
Richard Wagner's Theories of Music

By E. Gryzanowski



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Richard Wagner's Theories of Music.

(1)

THE whole apparatus of æsthetics may be divided into two parts, one of which is knowable, controllable, and therefore perfectible, while the other is transcendent, dependent on the cooperation of unknown agencies, and therefore exempt from the laws of progressive evolution. Hence it follows that when the future of music is discussed, or when a man like Richard Wagner announces himself as a reformer of music, such prospects and such a reform can refer only to the technical part of music, to the methods of musical utterance and to the means of musical expression, not to the idea or sentiment which craves utterance and expression through the artist. It is more than ever important to remember this. The "music of the future," which for more than thirty years has attracted public attention, may as music be bad or good. It matters little whether its composer has succeeded in realizing his own aspirations. As a thinker and writer Wagner has a right to be heard, and we cannot judge him with even an approach to fairness if we found our verdict on nothing but the success of his operas. Before analyzing other people's works and thoughts we must analyze our own notions on these subjects. Neither the fanatic nor the scoffer ever does this, and the consequence is that the hero, half spoilt and half embittered as he is, remains a stranger among his contemporaries, thinking himself in the right, since everybody else—friend, foe, or neutral—has chosen to be in the wrong.

The future of music or of any other art can never be inferred from its past. The apparition of a genius is incalculable, notwithstanding the pretended hereditariness of the quality called genius. It does not even depend on the progressive phases of human consciousness. It seems, as Voltaire has it, a sacred torch

"Que le ciel bienfaisant, dans cette nuit profonde,

Allume quelquefois pour le bonheur du monde."

[54]

Yet the history of art consists mainly in an irregular succession of such flashes or sparks. Each is followed by a short but strictly evolutionary period of imitation and emulation, conducive to new standards, forms, and methods, which, in their turn, may fertilize new ground. Thus the history of art looks somewhat like the starry sky; we find nebulae and empty spaces, clusters of stars and constellations, irregularly arranged without the slightest attempt at compensation or evenness of distribution. In the history of music we have just passed through a most brilliant constellation, large enough and rich enough to stud a whole century with its sparkling gems. If the law of compensation were applicable to these phenomena we might prognosticate a lull of similar length, but as it is not applicable we can prognosticate nothing. All we might say is that, granted a general fitness of things, it seems improbable that the age of steam and electricity should be an age of art. *Non omnia possumus omnes*, the centuries might say; let each have its specialty. But even this is more than we would venture to assert, and, the future of an art being absolutely uncertain, we do not see how any art can be created, revived, or reformed at will. Chromography has been started, the ceramic "art" has been revived, and Xylography has been brought to great perfection; but these are crafts, not arts, and belong to the province of the performer whose office it is to reproduce forms created by others or possibly by himself in so far as he may happen to be also an artist.

A glance at the history of music shows us that in one sense music is a modern art, in another the oldest of all arts. It may, for aught we know, be the twin-sister of speech, which

Hegel calls the oldest art of man. No doubt it must have remained for ages in a most primitive condition, and even during the heroic or mythical age, when symbolic hieroglyphs and written characters were invented for language, music was allowed to remain without any proper notation. All we know about the beginnings of this art is that even before the dawn of history, the exigencies of life had called into existence certain forms of music, such as the war-song, the dance-tune, the epic recitative, the religious chant, and that each of these had its proper instrument and technical means of expression. But that even in these most primitive forms of utterance music must have had great power over the [55] human soul, is clearly shown by the fact that such power was attributed to it by the earliest legends. The Orphic legends could never have originated when they did if at the time the soul-stirring power of music had not been a generally admitted fact which required exaggeration for its adequate expression, and we must further conclude that the then recognized effects of music were not only exciting and inspiring, but also, and to a far greater extent, soothing, consoling, and refining. When Orpheus sang to his lyre, the stones moved and shaped themselves into walls and edifices, the beasts of the desert became tame and gentle, the lion and the lamb sat side by side while listening to the strains of music, and Cerberus himself was cowed at last and powerless to defend the gates of Hades against the unarmed yet irresistible intruder. There is a deep meaning in these charming myths. No other art can boast of such a legendary past, and of Music alone it may be said that she rules over the hearts of men by right divine.

Many centuries had to elapse before music, even without the aid of a written notation, could become audible to us through tradition. The Gregorian chants have been faithfully handed down to us, while the popular airs and love-songs, though widely spread by migrating troubadours, have not survived to bear witness against those who think that music is a modern art. The invention of a musical notation by Guido of Arezzo was certainly of the very highest importance under these circumstances, and it is quite correct to say that with it alone a systematic cultivation of music began to be possible; but this invention, though reacting powerfully, through its consequences, on the art itself, referred, after all, only to its technical externals; in other words, it was not necessary for its inventor to be himself a musical genius or a great composer. There is, however, another invention, or, more strictly speaking, another phenomenon in the history of music, which affects the essence of music itself, and which divides the history of this art into two most thoroughly different epochs. It is the appearance, the discovery rather than the invention, of musical *tonality*. The music composed on this principle is to the older music very much as chemistry is to alchemy, or science is to scholasticism. This principle implies that all the notes of a melody must be considered as referring to, and dependent on, a common centre which is their [56] keynote, and which, in token of its dominion, must be made the starting-point and the conclusion of that piece of music. The whole modern doctrine of harmony, counterpoint, and composition in general is founded on this principle of tonality. Without it a melody would be a senseless succession of notes, pleasing only in so far as each successive interval may be pleasing. Through tonality alone a melody becomes a definite whole, a *unum e pluribus*, tonality being that which binds notes together by giving them a common centre. This centre is to the plurality of notes what self-consciousness is to the plurality of sensations; it gives a soul to music,—not a soul in the sense of sentiment, but a soul in the sense of reason. Thus the introduction of tonality has *intellectualized* music, and has given rise to a science of music, the truths of which are as independent of the phases of musical art as the validity of the rules of perspective are independent of the æsthetic leanings of the various schools of painting. This intellectualization found its highest expression in the *Fugue*, which still holds a respected place among the accepted forms of church music, while in secular music the same process soon led to a stiff formalism quite incompatible with the genial spirit of artistic freedom. We know that modern music has most successfully reasserted its rights and liberties. Pedantic

rules have gradually been set aside or greatly mitigated, and the divine art, which seemed to be in some danger of degenerating into a piece of mechanism, has shown, through Gluck and Mozart, Auber and Rossini, that it has a life of its own, and that its capacities can neither be calculated nor regulated by theory. The climax of this reassertion we find, according to Wagner, in Beethoven. He calls Beethoven, rather fantastically perhaps, *die Menschwerdung des Mechanismus*, by which he means that in the works of Beethoven we recognize the highest efforts of a mechanized art to become human again. But these noble efforts were not supported by Beethoven's successors. A relapse into mechanism has taken place. Meyerbeer is but a scene-shifter in the eyes of Wagner, and as to the countless imitators of Beethoven, Wagner thinks that they know how to compose respectable quartettes, but that their individualities are far too small to fill the mighty moulds they have inherited from their master. If Beethoven impresses Wagner "as a man who has something to tell us, but cannot clearly communicate it to us, his modern followers [57] appear to be people who tell us at great length, and sometimes with charming eloquence, that they have nothing whatever to say to us."

This, then, is, according to Wagner, the present state of things, which, through his efforts, is to cease. A brighter future is in store for us, and without waiting for posterity to prove his words, the prophet has turned reformer, and is ready to introduce us into the new era at once.

"Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatus?"

Before examining Wagner's revolutionary doctrines, we are in justice bound to state, at the outset of this inquiry, that he does not claim to be a reformer of music as a distinct and independent art. He does not introduce a new principle like that of tonality; he has not discovered any new germ belonging to the nature and essence of music that had remained hidden and forgotten in the worldly, struggle for applause, but which, when brought to light, might originate new standards of musical beauty or induce new powers of æsthetic perception. We can find no passage in Wagner's writings expressive of such claims, nor does his music, when considered as mere sound, differ so widely from the music of other modern composers that it could be said to belong to an altogether new order of music, marking a new era in the history of the art. We do not know whether Wagner himself is conscious of this, but every impartial reader and hearer must perceive at once that Wagner's reform does not refer to music as such, but to one particular form of art, which, being a *compound* form, cannot even be called a form of music, but a complex of several arts, among which music, though hitherto considered to be the principal, can, according to Wagner, only hold the second place. Wagner's so-called reform of music is *the reform of the opera* and of all its constituent elements.

We shall begin by briefly enumerating Wagner's fundamental theories and his proposed reforms. It will then be seen that these theories and reforms can be divided into groups corresponding to our divisions of the æsthetic process itself; that there are reforms concerning the relations between hearer and performer, reforms concerning the performance and its technical accessories, reforms concerning the relation between the performer and the [58] composer, reforms concerning the technical methods of composition, and reforms concerning the relations between the artists whose joint work the opera is, especially between the composer and the poet. To these must be added Wagner's theories about dramatic poetry, which are interesting enough. But about music pure and simple, about the standards of musical beauty and the improvement of æsthetic culture, Wagner has nothing new to tell us, and we shall soon understand the reasons of this when we hear what position Wagner assigns to music in relation to dramatic poetry, and, for aught we know, to poetry in general.

Following the opposite order of discussion, Wagner begins by saying that *it lies in the nature of music to be, not the aim, but the means of expression*. Therefore, in the coupling of

poetry and music, called opera, the drama being the aim and the music being the means, the latter has to be adapted to the former, not (as is the case in libretto writing) the former to the latter. This is the fundamental principle on which the whole scheme of the reformer is based, and it is, according to Wagner, so obvious and self-evident that he apologizes for proclaiming a mere truism with such emphasis. It would be dishonest to withhold, even for one moment, our own dissent from this doctrine; we shall have to say more about it hereafter, but we gladly admit its plausibility. The disregard of this principle having caused the decay and death of the modern opera, the opera can only revive through its revindication. The poet must be emancipated from the composer, the composer from the performer, the singer from the orchestra, and all from the tyranny of the public. As it is, the applause of the public tempts the performer to gratify low tastes instead of acting up to the artist's standards; the performer by selfishly showing off his personal attractions forces an uninteresting and irrelevant fact upon the attention of the hearer and generally disfigures the composer's work or veils his intentions; and the composer, thus doubly ill-treated by the performer, tyrannizes, in his turn, over the poet, whom he forces to write contemptible librettos instead of dramas, and to shape his verse according to the requirements of the conventional forms of music. The poet, then, the slave of the servant, of the *servi servorum*, is now to become the king of kings, and it is not too much to say that the much-abused music of the future turns out, on closer examination, to be the dramatic poetry of the future.

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Wagner is particularly explicit in his instructions to the poet, and the second part of his work, which relates exclusively to the reform of dramatic poetry, is justly considered by the author as his literary and philosophical masterpiece. It is brimful of thought, and lifts the reader to the pure heights of æsthetics, without dimming his sight by clouds of transcendental nonsense.

"All arts," says Wagner, "when selfishly isolated, can only address themselves to our imagination," not to our senses. This means that each art taken separately has but a narrow range of expression. Even the plastic arts, which convey these impressions apparently through the eye alone, are powerless to express motion, the most important element of art, except through allusions which would remain unintelligible to us without the aid of our imagination. Descriptive and narrative literature requires the service of the eye only for the reading, not for the perception of the images described and facts narrated, which must be done by our imagination. And as to music, which can express only sentiment, and even that only vaguely, it would seem, according to this standard, the least independent and most helpless of all the arts. There is, according to Wagner, but one form of art capable of conveying all its meanings and intentions through the senses, and without the untrustworthy and often dangerous aid of our imagination. That form is the musical *drama*. It has all the known means of artistic expression at its disposal, and is therefore "the art *par excellence*." Not that Wagner advocates the mechanical juxtaposition of arts. He condemns even the melodrama as a mere mixture of speech and music which run parallel instead of coalescing, as they do in the opera, into a new unit which is neither speech nor music, but music spoken or speech sung.

And what are the things to be expressed by this great art which is so rich in means of expression? Action, of course,—human action; not a mere piece cut from that endless string of actions which we call history, nor a succession of such small doings as constitute the events of private life. The actors of history are princes and soldiers, the actors of private life accidental personalities. There the costumes, here the plot, may interest us, but we find human characters fit to be represented as centres of dramatic action, according to Wagner, neither in history nor in private life. The plot may be the ripening process of a character, [60] but the drama cares nothing for development, which it leaves to the novel; it wants ready-made characters, and only such among the possible types of human nature as are æsthetically

interesting. Wagner admits that private life is but "the sediment of history." When viewed in this relation, the *bourgeois* is transfigured into the citizen, and the citizen may become a dramatic hero. But the multitude of political detail, which is the negation of dramatic unity, is apt to overflow and to destroy its frame, and the citizen is far more likely to become a hero of the hustings than a hero of the stage. Modern literature, in fact, tends far more towards journalistic dilution than towards dramatic condensation. Life itself is becoming easier and more shallow, and with its contrasts and conflicts the tragic element is gradually disappearing from its surface.

The prospects of dramatic art would be altogether hopeless under these circumstances, if Wagner had not discovered that that which threatens art with extinction may still be made available for tragic purposes. Napoleon said to Goethe: "What fate was to the antique world, politics are to our modern world." To escape fate, which is nothing but natural necessity misunderstood, the Greeks founded the political state, which is necessity willed and enforced by man. And as this was the origin of the Greek tragedy, there is no reason why the opposite process might not lead to similar results in our own days. The state is Wagner's Carthage. It has to be destroyed, not violently, but gradually. We fly from the compelling state no longer to fate, but to the natural, the purely human, and by asserting, not our individuality as such, but what is purely human in it, against the state, we make tragedy. The struggle between the written and the unwritten law, between ethics and morals, between custom and truth, between order and passion, can only cease with the existence of the state. The complete destruction of the state would be the complete revindication of human nature, but as the destruction must always be attempted and can never be complete, the process which generates the tragic must be an everlasting one. Even retrospectively it is apparently eternal, and the endless task of the future we find achieved in the remotest past. Socrates destroyed the state, and his own death, because tragical, does not shock or distress us. Antigone defied the state and died, but Kreon, the [61] personification of the state, "became man" again on seeing his son expire on Antigone's grave.

Thus, and in this sense, we find myth to be the Alpha and the Omega of history. It is its beginning and its end, just as sentiment is the beginning and the end of reason. Myth, when sprung from the depths of human consciousness, must renew and reproduce itself forever amid the influences of actual life, and such a myth, when fitly and intelligibly embodied in a drama, is the highest work a poet can achieve.

All this refers to the poetical conception and is purely æsthetical, though it belongs to literary, not to musical, æsthetics. When we come to the consideration of the principles which, according to Wagner, ought to guide the poet in his written utterance of the idea thus conceived, we become at once aware that we have been led into a domain no longer purely literary, but forming a kind of neutral ground between absolute poetry and absolute music. The poet writes in verse, not in prose, and verse properly declaimed and not scanned, that is to say, accentuated according to the real meaning of the words, not according to a fictitious prosodic value of its syllables, is in itself a sort of melody which Wagner calls *verse-melody*. Verse differs from prose in terseness; in prose the rhetorical accents, that is to say, the essentials, are few and far between, the elimination of non-essentials causes a crowding of accents in verse, but it can hardly ever happen that these accents are equal in intensity throughout the sentence, or that their maxima and minima should alternate in regular periods like the so-called long and short syllables of a *metre*. There being no periodicity in the rhetorical accents and sub-accent, and there being a fixed periodicity in the metrical accent, it follows that declamation and metre are antagonistic to each other. Wagner does not seem to be aware of the peculiar charm which this antagonism may give to the verse-melody, in skilful declamation, but he is unquestionably right in saying that in musical song the prosodic metre is lost. The bar, one might say, corresponds to the foot of the metre, and the pauses to

the *cæsura* of the verse, and there are further analogies to be found in the natural limitation of all rhythm, whether musical or spoken, to two fundamental forms, — the even and the odd, the binal and the ternal. We cannot pass over more than two unaccentuated syllables, so that iambics and [62] dactyls, and, of course, their variations—the trochæus, the anapæst, and the amphibrachys — are the only possible constituent elements of a rhythmic sentence, whether sung or spoken. Notwithstanding this analogy, we are bound to admit the fact that, with the exception of the church choral and the dramatic recitative, modern music ignores and effaces the verse, so that, without hearing the actual words and repeating them without the music, one can rarely, if ever, recognize the metre of the verse through the rhythm of the music.

Modern languages have, according to Wagner, no real prosody, and consequently no metre. The accent is a rhetorical, not a metrical, necessity, and the verse owes its existence to the physiological necessity of drawing breath. The French and the Italians seem to know this, their verse being a string of a fixed number of syllables without the, slightest reference to prosody or accent. But as all external or audible difference between prose and verse would thus disappear, the ear was conciliated by the invention of the *rhyme*, which has the additional advantage that the first rhyme, by inducing the expectation of the second, insures and enhances the attention of the hearer. The whole contrivance, however, appears to Wagner thoroughly childish. To accentuate a mere terminal syllable in a word whose radical remains unaccentuated, and in a verse where nothing can be accentuated, and to do so with the sole intention of tickling the hearer's languid ear, may well be called a frivolous proceeding; but Wagner does not tell us on what grounds he would condemn the institution of the rhyme in those languages in which not the terminals but the radicals form almost always the accentuated part of the rhyme. Here too, however, we must agree with him in admitting that the rhyme is generally lost in music. Rhyme implies not only the identity of the two vowels, but that of the following consonants. But in song the most audible part of a compound syllable, besides its vowel, is not the terminal consonant, but the consonant preceding the vowel. The terminal consonant may react on the vowel by predetermining its length or intensity, but the longer the singer dwells on the vowel, the less distinctly audible will be the terminal consonants, and an essential element of the rhyme must thus be lost. The initial consonant, on the contrary, can never be lost in song; we hear it with, if not before, the [63] vowel; it is its countenance or physiognomy, and addresses itself to that part of our sense of hearing which Wagner fantastically calls "the eye of our hearing." Granting, now, that our ear is fond of repetition, Wagner would gratify that desire, not by means of the ordinary rhyme, but by means of *alliteration*, which implies the identity of nothing but the initial consonants, that is to say, identity of countenance in the words. These words, which may be two or three or even more, must all occur in the same verse whose accentuated or essential parts they are. They should express things either congenial or antagonistic, rather than indifferent to each other. "Sweet songsters soar" would be an alliteration of the former, "heaven and hell" of the latter, kind. The three s's would induce the composer to remain in the same key; the two h's, however, belonging to two opposites, just as the note C is common to the widely different keys of G and A flat, would indicate the necessity of a sudden modulation. The German language is particularly rich in proverbial expressions where alliteration takes the place of rhyme, and Wagner may not be wrong in considering it as the only form of rhyme compatible with the genius of the German language. It is certainly the only form of rhyme which is not lost in song.

The external characteristics of ordinary verse are its metre and its rhyme. The metre, as we have seen, is partly lost in declamation and entirely effaced in song, while the rhyme, though perfectly preserved in declamation, spoils declamation by enforcing false accents, and is almost entirely lost in melismatic song. And since both verse-melody and song-melody are by their very nature forced to ignore the metre and the rhyme, the only proper form of musical

poetry would seem to be that peculiar kind of rhythmic and alliterative prose which forms the text of the poet's own operas.

The faithful musical rendering of the verse-melody is the music of the future. So Wagner tells us, implicitly at least, when he calls this verse-melody "the intelligible tie between word and sound," "the offspring of music wedded to poetry," excelling either parent in dignity and beauty. But how is this musical verse to be obtained from the data furnished by the poet? We saw that this verse-melody consists in a succession of graduated accents and alliterative sounds. It is, therefore, predetermined by the sense of the words, and Wagner adds, that it must, in [64] its turn, predetermine its musical intonation. But if this is so, what is to become of musical spontaneity? What of the artistic dignity of the man whom we call composer, but who would seem to be nothing more than a translator in the poet's service? Wagner requests us not to be alarmed. Self-limitation and self-denial are fictions which he is too wise to expect from any mortal, and to enforce them would be to alter their nature. They are possible only through love, and *love* is the relation which, according to Wagner, ought to exist between poet and composer,—not love founded on absolute and equilateral reciprocity, but that mutual yet unsymmetrical love which exists between a man and a woman. The woman's sacrifice is great, but in making it she loses neither in dignity nor in power, but gains in both, her self-sacrifice being in itself the highest display of her innate capacities.

Poetry, then, is the man, music the woman. Each is sterile without the other. But when united in true love, they merge their separate individualities into one perfect being, the *dramatic artist*. Hitherto the poet has been the writer of librettos, an anonymous and ill-paid slave, and at best but a *cavaliere servante* to an imperious and capricious mistress. These unnatural relations have caused the decay of the opera, and the divorce from poetry may prove still more injurious to music when displaying her charms outside the walls of the theatre. Music can neither think nor express thought. All she can express is sentiment, but in expressing sentiment she gives shape and countenance to thought, and longs to receive its germs from poetry. Of course, there are different types of womanhood: there is the *fille de joie*, the *coquette*, and the *prude*, and Wagner gives us to understand that these may be taken as the representatives of Italian, French, and German music respectively. But where is the true woman, at once loving and chaste, lovely and modest, adorning her husband with her charms, yet unwilling to attract attention to her own self?

Wagner has the good fortune of belonging to the class which Linné called *Monœcia*. He is both poet and musician, man and woman. But he can see no reason why poet and musician should not be two separate persons, whose co-operation would no doubt be facilitated by a certain superiority, in age or otherwise, on the part of the poet. Voltaire said, What is too absurd to be spoken is allowed to be sung. But Wagner would say, What is unworthy [65] of speech cannot be worth singing, and what is unfit for song ought not to be deemed worthy of poetic speech. In other words, he would say to the poet, Give up as unpoetical whatsoever cannot be fitly expressed in music; and he would say to the musician, Avoid all musical expressions which are not called for by the poet's intentions, as superfluous, meaningless, unintelligible, and offensive.

The musical rendering having to accommodate itself to the verse-melody, and the verse-melody being derivable from the sense and meaning of the words, the musical melody must be considered as something partly derivable from the sense and meaning of the poet's words, and at the same time dependent, though in a different sense, on laws and agencies which belong to the exclusive domain of music. As the common fruit of two trees, it must have two roots, and these two roots are the poet's intention and the laws of harmony and tonality. However plainly inferrible from the poet's words, the melody cannot start into existence without having been predetermined by harmony and tonality, a melody being a *tonal* melody only in so far as it implies an ideal harmony. If melody is generated by the

poet's word, it is shaped and brought to light by harmony, the *matrix* of music. A succession of harmonies, no doubt, implies a melody in the treble, but such melodies are meaningless, and to make melody derivable from harmony without the intercession of the poet is to impute paternity to a mother. This is the mistake of absolute music, which plays songs without words, composes words without meaning, and sings vowels without consonants. Mendelssohn, the representative of this school, is a musical spinster in Wagner's eyes.

But let us suppose the composer had written his score in perfect accordance with the principles which regulate the relations between himself and the poet; what would be the *means of expression* at his disposal? We know that the spoken word addresses itself to the understanding, and the sentiment which the word implies but cannot intelligibly express is couched in melodious utterance. But there are shades of sentiment which the human voice, whether speaking or singing, seems insufficient to define in their micrometric distinctness, and there are others which exceed the range of audible utterance in the same way in which the invisible rays of the spectrum exceed the range of visual perception. When [66] the human voice has expressed all that it is capable of expressing in its double capacity as organ of speech and organ of song, there will always remain an unexpressed and inexpressible residue containing these two forms of the unutterable. This is no mystical platitude, the term "unutterable" meaning that which cannot be adequately or intelligibly expressed by speech or song, and which requires other means of expression. And fortunately for the dramatic art, such means exist; they are the *gesture* and the *orchestra*. The former (which comprises the dance and the mimic play) expresses that part of the unsung residue which requires visible symbols, the latter that part which requires audible symbols. The gesture or dance is to the orchestra as verse is to melody. Their unity lies in the *rhythm*, that is to say, in that which is jointly perceived and jointly enjoyed by the eye and the ear.

In the chorus of the Greek tragedy, speech, song, dance, and instrumental music were inseparable. In the modern drama this union has been destroyed, the verse-melody and the gesture being left to the actor, the instrumental music to the orchestra; and where gesture has to be concentrated into dance, the division of labor is carried still further, the dancing being intrusted to dumb performers, while the verse-melody is either entirely suppressed or declaimed by the actors with a minimum of conventional gesture. But this technically necessary division of labor ought not to induce forgetfulness of the primordial union or undue self-assertion of either the dancer or the orchestra. Their function is to co-operate with each other, but to do so not in each other's service, but in the service of the drama, in order to elucidate and carry out that part of the poet's intention which cannot be carried out through speech and song. Hence it follows that the pantomime and the ballet, being founded on an inversion of means and ends, cannot claim to be more than amusements, half childish, half sensuous, disguised under the garb of scenic art. And as to absolute instrumental music or orchestral music having no reference to the drama and as to its being played on the piano or by extra-theatrical hands, it is an art of which Wagner speaks with some reserve, and for whose greatest master, he feels unbounded admiration, but for which we can hardly find a proper place in Wagner's system.

The orchestra may be considered either as an apparatus for expressing harmony,—and in this case it may be fitly replaced [67] by the piano or the organ, — or as an *ensemble* of instruments of different structure,—and in this case it forms a real alphabet, containing all that is necessary for its own idiomatic utterances. We know from acoustics, that when a violin, a hautboy, and a horn play the same note, the differences of the three sounds are due to the number and relative strength of the *consonant harmonics*, which in their turn depend on the material and shape of each instrument, that is to say, on its individuality. These consonant harmonics or orchestral individualities are to the human voice what the consonants are to the vowels. The human voice, it is true, has both vowels and consonants, but can *dwell* only on

vowels, while the instrument, even in its long-drawn notes, never ceases to assert its own peculiar character. There are affinities between instruments as there are between consonants, and as we have groups of dentals, labials, and gutturals, it might be interesting to divide the orchestra into similar groups of agnate instruments. The art of *instrumentation*, therefore, consists chiefly in individualizing or characterizing. It must not be confounded with the art of harmonization, which is theoretical rather than technical. As the organ of harmony, the orchestra has to *accompany* the verse-melody, that is to say, to *justify* it as melody. As a chorus of instruments, it has to emphasize the individuality of the actor. Both these functions presuppose sympathy and self-subordination; the orchestra must not distract the hearer's attention, which belongs to the actor; and to avoid this, it must neither compete with the singer in melody nor depend on the singer's treble for harmonic completeness. The office of the orchestra is not to sing melody, nor is it the office of the singer to support or complete harmonies, as though the human voice were only one of the many possible instruments. The great popularity of singing (melody-playing) orchestras, such as we hear in garden-concerts and on military parades, only proves, according to Wagner, that the melodies, though designed for song, were purely instrumental and thoroughly "unhuman." And for analogous reasons Wagner condemns *polyphonous* singing on the stage, whether in form of duets, *ensembles*, or choruses. He objects to it on dramatic as well as musical grounds. As something requiring the merging of individualities, polyphony is thoroughly Christian, but thoroughly anti-dramatic. The actors on the stage are all heroes *in posse*; they [68] may sing together occasionally, but never for the sake of supporting each other harmonically, which would imply that some of them assume orchestral duties towards one man's treble.

Although the orchestra must not play melodies while they are sung by the actor, there is a class of orchestral melodies which Wagner not only tolerates, but to which he attaches the greatest dramatic importance. Certain musical phrases sung by the principal *dramatis personæ* in solemn and impressive moments, and accompanied by such instruments as befit the individual character of each singer, may be reproduced, in the course of the play, by the same group of instruments, without the vocal co-operation of the singer, whose presence or whose coming on the stage is all that is required on such occasions. Such a melody, though purely orchestral, must remind the hearer of the words to which it was originally sung, of the circumstances under which it was sung, and of the character of the person whose emotions it then helped to express. And not only does it suggest such reminiscences to the hearer, but it tells him that the same reminiscences are passing through the mind of the hero on the stage, whose attitude, gesture, or mimic expression must, of course, be in harmony with this supposition. We all know the strange fascination of associated ideas. A few bars of half-forgotten melody which strike our ear unexpectedly, though quite unobtrusively, may conjure up long-lost images of the past, which we are loath to dismiss again, and it seems strange that this weird, conjuring power of melody has not been used more systematically for dramatic purposes. There are, no doubt, some operas in which this has been done, but the orchestral *motives*, or phrases intended to be typical of something or of somebody, hardly ever refer to any previous vocal utterance and then remain meaningless, or they are used as mere ushers, as in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, to announce the appearance of the hero on the stage, when they are apt to become equally meaningless through indiscriminate repetition. In most of these cases they appear as mere tricks when compared with the thoughtfully devised and sparingly used *orchestral motives* of Wagner, the melody of which is determined by previous song, and the instrumentation of which is determined by the analogies which exist between moral and acoustic qualities, and consequently between personal character and orchestral individuality. This grouping of sound-capacities may not [69] unfitly be called the alliteration of the orchestra, the metaphor being fully justified by Wagner's own comparison between musical instruments and the consonants of the alphabet. And as we have had occasion to point out a

similar analogy between alliteration of words and modulation of keys, we may sum up this part of Wagner's doctrines in the following theorem—

The three principal factors of the musical drama namely, the verse, the melody, and the orchestra—have each its *principium unitatis* and its *principium individuationis*. The verse is held together by the laws of rhythm or accent, the melody by the laws of tonality, the orchestra by the laws of harmony. But each has the power of expressing special affinities or contrasts among its own constituent parts, — the verse among its words, the melody among its notes, the orchestra among its instruments. The alliteration which connects two words regardless of rhythm and accent, the modulation which joins two keys in defiance of tonality, and the sound-affinities which constitute orchestral groups not required for purely harmonic purposes, are three analogous means of expression, and as they are all eminently suggestive and individualizing they must be considered as the fittest means of defining dramatic characters. With regard to modulation and instrumentation this is no new truth, but the *alliterative rhyme* and that peculiar form of instrumentation called the *orchestral motive* are Wagner's own additions, and whatever may be the merits of the former, no man of thought and culture will hesitate to admit the high æsthetic value of the latter.

Like all works of art, the musical drama ought to have unity,—not the old unities of space and time, but the unity of that which is the negation of space and time, the unity of *action*. This unity of contents requires *unity of form*, unity in the modes of expression. Now let us look at any ordinary opera, no matter whether good or bad, and we shall see at a glance that far from showing this unity of form it is the very negation of all unity, a mosaic of loosely connected or unconnected pieces of music belonging to three or four purely conventional forms accepted and sanctioned by usage. Each of these pieces is an independent whole by itself, and each of these forms is an independent, and, as such, a perfectly legitimate form of art. The *recitative* has its history and its traditions, so has the *air*, and so has the *chorus*. We have seen above that Wagner objects to all forms of polyphonus [70] song on the stage, that he condemns the chorus and the duet or other *ensembles* as anti-dramatic, and that he wishes to see these forms replaced by musical dialogues, with occasionally overlapping sentences. These dialogues, in fact, form the bulk of Wagner's own operas. They partake far more of the character of the recitative than of that of the ordinary opera air, but differ from both, and their general character can perhaps be best inferred from our remarks on the Wagnerian verse-melody, in which we saw music firmly chained to the verse, and moving timidly along its rough surface, bristling with accents, meanings, and alliterative suggestions. The ordinary opera air is, in Wagner's opinion, an intruder on the stage; it is the popular air in disguise, and ought to be driven into the street again, from whence it came. In Mediæval Italy the popular air was admitted into the palaces, first as a means of amusement, later as a means of vocal display. It has never done more, as a part of the modern opera, than serve these two purposes, which are both foreign to the spirit of the musical drama as understood by Wagner. We cannot wonder, then, that, without banishing the opera air altogether from the musical drama, he reduces it to mere shreds of melody scattered over the musical dialogue, and reserves the full-grown air for those necessarily rare moments in which the lyrical element predominates over the dramatic.

Far less destructive are Wagner's ideas about the *overture*. Considering that it is a mere piece of "absolute" music, not induced by words, we might have expected its complete removal from the frame of the musical drama. If music is nothing but a means of expression, how can it claim to exist, apart from speech and dance-gesture, except for the sake of recalling previous song? What is the "orchestral motive" but an echo of the human voice?

But Wagner seems to admit that the *suggestiveness* of instrumental music is forecasting as well as reminiscent, prospective as well as retrospective. Compared with the spectacular and histrionic part of the performance, which is all motion, the part represented by the orchestra

seems repose, and we should become more conscious of this contrast if the orchestra were hidden from view by being placed, not behind the scenes, but in a pit of sufficient depth to cover the tops of the fiddlers' bows. This comparative repose which precedes the rising of the curtain is to the ear what [71] the sight of a landscape or a motionless, silent figure is to the eye it fixes our attention and raises our expectation. What the landscape does through its *genius loci*, and the silent figure through its glance, the orchestra must do through its speechless strains; it must put us into the proper *mood* for the coming drama. The Germans call mood *stimmung*, which, literally, means tuning or mode of tuning. We may say, therefore, that the overture ought to tune the hearer's soul according to the poetical clef of the drama, so as to render it capable of sympathetic vibrations. It is obvious that the so-called "orchestral motives" can find no place in such an overture. To make an overture out of shreds of melody taken from the drama itself is to do something which has no meaning, and the proper place for such an overture, if it had any, would be at the end of the opera.

Wagner's ideas concerning the *performance* itself are implicitly contained in the foregoing review of his doctrine. The practical details being a matter of personal tuition, we have only to make a brief recapitulation of the theoretical generalities. We saw that the musical rendering of the verse-melody must be, to use a profane simile, a close fit. The composer's wings are not clipped by the poet, but they are flapped in strict and deferential conformity with the poet's utterances. In this sense the composer must be realistic, but, the thing to be expressed being ideal, because poetical, its musical expression, though realistic in form, is still essentially ideal.

In like manner the performer must, with realistic accuracy and befitting *self-denial*, endeavor to reproduce with his technical means what the artist has produced with his æsthetic means. But he cannot faithfully carry out the artist's intentions without being able to perceive or to infer these intentions, that is to say, without *æsthetic culture*. Here too, then, we have but apparent realism, a realistic performance being a faithful and intelligent rendering of ideal meanings. The true performer, whether actor, singer, or player, must be a person of moral and intellectual training. What is proverbially called theatrical must disappear from the theatre, and false pathos must be replaced by that ideal naturalness which is intentional but appears unconscious. The artist knows the unconscious, the actor represents it. Nor must the singer be a mere vocal virtuoso, allowed to ignore the rules of [72] dramatic action and of good behavior, so long as he pours forth sweet melody. The grotesque conventionalities established among "absolute" singers are deservedly ridiculed by Wagner, who admits, however, that the composers are partly responsible for them. It is the structure of the opera air, the repetition of its couplets, which induces the singer to walk from one side of the proscenium to the other and to address the public instead of turning towards his interlocutor. And while the orchestra indulges in long preludes, interludes, and *ritornelli*, what can the embarrassed singer do but rush to the back of the stage, as if to see whether somebody is coming, or feign a whispering conversation with another actor, or look up to heaven with a senseless and uncalled-for show of distress? And when he has sung his air that is to say, the composer's air with additions and variations, and when he has effectually proved, by the length of his penultimate note, how painfully long he can hold his breath, he earns well-merited applause and bows his thanks. He may be *encored* or called again to the honors of the proscenium, which will necessitate more bows and deprecating gestures, and when at last he retires from the stage, we rejoice that the noisy *intermezzo* is over, but find to our distress that the spell is broken and our illusions are gone. In a reformed theatre there will be neither applauding nor encoring, neither bowing nor undue display. The capacity of a singer's lungs can interest nobody, and his vocal powers are interesting only in so far as they *suffice* for his special task, not in so far as they exceed these requirements. The excess of these powers may be displayed in concert-halls. The thing to be displayed on the stage is the artistic perfection of a musical drama, not the technical

accomplishments of its performers.

But the actors, singers, and players are not the only performers. No theatrical performance is complete or even possible without the co-operation of the scene-painter, the scene-shifter, and the costume-tailor, to mention only the most important factors of what is commonly called the *mise-en-scène*. When we remember that Wagner considers the musical drama to be the highest and most perfect form of art, and that he defines a perfect work of art as that which speaks to us through our senses, leaving little or nothing to our imagination, we can easily understand why he attaches a greater importance to the *mise-en-scène* than would seem [73] to be consistent with the poetical and thoroughly idealistic character of his whole doctrine. His stage realism is as thoroughgoing as the realistic accuracy which he expects from the singer, the actor, and the player; whether it is equally justifiable is another question. The æsthetic effect, he argues, must be complete, and to make it complete, the scenic illusion must not be destroyed by awkward failures and other relapses from a realm of poetic fictions into a world of coarse realities. In the theatre we ought to find a refuge from this world of realities, and not be rudely reminded of it by the flaws of the performance and the shortcomings of the scenic apparatus. We hardly know how to qualify this part of Wagner's theory. It seems idealistic in its aims and realistic only in the choice of means. But it is doubtful whether these means can produce the desired result. An excessive perfection of stage-thunder and stage-lightning, though insufficient to curdle the milk in the neighboring dairies, is amply sufficient to draw the spectator's attention from the work of art to a clever piece of mechanism, and is therefore far more likely to destroy the desired totality of effect than the well-known imperfection of these performances, whose conventional meanings and symbolical intentions are readily understood without impelling the spectator to conscious reflection. It is clear that admiration must be fully as mischievous as ridicule in such cases. The group of Laocoön could not impress us as it does, if the scales of the serpent had been chiselled with obtrusive accuracy; and that thousands of pictures are spoilt and æsthetically ruined by an uncalled-for exactness in the delineation of embroidery-stitches, flower-petals, and other accessories, is a fact well known, though rarely admitted in these days. But Wagner has the misfortune of having, like Faust, "two souls, alas! within his breast." His reflective power is fully as strong as his artistic intuitions. Had he followed the latter, he would have been the last man to advocate stage realism. But it was the logical consistency of his system that led him into error whenever false premises had crept into it. He himself denounces the electric sun in Meyerbeer's *Prophet* which shines upon the just and the unjust with such fierce impartiality. That sun, it may be said, is not even realistic, but simply painful through the failure of attempted realism. But he denounces it, not as a failure, but as an uncalled-for attempt, and in an eloquent passage of his [74] principal work openly condemns all scenic effects not called for by the dramatic situation as "absolute effects," that is to say, as "effects without a cause,"—which being logical absurdities must be æsthetic monstrosities. It is one of Wagner's false premises that a true work of art should leave little or nothing to the imagination. We know that in the Greek tragedy death, murder, and all that was deemed revolting or indecorous was brought before the public through the medium of description or narration. Who cares to see the smothering of Desdemona? and what is the use of having an imagination, if it cannot be made to save us the painful necessity of witnessing the accomplishing of a *deed* which is essential to the drama only as an accomplished *fact*? And if this is a legitimate use of our imagination, the legitimacy of stage realism becomes more than doubtful.

Wagner reproaches the modern public at large with æsthetic degeneracy. They seem incapable of grasping the unity of a work of art which requires concentration and dote on the plurality of details which insures distraction. And as if the scenic and orchestral details were not sufficient, the audience itself and the dress-circle must furnish additional materials for the

play-goer's distraction. He wants the pleasure of distraction, not the labor of concentration. Wagner knows this foible of the modern Mæcenas. He endeavors, in fact, to intellectualize him by darkening the theatre and forcing him to concentrate his attention on the strongly illuminated stage. But having secured it there, he unwittingly undoes his work again and sensualizes him through a mistaken and exaggerated stage realism. By thus ministering to the lower wants of the spectator, Wagner distracts him and seems to defeat his own object, which was to insure concentration.

We cannot afford to follow up this criticism any farther. The system of musical philosophy which we have endeavored to trace in the foregoing pages is altogether too grand for mere hole-picking. It is impossible not to be impressed with its compactness and richness in truths. We admire the former and feel grateful for the latter. Yet, invulnerable though this system seems at first sight, we are inclined to believe that its fundamental principle either hides an error or errs through incompleteness. And the following theoretical digression will not only justify our suspicion, but may assist us in forming an independent opinion on at least [75] two points, which Wagner's system seems incapable of settling or explaining satisfactorily,—the relation between song and speech, and the existence of instrumental music.

We know that whatsoever has the power of pleasing, either sensually or aesthetically, must be a *unum e pluribus*, whatever else it may be besides. This is no adequate definition either of the beautiful or of the agreeable, but unity and plurality are essential to both. When the component elements are equal in kind and in degree, they cannot form a unity so long as their plurality is perceived as such. But when their plurality ceases to be perceptible, as is the case with the vibrations of ether, their indistinguishableness constitutes their unity, and this relative unity is then translated by us into a quality, which we call green or red. In like manner we hear sound when we cease to be able to count or to perceive as plural the vibrations of air. These simplest perceptions, then, involve a partial loss of consciousness, which furnishes that unity which a succession of indifferent elements could not have furnished. But when the elements are not indifferent and indistinguishable, when they differ in degree if not in kind, then their unity, in order to become a pleasing perception, must lie in the commensurateness of their differences or in the simplicity and intelligibility of their proportions. Two successions, for instance, the velocities of which are to each other as one is to three, are perceived by us as dactylic rhythm without our being conscious that there are two successions to whose commensurateness alone the unity of our perception is due; and the same may be said of two or more sounds whose intervals enable them to form either a harmony or a melody. The perception of a rhythm or musical interval is therefore of a higher order than the simple perceptions of color or sound, because the generating elements are no longer co-ordinate and indifferent, but subordinate to one another. If we now go a step further and combine elements which differ in kind as well as in degree, forming a *variety* rather than a plurality, we may have some difficulty in making them coalesce to a unity; and it is with these difficulties that the province of æsthetics begins; in other words, the conditions under which heterogeneous elements can coalesce to a unity are no longer physiological, but psychological,—no longer verifiable by sensual pleasure, but by æsthetic gratification.

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There is no real breach of continuity, however, but a gradual rise from the agreeable to the beautiful, from the unconscious to the conscious. For if the unity of vibrations lies in their indifference and indistinguishableness, and the unity of ratios of vibrations in the difference and commensurateness of these ratios, the psychological unity of more varied elements must lie in their mutual dependence, or in their common dependence, from one principal element, and, generally speaking, in the possibility of arranging them as a group of essentials and accessories. It is this hierarchical differentiation which the beautiful has in common with the organic, and it is, if not the essence, the first condition of beauty as well as of life.

If, therefore, two or more arts are expected to co-operate so as to constitute a *complex form of art*, we may safely assume that they cannot do so by meeting on equal terms. Whatever their relative dignities and however elastic this relation of dignities may be, one must become for the nonce the accessory of the other. Arts which cannot serve one another cannot merge to form a new art. They may operate side by side and simultaneously; we may look at a statue while listening to a poem, but there can be no unity of perception, and our attention must remain divided. Even the melodrama, which bids us listen to spoken poetry and to instrumental music, is a questionable form of art, it being next to impossible to perceive, with undivided attention, any *tertium aliquid* that could convey to us the full meaning of the words and the full beauty of the music in a united impression. On the other hand, gesture, or dance, not only combines with instrumental music for a perfect form of art, but cannot exist without it. Their unity lies in the rhythm, which, though one thing, is audible and visible at the same time. But there is no equality of rank in this instance. Music not only stands infinitely higher than dancing, but is more self-sufficient than the latter; it may induce the hearer to beat time with his head or hand, but even of dance-music it cannot be said that it is enjoyable only during actual dancing. And if, notwithstanding its superiority of rank and its greater self-sufficiency, music can stoop to become the accessory of dancing, it is not unreasonable to infer that the union of these two arts owes its strange intimacy and fitness, not merely to their rhythmic affinity nor to their great disparity as such, but to the negation [77] of this disparity through the self-subordination of the higher art to the lower for the sake of their rhythmic affinity. The greatness of the sacrifice gives greater prominence to the object for which it was made, and as this object constitutes the unity of the two arts, the artistic completeness of their union is at once proclaimed and explained by this process. Of course, self-subordination alone cannot effect this; it must be needed by the other. When two very self-sufficient arts are made to combine, such as drawing and painting, the self-degradation of the latter is not really wanted by the former; a good drawing does not require coloring or illustration; and the combination of the two, notwithstanding their apparently close relationship, has never occupied a high rank among the possible forms of compound art.

If we now wish to test the legitimacy of the musical drama, which is a highly complex combination of poetry, song, instrumental music, mimic art, scene-painting, scene-shifting, and tailoring, we must begin by finding out the purpose for which these arts pretend to co-operate, and whether this unity of purpose is enough to constitute artistic unity. If these arts cannot co-operate without dividing our attention, the musical drama is no genuine form of art. The purpose of a drama is the manifestation of the poet's intentions. Music not only is a means of expressing these intentions, as Wagner has it, but all the other component arts, and especially the poet's own *poetry*, contribute their share. The true relation between speech and song is not that of contents and form, of meaning and expression, but *they are both means of expression*, each in its own way and for its own special part of the *exprimendum*. By putting them in the relation of end and means, Wagner has misled us and deceived himself. They are both means, and in this sense they are co-ordinate, but this co-ordination cannot be tolerated, as it would entitle them to equal shares of our attention and thus destroy the unity of perception. Which, then, is to become the subordinate?

It is a physical fact that words are apt to become unintelligible when sung, and the more unintelligible the more perfect is the singing. We cannot help that. The singing voice can dwell only on vowels, while the consonants, which alone specify a word, are evanescent appendages which, even when pronounced distinctly, are too far removed from the beginning of the syllable to convey [78] a clear impression. In melismatic song especially we forget the beginning before we have heard the end of a word. This has always been instinctively felt, and it has led to the subordination of poetry. It has always been poetry which had to adapt itself to the requirements of music, not every poem being considered fit for melodious song.

The simpler and the fewer the words of a poem, the more welcome, *cæteris paribus*, it is to the composer. But there are two ways of saving the words from drowning, either by reducing their own weight or by reducing the supernatant melody to a minimum, making it so thin and shallow that it could not cover anything. This latter method is Wagner's, but it does not succeed. The words in Wagner's operas are, on the whole, not more intelligible than in other operas, and if we have lost the melody without having gained the perception of the poet's words, we must consider ourselves as losers in the bargain. It must be remembered that the libretto, though easily bought, cannot be read in a darkened theatre, and ought not to be read in presence of a work of art which claims our undivided attention through eye and ear. And as the hearer cannot fairly be expected to have learned the words by heart, we are forced to reconsider the whole question and to ask ourselves whether the old way of simplifying the words, and thus lessening the importance of what seems an unavoidable loss, was not, to say the least, the lesser of two evils.

Wagner compares the relation between poetry and music to the relation between the two sexes, and we accept this simile as both beautiful and true. But the relations between man and woman are of two kinds: courtship is the servitude of man, marriage the dependence of woman. Both are self-subordinations induced by love; both are normal relations, and will continue to exist as long as there are two sexes. Wagner's Muse is the poet's wife, and the poet has forgotten his courtship. Why not admit the possibility of two forms of operatic art,—the one of historical origin, and ruled by tradition and convention, the other of revolutionary origin, and ruled by intellectual considerations? The former is our old *opera*, where the loving poet humbles himself before music; the latter is the *musical drama* of the future, where music stoops to wait upon poetry.

We have something similar in the relation between painting and architecture; they stand in want of each other, but very unequally; [79] the hall wants mural decoration, the fresco-painting needs an edifice; but the building can do without the decoration, while the painting can dispense with the mural surface only by substituting canvas, just as poetry can exist without music, while music can dispense with words only by substituting artificial instruments for -the natural instrument of the human voice. The general character and purpose of the building will guide the fresco-painter in his choice of subjects, as the general sense and purpose of the poem will guide the composer in his choice of themes and motives. But all timid and finical adaptation of mural painting to architectural details belongs to the decorator's art; and the equally timid adaptation of song to the minutiae of speech, which forms the leading feature of Wagner's vocal music, belongs to an art which we may call the art of *dramatic intonation*, whose dignity can hardly be greater than that of purely decorative art. Raphael was invited to *adorn* the Loggia in the Vatican, but he might, with equal propriety, have asked the Pope's architect to build him a gallery *ad hoc* worthy to *serve* as a mural bearer of his frescos. If there - can be such reciprocity of self-subordination between architecture and painting, why could not a similar relation be established between poetry and music? Our historical opera is the musical fresco engaging the services of the architect of words, and Wagner's reformed opera is a structure of poetry engaging the services of the musical decorator. Notwithstanding the conventional nonsense which disfigures the opera of the past, Wagner is ready to admit that, "*in its way*, a good Italian opera is something quite perfect." But he admits this in an after-dinner speech, and our idea of a double possibility, though implied in this admission, forms no recognized part of his system.

As to purely *instrumental music*, independent of the theatre, it occupies a place in Wagner's system which it seems to hold on sufferance. His great admiration for Beethoven cannot be explained by his system or deduced from its principles. But it is, after all, easy enough to justify the existence of "absolute" instrumental music without upsetting Wagner's system of reform. As we have seen, music and poetry are not in a one-sided relation of means

and end to each other, but have this in common, that they are both means of expression. And if poetry can exist as an independent art expressing ideas through words, we can see no reason [80] why music should not exist as an "absolute" art expressing sentiments through "absolute," that is unsung sound. Wagner says somewhere, that instrumental music representing harmony or the "vertical relations of the written score, may be compared to the ocean, while melody, the representative of the horizontal movement, is like the sailing on its surface." He then adds, in support of his favorite doctrine, that the sailor (here the singer) cannot sail without a boat, that is to say, without something which owes its substance to the mainland of rational speech or to the forests of poetry. To make sailing possible the mainland must furnish the boat and the ocean must carry it. To make melody possible, poetry must furnish the words and the orchestra the harmonic support. But Wagner seems to forget that there is such a thing as swimming without any wooden support, and that the shell which bore the sea-born goddess was not made of stuff that grows on *terra firma*.

Without, then, giving up any of the recognized and time-honored forms of music, we can afford to hail the advent of the new form of musical drama as a welcome and even necessary addition to the resources of the art. Wagner has matched the deed to his word, and his works are great examples. But can these examples be imitated? And is Wagner likely to have a successor? His own brilliancy is not sufficient to throw brightness on our prospects, which are by no means reassuring. Materialism, realism, and positivism can be no fit companions of idealistic art. They favor, no doubt, the steady improvement and multiplication of the *technical* means; but this over-development of the means of expression, when not justified by an adequate growth of the ideal contents, must lead to hollowness and ostentation, and the love of the sensational and the colossal, at all times a sign of incipient decay, has of late manifested itself with alarming frequency in every sphere of artistic activity.

There may be some doubt about what constitutes real progress in music. Helmholtz calls Beethoven no improvement on Mozart and seems to consider the increasing predominance of dissonance over consonance as a sign of decay. But we feel sure that this is a mistaken view, and that consonance is no absolute test of musical beauty. In his later works, and especially in that remarkable yet almost unknown sonata which forms his *opus 106*, Beethoven has shown how far music can go in its anti-tonal fury. How [81] much farther it may be possible to go in this direction must ultimately depend on the range of human sentiment itself. We do not know its limits, but we may rest assured that the dissonances of that sentiment will find adequate expression in music only on condition of resolving themselves into harmonies, and will thus, by their very harshness, proclaim the binding and readjusting power of *tonality*, which in its widest sense is a world-compelling principle, the spiritual rival of mechanism.

E. Gryzanowski.

Notes

Note 1 on page 5

Oper und Drama. Von RICHARD WAGNER. 2te Auflage. Leipzig: Weber. 8vo. pp. 351. 1869.