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Ancient and Modern: Volume 1

Thomas Busby

Excerpt

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# MUSIC

AND

## MUSICIANS.

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ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

THE compiler of this work is happy in being able to commence his labours with a subject so honorable to his country, as that of an establishment that no less demonstrates the taste than the liberality of its ROYAL PATRON, and of its munificent founders and supporters.

The Royal Academy of Music, proposed by Lord Burghersh, and instituted under the auspices of the King, was opened on the 18th of March, 1823; and in the beginning of the following year, the pupils, male and female, gave at the Hanover-Square Rooms, by permission of the Directors of the Concerts of Ancient Music, a morning concert (vocal and instrumental), by the various excellence dis-

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played in which, the talents and progress of the students, and the skill and assiduity of the several tutors, were strikingly manifested.

The directors of this national and elegant undertaking, first suggested by a nobleman, who is, himself, no ordinary musician, judiciously appointed Dr. Crotch as *principal* of the *Corps Instructif*, and the master for harmony and composition. This measure was succeeded by that of admitting on the foundation of the establishment a limited number of students, on payment of a small annual stipend. If the present universal taste for music, and the immense sums which are bestowed upon foreign artists, be considered, there will be no reason to doubt of the entire success of this institution; especially if we duly estimate the willingness of the public to encourage all establishments formed for the patriotic purpose of calling forth and maturing British talent.

When the Royal Academy of Music was first projected, the opinion obtained, that such an institution was not calculated for this country; but the success already realized, forms a solid basis for the hope, that the cultivation of the elegant science of music is no less suited to the English, than to any foreign soil: and that the day will arrive when we may be able to boast of possessing as learned and distinguished composers,

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and as able and tasteful executants, as any country.

## THE APOLLONICON.

This curious and magnificent organ, which, for several years, has been exhibited to the public in the great rooms of the ingenious inventors, Messrs. Flight and Robson, has for the basis of its powers, the *cylindric principle*. Working on this, the originators of the *Apollonicon* have not only contrived to produce all the different lights and shades of organic sound, from the most exquisite softness, to the greatest possible degree of tonic force, but have imparted to the treble-pipes of their instrument a mellifluousness, to the tenor portion of its scale a richness, and to its bass extremity a dignity and a power, with which every one is astonished and delighted.

This instrument, by its varied and extraordinary effects, approaches, it would seem, nearer than any other existing congeries of vocal tubes, the organ described by Plato, and his commentator, Proclus, denominated by the Greeks a *Panarmonion*. If, in the ancient machine, every aperture of the innumerable pipes, of the *fistula innumera*, was capable of emitting three or more different notes, the modern instrument possesses the capacity of pouring forth its voluminous and voluble sounds, either automatically, or by the living action of the finger.

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The cylinders employed for the former of these operations, are three in number, and each of them is no less than six feet in circumference. By their revolving motion, all the mechanical powers of the complicated machine are brought into play; and the effect of the combined means employed is tremendous. But this is only a portion of the result of this mechanic and vocal frame. It is furnished with six distinct collateral sets of keys, which are simultaneously performed upon by as many different performers. These, acting in concert, develop the various powers of the organic construction, and operate on the nerves and feelings of the auditors in a truly surprising manner. The external dimensions of the Apollonicon are about twenty-four feet in height, and twenty in breadth. The expense of erecting this instrument, which was built under the royal patronage, is stated to have been more than ten thousand pounds.

## THE PANHARMONICON.

In the year 1814, Mr. Maelzel, the ingenious inventor of the *Panharmonicon*, announced to the British public the intended exhibition of his curious novelty, in a placard of which the following is an exact copy:—

“Mr. Maelzel begs leave to inform the nobility, gentry, and the public in general, that he

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will have the honor to exhibit every day (except Fridays) at eight in the evening, his *grand Panharmonicon* and his *Automatical Trumpeter*, which have never yet been seen in this country, and of which he is the inventor. The Trumpeter plays—

“1. *The Signals of the Cavalry.*

“2. *A March, composed by Mr. Hummel.*

“3. *An Allegro, by Mr. Pleyel.*

“*The two latter with accompaniments.*

“He will further represent to the view of the public, a *Hebe*, a sublime picture, made transparent by a double effect of light; after which the *Panharmonicon* will execute,

“1st, *The Overture to Lodoiska, by M. Cherubini.*

“2d, *A Military Symphony, by Mr. Haydn.*

“Afterwards will be seen, a *great city on fire*. The view is taken from the citadel, between which and the city the spectator observes several military corps filing off with their military music, which is executed by mechanism. On the left side is very distinctly to be seen the progress the fire has made, and the natural motions of men, horses, carriages, &c. &c. The representation is faithful, and accompanied with appropriate music.

“The whole will terminate by,

“1st, *The Grand Symphony of Mr. Beethoven, so well known and admired in London.*

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*“2d, An Echo by Mr. Cherubini.**“3d, Two French Marches, by Mr. Mocheles.*  
which will be executed by the *Panharmo-*  
*nicon.*”

## SINGING AT SIGHT.

In 1741, Handel, proceeding to Ireland, was detained for some days at Chester, in consequence of the weather. During this time, he applied to Mr. Baker, the organist, to know whether there were any choir-men in the Cathedral, who could sing *at sight*, as he wished to prove some books that had been hastily transcribed, by trying the choruses. Mr. Baker mentioned some of the best singers in Chester, and, among the rest, a printer of the name of Janson, who had a good bass voice, and was one of the best musicians in the choir. A time was fixed for this private rehearsal at the Golden Falcon, where Handel had taken up his residence; when, on trying the chorus in the Messiah,

“And with his stripes we are healed,”

poor Janson, after repeated attempts, failed completely. Handel got enraged, and after abusing him in five or six different languages, exclaimed in broken English, “You schautrel, tit not you dell me dat you could sing at soite?” “Yes, sir,” said the printer, “and so I can; but not at *first sight*.”

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## ROYAL PRECEPT.

When Farinelli was at Venice, he was honoured with the most marked attention from the Emperor Charles VI.; but of all the favours he received from that monarch, he used to say, that he valued none more than an admonition which he received from him on his style of singing. His imperial majesty condescended to tell him one day, with great mildness and affability, that his singing was, indeed, supernatural, that he neither moved nor stood still like any other mortal; but “these gigantic strides,” continued his majesty, “these never-ending notes and passages, only surprise, and it is now time for you to please; you are too lavish of the gifts with which nature has endowed you; if you wish to reach the heart, you must take a more plain and simple road.” These few words brought about an entire change in Farinelli’s singing; from this time he mixed the pathetic with the spirited, the simple with the sublime, and, by these means, delighted as well as astonished every hearer.

## BALLAD-SINGING DIVINE.

Dr. Richard Corbet, bishop of Norwich, was a great humourist, both in his words and actions. “After he was D.D.” says Aubrey, “he sang ballads at the Crosse at Abingdon. On a mar-

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ket day, he and some of his comrades were at the tavern by the Crosse (which, by the way, was then the finest in England). A ballad singer complained that he had no custome; he could not put off his ballads. The jolly Doctor put off his gowne, and put on the ballad singer's leathern jacket, and being a handsome man, and having a rare full voice, he presently had a great audience, and vended a great number of copies."

## SENSE AND SOUND.

It is related of Haydn, that, when about to compose, "noting down his principal idea or theme, and choosing the keys through which he wished it to pass, he imagined a little romance which might furnish him with musical sentiments and colours." The strict connexion which thus subsisted between the poetical and the musical imagination of Haydn, was of great advantage to him in his compositions. He thus introduced into his melodies a sentiment and character which we in vain look for in those of his predecessors.

The musical idea, though originally vigorous and impressive, may be clothed in phraseology so clumsy, as to deprive it of all elegance. This phraseology is as capable of improvement, as the modes of expression in poetic language; and in the airs of Haydn and Mozart, we dis-



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cover that beautiful connexion, that perpetual variety of expression, and that polished elegance of manner, which are so rarely found even in the compositions of Corelli, Handel, Gluck, or Arne.

## BALANCING ACCOUNTS.

Jarnowick, the composer, being in the music shop of Bailleux, in Paris, accidentally broke a pane of glass. "Those who break windows must pay for them," said the music-seller. "Right," replied the musician; "How much is it?" "Thirty sous." "There's a three franc piece." "But I have no change," answered Bailleux. "Never mind that," rejoined Jarnowick, "we are now quits, then,"—and immediately dashed his cane through a second square.

THE ACOUCRYPTOPHONE, OR ENCHANTED  
LYRE.

This perfectly novel musical invention, which, during its public exhibition in London, in 1822, excited so much surprise among the votaries of the harmonic art, forms one of the most beautiful and striking experiments that has ever been witnessed, in the philosophy of sound. It constitutes one of the practical applications of a series of original and interesting acoustical investigations, and reflects much credit on the science and talents of Mr. C. Wheatstone, its ingenious inventor. The description of the ex-

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hibition of this musical curiosity is briefly as follows :—

The *form* of an antique lyre of large dimensions was freely suspended from the ceiling by a silken cord. The instrument was not really furnished with any wires, but only a representation of them in steel rods. The company being seated, the inventor applied a key to a small aperture in the body of the instrument, giving it a few turns representative of the act of winding it up, and music was instantly heard, as if proceeding from the suspended lyre. As the sounds continued, they varied in their effect, and seemed to form a combination of the visible lyre with a conical piano-forte and a dulcimer. By these united tones, a variety of difficult compositions were executed; and the whole performance occupied about an hour.

This singular experiment was founded on the general principle by which sound is conducted, and the application of which is certainly capable of being carried to a much greater extent; and might be made to include even the mixed and multifarious tones of a complete orchestra.

## MUSICAL CHINESE LOVE FEASTS.

The Chinese have musical love feasts, in which the amusements of singing and performing on musical instruments have a much larger share than those of eating and drinking. At