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978-1-108-06431-6 - Musical History, Biography, and Criticism: Being a General Survey of Music, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time

George Hogarth

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George Hogarth (1783–1870), music critic and journalist, is also remembered as a friend of Sir Walter Scott and the father-in-law of Charles Dickens. His lengthy writing career included posts as music critic with *The Harmonicon*, the *Morning Chronicle* (where he first met Dickens), the *Evening Chronicle* (which he co-edited), and the *Daily News*. He also served as music critic for *The Illustrated London News* and was secretary to the Philharmonic Society between 1850 and 1864. His account of the first fifty years of the Society has also been reissued in this series. The present work, first published in 1835, is his lively history of music from ancient to modern times, aimed squarely at the general reader. It is couched in ‘simple and perspicuous language, avoiding technical phraseology and abstruse discussions’. The final chapter presents an invaluable first-hand account of contemporary music and musical life in England.

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P R E F A C E

At a period when Music is more and more extensively cultivated, as a branch of polite knowledge, as a powerful aid in the exercises of devotion, and as a rational and elegant recreation in social and domestic life, a work like the present appears to be called for. Dr. Burney's *History of Music*, from its magnitude, is not calculated for general use, and, moreover, does not embrace the last half century,—a most eventful and interesting period of the art. A work upon the plan of Dr. Burney's, the fruit of similar learning and research, equally attractive in its style, and better proportioned in the relative extent of its different parts, would be most welcome to those who are inclined to enter deeply into the study of musical history and antiquities. The minute details, however, which such a work must necessarily contain, would have little interest for a numerous and daily increasing description of readers, whose taste for the art leads them to desire a general knowledge, not only of its present state among ourselves, but of its history in other times and countries.

It is for this class of readers that the present work is intended. The author's object is to give that information respecting the progress of Music, the personal history of the most eminent Musicians, and the present state of the art in this and other countries, which is now looked upon as indispensable to every person of liberal

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attainments. He has endeavoured to use simple and perspicuous language, avoiding technical phraseology and abstruse discussions; these, in truth, being wholly unnecessary in treating of Music, not as an intricate science, but as one of the most beautiful of the Fine Arts. He has entered, as fully as the plan of a concise and popular work would admit of, into an examination of the works of the great masters; endeavouring to illustrate those principles of criticism which are the foundation of sound judgments on musical subjects. His opinions, he knows, are not always in accordance with those which have been advanced by critics superior to himself; and he is very far from having any overweening confidence in his own infallibility. He may have taken narrow views, or (like many of his betters,) may have been sometimes blinded by prejudice. But his opinions have been carefully formed; and any errors that may be laid to their charge are certainly not the result of wilful perversion of judgment.

The following pages contain a view of the state of music among the ancients; an account of its revival in the middle ages; and a history of its progress in Italy, Germany, France, and England, down to the present time. It embraces biographical sketches of the greatest musicians, (the lives of many of whom are full of interest,) and critical remarks on their productions.

It is hardly necessary to say, that the same minuteness of historical detail cannot be expected in this as in a larger work. But, in taking a general survey of the art, the Author's object has been to select its most prominent and important features; and he believes he

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has omitted very few musicians whose labours have materially influenced its progress.

On one interesting topic he has not touched, further than in the way of incidental remark. This is the *national*, or *traditional* music of different countries. But this, as yet, is more a matter of inquiry and speculation than of history. Before a history of national music can be written, multitudes of volumes, unconnected with the subject of music, must be ransacked; and even then the materials will be meagre and unsatisfactory. Travellers are seldom sufficiently versed in music to collect and note down accurately the melodies, or to describe distinctly the musical instruments, and the modes of vocal and instrumental performance, of the countries they visit. A historian of national music must not only spend years in collecting and digesting the fragments of information scattered through innumerable volumes, but, like another Burney, only on a much more extensive scale, must make a series of "Musical Tours" through the remotest regions of the earth.

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