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978-1-108-00515-9 - Summary of the History and Development of Medieval and Modern European Music

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry

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In 1893, the English composer and director of the Royal College of Music C. Hubert H. Parry published *Summary of the Development of Medieval and Modern European Music*, an overview of European music from the middle ages to the work of Schubert and Brahms. Intended for music students, the book summarises the major composers, their work and the social circumstances that surrounded the creation of their music. This ambitious book is divided into 12 chronological chapters, from the troubadours and plainsong, through Bach and Handel to the rise of the symphony, Mozart, and the emergence of music as an expression of nationalism. In the book's first part, Parry deftly puts music in historical context, discussing England's Wars of the Roses, and the Reformation in relation to the changing styles throughout the sixteenth century; he then explores the music of the Restoration and the rise of opera.

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NOVELLO, EWER AND CO.'S MUSIC PRIMERS.

EDITED BY SIR JOHN STAINER.

SUMMARY

OF THE

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

OF

MEDIÆVAL AND MODERN

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BY

C. HUBERT H. PARRY.

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PREFACE.

A FAIRLY comprehensive and orderly understanding of the history of his art is of great importance to a musician, both for the light it throws upon every department of practical work, for the widening of his artistic sympathies, and for the service that a rational study of history of any kind is capable of rendering to a man's mind and judgment.

History is generally supposed to be based on facts; but in all branches, whether political, social, or artistic, there are a great many things which pass for facts which are very far from trustworthy, and a great many which, even if they were trustworthy, would be of very little importance.

The personal details of the lives of men who played conspicuous parts in the story of art are of but little importance except in so far as they throw light upon their style or method, or the line of art which they chose; and on the consequent direction of the progress of art under their influence. Even dates are only of importance to verify strictly the temporal relations in which the facts and the men stood to one another; and to save people from such misconceptions as calling a result the antecedent of its cause, or, inverting the order of master and disciple.

The facts which are of chief importance to a musician are the facts of the art itself; and in that respect the history of an art is fortunate, for the artistic products themselves are facts, about the existence of which there can be no manner of doubt. The inferences which they suggest may vary with different people in accordance with their artistic dispositions and preconceptions; but though the conclusions men draw about art are sometimes as disheartening as they are about every other department of human life, it is at least better to

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face substantial facts, on the chance of understanding them, than to build up a shadowy and unsubstantial scheme of the principles of musical development which has not even the merit of being a conscientious misconception.

The study of music itself in the light of its history and the recognition of its phases of progress and development is of more importance than all that is written about it. But it may be a valid excuse for writing about an art if it helps people to understand it better, and to enjoy it more, and more of it.

The following summary is intended as a help to the understanding of the circumstances which have made music what it is, and of the aims and efforts of the men who tried to convey their ideas by its means, and the relations in which they stood to one another; and it will not fully attain the purpose for which it is intended without reference to the actual musical facts.

The amount of music which is now easily procurable in a published form spreads over such a wide space and illustrates so copiously the various periods, from the crude experiments of early times to the wonderful achievements of recent years, that there will be little difficulty for anyone who wishes to understand the matter thoroughly to become acquainted with the works to which reference is made.

But in order to simplify the study of the actual materials it is intended to publish a second volume shortly, containing illustrations of all periods and styles of art, together with references to authorities and collections, and such particulars as may help to a fuller and more complete study of details than can easily be indicated within the limits of a primer.

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