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The British musicologist Henry Davey (1853-1929) was a noted scholar of the manuscript sources of Tudor music. He published the first edition of *History of English Music* in 1895 with the aim of providing his fellow-musicians with the first clear scholarly account of the full range of English musical achievements. His main focus is the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which he considered the heyday of English music, and he claims that the earliest known free instrumental compositions, as well as the polyphonic style, originated in England during the fifteenth century. In Davey's view, these controversial findings were his most important contribution to general musical knowledge. His work was widely discussed in his own time, attracting both praise and aggressive criticism, and continues to be read with great critical interest today, not least because of its association with the socialist utopianism of Ruskin and Morris.

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HISTORY OF ENGLISH MUSIC.

The image shows a page from a medieval manuscript, likely a choirbook, containing musical notation and Latin lyrics. The page is divided into two columns of music. The left column features a large decorated initial 'E' and a smaller one 'E'. The right column features a large decorated initial 'E' and a smaller one 'E'. The lyrics include 'Elesse benedictum', 'per qui nobis nata est', 'Mater virgo', 'O beata', and 'Atria virgo'.

Left Column (top to bottom):
 - Large decorated initial 'E' containing a coat of arms.
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Elesse benedictum*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *per qui nobis nata est*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Mater virgo*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *O beata*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Atria virgo*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *per qui nobis nata est*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Mater virgo*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *O beata*

Right Column (top to bottom):
 - Large decorated initial 'E' containing a coat of arms.
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Elesse benedictum*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *per qui nobis nata est*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *Mater virgo*
 - Musical staff with lyrics: *O beata*

A CHOIR-BOOK OF HENRY VIII (See p. 95)

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HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH MUSIC.

BY
HENRY DAVEY
(Author of the "Student's Musical History").



LONDON:
J. CURWEN & SONS, 8 & 9 WARWICK LANE, E.C.

1895

P R E F A C E .



A few words concerning the origin of this book are necessary. It was already begun during an illness in 1892, and arrangements were made for its publication. But upon further investigation, especially of the early MSS., I perceived that the wealth of most valuable material still unexamined was far greater than I had suspected; so great, in fact, as to modify my previous opinions concerning English music in the 15th and 16th centuries. What I had previously written had largely to be rejected, and the whole plan of the work was altered; while three years' study has been necessary before I could let the book be printed. A variety of accidents unfortunately prevented a systematic comparison of every proof-sheet with the original sources of information, a test I had intended to apply; should any mistakes have arisen thereby, they will be duly published as they are discovered, and corrected in future editions. The main hindrance, in this and other respects, has, of course, been my living away from London and the other great repositories of MSS.; but I am able in consequence to have a clearer view of the condition of music in the whole country, of our defects and their causes, than I should probably have acquired had I been a London musician, when it would have been difficult or impossible for me to perceive the effects of centralisation upon our musical life.

A minor but a very real hindrance has been the unsystematic indexing of many important publications.

In Bullen's catalogue of the Early English Books in the British Museum, the subject-index under *Music* mentions only the treatises of Bathe, Morley, and Butler, and Barley's "Pathway;" Campion's treatise is put under *Counterpoint*, Ravenscroft's under *Harmony*, while Dowland's translation of Ornithoparcus is concealed under *Singing!* As for the musical compositions (which are included in Bullen's catalogue), almost the only ones I have as yet discovered in the index are Tye's setting of the "Acts of the Apostles," indexed under *Bible*, and Leighton's "Tears or Lamentations of a Sorrowful Soul," indexed under *Sorrowful*. Any one who is making researches, not as yet knowing what he may find, is seriously impeded by these eccentricities, and risks altogether overlooking something of importance. As a proof of this possibility, I may point to the catalogue of the Cambridge University MSS., where the index has a heading *Music*, under which are placed the lute-books and some other MSS.; but the part-book of masses and motets (see p. 94) is not there, though it may be discovered by reading the index through, for it is placed under *Anthems!* In fact, it was only by reading that whole catalogue through that I discovered the valuable MSS. 235, 1354, and 1940; two of these I have mentioned in the Appendix, the other I observed just in time to correct the proof of p. 197. These are by no means the only indexes whose defects have hindered me.

At last, however, I have judged it expedient to let the work appear, without waiting for further discoveries; and English musicians can now obtain a clear and connected idea of the great musical deeds of our forefathers in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. I have given space to the account of works and performances, rather than to biographical details; and some fact not yet published in any History will be found on almost every

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page, until I reach the account of Handel. Doubtless much other material will yet be found; and may throw light on various doubtful points. Another such choir-book as that at Eton would indeed be welcome.

I have, unfortunately, not been able to give much help towards elucidating the obscure origin of composition. Since it is now certain that the polyphonic style was invented in England, it is especially the duty of Englishmen to investigate this matter; as F. X. Haberl wrote in 1885 (*Bausteine fuer Musikgeschichte*, Vol. I, p. 114), "Through the undeniable origination of Polyphony by Dunstable, the interest in England for this period will, perhaps, be quickened, so that the necessary materials for the origin of Polyphony there (no doubt in the period when England invaded France) may be obtained partly from theorists, partly from archives and libraries, with that tranquillity and perseverance which adorn the English race."

This matter should, of course, have been the chief feature of my work; but I have discovered few new facts of importance concerning that period. I have, however, been able to show that the earliest known free instrumental compositions are also English, and this is in some respects the most important addition to general musical knowledge which I have been able to make.

On one point I much fear strong opposition, also misquotation and misapprehension. The standpoint I have taken up regarding the Puritans will, I doubt not, startle and offend very many; and careless readers will not apprehend my statements. Should any one think me wrong, I hope he will set forth his reasons at length; and he may do useful work by issuing a detailed Monograph on the subject.

Some may, perhaps, be surprised at not finding greater space given to the latest English works. When I published my *Student's Musical History*, I found that a large

proportion of critics opened the book at the end, and judged the whole work according to their agreement or disagreement with my opinions concerning living composers. All such will be disappointed in this book, from which, indeed, I should have been glad to exclude all mention of living men.

Objection may be brought, and with reason, to the complete absence of all practical illustrations; but if I had used examples, I should have required a great number, which would have increased the cost of the work to a price beyond the reach of many, and I wished to produce a work which all English musicians would read. Also, as so many of the early compositions are in separate parts, it would have been necessary to postpone the work still longer until I had copied and scored at least some hundreds of pieces from which to make a representative selection. Such a selection can be better made afterwards, when MSS. now unknown are brought to light. I hope to make a systematic examination of all known English works of the 15th and 16th centuries, and, perhaps, to issue a selection of the most important. It is because the early music exists generally in separate parts that I have so seldom inserted critical remarks.

The details of the work call for some allusion. I have endeavoured to condense everything as much as possible, and in archæological matters to simply indicate how those interested in the subject may find what they seek; had I minutely detailed my discoveries, I should have filled several volumes. Especially to facts which have been previously published I have allotted little space. I have thought it advisable, in naming notes, to use the acoustical notation, universal in Germany and always convenient; it is very much simpler to use, for instance, *d''*, than "D on the fourth line of the treble stave." Influence of the German language may, perhaps,

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be detected in the construction of some sentences; and I may also mention that I use the word *Polyphony* (which in England is seldom and not definitely employed) in the restricted technical sense in which Continental musicians and writers use the word, to denote *a style of artistic composition*, not a fortuitous or experimental conjunction of notes such as we may find in some English and French MSS. of the 13th and 14th centuries. To prevent any misunderstanding on this point, I appended a foot-note to p. 44 giving references to Grove's *Dictionary*, where Polyphony is thus defined; but I think it advisable to distinctly state my meaning here also, besides the remarks on p. 75.

As regards authorities for my statements, I have not usually quoted any which are taken from standard works such as Hawkins's and Burney's *Histories*, Grove's *Dictionary*, or Neal's *History of the Puritans*. Other references, especially fresh discoveries, will be found in the Appendix. But the earlier chapters consist so largely of original matter that few authorities are necessary.

I have not attempted to be systematic in spelling names; I prefer archaic forms (such as Banastir, Fayrfax, Whyte, Byrd, Sympson) in naming old musicians, but the variety they used was very great.

I hope that at least some improvement may take place in the attitude of our literary men to music, especially music of the past. It is, indeed, not probable that Macaulay, if writing now, would omit music from his description of the State of England in 1685; nor would Carlyle now write as if Italian Opera and ballet-divertissement constituted the whole music of the 19th century. Yet even lately Mr. Maunde Thompson and Mr. Falconer Madan have written elaborately of Palæography without once mentioning musical MSS.; and our historians of literature still display unpardonable ignorance

of the early songs, while our great Reviews generally employ half-learned amateurs for their occasional articles on music. A Monograph on the connection between English poetry and music in the period from Chaucer to Spenser is very much needed by students of both arts.

I have still remaining the very agreeable task of thanking those who have assisted me. Above and before all I must mention Mr. Taphouse, of Oxford, who, accidentally hearing that I was engaged upon this work, wrote in the kindest manner to place the whole of his magnificent library at my disposal. From the officials of the British Museum (especially from Mr. W. B. Squire and Mr. Hughes-Hughes), of the Bodleian Library, and of the Cambridge University Library, I have received most valuable help bestowed with every courtesy. To the librarians of Eton College, of Sion College, of several colleges at the Universities, and of the Fitzwilliam Museum, my warm thanks are due for permitting access to the treasures under their charge. Dr. F. X. Haberl (whom England must ever gratefully remember for his finally proving that Dunstable invented composition) very kindly sent me the poem discovered by Coussemaker, with his own varying readings, which I have inserted on p. 61. For information sent or obtained through their assistance, I must tender my sincere thanks to Mrs. Arthur Sassoon, Miss Middleton, Mr. Kidson, Dr. Alfred King, Dr. C. Wells, my old and endeared friends Mr. F. Corder and Mr. J. W. Nias, with many another who has rejoiced to add one stone to the work. Nor must I forget the publishers, who have done everything possible to produce the book in a style worthy of its purpose, yet at a price within the reach of all.

Finally, I leave the book, such as it is, to the judgment of the public, and especially of the professional musicians of England. Previously we have had no

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connected account of England's musical achievements; and now that I have undertaken the task, the greatest reward I could obtain would be the knowledge that my fellow-professionals appreciated my endeavours. With the hope that I may obtain that reward, I dedicate this History of English Music to the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

HENRY DAVEY.

GRAND PARADE, BRIGHTON.
August 21st, 1895.

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