

expresses the delight of all the countries of Europe in music which for a long time almost monopolized the stage.

The charge of being a mere tune-spinner, the denial of invention, depth, and character, have been common watch-words in the mouths of critics wedded to other schools. But Rossini's place in music stands unshaken by all assaults. The vivacity of his style, the freshness of his melodies, the richness of his combinations, made all the Italian music that preceded him pale and colorless. No other writer revels in such luxury of beauty, and delights the ear with such a succession of delicious surprises in melody.

Henry Chorley, in his "Thirty Years' Musical Recollections," rebukes the bigotry which sees nothing good but in its own kind: "I have never been able to understand why this (referring to the Rossinian richness of melody) should be contemned as necessarily false and meretricious—why the poet may not be allowed the benefit of his own period and time—why a lover of architecture is to be compelled to swear by the *Dom* at Bamberg, or by the Cathedral at Monreale—that he must abhor and denounce Michel Angelo's church or the Baths of Diocletian at Rome—why the person who enjoys 'Il Barbiere' is to be denounced as frivolously faithless to Mozart's 'Figaro'—and as incapable of comprehending 'Fidelio,' because the last act of 'Otello' and the second of 'Guillaume Tell' transport him into as great enjoyment of its kind as do the duet in the cemetery between 'Don Jaun' and 'Leporello' and the 'Prisoners' Chorus.' How much good, genial pleasure has not the world lost in music, owing to the pitting of styles one against the other! Your true traveler will be all the more alive to the beauty of Nuremberg because he has looked out over the 'Golden Shell' at Palermo; nor delight in Rhine and Danube the less because he has seen the glow of a southern sunset over the broken bridge at Avignon."

As grand and true as are many of the essential elements in the Wagner school of musical composition, the bitterness and narrowness of spite with which its upholders have pursued the memory of Rossini is equally offensive and unwarrantable. Rossini, indeed, did not revolutionize the forms of opera as transmitted to him by his predecessors, but he reformed and perfected them in various notable ways. Both in comic and serious opera, music owes much to Rossini. He substituted genuine singing for the endless recitative of which the Italian opera before him largely consisted; he brought the bass and baritone voices to the front, banished the pianoforte from the orchestra, and laid down the principle that the singer should deliver the notes written for him without additions of his own. He gave the chorus a much important part than before, and elaborated the concerted music, especially in the *finales*, to a degree of artistic beauty before unknown in the Italian opera. Above all, he made the operatic orchestra what it is to-day. Every new instrument that was invented Rossini found a place for in his brilliant scores, and thereby incurred the warmest indignation of all writers of the old school. Before him the orchestras had consisted largely of strings, but Rossini added an equally imposing element of the brasses and reeds. True, Mozart had forestalled Rossini in many if not all these innovations, a fact which the Italian cheerfully admitted; for, with the simple frankness characteristic of the man, he

always spoke of his obligations to and his admiration of the great German. To an admirer who was burning incense before him, Rossini said, in the spirit of Cimerosa quoted elsewhere: "My 'Barber' is only a bright farce, but in Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro' you have the finest possible masterpiece of musical comedy."

With all concessions made to Mozart as the founder of the forms of modern opera, an equally high place must be given to Rossini for the vigor and audacity with which he made these available, and impressed them on all his contemporaries and successors. Though Rossini's self love was battered by constant adulation, his expressions of respect and admiration for such composers as Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, and Cherubini display what a catholic and generous nature he possessed. The judgment of Ambros, a severe critic, whose bias was against Rossini, shows what admiration was wrung from him by the last opera of the composer: "Of all that particularly characterises Rossini's early operas nothing is discoverable in 'Tell'; there is none of his usual mannerism: but, on the contrary, unusual richness of form and careful finish of detail, combined with grandeur of outline. Meretricious embellishment, shakes, runs, and cadences are carefully avoided in this work, which is natural and characteristic throughout; even the melodies have not the stamp and style of Rossini's earlier times, but only their graceful charm and lively coloring."

Rossini must be allowed to be unequalled in genuine comic opera, and to have attained a distinct greatness in serious opera, to be the most comprehensive and at the same time the most national composer of Italy, to be in short the Mozart of this country. After all has been admitted and regretted—that he gave too little attention to musical science; that he often neglected to infuse into his work the depth and passion of which it was easily capable; that he placed too high a value on merely brilliant effects *ad captandum vulgus*—there remains the fact that his operas embody a mass of imperishable music, with the art itself. Musicians of every country now admit his wondrous grace, his fertility and freshness of invention, his matchless treatment of the voice, his effectiveness in arrangement of the orchestra. He can never be made a model, for his genius had too much spontaneity and individuality of color. But he impressed and modified music hardly less than Gluck, whose tastes and methods were entirely antagonistic to his own. That he should have retired from the exercise of his art while in the full flower of his genius is a perplexing fact. No stranger story is recorded in the annals of art with respect to a genius who filled the world with his glory, and then chose to vanish, "not unseen." On finishing his crowning stroke of genius and skill in "William Tell," he might have said with Shakespeare's enchanter. Prospero:

" . . . But this magic
I here abjure, and when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff—
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book."