods represented on the stage.

A little company of village maidens, in a seaport town in Holland, is assembled of a winter evening to spin. It is to be a semi-social, semi-useful gathering, much like the old quilting parties of our grandmothers' time, and they are all in the best of spirits. They start the wheels, but something is wrong apparently; the thread breaks or tangles, and two or three times they are obliged to stop, wait a moment, and recommence, till finally the buzz and hum of the swift-rolling wheels become continuous. This orchestral imitation of the spinning-wheel is a piece of very graphic realism, and in the piano arrangement is given almost equally well in the left-hand accompaniment, while the right hand carries in chords the chorus of the spinning maidens, as they sing at their work, a bright, joyous, rhythmical song, full of gaiety and wit, as shown by an occasional interruption by a burst of merry laughter.

In the very midst of their jollity they are startled into an abrupt silence by the ominous sound of a single horn close by, and they suspend their work to listen. The horn rings out, clear and strong, a peculiar impressive signal, which they know and dread as that of the "Flying Dutchman," the terror of those shores, the fated commander of a phantom ship, manned by a specter crew, who sails the northern seas eternally, in winter storm and summer fog, condemned forever to this ghastly isolation from his living fellow-men, and striking terror to the hearts of all the simple fisher-folk, whenever the dim outlines of his ship are seen in the misty offing; and especially when his signal horn is heard; for it is known that he does sometimes land. His only possible chance of escape from the awful curse upon him is that once in a hundred years he is permitted to spend a few brief days on shore and mingle with his kind, and if, during that short period, he can win the love of any true maiden so completely that she will voluntarily give her life for him, then the curse is ended and both may rise to the realms of the blessed together. It is a grand opportunity for generous self-sacrifice on the part of some noble girl; but naturally all shrink from it, and are panic-stricken at his approach.

But the horn dies away. Echo repeats the notes and drops them. All is still. They think he is merely passing, as he often does, and has no intention of landing here at present. So, after a little timid hesitation, they resume their work and their song, become as hilarious as before, even more so, going off at last into a perfect gale of laughter, in the midst of which the horn sounds again; this time nearer, louder, more importunate. Surely he is about to land, perhaps is already on shore and approaching; and then there is a frenzy of panic; work is flung aside, wheels are overturned in the confusion, and the girls scatter in mad terror in all directions; and with this flight the scene closes, and this transcription for the piano ends.

I will add, however, for the completion of the story, that one of the girls, the heroine, her woman's heart touched to pity by the awful destiny of the curse-laden commander, remains, half in eagerness, half in fear, to

meet him at his entrance and to become the willing sacrifice for his redemption.

The keynote of the whole opera is found in that sublimest of all facts—human love triumphant over fate.

With this story in mind, even those quite unfamiliar with the music cannot fail to recognize and follow the successive details of the scene described: the whir and hum of the spinning-wheels, the chorus of singing maidens, the entrance of the signal horn, with its echo and the terror that follows; the repetition of these incidents in growing climax, and the mad confusion and scamper at the close.

Wagner-Liszt: Tannhäuser March

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Liszt's brilliant transcription of this fragment of the *Tannhäuser* music is another of the most popular and grateful Wagner numbers for the piano. It must not be confounded with the "March of the Pilgrims," or, more properly, the "Pilgrim's Chorus," as it often is by those not familiar with the opera. The latter, a chorus of fervently devout pilgrims departing for the Holy Land, is solemn, inspiring, but somber in character, while the march is brilliantly festive in tone, gorgeous in coloring, pompously magnificent in its martial rhythms, its rich major harmonies and its ringing trumpet themes. It appropriately accompanies the entrance of a long and splendidly appareled procession of guests into the old castle known as the *Wacht Burg*, a famous feudal stronghold in Thuringia during the middle ages. They have assembled in holiday mood and attire to witness one of those prize contests in singing—a sort of musical tournament between the leading Minnesingers of the time, frequently held at the castles of the powerful German nobles of that period. The word *Minne* is an old German, poetic synonym for *Liebe*, or love. Hence the Minnesinger was a minstrel whose avowed theme was love.

It was a gala occasion. Excitement and anticipation ran high, for some of the most celebrated names of the time were on the list of competitors. All had their favorites, to whom they were disposed to accord the victory in advance, and all came in the expectation, not only of a rich musical feast, but of a close and sharply contested combat of genius, for the honors of the day. The opening trumpet signal announces that the castle gates are 209
thrown open, and summons the guests to form in marching order, and then the glittering ranks move forward to the rhythmically cadenced measures of the march music. Gallant knights in glistening armor, the pride of race and martial glory in mien and carriage, stately dames in silk and jewels, fair maidens sweet as the blossoms they wear, and old men in the dignity of years and proven wisdom—all are there and are faithfully mirrored in the music as they pass before us. There is an imposing pomp and gorgeous splendor about it; a little wearying, it may be, after a time, but certainly never equaled, if approached, by any other composition, and absolutely in keeping with the mood and setting of the scene. The tempo should be very moderate, the rhythm marked and steady, the contrasts distinct, and the tone, for the most part, full and brilliant, but never harsh.

Wagner-Liszt: Abendstern

Another selection from this same opera, this time in the lyric vein, which Liszt has effectively arranged for the piano, is the "Evening Star Romance," as it is often called. It is one of the songs of Wolfram, the leading baritone of the opera. The theme is love, and the opening line of the song, "O thou, my gracious evening star," clearly indicates the bard's intention. The love of which he sings is to be a modest, distant, respectful devotion, a pure adoration rather than a passionate desire. His lady-fair is to be his light, his guide, his inspiration to lofty 210
vows and noble deeds of chivalry. For her will he be all things, achieve all things, sacrifice all things, asking no reward but her smile of approbation. She is to be his divinity, not his bride; to be worshiped, not possessed.

The mood is one of glowing enthusiasm and ideal unselfishness, but subdued to a dreamy, half intensity, like sunlight through a fleece of summer clouds. The player should strive to produce in the melody the effects of a rich, mellow baritone voice, clearly, smoothly, musically modulated, warm, but never impassioned. The Minnesingers always accompany themselves upon the harp, and the harp effects used by Wagner in the orchestra have been retained, as a matter of course, by Liszt in the piano arrangement, and must be reproduced by the player with the utmost fidelity.

Wagner-Liszt: Isolde's Love Death

One of the most vividly interesting, to musicians, of all the Wagner-Liszt transcriptions, is the death scene from "Tristan und Isolde," known as "Isolde's Love Death." It is not a number easily grasped, or usually enjoyed by the general audience; and the elemental power and intensity of the passion it so forcefully expresses have been often criticized as morbid, unnatural, and exaggerated, by those, the mildly tempered milk-and-water of whose stormiest passions never exceed the moderate, decorous fury of a tempest in a tea-pot. But to those who can sympathize with and appreciate its irresistible, volcanic outburst of emotion, its overwhelming sweep of life- 211
rending anguish, it is one of the strongest, grandest lyric utterances in all the realm of music, thrilling and overpowering the heart to the degree of pain and terror.

It is a lyric in form, in treatment, and in subject-matter, dealing exclusively with emotion, not action, though its breadth of outline, its somber strength, and its passionate intensity give it a decidedly dramatic effect. Here is no pink-and-white pet of the modern drawing-room, grieving for her missing poodle, or another's failure to wear the most up-to-date tie; but a glorious primeval woman, with the fire of youth and plenty of good red blood in her veins, a goddess in the unreserved frankness of her feelings, the boundless strength of her devotion, sublime in the might of her passion and the majesty of her doom.

Her life is her love and must end with it. Her hero-lover, Tristan, lies beside her, dying of a mortal wound received in combat for love of her, however dishonorable in the world's eyes; and he is the more to be cherished because despised and hunted to his death by his king and former comrades for her sake. Further attempt at flight with him is hopeless. Fate and their foes are closing swiftly in around them. The end is inevitable. Their brief, wild dream of stolen happiness is over. The first black, crushing moment of despairing realization,

portrayed in the opening measures in sober chords, is followed by a strain of sweet, tender, but plaintive reminiscence of what love was to them and might have been. Then comes a long, steadily growing, tremendously impassioned climax of impotent protest, of desperate love, of vehement, heart-breaking sorrow, all mingled in one glowing lava stream of frenzied anguish, merging at last into a soft, half-delirious vision of reunion and happiness beyond the grave, in which her spirit takes its flight, to realms, we will hope, where hearts, not crowned heads, were the arbiters of her woman's destiny.

Those who have no sympathy with a really great passion which sweeps all before it, flinging the pretty policies and cut-and-dried conventions of life aside like straw in the path of a cataract, had better let this music alone. It is not for them either to feel or to render. It requires exceptional intensity of treatment, a broad, strong, yet flexible chord-technique, and an absolute mastery of the tonal resources of the piano.

Schubert-Liszt: Transcriptions

Some of Liszt's very best though earliest work in the line of pianoforte transcription was done in connection with the Schubert songs; most of it in the thirties. These songs were then first coming into prominence, and their markedly romantic and descriptive character appealed strongly to the dramatic instincts of this master of the piano, understanding and utilizing as no other writer ever had, the resources and possibilities of his instrument. Liszt adapted a large number of these songs to it, rendering them most effectively available as piano solos, selecting mainly those in which the character of the text and original music gave opportunity for suggestively realistic and descriptive treatment.

Der Erlkönig

Most famous and decidedly most dramatic of these is the "Erlkönig." All German students and most vocalists are familiar with the text of this song, which is its own best explanation; but the piano student may find a sketch of the story helpful. It is a legend of the Black Forest in Baden, brought to the world's notice by Goethe in one of his most dramatic and perfectly wrought ballads. This ballad Schubert set to music in a moment of highest inspiration; then, in the natural reaction and discouragement following such a supreme effort of genius, he threw the manuscript into the waste-basket as unsuccessful and impracticable. It was rescued a few hours later by a celebrated tenor of the day, who chanced to call, and accidentally discovering this gem among the torn papers, saved it to the world. Liszt recognized its immense possibilities as a piano number and gave the song an instrumental setting which is even more effective than the original vocal composition.

The story is briefly this. A horseman is riding homeward through the depths of the Black Forest at midnight in a raging tempest, bearing in his arms his little boy, wrapped safely against the storm, held close for warmth and safety. The "Erlkönig," or, as we should say, "Elf King," is abroad in the dark, storm-racked forest. He espies the boy, takes a freakish fancy to him, determines to possess the child, approaches softly, with coaxing and persuasion, offers flowers, playthings, pretty elf playmates, everything he can think of, to tempt the boy to leave his father, and come with him. But the little one is terrified, shrieks to his father for protection; and the father, while striving to quiet his fears, spurs onward at utmost speed, seeking in vain to distance the pursuing Elf King.

The composition is graphically descriptive and contains many varied, yet blended elements. The swift gallop of the horse over the broken ground is given in rapid triplets as a continuous accompaniment; the rush of the storm-wind through the moaning pine-tops, the roar of the thunder, the chill and gloom and terrors of the wild night, are forcefully depicted in the sweeping crescendos and somber harmonies of the left hand, while the three voices engaged in the flying, intermittent colloquy are rendered the more distinct and easy to follow, by being played in different and suitable registers; the father's voice in the baritone—grave, stern, impressive; the child's in the soprano—plaintive and pathetic; and the Elf King's high in the descant—sweet, seductive, persuasive, impossible to mistake. Three times this colloquy is renewed, with growing agitation, each time ending with the terrified shriek of the child, while the flight and pursuit continue with increasing speed, and the tempest grows apace. Finally the Elf King loses patience, throws off the mask of friendly gentleness, declares that if the child will not come willingly he shall use force, and tries to take him by violence. The child shrieks for the third time in an anguish of fear, for the touch of the elf is death to a mortal.

The father, now himself frantic with terror, spurs on madly for home, with the tempest crashing about him. He reaches his door at last and dismounts in fancied security, only to find the boy dead in his arms; and perhaps the most impressive moment of the whole composition is that at its suddenly subdued, solemnly mournful close, when he stands at the goal of his furious but futile race, and gazes, by the light of his own home fire, into the dead face of his child.

Hark! Hark! the Lark

Among the Schubert-Liszt transcriptions, the one which probably stands next to the "Erlkönig" in general popularity is the song "Hark! Hark! the Lark at Heaven's Gate Sings!" the words being the well-known, charming little matin song by Shakespeare which Schubert has set to music with all his infallible insight into their exact emotional import, and all his masterly command of musical resources, reproducing in the melody and its harmonic background the effect intended in every line of the text, filling every subtlest shade of feeling to a nicety, realizing once again that ideal union, that perfect marriage of words and music, so difficult and so rare with most song-writers, but which was a distinguishing characteristic of Schubert's work.

In his piano accompaniment Liszt has displayed even more than his usual skill in preserving all the intrinsic beauty and precise poetic significance of the original, besides giving to it an eminently pianistic form. The music is bright, buoyant, joyous as the summer morning, fresh as its breezes, light as its floating clouds, stirring our hearts with the revivifying call of a new day, breathing hope and happiness in every measure, while the airy rippling embellishments remind us of the exuberant song of the skylark, as he rises exultantly to meet the dawn, shaking the dew from his swift wings and pouring out the plenitude of his glad heart upon the awakening earth in a sparkling shower of music, like the bubbling overflow of some sky fountain of pure delight.

The player and listener will do well to have in mind Shelley's lines, describing the "clear, keen joyance" of that "scorner of the ground," the English skylark.

A striking contrast to the composition just described is afforded by the equally able but intensely mournful transcription entitled “Gretchen am Spinnrad.”

The text of this song is taken from Goethe’s “Faust.” It is the song of Marguerite, sitting at her wheel, in the gathering dusk of evening, spinning mechanically from the force of long habit, but with her thoughts engrossed by memories of her lost happiness, her ruined life, and blighted future. The mood is one of overwhelming melancholy, of crushing despair, whose dark depths are fitfully stirred from time to time by a rebellious surge of passionate but hopeless longing, as her heart throbs to some passing recollection of departed joys and love’s fateful delirium.

Her dashing but faithless lover, Faust, after winning and betraying her affection, robbing her of the innocence and tranquil happiness of girlhood, has abandoned her to face her bitter fate alone; and she moans in her solitary anguish:

> “My peace is gone, my heart oppressed,
> And never again will my soul find rest.”

The music perfectly voices the piteous sadness of her mood, with the occasional intermittent outbursts of passion; while the monotonous hum of the spinning-wheel, literally imitated in the accompaniment, as in every good spinning song, seems in this case to adapt itself to the song of the maiden, to harmonize with its sadness, to take on a corresponding melancholy, reflecting the emotions expressed in her voice and words, as a stream reflects the somber cloud that shadows it—a good illustration of that universal principle in art, which invests inanimate things with a fancied sympathy with human experiences. 218

Nothing could be more complete or perfectly appropriate than the musical treatment of this subject; but its unmitigated sadness probably prevents its becoming a popular favorite; and its extreme, though not at first apparent, difficulty places it beyond the reach of most amateur players.

Liszt: La Gondoliera

Like many of Liszt's contributions to piano literature, this dainty and most pleasing little work is not exclusively his own; that is, it is not an original melodic creation, but the admirably clever arrangement or setting of an old Venetian boat-song. The melody has been in existence for many decades, perhaps centuries, and may be heard by any one who visits Venice, as sung by the gondolier in time to the swing of his dextrously handled single oar. It is called "La Biondina in Gondoletta" ("the blond maid in a gondola"), and was originally composed by Pistrucci, to words by Peruchini, and harmonized later by Beethoven, in his folk-songs, entitled "Zwölf verschiedene Volkslieder."

It is a distinctly Italian melody, with no pretensions to great depth or dramatic intensity, but simple, tender, and sweet, winning rather than commanding—a lyric of the sensuously beautiful type, but not to be despised, as it is a spontaneous product of the sunny-tempered, warm-hearted children of the South. It contains no hint of the Venice of mystery, of secret cruelty, of world-wide powers, of the Council of the Ten, that masked midnight tribunal of former days; but breathes only of Venice the fair, in her moonlit beauty—of Venice, "the Bride of the Sea."

Liszt's setting gives us not only the melody enhanced by effective harmonic coloring and delicate embellishment, but a characteristic and picturesque background of accompaniment suggesting the scene, the mood, and the environment; the low murmur of the Adriatic, at the distant water-gate, pleading to be admitted to the presence of his Queen; the soft ripples stealing up the long winding canals, whispering their love secrets under the palaces of Juliette and Desdemona, and creeping fearfully beneath the Bridge of Sighs, and past the dreaded dungeons of the doges; the silvery moonlight gleaming upon marble frieze and column, and touching to soft brilliancy the fadeless tints of glass mosaic; the dip and sway of the graceful gondola as it glides on its silent way along those water streets between rows of stately buildings, every carved stone of which is alive with history or with some romantic legend.

All these are delicately yet graphically depicted, while the boatman's song rises and falls, seeming now near, now distant, as it is borne to us on the varying breath of the light sea-breeze. The whole picture is one of subdued evening tints, of half-disclosed, half-hinted outlines, with a pervading mood of dreamy fancy, of wistful tenderness. It seems to me one of Liszt's most perfect and ably sustained efforts in the purely lyric, yet suggestively descriptive vein.

At the close, the great, sonorous bell of St. Mark's Cathedral strikes midnight, its grave, deep-toned voice majestically commanding the attention. The F sharp here used to produce the bell effect, and at the same time serving as bass in a prolonged organ-point throughout the coda, is the actual keynote of the St. Mark's bell, ingeniously utilized for this double purpose. Meanwhile, the last notes of the song die away in the distance, and slumber, like a veil of mist floating in from the summer sea, envelops the city.

The Music of the Gipsies and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies

Liszt, in his able and unique but somewhat prolix work, entitled "The Bohemians and Their Music in Hungary," which, so far as I can learn, has never been translated into English, gives some most interesting information concerning these much-played and much-discussed Rhapsodies, their origin, character, and artistic importance, their relation to the national music of the gipsies and the racial peculiarities of this strange people, which I believe will be new to most readers.

I present here what seem to me the most valuable facts and ideas in Liszt's book in connection with these Rhapsodies, using, so far as possible, his own words translated from the French. I have used the word "gipsies" for "Bohemians" in the translation; this being the usual English name for the race, as "Bohemian" is the French.

It should be distinctly borne in mind that, contrary to the generally prevailing impression, these so-called Hungarian Rhapsodies are not in any sense derived from or founded upon national Hungarian music, or the national life and racial traits of the Hungarians. The floating fragments of wild, fantastic melody and strange, weird harmony which Liszt has gathered and utilized in this form, came neither from the Huns nor from the Magyars, whose blended tribes compose the present Hungarian race; but they are of purely gipsy origin. It is distinctly and characteristically gipsy music which Liszt has merely adapted to the piano. His reasons for calling these works Hungarian Rhapsodies he states as follows:

"In publishing a part of the material which we had the opportunity to collect during our long connection with the gipsies of Hungary, in transcribing it for the piano, as the instrument which could best render, in its entirety, the sentiment and the form of the gipsy art, it was necessary to select a generic name which should indicate the doubly national character which we attach to it.

"We have called the collection of these fragments 'Hungarian Rhapsodies.' By the word 'Rhapsody' we have wished to designate the fantastically epic element which we believe we recognize therein. Each of these productions has always seemed to us to form a part of a poetic series. These fragments narrate no facts, it is true; but 'those who have ears to hear' will recognize in them certain states of mind, in which are condensed the ideals of a nation. It may be a nation of Pariahs; but what difference does that make to art? Since they have experienced sentiments capable of being idealized, and have clothed them in a form of undisputed beauty, they have acquired the right to recognition in art.

"Furthermore, we have called these Rhapsodies 'Hungarian' because it would not be just to separate in the future what has been united in the past. The Hungarians have adopted the gipsies as their national musicians. They have identified themselves with their proud and warlike enthusiasms, as with their poignant griefs, which they know so well how to depict. They have not only associated themselves in their 'Frischka' with their joys and feasts, but have wept with them while listening to their 'Lassans.'

"The nomadic people of the gipsies, though scattered in many countries, and cultivating elsewhere their music, have nowhere given it a value equivalent to that which it has acquired on Hungarian soil; because in no other place has it met, as there, the popular sympathy which was necessary to its development. The liberal hospitality of the Hungarians toward the gipsies was so necessary to its existence that it belongs as much to the one as to the other. Hungary, then, can with good right claim as its own this art nourished by its cornfields and its vineyards, developed by its sun and its shade, encouraged by its admiration, embellished and ennobled, thanks to its favor and protection."

These compositions, then, according to Liszt's own statement, are called "Hungarian" only by courtesy and a sort of national adoption. They are called "Rhapsodies" because of their resemblance, in form, character, and content, to those detached, fragmentary poems sung or recited by the wandering bards, troubadours, and rhapsodists of the olden time—poems embodying the collective sentiments, the heroic deeds, the touching or stirring experiences of a people, which were later collected and welded together, with more or less coherency, by some master mind, to form the national epic of that people. This music, of an authentically gipsy parentage, of which Liszt speaks as "the songs without words" of the gipsies, and to which he has merely stood sponsor at its rechristening and its introduction, in new civilized dress, to the musical world, is the only art form in which this enigmatical race has ever expressed itself—the only channel through which its ill-comprehended but intense inner life of emotion, imagination, and vague idealism has found vent. It is the inarticulate, but none the less expressive, cry of the soul of a race struggling with that universal human longing for self-utterance.

Liszt's aim, pursued for many years, at great pains and with masterly ability, was to collect and preserve for the world at least certain representative portions of this music, and construct from them a tone epic of the gipsies, possessing, not only from the artistic, but from the historical and anthropological standpoint, an interest and value similar to that of other epics in verse, as, for instance, those of the Greeks, the Persians, the Germans, the Finns, Scandinavians, etc.

Of the actual history of the gipsies little is known, save that they are the strangest and most anomalous people of the globe. Numerous theories as to their origin have been advanced, only to be abandoned. But the best belief of to-day is that they originated in India, being of the lowest Soodra caste or Pariahs there, driven out by the terrible Mongol invasions between the tenth and thirteenth centuries A. D. They first appear to the historical world in Egypt, and their name, "gipsies," given them in this country and Great Britain, is but a corruption of the word "Egyptian"; and hence they were long erroneously supposed to have originated there. In other countries they have received various names, as Bohemians in France, Gitanos in Spain, Zigeuner in Germany, Zingari in Italy. But they always and everywhere designate themselves as Romani, or Roma Sinte, meaning, "Roma" (men) and "Sinte," probably from Scind, or the Indus River. They did not appear in Western Europe till the early part of the fifteenth century, first in Bohemia, then in France and Germany, and thence they spread, in wandering bands, from natural increase, and, perhaps, from further immigration, over most of

Europe and other large portions of the world, everywhere abused and hated, and by most governments cruelly persecuted. The Austrian government, under Maria Theresa, was the main, modified exception to this harshness. She encouraged and protected them in some localities in Hungary, and, under this more humane care, they have there lived, in very considerable numbers, a more stable and localized life than elsewhere on earth, affording some modifications and improvement of their general habits and character, as nomad, oriental vagabonds.

Liszt, in the book referred to, has eloquently and strikingly characterized this strange people, as follows: "Among the nations of Europe there suddenly appeared one day a people, whence no one could definitely say. It cast itself upon the Continent without showing any desire of conquest, but also without asking any right to a 227
domicile. It did not desire to appropriate to itself an inch of ground, but it declined to give up an hour of time. It had no wish to conquer, but it refused to submit. It avowed neither from what Asiatic or African plateaus it had descended, nor from what necessity it had sought other skies. It brought no memories; it betrayed no hope. Too vain of its sad race to condescend to merge itself in any other, it was content to live repulsing all foreign elements.... This is a strange people, so strange as to resemble no other in any respect. It possesses neither country, nor religion, nor history, nor any law whatever.... It permits no influence, no will, no persecution, no instruction either to modify, dissolve, or extirpate it. It is divided into tribes, hordes, and bands which wander here and there, following each the route dictated by chance, without communication with each other, largely ignoring their collective existence, but each preserving, under the most distant meridian, with a solidarity which is sacred to them, infallible rallying signs, the same physiognomy, the same language, the same manners.... The ages pass. The world progresses. The countries where they sojourn make war or peace, change masters and manners, while they remain impassive and indifferent, living from day to day, profiting by the preoccupations caused by events which decide the fate of nations, to secure their own existence with less difficulty.... This people that shares the joys, the sorrows, the prosperities, and misfortunes of no other; that, like an incarnate 228
sarcasm, laughs at the ambitions, the tears, the combats, and festivals of all others; that knows neither whence it came nor whither it goes; ... that preserves no traditions and registers no annals; that has no faith and no law, no belief and no rule of conduct; that is held together only by gross superstitions, vague customs, constant misery, and deep humiliation; this people, that nevertheless is obstinate, at the price of all degradation and destitution, to preserve its tents and its tatters, its hunger and its liberty; this people, that exercises upon civilized nations an indescribable and indestructible fascination, passing as a mysterious legacy from one age to the next, all defamed as it is, offers nevertheless some striking and charming types to our grandest poets; this people, so heterogeneous, of a character so indomitable, so intractable, so inexplicable, must conceal, in some corner of its heart, some lofty qualities, since, susceptible of idealization, it has idealized itself; for it has poems and songs which, if united, might perhaps form the national epic of the gipsies."

It is from such a people, so understood and described by him, that Liszt has taken the musical fragments inwrought into his Hungarian Rhapsodies; and he reasons at length and ingeniously as to his right to call these musical cycles parts of what could be enlarged and made to cohere into a national tone epic. This people, being unfitted to express itself nationally in any other mode save through its wonderful, though rude and uncultivated, instinct for music, "as it drew the bow upon the strings of the violin, inspiration taught it, without its seeking, rhythms, cadences, modulations, songs, speech, and discourse. Hegel was not wrong," says Liszt, "when he 229
gives to the word 'epic' more of the signification of the verb 'to speak,' or utter, than of the substantive, 'recital'; and these tone pictures are fragments of an epic, because they speak sentiments which are common to all the race, which form their inner nature, the physiognomy of their soul, the expression of their whole sentient being." And therefore, in summary conclusion, Liszt says: "Believing that the scattered fragments of the instrumental music of the gipsies, properly arranged, with some understanding of the succession necessary to make them reciprocally valuable, would afford the expression of those collective sentiments which inhere in the entire people, determining their character and customs, one feels himself authorized to give to such a collection the name of National Epic."

Regarded from a purely musical standpoint, the Rhapsodies have occasioned much controversy and considerable adverse criticism on the part of certain musicians who pride themselves on their loyalty to conservative traditions. They have been decried as trivial, superficial, and sensational; as lacking in depth and dignity, in symmetry of form and nobility of sentiment. These critics seem to forget that the object of all art is primarily, not instruction or elevation, or even abstract beauty, but expression. Its mission is to portray, not exclusively the highest and grandest emotions of humanity, but every experience, every shade of feeling, every psychological possibility of the race, with equally sympathetic fidelity. Humanity is the broad theme; and the 230
various forms of art, on which the specialist is apt to lay undue stress, are only the means of expression, not the supreme end. That form is best, in any given case, which best serves the artist's purpose.

It should be remembered that the music under discussion does not purport to embody the loftiest or profoundest sentiment which Liszt was personally capable of feeling or portraying, but the life, scenes, and moods of the gipsy camp, presented in the primitive, but spontaneous and vividly graphic, tone imagery of the gipsies themselves. Who shall say that, as a representative racial art, it is not precisely as legitimate, as worthy, and as genuinely artistic as the characteristic national art of the Germans, the Italians, or any other people? Who shall presume to dictate to the artist what subject, or class of subjects, he may or may not select for treatment? I repeat, all art has for its mission the expression of life, all life; not the establishment or maintenance of standards either of morals or emotions; still less of mere forms of expression. Is not the gipsy maid, with her ungoverned caprices, her moments of exuberant gaiety, or passionate grief, just as much alive, hence as legitimate a theme for the artist, and certainly as interesting and romantic a subject for art treatment, as the staid German *Hausfrau*, or the frivolous American society girl? The beggar boy has been as ably painted, and is considered as artistic a figure as the king. Poets have sung the loves of shepherds and shepherdesses as fondly as those of lords and ladies. Is not, then, a good portrayal of a gipsy camp, whether in words, colors, or 231
tones, just as legitimate a work of art as an equally able picture of an imperial palace, or an imposing cathedral? Will not "Carmen" live as long on the operatic stage as even that paragon of all feminine virtues, "Fidelio"? Is not Don Juan as immortal a personage in art as Lohengrin? Goethe says: "We have only the right to ask three questions of any art work: First, what did the artist intend? Second, was it worth doing? Third, has he

succeeded?” Judged from this, the only true standpoint of esthetic criticism, I venture to maintain that the Hungarian Rhapsodies are just as good and just as legitimate music, in their own peculiar way,—that is to say, they fulfil the essential conditions of their special artistic purpose, as well and as completely,—as the Bach fugues, or the Beethoven sonatas.

Granting, if need be, that the Rhapsodies are sensational, heaven protect us from music that produces no sensation! And, in this case, it is the sensation, or startling effect, not of mere brilliancy, but of the unfamiliar contact with the spirit of a race radically differing from our own; not sensuous and superficial, but profoundly temperamental, possessing all the fresh charm of new thought expressed in a novel idiom. Granting again that their melodies are capricious and fantastic, their harmonies strange and half-barbaric, their form incoherent and wholly at variance with our established notions of musical structure, all this but renders them the more characteristic. The picturesque gipsy could not appear to advantage, nor as a typical figure in conventional evening dress, with punctilious drawing-room manners; and the sentiments imputed to him, to be true to life, 232
must not be those of the cultivated modern gentleman, expressed with the stately precision affected by the scholastic world; but primitive, elementary, to some degree chaotic, uttered with the rude force and directness of the undeveloped nature. In brief, he must be represented against the background and amid the surroundings which are his natural environment.

These Rhapsodies are to be taken as rough but faithful self-portraitures of the gipsies, strictly on their own standards of merit, as art works in a department by themselves, with a pronounced individuality and a definite purpose. They are sixteen in number, and all constructed on the same general plan, made up, like mosaics, of widely varying fragments of melody, each expressing some particular mood or phase of life, but combined so as to give a comprehensive impression of the scenes and conditions of gipsy camps, familiar to Liszt for many years, through frequent and lengthy visits, as vividly described by him in the book from which we have so largely quoted.

Roughly speaking, the melodies so interwoven in the Rhapsodies may be divided into three classes, all of which appear in about equal proportions, and with their ever startling sharpness of contrast, in each and all of these works: the “lassan,” a slow, mournfully lugubrious song, expressing the uttermost depths of depression; the “frischka,” a bright, playful, capricious dance movement, full of grace, humor, and witching coquetry, and the “czardas,” a furious, almost demoniac dance portraying the dance delirium at its most intoxicating extreme, resembling somewhat the Tarantelle of Spain and the Dervish dance of the Orient. These three, with an 233
occasional brief strain from a fugitive love-song, shy and elusive as the notes of some timid night bird, or a march-like movement of wild but distinctly martial character, formed the crude material from which Liszt has wrought these always effective and thoroughly pianistic compositions. A brief, special reference to two or three of the best known among them will be sufficient to indicate an intelligent interpretation of them all.

The No. 6, for instance, begins with one of the march movements referred to. It is rhythmic and pompous, with a bold, half-barbaric splendor. Next comes one of the slower forms of the “frischka,” which is often sung in Hungary to the words of a half-tipsy drinking-song. Then follows one of the most doleful of the “lassans,” the words to which, in free translation, run as follows: “My father is dead, my mother is dead, I have no brothers or sisters, and all the money that I have left will just buy a rope to hang myself with.”

The work closes with one of the wildest, most impetuous of the “czardas” dances, which Liszt has wrought up to an irresistible, overwhelming climax.

The No. 12 begins with a slow, gloomy recitative delivered with an impressive dignity so exaggerated as to border on the bombastic; a tale of strange adventures, it may be, narrated by the chief of the tribe at the evening camp-fire, while the flickering firelight plays upon the picturesque figures grouped about against the somber background of the pines, and the thunder mutters sullenly in the distance. Then a quiet bit of lyric, 234
evidently a love-song, gives a touch of softness to the scene, and hints at a covert courtship among the shadows. Later, the crisp, piquant music of the “frischka” calls the young people to the dance, which gradually increases in speed and brilliancy, till it finally merges in the “czardas,” in which all join, and which is given with the greatest possible dash and abandon.

No. 15 is founded upon, and mainly consists of the Rakoczy March, composed by a gipsy musician in honor of Rakoczy, that Hungarian patriot, popular general, and hero, whose daring exploits as leader, in the Hungarian struggle for independence, made him a prominent historical figure of his time, and the idol of his countrymen. This march has been adopted as the national march of Hungary, and Liszt’s setting of it for piano is among his most stupendous works.

These few illustrations may serve as guides in forming a correct conception of all the Rhapsodies. I have given to the foregoing article more space than seems, at first thought, to be warranted; partly, because it gives a somewhat unusual point of view in considering Liszt, not only as a composer, but as a thoughtful and philosophic student of esthetics, and as an eloquent, forceful writer; partly, because I hope it may produce in the minds of some readers a more favorable, because more justly discriminating, attitude of mind toward these Hungarian Rhapsodies as musical art works; but mainly, because it emphasizes, with the powerful support of Liszt’s authority, certain general principles of art which seem to me all-important, but which are too often ignored in considering the special art of music.

RUBINSTEIN
1830 1894

Rubinstein: Barcarolle, in G Major

Strictly speaking, the “barcarolle” is an Italian boat-song—“barca” being the Italian word for boat. But in musical terminology it has been localized and signifies distinctly a Neapolitan boat-song associated as exclusively with the Vesuvian bay as is the gondoliera with the lagoons and canals of Venice. In each case it is the song of the local boatman, sung to the rhythmical accompaniment of the swinging oar, and enhanced in poetic charm by the beauty and romantic atmosphere of the surroundings. In each case also it has served as a suggestive and grateful artistic subject for musical treatment, used by nearly all the modern composers, great and small, and one which is particularly suited to the pianoforte and facilely adapted to its characteristic resources.

In many respects the barcarolle, in this its idealized form as a musical art work, closely resembles the gondoliera, similarly developed; for instance, in its graceful six-eight rhythm, its gliding, swaying boat-like movement, its suggestions of dipping oar and rippling water, and in its sustained song-like melody which we may easily consider as representing the voice of the boatman.

These descriptive elements are common to all works of both classes, but the characteristic mood of the typical barcarolle is less tender and passionate, more cheery and fanciful than that of the gondoliera. It has less of the human element, more of the sea and its slumbering mystery; less of the lover’s sigh, and more of the half-seen witchery of sea-sprites and mermaids in the clear depths of inverted sky beneath. To appreciate this mood to the full, one must have drifted, with suspended oars, in a small boat, upon the far-famed bay of Naples, just as evening fell, with the lofty banner of blue-black smoke waving majestically above the summit of Vesuvius, in the distance, like the pennon of some mighty earth giant, an ominous reminder of his terrible, through slumbrous, power; with the city rising in the background, terrace on terrace, from the water’s edge to the stern old ducal castle, which crowns the height and looms dark and forbiddingly against the sky, a memory in stone, with the fairy island of Capri lying to seaward and the cool breath of the Mediterranean filling the sails of the countless fishing-boats gliding shoreward, while the boatmen sing to the subdued accompaniment of the evening chimes softened by distance. Seen at midday from the height, under the glare and scorch of the noonday sun, with the discordant, jangling sounds of busy life rising harshly to one, like the cries from some pit of torment, Naples seems a hell; but at the evening hour, viewed from the bay, it is a veritable dream of heaven.

No one has caught and embodied in music the mood and scene of this hour, with its caressing coolness, its murmuring ripples, whispering secrets of other days, like Rubinstein, though many have attempted it with more or less success. Of his five barcarolles, all beautiful and characteristic, the most faultlessly typical seems to me the one in G major which I have selected for special mention.

This is not only one of the most graceful and characteristic, as well as most perfect in form and finish, but also decidedly the most realistic of the five. The rhythmic play of the oars, the undulating movement of the boat, and the constant plash of the water, are all vividly suggested, and the melody of the boatman’s song, original with Rubinstein, is very appropriate and typical, heard in intermittent fragments as if sung fitfully in broken snatches. The chords accompanying the melody should be given lightly, though in nearly strict time, in regular, rhythmic pulsations, but with a broken arpeggio effect, that may well coincide with the representation of rippling water, which idea is to be kept in mind.

The passages in double-thirds, which form the principal difficulty of the work, must be rendered with the utmost smoothness and delicacy. It is a good plan to begin each passage with a very low and extremely loose wrist, raising it gradually till quite high toward the middle of the run and then lowering it as gradually and easily to the end. This insures absolute flexibility and enhances the undulating effect. The following little verses, by T. Buchanan Read, express exactly in words the mood of this barcarolle, and I never play it without thinking of them:

“My soul to-day
Is far away,
Adrift upon the Vesuvian bay.
My winged boat,
A bird afloat,
Glides by the purple peaks remote.
Across the rail
My hand I trail
Within the shadow of the sail.
With bliss intense
The cooling sense
Glides down my drowsy indolence.”

Rubinstein: Kamennoi-Ostrow, No. 22

Kamennoi-Ostrow is the name of one of a group of islands situated in the Neva River, some miles below St. Petersburg, “Ostrow” being the Russian word for island, and “Kamennoi” the specific name for this particular island, signifying at once small and rocky. This island is a favorite pleasure resort, both winter and summer, for the wealthy and aristocratic classes of St. Petersburg; one of the imperial palaces is situated upon it, besides many cafés, dance halls, summer and winter concert gardens, and the like. In winter it is the objective point for countless gay sleighing parties, in which the lavish Russian nobles vie with each other in the display of elaborately decorated sledges, fine blooded horses in glittering harness, and piles of almost priceless furs. At this time the highway to and from the island is the smooth, solid ice of the frozen river. In summer the transit is made by boat, and the gaiety is higher during those gorgeous summer nights, when the midnight sun, never quite vanishing below the southern horizon, floods the scene with its wondrous, mystical light, unlike either moonlight or the ordinary light of day, but described by enthusiastic beholders as possessing a peculiar, magical charm wholly its own and scarcely to be imagined by those who have never witnessed it.

Rubinstein, who spent many years of his later life at St. Petersburg, was naturally a frequent visitor at Kamennoi-Ostrow. In fact, on several occasions he spent a number of weeks consecutively at one of its summer hotels and became very familiar with all phases of gaiety at this festive resort and well acquainted with most of its habitués. His set of twenty-four pieces for the piano, entitled “Kamennoi-Ostrow,” is a series of tone sketches suggested by and representing various scenes and personages which his sojourn there brought within his experience. The No. 22, which is probably the best of the set and certainly the most widely known, is intended as the musical portrait of a lady, Mademoiselle Anna de Friedebourg, a personal acquaintance of Rubinstein, to whom the composition is dedicated. It is a portrait drawn in tender yet glowing tints against the soft background of the summer night, outlining, however, the spiritual rather than the physical charms and characteristics of the lady, affording us a conception of her individuality as well as the mood of the surroundings. The first and principal subject, a slow and song-like lyric melody, enunciated by the left hand, with its peculiarly warm and mellow character, reminding one, in color and quality, of the tone of the G string on the violin, is intended to suggest the personality of the lady, or perhaps, more strictly, the emotional impression which this personality produced upon the composer; while the delicate, vibratory accompaniment of the right hand indicates the poetic setting or background, the luminous midsummer night, in one of those island pleasure gardens, the weird light quivering down through tremulous leaves, the mingled scent of flowers and faint sea-breezes, the hum of summer insects, and the whisper of the reeds stirred by the lazily flowing river.

Upon the dreamful hush of this audible silence sounds clear, but sweet and silvery, the little bell of a Greek Catholic chapel, not far distant, calling to midnight mass and ringing out at regular intervals, with soft persistency, through the whole of the second strain or movement. Below and subordinate to it is heard a curious series of colloquial phrases of melody, subdued and fitful, like the fragments of a murmured conversation, as if a low and interrupted dialogue were taking place. Then the full, rich chords of the organ roll out upon the quiet night, flooding it at once with ample waves of grave, solemn harmony. This is followed by a brief passage of recitative in single notes, suggesting the voice of the priest intoning the service within the chapel. It is said to be an exact reproduction, note for note, of a fragment of very ancient Hebrew music, once forming a part of the religious exercises of the Jews and long ago incorporated into the Greek Catholic service.

Then comes an effective, but seemingly irrelevant, cadenza in double arpeggios which, though pleasing, has no apparent connection either with the subject or the mood of the rest of the composition, but which serves indifferently well as a means of leading back to the first theme, presented this time with full, flowing accompaniment in a more impassioned guise, as if to indicate the deeper, more intensified emotions developed by the romantic scene and poetic surroundings.

The composition closes with a momentary return of the little conversational strain, merely suggested and only just audible this time, like whispered words of farewell; and then a few quiet chords of the organ, lingering and slowly fading into the silence, as a pleasant memory reluctantly dissolves into slumber.

GRIEG

1843 1907

Grieg: Peer Gynt Suite, Op. 46

Grieg is the chief living exponent of Norwegian music, as Ibsen is of its literature. “Peer Gynt” is a versified drama by Henrik Ibsen, to which Grieg has written an orchestral suite of that name, from which arrangements for piano have been transcribed, both for two and four hands.

The scenes, incidents, moods, and characters of Ibsen’s drama are essentially Scandinavian; wild, gloomy, fantastic, often vague and incoherent to the reader of more classic and polished literature. Peer Gynt, the hero, is a lawless adventurer, of wild and uncouth personality, undisciplined instincts and passions, and most chaotic career.

The various parts of the Grieg suite are founded upon various scenes of the drama, but the numbering of the different movements will mislead the player, as the chronological progression of the drama is not always adhered to in the music. The following is the order in which the numbers should be presented to fit the scenes which they represent in the life and adventures of Peer Gynt: (1) Peer Gynt and Ingrid; (2) Troll Dance; (3) Death of Ase; (4) Arabian Dance; (5) Anitra’s Dance; (6) Solveig’s Song; (7) Morning; (8) Storm; (9) Cradle Song. I have included in their proper places two of the songs of Solveig, the principal heroine of the drama, which Grieg has also set to music and which should be rendered by soprano voice.

1. Peer Gynt and Ingrid

This is also called “Ingrid’s Complaint” and *“Brautraub,”* or the robbery of the bride. It is the first of the scenes in the drama which Grieg has rendered into music, and represents one of the earliest escapades in the life of the hero, when he attended the rustic festivities of a wedding in the neighborhood, and, seized with a sudden infatuation for the bride, Ingrid, ran away with her to the mountains, in the face of the assembled company. The first four measures, marked “allegro furioso,” suggest the furious movement and delirious excitement of the flight and pursuit, contrasting ludicrously with the dazed, helpless astonishment of the disappointed bridegroom.

The following protracted plaintive minor strains embody the complainings and reproaches of Ingrid, grieving for a life ruined and happiness destroyed, from which Peer suddenly makes his escape, brutally leaving her to her fate in the hills; and the first four measures are repeated at the close, to indicate that the only lasting impression made upon him by the whole affair was that of the exciting and triumphant moment of his success.

2. Troll Dance

This is the most graphic of all the numbers, and is sometimes called “In the Hall of the Mountain King.” The *troll* seems to be the Scandinavian mountain spirit, but more of the nature of gnomes, kobolds, and goblins than of the gentle elves and fairies of English lore. After deserting the unfortunate Ingrid in the forest, Peer fled still deeper into the rugged fastnesses, where he was surrounded at nightfall by a pack of trolls, who alternately teased and entertained him with their pranks and antics, until scattered at dawn by the sound of church-bells in the distance.

The grotesque character of this movement admirably depicts the uncanny mood and nature of the trolls. The opening measures are light and weird, fantastically suggesting the stealthy footsteps of the gathering pack of trolls, emerging on tiptoe from the mists and shadows of the night, and cautiously surrounding their uninvited guest. Little by little the movement becomes more impetuous, as the hilarity and excitement increase, until toward the close it grows to an incoherent whirl and rush, above which ring out sharply the gruesome shrieks of the infuriated goblins, balked of the continuance of their vindictive delight in tormenting their victim, by the approach of dawn.

3. Death of Ase

On returning to his mother’s hut in his native village, after these and many other adventures, Peer finds her on her death-bed, and remains with her through the night, during which she passes away, enlivening her last hours with the most preposterous tales and pantomimes. This scene of the drama, in spite of its solemnity and sadness, carries the fantastic to the extreme verge of the grotesque.

The illustrative music is cast in the mold of a “funeral march,” without trio and with but one well-developed theme. In it Grieg has emphasized only the somber and tragical aspect of the situation, ignoring entirely its touches of ghastly humor. The utter and crushing despair of a wrecked and disappointed life, of shattered hopes and unrequited and unappreciated maternal affection, sobs through its strains, enhancing the pangs of approaching dissolution. Its mood is that of unqualified gloom, unrelieved by a single vibration of hope or consolation.

4. Arabian Dance

In the interval which has elapsed since the death of Ase, our hero, now in the prime of life, driven by his erratic spirit and love of adventure, has landed upon the coast of Africa, after being fairly hounded out of his own country by the ridicule and contempt of his neighbors. This scene takes place in an oasis of the Great Desert, where an Arab chief has pitched his tent, and where Peer, mounted on a stolen white charger and clad in stolen silk and jeweled robes, has arrived in the rôle of the prophet to the Bedouins. A bevy of Arabian girls are dancing before him in oriental costume, pausing to render homage at intervals to the supposed prophet, who 251
reclines among cushions, drinking coffee and smoking a long pipe. The music begins with a monotonous rhythmical figure in the accompaniment, suggesting the beat of tambourines and castanets, and the melody of the opening strain is weird rather than bright, stealthily playful rather than openly gay, rising soon to a considerable degree of excited movement. The trio, with its double melody and its languorous warmth of cadence, tells of increasingly involved figures in the dance and a more voluptuous, seductive grace of motion among the dancers. Then the opening strain is repeated, with its clash of tambourines, its tinkle of silver bangles and anklets, and its mood of repressed, but jocose, humor, beneath a flimsy veil of fictitious gravity.

5. Anitra’s Dance

Anitra, the light-limbed and dark-eyed daughter of the chief, has won the especial favor of the prophet, and dances alone before him after her companions have retired. Peer is enraptured and promises to make her an houri in paradise, and to give her a soul, a very little one, in return for her love and service. She is not much tempted by the soul, but finally consents to fly to the desert with him for the gift of the large opal from his turban. Anitra’s dance is more warmly subjective, more distinctly personal in character than the preceding, at once lighter and more rapid, more tender and winningly graceful, full of arch defiance, playful witcheries, and the coquettish confidence of the high-born maiden and practised solo-danseuse, certain of her power and bent 252
on using it to the full, for the complete subjugation of their prophet guest. We can almost feel her smoothly undulating movements, her swift, but seductive, changes of pose, and those sharp, stolen side-glances, skilfully blended of shyness and fire, flashing from beneath her drooping black lashes, fascinating, but dangerous, like lightning gleams from a fringe of somber cloud.

6. Solveig’s Song

Solveig, a Norwegian maiden of Peer’s own village, the earliest and only worthy love of his life, whom he has deserted in a spasm of virtue, feeling himself unfit to remain with her, sits spinning at the door of a log hut, in a forest far up in the North. She is now a middle-aged woman, fair and comely, and as she spins she sings of her unfailing faith in Peer’s return, her own ever-constant love, and her prayers to God to strengthen and gladden her lover on earth or in heaven. In the music to this song Grieg has admirably depicted the character of Solveig: beautiful, tender, joyous, and full of hope. The English translation of the words, which is but a poor and inadequate representation of the original, runs as follows:

“Though winter departeth,
  And fadeth the May;
Though summer, too, may vanish,
  The year pass away;
Yet thou’lt return, my darling,
  For thou, love, art mine.
I gave thee my promise,
  Forever I am thine.

“God help thee, my darling, 253
  If living art thou;
God bless thee, O my darling,
  If dead thou art now.
I will wait thy coming
  Till thou drawest near;
Or tarry thou in heaven,
  Till I can meet thee, dear.”

7. Morning

This, the most musical and sensuously beautiful movement of the whole suite, represents daybreak in Egypt, with the desert in the distance and the great pyramids, with groups of acacias and palms in the foreground, against a rosy eastern sky. Peer stands before the statue of Memnon in the first hush of the dawn, and watches the rays of the rising sun strike upon it, when, true to the ancient tradition, the statue sings. Soft and mysterious strains of music, monotonous and prolonged, are drawn by the sunbeams from the venerable stone.

The melody of this movement is of extreme simplicity and lyric beauty, pure and fresh as the dawn. Its cadences swell in power and volume as the sun rises higher; and the full flood of light is transmitted into a full flood of song, as the statue thrills and vibrates with the first kisses of the ardent Egyptian sun.

After the climax, which is full and joyous, but never passionate, the music diminishes and dies away in broken snatches, as the statue, now thoroughly impregnated with light and warmth, ceases to emit those sounds with which it has been said to salute the daybreak for four thousand years.

8. Storm

Peer Gynt, now a vigorous old man, is on board a ship on the North Sea off the Norwegian coast, trying to discern the familiar outline of mountains and glaciers through the growing twilight and gathering storm. The wind rises to a gale; it grows dark; the sea increases; the ship labors and plunges; breakers are ahead; the sails are torn away; the ship strikes and goes to pieces, a shattered wreck, and the waves swallow all. Peer, true to his nature, saves his life and adds to the list of his sins by pushing a fellow-passenger from an upturned boat which will not support both, and floating to shore.

This, the final instrumental number of the suite, is by far the most difficult, important, and pretentious of them all; and whether regarded from a musical or descriptive standpoint, is unquestionably the crowning effort of the whole work. It portrays the mood and the might of the tempest with startling vividness, the blackness of the storm-racked clouds, the rage of the wind-lashed waters, the shrieking of the gale through snapping cordage, the almost human complaining of the noble ship, struggling hopelessly with her doom. In brief, the strength, the power, and the manifold phantom voices of the storm are simultaneously and graphically expressed, and the mood and movement, both in duration and completeness of development, exceed those in any of the other numbers. At length, however, after the catastrophe, the force of the storm is broken, the fury of wind and waves subsides, and the receding thunder clouds mutter their baffled rage and threats of deferred destruction more and more faintly as they disappear, and the light of morning breaks upon the scene. Then softly, like the audible voice of the sunlight, comes an instrumental transcription of Solveig's song of love, previously sung, whose familiar strains symbolically express the idea that her sleepless affection, her guardian thoughts and prayers have watched over her loved one and brought him at last safely through danger and tempest to his native shore. This symbolic use of Solveig's song, with its suggestive significance, is in my opinion the happiest and most poetic touch in the whole composition.

9. Solveig's Cradle Song

Solveig, the guardian angel of Peer's life, represents and appeals to all that is good in his nature. Her influence, even in the midst of his maddest escapades, has never wholly deserted him, and serves at last as the magnet to draw him back to her and home. The last scene in the drama represents Solveig, now a serene-faced, silver-haired old lady, stepping forth from the door of the forest hut, on her way to church. Peer, who in his chaotic fashion has become a prey to disappointment, to remorse, and to fear of death, appears suddenly before her, calling himself a sinner and crying for condemnation from the lips of the woman whom he has most sinned against. Solveig sinks upon a bench at the door of the hut. Peer drops upon his knees at her feet and buries his face in her lap. The sun rises and the curtain falls as she sings her lullaby song of peace and happiness. Grieg has set these last stanzas of the drama to music under the title of Solveig's Wiegenlied, or Cradle Song. They are translated as follows:

> "Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!
> I will cradle thee, I will watch thee.
> The boy has been sitting on his mother's lap,
> The two have been playing all the life-day long.
> The boy has been resting at his mother's breast
> All the life-day long. God's blessing on my joy.
> The boy has been lying close in to my heart
> All the life-day long. He is weary now.
> Sleep thee, dearest boy of mine!
> I will cradle thee, I will watch thee.
> Sleep and dream thou, dear my boy!"

These lines seem to indicate a transition from wifely love to maternal love in the affection of Solveig, with the advent of age.

The moral of the drama, not a very ethical one, but one which has possessed the minds of many devoted women since the world began, appears to be that in love alone is salvation. Whatever the errors and sins and follies of the man, he is won at last and saved, even at the eleventh hour, by the faith, the hope, and the love of one devoted woman.

Grieg: An den Frühling (Spring Song), Op. 43, No. 6

Among the very few strictly lyric compositions for the piano by Grieg,—a vein in which he was singularly unproductive for so eminent a genius,—this spring song must unquestionably take rank as the best, the most evenly sustained throughout, the most perfect in form and finish, and decidedly the finest as well as most emotional in quality.

The opening notes of the right hand accompaniment fall light and silvery as the soft drops of the April shower upon the waiting woods, when the first faint shimmer of tender green begins to tint the tips of the waving boughs. Then the melody enters in the left hand with subdued, repressed intensity, warmly, sweetly vibrant, like the upper register of that most passionate of instruments, the ’cello, a melody telling of mild, languorous days and soft, dream-haunted nights, thrilled through by the mysterious throbbing of a new life in the earth’s long-frozen veins; telling of Nature, surprised but radiantly happy, awakening at the touch of her ardent lover, the sudden spring, from her ice-locked sleep, like the slumbering, frost-fettered bride in the old legend of Siegfried and Brünnhilde; telling of summer joys and brightness begotten of their union, of bird songs, sweeter for the long silence, of many-tinted flowers springing in fragrant profusion where the cold white drifts of winter lay but yesterday, as if the snowflakes had all been transformed to blossoms by the magic kiss of the sun; of love as sudden as the spring, as tenderly sweet as its violets, strong as its rushing torrents, but alas! too often as transient as its fleeting glories. This sudden, startling thought of pain and disillusion strikes sharply across the mellow, golden current of the stream with a somber threatening note of danger and distress rising to a swift, strong climax of indignant protest or fierce defiance, a contrasting reactionary mood common to certain minds, like those, for instance, of Byron and Heine, aptly illustrated by the following lines, translated from the German of Amentor:

> “Sing not to me of spring, its flowers and azure skies,
> Fleeting delusions all to cheat unwary eyes.
> Talk not to me of love, its dreams of Paradise.
> The charms of spring, the joys of love, are brilliant lies.”

But this dark mood is of but brief duration; it is soon exorcised by the plenitude of sunshine and the exuberance of springtime happiness, and the first melody returns with all its glowing beauty and seductive sweetness, and with a fuller, more fluent, voluptuous accompaniment, suggesting the mingled voices of many streams exulting in their new freedom, or the irregular, intermittent sighs of May breezes, impatient with having to rock all the baby leaves at once.

This composition is technically of only moderate difficulty, but requires for its proper delivery a fine taste, great warmth of feeling, and a telling, sensuous quality of tone for the melody, while the right hand accompaniment in the first movement is kept almost infinitely light and delicate. The sudden burst of passionate pain and resentment in the climax should be given with extreme intensity and a decided acceleration of tempo, as well as increase in power; followed by an abrupt fall to a caressing pianissimo, and a long lingering hold on the final chord just preceding the return of the first melody, to accentuate the renewal of the softer, sunnier mood.

Grieg: Vöglein (Little Birds), Op. 43, No. 4

A charming and effective supplementary companion piece to the spring song is that exquisitely, daintily fanciful, yet exceedingly brief piece of descriptive tone painting, called “The Little Birds,” published in the same volume of lyrics with the preceding number. It may be played as an added and appropriate coda to the spring song. It is one of those graphically realistic productions which tell their own story. It portrays very literally, by more than suggestive imitation, the blithe twitter of the spring birds fluttering amid the dancing leaves and sunlight, engaged in their delightful occupation of nest-building. Notice, too, the sudden touch of facetious drollery, so characteristic of Grieg, where the delicate little bird motive is abruptly transferred to the bass register, producing a peculiarly comical, grotesque effect, reminding one of the gutteral hilarity of the spring-awakened frogs in some neighboring pool.

Exceeding lightness and delicacy, combined with a certain playful staccato effect, are the chief technical requisites for the correct performance of this work, which, though small, will well repay careful study. The tone produced should be crisp and bright, though never rising above piano, and the tempo not exceedingly rapid.

Grieg: Berceuse, Op. 38, No. 1

One of Grieg's most charming lyrics is this thoroughly unique and characteristic Cradle Song. This has always been a most attractive and facilely treated subject for piano-compositions, on account of the way in which it lends itself to realistic handling.

The general plan of these compositions is always substantially the same: a simple, swinging accompaniment in the left hand, symbolizing the rocking cradle, and a soft, soothing melody in the right, more or less elaborately ornamented, suggesting the song of the nurse or mother lulling the child to rest.

An almost infinite variety of effect is possible, however, within these seemingly narrow limits, dependent upon the differing ability and personality of the composer, the diversity in melodic and harmonic coloring, and especially upon the environment and conditions conceived of by the writer as the setting or background of the picture. The range of legitimate suggestion in this regard by means of such works is as broad as that of human experience itself. For instance, the child imagined may be the idolized prince of a royal line, rocked in a golden cradle with a jeweled crown embossed upon its satin canopy, and guarded by the loyalty, the hopes and pride of a mighty nation; or it may be the sickly offspring of want and suffering, doomed from its birth to sorrow and struggle and disappointment, to a crown of toil and a heritage of tears; or perhaps it may be a fairy changeling, stolen by Titania in some wayward caprice, rocked to sleep in a lily-cup upon crystal waves, or watching, with large, wondering human eyes, the pranks of the forest elves as they trace with swiftly circling feet their magic rings upon the moss, or awaken the morning-glories upon the lawn with a shower-bath of dew.

The lullaby song of the mother may thrill with the sweet content and rapturous joy of a life of love and brightness but just begun, and seemingly endless in its forward vista of ever new and ever glad surprises. Her fancies may be winged by hope and happiness to airy flights in which no sky-piercing height seems impossible; or her voice may vibrate with the songs of a broken-hearted widow, who guards the little sleeper in an agony of loving fear, as the last treasure saved from the wreck of her world. As the smallest plot of garden ground possesses the capacity to receive and develop the germs of the most diverse forms of vegetation, from the violet to the oak, from the fragrant rose to the deadly poppy, so these modest little musical forms are replete with an almost boundless potentiality of suggestion.

In the case of this particular work by Grieg, the child portrayed is no delicate rose-tinted girl-baby, downily cushioned upon silken pillows, peeping timidly from a drift of dainty laces like the first crocuses from the feathery snow of April, but the lusty son of a Viking stock, with the blood of a sturdy race of fighters coursing red through his veins, and with a will and a voice of his own, cradled in the hollow trunk of a pine or the hide-lashed blade-bones of the elk, wrapped in the skin of wolf or bear, and lulled to sleep by the rough, but kindly, crooning of a peasant nurse. May we not fancy the refrain of her song somewhat after the fashion of the following lines?

"Oh, hush thee, my baby;
  The time will soon come
When thy rest will be broken
  By trumpet and drum,
When the bows will be bent,
  The blades will be red,
And the beacon of battle
  Will blaze overhead.
Then hush thee, my baby,
  Take rest while you may,
For strife comes with manhood
  As waking with day."

Grieg: The Bridal Procession, from “Aus dem Volksleben.” Op. 19, No. 2

One of the best known and most popular of Grieg’s compositions is the second movement of his piano suite entitled “Aus dem Volksleben” (sketches of Norwegian country life), a work which portrays, with all his graphic power and good-natured humor, a number of unique and characteristic phases of the peasant life in Norway. This second movement, at once the easiest and most pleasing number of the suite, is intended as a realistic representation of the music of a primitive peasant band, which leads a rural bridal procession, made up of Norwegian countrypeople, on its way to the church.

We may fancy ourselves seated on a bank by the roadside, with a jolly company of villagers in picturesque holiday costume, listening to their jests and gaiety as we await the rustic pageant. Soon our attention is caught by the sound of distant music, gradually approaching, strange, weird, uncanny music, as if the gnomes and trolls had left their work in the secret mines and caverns of the mountains, where they are ever forging new chains for the fettered earth-giants as their prisoned strength increases, and had turned musicians for a frolic and come forth into the light of day to join the festival. The rhythmic beat of drums and cymbals, the shrill, strident notes of the fife, the quaint, quavering tones of the pipe and clarinet, mingle in a strain jocosely mirthful, rather than truly gay, and becoming more insistent as it advances.

There is no trace of tenderness, no hint of sweet anticipation, no suggestive undertone of sacred solemnity, in this music. We miss the warm color and tremulous, sustained effects of the violins, which with us are always symbolic of love. It seems almost like a musical satire on the tender passion; as if the divine but dethroned Balder (the God of Love in Norse mythology), disgusted by the infidelity and ingratitude of mankind, were employing all his wondrous power as a minstrel to depreciate and deride this his best gift to humanity. But perhaps we do not rightly appreciate the significance of the music. As it draws nearer and nearer, growing stronger with every moment, we begin to suspect that perhaps its very rudeness and primitive energy express more truthfully than more delicate, dreamy, finely shaded cadences could do, the idea that human love is one of the elemental forces of nature, underlying and antedating all the subtilizing refinements of civilization, and destined to outlast them, as the rugged granite of the northern mountains antedates and will outlast all the crystal palaces of taste and luxury.

On comes the procession, the music swelling and growing with every step, till as it passes immediately before us it becomes an almost deafening crash of dissonant instruments, each player with lusty good-will doing his utmost to honor the occasion, outvie his comrades, and earn his share in the wedding feast, by making his part most prominent in the general din. First comes the band, then the bride and groom and the bridesmaids in white, with wands and wreaths, a troop of children with baskets of flowers, then a company of the immediate friends and relatives of the bridal pair, with the older neighbors and acquaintances soberly bringing up the rear. So they defile before us, and pass on their way down the sunlit country road to the church, the music gradually diminishing as it recedes into the distance, growing fainter and fainter till only occasional shriller notes or louder fragments reach us, and at last even these are sunk in the summer silence.

This movement is in march time and form, and the strict, unvarying march rhythm should be preserved throughout, absolutely without variation. The tone should be crisp and clear, with but little singing quality, to represent that of wooden wind instruments, but varying in degree from the softest possible *pp* to the most tremendous *fff* which the performer is capable of producing. The player is here afforded an opportunity of testing his powers in that most difficult of all elements in pianism—a long-sustained, evenly-graded crescendo and diminuendo. To produce its true realistic effect, the music should emerge almost imperceptibly out of silence, increase steadily, but by infinitesimal degrees, to the greatest quantity of tone power which the instrument will produce; then diminish as gradually and steadily till it dissolves into silence again at the close; not stopping at a given point, but simply ceasing to sound. Those who have heard Rubinstein render the Turkish march from “The Ruins of Athens” will remember it as a masterly model for this effect.

SAINT-SAËNS
1835–

Saint-Saëns: Le Rouet d’Omphale

Saint-Saëns, though himself a first-rate concert pianist and the composer of some excellent things for the piano, notably in concerto form, is, nevertheless, chiefly gifted and principally celebrated as a writer for orchestra, having done his best, most original, and most interesting work in this line. Among his many important compositions for full orchestra, there are perhaps none which better represent his individuality and peculiar style than his four “Symphonic Poems,” of which two have been selected for illustration here. This form of composition, as well as its name, originated with Franz Liszt, whose twelve “Symphonic Poems” are his most important contributions to orchestra literature. In musical structure the symphonic poem corresponds to the modern overture and to the pianoforte ballade, as exemplified by Chopin, much more nearly than to the symphony proper. It consists of a single movement, without different divisions and pronounced differentiated parts, such as are to be found in the regulation symphony, though it often expresses a wide variety of moods, merging into one another without pause or interruption.

Its only radical point of similarity to the symphony lies in the fact that its first principal theme is subjected to an elaborate and logical development in most cases, as in the symphonic allegro. It is distinctly an outgrowth of modern romanticism and deals always with the somewhat definite poetic thought, or some real or imaginary episode from life. It is, in fact, program music of the most pronounced and uncompromising type, and the special thought or episode is always indicated by its descriptive title.

The four Symphonic Poems of Saint-Saëns are: (1) Le Rouet d’Omphale; (2) Phaeton; (3) Danse Macabre; (4) La Jeunesse d’Hercule.

I have selected for consideration here the first and third, entitled respectively the “Rouet d’Omphale” and the “Danse Macabre”; the one descriptive of a classic, the other of a medieval scene and tradition.

The first, the “Wheel of Omphale,” was suggested by the Greek myth of Hercules and Omphale. The story of the pair is familiar to all readers of classic mythology, and represents perhaps the most singular episode in the checkered career of this hero and demigod. The legend runs as follows: Hercules, having killed his friend Iphitus in a fit of madness, to which he was occasionally subject, fell a prey to a severe malady, sent upon him by the gods in punishment for this murder. He consulted the Delphic oracle with a view to learning the means of escaping from this disease. He was informed by the oracle that he could only be cured by allowing himself to be sold as a slave for three years, and giving the purchase money to the father of Iphitus as recompense for the loss of his son. Accordingly Hercules was sold by Mercury as a slave to Omphale, the Queen of Lydia, then reigning in that country, who had long been desirous to see this strongest of men and greatest hero of his age. He remained with her the allotted three years, and during this period of slavery, by the wish of the queen, the warrior-hero assumed female attire and sat spinning among the women, where his royal mistress often chastised him with her sandal for his awkward manner of holding the distaff, while she paraded in his lion’s skin, armed with his famous war-club. But if awkward at the distaff this son of Jupiter understood other arts which he practised upon the Lydian queen; for in the intervals of spinning he made love to her so successfully that from their union sprang the race of Crœsus, famous in antiquity. Some authorities regard this legend of Hercules and Omphale as of astronomical significance, while others give it a moral interpretation, saying it illustrates how even the strongest and bravest of men is demeaned and belittled when subjugated by a woman.

The music opens with a playfully realistic introduction, consisting of a series of light, rapid-running figures and graceful embellishments, imitatively suggesting the roll and buzz of the spinning-wheels. A series of delicate turns, each an audible circle, add their quota of pertinent symbolism to the general effect. Soon the melody enters, joyous, musical, yet with a certain arch mockery, enhanced by its odd, piquant rhythm. It is the song of the spinning maidens, cheerfully speeding their hours of toil with music and mirth, with occasional irrepressible touches of gay raillery at the expense of the clumsy captive warrior, whose long face and futile attempts at their handicraft afford them vast amusement. Now and then a distinct burst of silvery laughter is heard above the boom of the wheels, interrupting the strain. Omphale, too, is there, admonishing, chiding, ridiculing the hero, as he moodily pursues his unwonted and unwilling task with many a blunder and comical mistake; yet we can fancy a half-tender smile softening her reprimands and sweetening her playful chastisements.

Then with a radical change of mood and movement comes the second important theme, a broad, impressive, strikingly original melody in the bass, half gloomy, half indignant, the mighty manly voice of Hercules, uplifted in grave lament and dignified protest, deploring his hard lot, defying its humiliations, reproaching his gay tormentors, rebelling at his menial duties and unworthy surroundings, yet with a stern, proud gravity, a grand fortitude which scorns alike weak complainings and impotent petulance. It subsides at last into philosophic resignation and sorrowful self-repression, as if consoled by the thought that his punishment is after all just and his submission voluntary.

Then the spinning movement is resumed and the first song virtually repeated, though in a materially modified rhythm; and the work ends playfully, as it begins, with a wonderfully realistic imitation of the gradual stopping of the wheels, as their momentum exhausts itself and little by little their speed slackens and they finally come to a complete rest when abandoned by the girls, as sunset ends the day’s work.

This composition is one of Saint-Saëns’ most genial and melodious productions, as well as an excellent piece of

descriptive work. It may be rendered on the piano either in the four-hand arrangement by Guiraud, or as transcribed for two hands by the composer himself. It is about equally feasible and effective in either of these forms.

Saint-Saëns: Danse Macabre

For the significance of the French word *macabre* we must turn to the Arabic *makabir*, signifying a burial place or cemetery. The “Danse Macabre,” therefore, is simply a “cemetery dance” or “Dance of Death.”

One of the most prevalent superstitions during the middle ages throughout Europe, and especially France, was that of the “Danse Macabre,”—a belief that once a year, on Hallowe’en, the dead of the churchyards rose for one wild, hideous carnival, one bacchanalian revel, in which old King Death acted as master of ceremonies. This gruesome idea appears frequently in the literature of the period, and also in its painting, particularly in church decoration, and a more or less graphic portrayal of the “Danse Macabre” may still be seen on the walls of some old cathedrals and monasteries.

This composition, belonging as it does to the ultra-realistic French school of the present day, is a vivid tone picture of the same “Danse Macabre.” At the head of the original composition, serving as motto and undoubtedly as direct inspiration for the music, stands a curious ancient French poem in well-nigh obsolete fourteenth century idiom. I have made a free translation of these verses into English, as follows:

On a sounding stone,
With a blanched thigh-bone,
The bone of a saint, I fear,
Death strikes the hour
Of his wizard power,
And the specters haste to appear.

From their tombs they rise
In sepulchral guise,
Obeying the summons dread,
And gathering round
With obeisance profound,
They salute the King of the Dead.

Then he stands in the middle
And tunes up his fiddle,
And plays them a gruesome strain.
And each gibbering wight
In the moon’s pale light
Must dance to that wild refrain.

Now the fiddle tells,
As the music swells,
Of the charnel’s ghastly pleasures;
And they clatter their bones
As with hideous groans
They reel to those maddening measures.

The churchyard quakes
And the old abbey shakes
To the tread of that midnight host,
And the sod turns black
On each circling track,
Where a skeleton whirls with a ghost.

The night wind moans
In shuddering tones
Through the gloom of the cypress tree,
While the mad rout raves
Over yawning graves
And the fiddle bow leaps with glee.

So the swift hours fly
Till the reddening sky
Gives warning of daylight near.
Then the first cock crow
Sends them huddling below
To sleep for another year.

The composition opens with twelve weird strokes indicating the arrival of midnight, struck out upon a vibrant tombstone by the impatient hand of Death himself. There follows a light, staccato passage, suggesting the moment when, in obedience to this awesome signal, the specters appear from their graves and come tiptoeing forward to take their places in the fantastic circle. Then comes a strikingly realistic passage where Death attempts to tune up his fiddle, as he is to furnish the music for the dance. It has been lying disused since the last annual festival, is very much out of tune, and refuses to come up to pitch. In spite of his best endeavors, the E string obstinately remains at E flat. The repetition of this passage at intervals throughout the composition

suggests occasional hasty and ill-timed efforts to tune up.

Now comes the first theme of the dance itself, light, fantastic, suggestive of purely physical excitement and ghastly pleasure, and graphically representing the imagery of the corresponding verse of the poem.

The second theme is slower, heavier, more gloomily impressive, with its weird minor harmonies and its strongly 279
marked rhythms, suggesting the darkness and terror of that midnight scene, the gruesome gravity of old King Death, as master of ceremonies, and the increasingly ponderous tread of that ghostly multitude, to which the gray walls of the abbey and the very ground itself seem to reel in unison. This is the moment when “the sod turns black where each skeleton whirls with a ghost.”

Death again attempts to tune up his fiddle, with frenzied haste, and the dance grows in speed and impetuous power. Later it is interrupted by a lyric intermezzo, brief but pathetically sweet. It seems to be a plaintive lament played in a momentary pause of the dancing, expressing the sad memories and hopeless longings of the dancers, the real mood which underlies the forced gaiety of this wild revel. It is appropriately accompanied by the Æolian-like effect of the night wind sighing among the cypress boughs. An onward rush follows, more furiously impetuous than before, for just as in the small hours the boisterous and frenzied merriment of the witches in “Walpurgis Night” grew apace, so does this skeleton dance gradually reach an almost demoniac climax of hilarity, as all unite in a grand finale, a thunderous whirl of hideous merriment. Here the first and second dance themes are very ingeniously woven together, appearing simultaneously in a piece of most grotesque but effective counterpoint.

Then comes a sudden hush, in which the distant crow of the morning cock is distinctly heard, a signal that daylight is approaching and the revel must end. With a wild hurry and scurry the specters betake themselves to 280
their graves once more, a final lugubrious wail from the fiddle closing the composition, as Death is the last to leave the field.

Counterparts among Poets and Musicians

Those who have had sufficient interest to read any considerable number of the foregoing chapters cannot have failed to perceive that, to the mind of the author, the sister arts, music and poetry, sustain to each other an even closer, more vitally intimate relation than the family connection generally conceded to them.

It is a kinship of soul and sympathy, as well as of race—a similarity of aim and influence upon humanity; a similarity, even in the kind of effect produced, and the means employed to produce it, which renders them largely interdependent and reciprocally helpful. The purpose of both is expression, chiefly emotional expression, descriptions of nature and references to natural phenomena being introduced merely as accessories, as background or setting for the human life and interest, which are of primary importance. Both express their meaning, not through imitated sounds or forms borrowed from the physical world, but by means of audible symbols devised by man for this express purpose, which have come by long usage and general acceptance to have a definite significance, but require a certain degree of education to comprehend them, and which are therefore more intellectual, more adapted to the expression of the subtler phases of life, and more purely human in their origin, than the media of form and color employed in the plastic arts.

True, the one uses tones, the other words, as its material; but the difference is by no means so radical as at first appears. Both exist in time, while all other arts have to do with space and substance. Both have but one dimension, so to speak,—namely, duration,—and owe whatever of the beauty of form and proportion they possess to a symmetrical subdivision of this given duration into correspondent parts or sections, by means of accents, brief pauses, and rhymes or cadences. Both may successfully treat a progressive series of moods or scenes, of varying character, and fluctuating intensity, which is not possible in the plastic arts, limited as they all are to the portrayal of a single situation, a single instant of time, a single fixed conception. Both, again, possess a certain warmth and inherent pulsing life, which is their common, dominant characteristic, due to the heart-throb of rhythm, which is lacking in all other arts.

Even in the media they employ, there is a strong though subtle resemblance; both appeal directly to the sense of hearing, which scientists tell us is more intimately connected with the nerve centers of emotional life than any other of the senses. In both cases the immediate appeal is to the feelings and the imagination, without recourse to intervening imagery borrowed from external nature. Both embody the cry of one soul to another, and they are not widely divergent in quality or effect. Language at its highest is almost song, and music at its best is idealized declamation. All good poetry must be musical. It should, as we say, sing itself; and all good music must be poetical, conveying a distinctly poetic impression.

To me every poem presupposes a possible musical setting, and every worthy composition, a possible poetic text. Hence the language used, in describing music, must of necessity, so far as the powers of the writer permit, possess a generally poetic character. In all my thought and reading, along this line, it has seemed to me, not only of extreme interest, but of great practical value to every musician and writer, to devote careful study to the analogy between these arts, to the correspondences between artists, in these parallel lines of work, and between their special productions in each, to obtain the widest possible familiarity with both arts and their mutual relations, with a view to letting each aid to a fuller elucidation and better appreciation of the other. I have always grouped together in my mind Bach and Milton, Beethoven and Shakespeare, Mozart and Spenser, Schubert and Moore, Schumann and Shelley, Mendelssohn and Longfellow, Chopin and Tennyson, Liszt and Byron, Wagner and Victor Hugo.

Bach and Milton seem to me to occupy corresponding niches in the temples of music and of verse, because of the strong religious element in the personality of both, of their severe, involved, lengthy, sonorous, and dignified style of utterance; their mutual disdain of mere sentiment and softer graces, and their fondness for works of large dimensions and serious import. Furthermore, because of the proneness of both to religious and churchly subjects, and the corresponding position which they occupy as veteran classics in their respective arts.

The analogy between Beethoven and Shakespeare is almost too obvious for remark. They are the twin giants of music and literature in their colossal and comprehensive powers, in the breadth and universality of their genius, and in the verdict of absolute superiority unanimously accorded them by all nations, all schools, and all factions, both in the profession and by the public. They are like the pyramids of Egypt; they overtop all altitudes, cover more area, and present a more enduring front to the “corroding effects of time” than aught else the world has known.

Mozart and Spenser resemble each other in their quaint and classic, yet naïve and sunshiny style, their abundance, almost excess of fancy, and their fondness for supernatural, though for the most part non-religious and non-mythological scenes, incidents, and characters; also in their habit of treating startling situations and normally grievous catastrophes without exciting any very profound subjective emotions in their readers and hearers. Not that they are flippant or superficial in character; far from it; but with them art was somewhat removed from humanity. With Spenser literature was not life, and with Mozart music was not emotion. We smile and are glad at heart because of them, but we are not thrilled; we are pensive or reflective, but we rarely weep and are never plunged into despair. There is a moral lesson, it is true, in the feats of the knights and ladies in the “Faery Queen,” as also in the vicissitudes of that rather admirable scoundrel, Don Juan, but it is not burned into us, as by a keener and crueler hand. Those who enjoy poetry and music, rather than feel it, love it, or learn from it, are always partial to Spenser and Mozart.

No artistic affinity is more marked than that of Schubert and Moore. They are both preëminently song-writers. Both had a gift of spontaneous, happy, graceful development of a single thought in small compass. Both are melodious beyond compare, and both wrote with an ease, rapidity, and versatility rarely matched in the annals of their arts. Moore is the most musical of poets, and Schubert, perhaps, the most poetic of musicians. One of

Moore's life-purposes was the collection of stray waifs of national airs and furnishing them with appropriate words. Likewise, one of Schubert's main services to art was the collection of brief lyric poems and setting them to suitable melodies. Each reached over into the sister art a friendly hand, and each, unawares, won his chief fame thereby. Moreover, though clinging by instinct and preference to the smaller, simpler, more unpretentious forms, each wrote one or two lengthy and well-developed works, such as the "Lalla Rookh," with Moore, and the "Wanderer Fantaisie," with Schubert, which gloriously bear comparison with the masterpieces of their type from the pens of the ablest writers in the larger forms.

Shelley has been called the poet's poet, and Schumann might as aptly be termed the musician's composer; 286
because the subtle, fanciful, subjective character and the metaphysical tendency of the works of both require the keen insight and the fertile imagination of the artistic temperament, to follow them in all their flights and catch the full significance of their suggestions. With both, the instinct for form is weak, and the constructive faculty almost wanting. Ideas and figures are fine, profound, and astute, but there is a lack of lucidity, brevity, and force, as well as of logical development, in their expression. A few bits of melody by Schumann, such as the "Träumerei," and an occasional brief lyric by Shelley, like "The Skylark," have become well-known and popular; but their works, in the main, are likely to be the last ever written to catch the public ear. They appeal the more strongly to the inner circle of initiates who are familiar spirits in the mystical realm, whose language they speak. Where Shelley is the favorite poet, and Schumann the favorite composer, an unusually active fancy and subtle intellect are sure to be found.

Mendelssohn and Longfellow are alike in almost every feature. Both are in temperament objective and optimistic. Both are graceful, fluent, melodious, tender, and thoughtful, without being ever strongly impassioned or really dramatic. Both display superior and well-disciplined powers, nobility of sentiment, and ease and grace of manner. Perfect gentlemen and polished scholars, both avoid all radical and reformatory tendencies, to such an extent as to lend a shade of conventionality to their artistic personality, as compared with the extreme romanticists of their day. Both have reached the public ear and heart as no other talent of 287
equal magnitude has ever done. Many of the ballads, narrative poems, and shorter pieces by Longfellow, and the "Songs Without Words," by Mendelssohn, have become so familiar as to be almost hackneyed, even with the non-poetic and non-musical populace.

Chopin is beyond dispute the Tennyson of the pianoforte. The same depth, warmth, and delicacy of feeling vitalizing every line, the same polish, fineness of detail, and symmetry of form, the same exquisitely refined, yet by no means effeminate, temperament are seen in both. Each shows us fervent passion, beyond the ken of common men, without a touch of brutality; intense and vehement emotion, with never a hint of violence in its betrayal, expressed in dainty rhythmic numbers as polished and symmetrical as if that symmetry and polish were their only *raison d'être*. This similar trait leads often to a similar mistake in regard to both. Superficial observers, fixing their attention on the preëminent delicacy, tenderness, elegance, and grace of their manner and matter, regard them as exponents of these qualities merely, and deny them broader, stronger, sterner characteristics. Never was a grosser wrong done true artists. No poet and no composer is more profound, passionate, and intense than Tennyson and Chopin, and none so rarely pens a line that is devoid of genuine feeling as its legitimate origin. But the artist in each stood with quiet finger on the riotous pulses of emotion, and forbade all utterance that was crude, chaotic, or uncouth. Both had the heart of fire and tongue of gold. Tennyson wrote the model lyrics of his language and Chopin the model lyrics of his instrument, for all posterity. Edgar Poe said of Tennyson: "I call him and think him the noblest of poets, because the excitement which he 288
induces is at all times the most ethereal, the most elevating, and the most pure. No poet is so little of the earth, earthy." The same words might well be spoken of Chopin.

Liszt and Byron were kindred spirits, both as men and artists. Among the serener stars and planets that move majestically in harmony with heaven's first law, to the music of the spheres, they were like meteors or comets, appearing above the horizon with dazzling brilliance, and darting to the zenith, through an erratic career, reaching a summit of fame and popularity, attained during his lifetime by no other poet or musician, and setting at defiance all laws of art, of society, and of morals. Brilliancy of style and character, haughty independence, impetuous passion, a matchless splendor of genius, a supreme contempt for the weaknesses of lesser mortals, combined with the warmest admiration for their peers, are the distinguishing attributes of both. Byron's devoted friendship for Moore and Shelley corresponds exactly to Liszt's feeling for Chopin and Wagner. Liszt himself recognized this affinity between himself and Byron. The English poet was for many years his model and favorite author; many of his scenes and poems he translated into tones, and his influence is marked in most of his earlier compositions. The works of both are remarkable for a fire and fury almost demoniac, alternating with a light and flippant grace, almost impish. Both understood a climax as few others have done, and both had the dramatic element strongly developed. Both were lawless and dissolute, according to the world's verdict, yet 289
scrupulous and refined to an extreme in certain respects. Each scandalized the world, repaid its censure with scorn, and saw it at his feet; and each left, like a meteor, a track of fire behind him, which still burns with a red and vivid, if not the purest, luster.

Wagner and Victor Hugo are the two Titans of the nineteenth century, having created more stir and ferment in the world of art and letters than any other writers, contemporary or previous. Each is the leading genius of his nation. They resemble each other in the pronounced originality of their genius, their virile energy and productivity, and their colossal force. Of both, the rare and singular fact is true, that their productions all attain about the same level of merit. Most authors and most composers are known by one or a few sublime creations. I know of no others who have written an equal number of great works and none that are mediocre or feeble. They are also alike in the circumstance that while each has done fine work in a number of other departments, it is the dramatic element which forms the strongest feature of their artistic personality. Few French novels can compare with those of Victor Hugo; but it is the powers of the dramatist displayed in the plot, striking situations and characters, which constitute their chief merit; and in his writings for the stage he has far surpassed all that he has done as novelist. Likewise, while Wagner's orchestral works for the concert room would alone have made him a reputation, it is by his operas that he has made the world ring with his fame. Each had a sense of the dramatic and a mastery of its effects not even approached by any other artist. They bear, furthermore, a strong 290

resemblance in their revolutionary character and tendencies. Both were born pioneers, innovators, reformers. Both headed a revolt against the reigning sovereigns and the established government of their respective arts and after a desperate struggle came out victorious. Both have been followed by a host of disciples, belligerent and radical beyond all that the annals of music and literature can show. They were like two powerful battering-rams, attacking the bulwarks of classic prejudice and conventionality. The revolution which Wagner brought about in opera was exactly matched by Hugo with the drama. His “Hernani” was as great a shock to the established precedents of the stage, as was Wagner’s “Nibelungen.” Lastly, both display the unusual phenomenon of retaining their creative power into extreme old age, and both died when life and art and fame were fully ripe, with the eyes of the world upon them and their names on every tongue.

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