

Music and the Home

Suited Musical Tastes

There is a tendency among singers at all times to sing a class of songs which are above and beyond the musical tastes of the public. They seem to be more afraid of the criticism of other singers than they are of leaving their hearers unsatisfied. Consequently they make up programmes which other singers must acknowledge to be high class and difficult, but which the average hearer finds meaningless and tiresome. As soon as a singer, or instrumentalist for that matter, selects music for the masses he gets accused of playing to the "gallery." Well, the gallery is a very important part of the concert hall, and the artist who fails to win the hearts of the gallery eventually fails as a public artist.

We are not pleading for poor music and low art. We merely ask if it is not better to lead the public gradually by music it can understand than to force on it music for which it has not had the preliminary culture? The singer who selects the best foreign songs in foreign languages, and the latest and most advanced and difficult British or American songs, is also selecting his audience. He is limiting his influence and his popularity to hearers who have enough musical culture to enjoy his selected songs. The artist who would win the applause of the great public must select what that public can enjoy.

It is certain that if he cannot get the ear of the public he will never become a great producer of grain for the mill, he will never help to raise the national taste. He will never become a great producer of grain for the million by cultivating his little hothouse flower garden.

A Boys' Operatic School

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the "operatic enterprises" in Great Britain is that of the school in the Isle of Dogs, tucked away in one of London's poorest slums, Poplar, where a study of opera is a regular part of the curriculum. In this surprising school, performances of operas are given by the boys, that is to say, the important parts are arranged for boys' voices, sung and acted by them, and the whole knit together and made lucid to young people by descriptive talks by the master, who is responsible for the music of the school.

"Faust" and "Tannhauser" have already been done in this way, and "The Magic Flute" is another production.

Music and the Early Egyptians

We first hear of music in the land of the pyramids at the beginning of the nineteenth dynasty, about 1350 B.C., when the power of Egypt, which had been steadily mounting during the eighteenth dynasty, had now reached its height under Rameses II. Passing down the crowded streets, where, through the open shop-fronts, we may see the artisans in thousands at work at their laborious daily tasks, let us go in quest of music. We may traverse the busy streets of Thebes or Heliopolis in vain, and it is not till the shades of evening fall, and the entertainments of

the wealthy begin, that we discover the existence of music in Egypt at all. We have to penetrate some brilliantly lighted hall full of guests and attendant slaves; and at the far end of the luxurious room we shall see a band of men and women playing on their instruments, amid all the clatter of dishes and the chatter of the guests. They are all slaves, and before every piece they play they do obeisance to the master of the house. The business of these slaves was to attend the banquets of the great, and play and sing for the amusement of the company. We find them constantly represented in the sculptures in groups of from two to eight persons—some women and some men—playing on various instruments, as the harp, pipe, flute, etc.

Early Egyptians and Music

When dealing with Egypt of the early days let us not forget that in that land of hieroglyphics, when their history was carved on stone, that very frequently the sculptors who had only a limited space in which to express themselves sculptured one or a few men to do the duty of hundreds or thousands. That is why one harper or one piper is made to represent an entire band.

As a matter of fact a full Egyptian orchestra was composed of twenty harps, eight lutes, five or six lyres, six or seven double pipes, five or six flutes, one or two pipes (rarely used), two or three tambourines (seldom used). If vocalists were added, which was not necessarily the rule, they would number about three-fourths as many as the harpers.

The harp was the foundation of the Egyptian orchestra. Now the harp is essentially anti-chromatic. It is plain, therefore, that the Egyptian harmony was purely diatonic, such a thing as modern modulation utterly unknown, and every piece from beginning to end played in the same key. The compass of the orchestra was considerable and may have been nearly as great as our own, even though not possible used for harmonies.

Children and Music

As one goes back in literature and art to ancient civilizations the child, its appearance, its feelings, its modes of expression are less taken into account. Only slowly does he seem to have come into his own in art. With the ancient Greeks the child had a very small role, witness the part played by the young Astyanax in that passage of the Iliad so touching but so short, if one considers the whole length of that immortal poem.

In the newest of all the arts the same tendency is to be noted. Music is as little prone as other arts to add to its language or its representations the resources contained in the action of childhood. However, the relation of children with art and especially with music has been increasingly great during the last fifty years. The relation of children with music may be of three sorts: Either it may be music for children, or by children, or music in which children are playing the part of inspirers.



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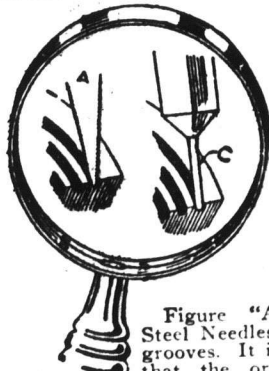


Figure "A"—Ordinary Steel Needles fitting record grooves. It is quite logical that the ordinary needle becomes of larger diameter at the engagement point as the needle wears down (owing to its taper form) and

thus tends to wear off the edges of the groove of the record. Figure "C"—Sonora semi-permanent needle, with parallel sides, which fits the record groove accurately always while wearing, and prolongs life of record.

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