



FERRUCCIO BUSONI IN HIS LIBRARY

*From a hitherto unpublished photograph in the possession of the translator*

FERRUCCIO BUSONI

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THE ESSENCE  
OF MUSIC

AND OTHER PAPERS

*Translated from the German  
by Rosamond Ley*

ROCKLIFF

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SALISBURY SQUARE

LONDON

## THE ESSENCE OF MUSIC

seem to me to be admissible. No, as soon as one wishes to work seriously, it is advisable not to join in any compromise with the stage. The opera which stands for everything improbable, unbelievable and impossible, may claim the right to do so on the surest and best of grounds.

With my three fundamental theories, the three-part division of whole tones, "Young Classicism", and *the transformation of the opera through the perception of the inherent Oneness of music*, important material has been collected for further action. To the youngest I cry: Build up! But do not content yourselves any longer with self-complacent experiments and the glory of the success of the season, which flares up quickly; but turn towards the perfection of the work seriously and joyfully. "Only he who looks towards the future looks cheerfully."

## II

### THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

OPEN LETTER TO HANS PFITZNER\*

Zürich, June 1917

Honoured Friend,

You pay me the honour of expressing your opinion openly about my little book. But whereas what I wrote was intended to be of an abstract and conciliatory nature, and to be aimed at no one individually, you make a controversial reply which is openly directed against one person, changing the general into the particular, the temporary and the personal.

By the title alone, "The Danger of Futurism", you lead your reader astray by heaping on my name, in the eyes of the public, all the weaknesses and faults with which you could possibly reproach a certain group of people—a group from which I am far removed.

The word "Futurism" is not used on any page of my little book. I have never attached myself to a sect—Futurism, a movement of the present time, could have no connection with my arguments.

You consider it a defect in my work "that I have not drawn up something like an aesthetic law", while the whole tenor of the little book is against the drawing up of general rules as being a hindrance to a free art.

But also, you believe that your view of the questions started by me lies nearer to many people than mine. You say: "It will,

\* Hans Pfitzner published a pamphlet called "Futuristengefahr" ("The Danger of Futurism") in the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* which was chiefly aimed against the *Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst* ("New Aesthetic of Music"). This "open letter" was a reply published in the *Vossische Zeitung*, Berlin, June 1917.

perhaps, not be unwelcome to these to learn something more in accordance with their views."

It is just for these people that my book is written, so that for once they may hear something from "the other side" as well.

But whilst I have never questioned your art publicly either with your followers or with anyone else, you draw an unjust and ugly picture of me from which they get to know me for the first time.

You proclaim me openly as a disowner and despiser of all great composers of the past without quoting any of my sentences as proof of such a monstrous accusation; but you rely solely on "the impression as a whole, which one has from the reading of this little book".

I must, first of all, refer you and your readers to my edition of Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier*, which certainly cannot appear to be written in a tone of disavowal or disrespect.

When I exclaim, on page 10 of my little book: "Mozart, the Seeker and the Finder, the great man with the child-like heart, we gaze in astonishment at him, we hang on him", no one will be able to misunderstand the absolute reverence which is manifest therein.

I am a worshipper of Form! I have remained sufficiently a Latin for that.

But I demand—no! the organism of art demands—that every idea fashions its own form for itself; the organism—not I—revolts against having one single form for all ideas; today especially and how much more in the coming centuries.

The "law-givers" (and you know who and what is intended by this symbolic word) have constructed their formulas after the creations of the masters, the latter go in front, the former follow after, and at a good distance. "The creator [p. 31 of my book] only strives for perfection and as he brings this into harmony with his individuality a new law arises unintentionally."

From the "magic child", music, I still look for what is yet undreamt of, and towards which my "desire" goes: the all-human and the super-human. It is the desire which acts as the

first mainspring of realisation. Therefore, I cannot and should not like to say precisely what form such a development will take; no more than, thousands of years since, the longing of men to be able to fly could describe the apparatus which today fulfils this longing.

If my "promises" remind you of Jules Verne's romances do not forget that much technical fantasy in these books has now become fact.

But how do you describe the course of life of the "magic child" music?—"After [see p. 10] it had grown to a wonderfully vigorous and healthy baby with his nurse from the Netherlands, he passed happy times in the Italian boarding school, and after a hundred and fifty years is now at home in our Germany where, as a beautiful and strong youth, it is to be hoped he will thrive for a long time yet".

Consider, honoured friend, how with time even the most beautiful and strongest youth matures to an old man, and for the maintenance of a powerful race, cross-breeding is a well-known expedient.

I believe you are too honest intentionally to misrepresent my book, which is well-meant and full of peace, as harmful teaching; therefore a misunderstanding must exist, which I consider it my duty—confronted by such an esteemed opponent—to put right with these few lines.

## YOUNG CLASSICISM\*

Zürich, January 1920

Dear Herr Paul Bekker,

I have read your article—"Impotence or Potency"—with interest and sympathy, and for much that is said I am heartily indebted to you. Even if Pfitzner cannot awaken my interest

\* This letter to Paul Bekker was a personal one which arose out of the controversy between Pfitzner and Busoni. It was first published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 7th February 1920, and then reprinted in the Busoni number of *Anbruch*, 1921.

and sympathy to the same extent—and indeed he does not wish to do so—yet I cannot quite overcome the fear that there is some misunderstanding between him and what he attacks; not only do I believe that all of us whose intentions are honest strive for the best and utmost possible perfection in music—a common starting-point which should abolish all antagonism—but I believe further that there are certainly dissimilarities in the compositions of today, that is to say dissimilarities in talent! But not chasms separating them; I believe they are more alike than we suppose or will allow ourselves to believe. (Dissimilarity in the attitude of mind is another thing altogether. . . .)

At all times there were—must have been—artists who clung to the last tradition and others who sought to free themselves from it. This twilight condition seems to me to be the stable one; dawn and the full light of day are considerations of perspective for historians who gather them together and gladly arrive at results.

The appearance also of isolated experiments which stand out as caricature is a usual concomitant of evolution; the strange, ape-like forward-springing gestures of those who stand for something; either defiance or rebellion, satire or foolishness. This type has appeared again in greater numbers during the last fifteen years and it strikes one all the more forcibly after the standstill of the 'eighties which remains quite isolated in the history of art. Unfortunately it coincided with my own youth. Exaggeration, with which the beginner today already makes his first appearance, is becoming general and portends the end of such a period; and the next step is that which inclines towards Young Classicism (which opposition is bound to stimulate).

By "Young Classicism" I mean the mastery, the sifting and the turning to account of all the gains of previous experiments and their inclusion in strong and beautiful forms.

This art will be old and new at the same time at first. We are steering in that direction, luckily, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly.

But this art, in order to arise intact in its newness, so that it will mean a genuine result to the historian, will be founded on many hypotheses which today are not yet fully apprehended. I feel the idea of Oneness in music as one of the most important of these as yet uncomprehended truths.

I mean the idea that music is music, in and for itself, and nothing else, and that it is not split up into different classes: apart from cases where words, title, situations and meanings which are brought in entirely from outside, obviously put it into different categories. There is no music which is Church music in itself, but only absolute music to which sacred words are put or which is performed in church. If you change the text, the music apparently changes also. If you take the text away altogether, there remains (illusorily) a symphonic movement; join words to a movement from a string quartet and an operatic scene grows out of it. If you play the first movement of the "Eroica" Symphony to an American-Indian film, the music will appear so changed that you will not recognise it. For this reason you should not use the terms "instrumental music" and the "true symphonic composer" which you let fall in your article about chamber symphonies. I do not permit myself to criticise you but I am under the impression that by using these words you surely place yourself nearer to Pfitzner than you intend.

With "Young Classicism" I include the definite departure from what is thematic and the return to melody again as the ruler of all voices and all emotions (not in the sense of a pleasing motive) and as the bearer of the idea and the begetter of harmony, in short, the most highly developed (not the most complicated) polyphony.

A third point not less important, is the casting off of what is "sensuous" and the renunciation of subjectivity (the road to objectivity, which means the author standing back from his work, a purifying road, a hard way, a trial of fire and water) and the re-conquest of serenity (*serenitas*). Neither Beethoven's wry smile nor Zarathustra's "liberating laugh" but the smile

of wisdom, of divinity and absolute music. Not profundity, and personal feeling and metaphysics, but Music which is absolute, distilled, and never under a mask of figures and ideas which are borrowed from other spheres.

Human sentiment, but not human affairs, and this, too, expressed within the limits of what is artistic.

The measurements of what is artistic do not refer only to proportions, to the boundaries of what is beautiful and the preservation of taste, they mean above all not assigning to art tasks which lie outside its nature. Description in music, for instance.

This is what I think. Can this, to return to what was first said, can this opinion be contested by honest people? Do I not much rather hold out my hands to universal understanding? Is it possible that these theories could be considered injurious and dangerous on the one side and as retrograde and compromising on the other side? I entrust them to you.

F. B.

My dear boy,\* already more than two years ago, as you know, I threw the expression "Young Classicism" into the world and prophesied popularity for it. For me there is something strange about it, for today the expression is circulated and there is nobody who knows who coined it. So it is said at times that Busoni also follows the "Young Classicism"...! It is not necessary to be a prophet to imagine it. After a seriously large number of experiments from the original "Secessionists" to the "Anti-Secessionists" and finally, after the manner of crowds, to separate groups getting further apart, the necessity for a comprehensive certainty in style must be met.

But, as with everything else, I was misunderstood about this also, for the masses look upon Classicism as upon something turning back. This is confirmed in painting by the rehabilitation of Ingres for instance who, a Master himself, is a terrible

\* From a letter to his son, 18th June 1921, taken from Debusmann's *Ferruccio Busoni* (1948).

example of dead forms (the impression made by this opinion is intended to be sharp).

My idea is (this is feeling, personal necessity rather than constructed principle) that Young Classicism signifies completion in a double sense; completion as perfection and completion as a close. The conclusion of previous experiments.

#### SIMPLICITY OF MUSIC IN THE FUTURE\*

IN the editions I possess of Poe, there are many carefully arranged, good, and characteristic portraits of the poet to be found. But a picture of Poe by Manet, etched with a few strokes, sums up all the other pictures and is exhaustive. Should not music also try to express only what is most important with a few notes, set down in a masterly fashion? Does my *Brautwahl* with its full score of seven hundred pages achieve more than *Figaro* with its six accompanying wind instruments? It seems to me that the refinement of economy is the next aim after the refinement of prodigality has been learnt. Perhaps this will be the third phase of the first book in the history of music; then new starting-points and new means may have to arise to produce in sound the longing which is the pedal note of human polyphony. This might lead eventually to freeing humanity from what is most difficult.

#### THE NEW HARMONY†

Chicago, January 1911

BETWEEN Minneapolis and New York I have some hours of Sunday repose. The travelling bag, which contains my work, lies at the station; there is no pianoforte in the room, so I am thrown on my own thoughts. With your permission I will impart one of them to you.

\* From the "Aufzeichnungen" in *Von der Einheit der Musik* (1922).  
† Written in Chicago, January 1911, for the periodical *Signale*, Berlin.

The present-day harmony and that of the future interest me as they do the musical world and with a similar intensity. At present there is a searching and groping but I see the roads. There are five in all and as yet no composer has walked up to the end of any of them.

The first new harmonic system rests upon chord formation according to customary scales. (Debussy, out of 113 scales which I have compiled, only employs the whole-tone scale, and that only in the melody.)

By the symmetrical inversion of the harmonic order Bernhard Zielen shows me the second way.

Keeping the voices independent of each other in polyphonic compositions produces the third road. (I have, as an experiment, constructed a five-part fugue in which every voice is in a different key so that the harmony flows in quite new chord successions.)

A fourth road is anarchy, an arbitrary placing of intervals, next and over one another, according to mood and taste. Arnold Schönberg is trying it; but already he is beginning to turn round in a circle.

The fifth will be the birth of a new key system which will include all the four afore-mentioned ways.

I believe this list is as clear as it is complete; it contains enough material to fill an extensive volume. This is left for the latest theorist. For every good theory can be expressed in a short sentence, whereas every fundamental sentence contains the stuff for an extension as long as you please. The world, to be sure, usually only allows itself to be convinced through works of several volumes.

## CONCERNING HARMONY\*

*Berlin, January 1922*

Dear Herr Windisch,

I have already pointed out and emphasised the fact several

\* These arguments about "Harmony" originally appeared as an open letter, written in Berlin, 17th January 1922, and first published in *Melos*.

times, that in our art the mind, the skill and the content set the standard for the estimation and the endurance of a work. A change has been brought about amongst the more progressive critics of today and a standard set which does not differentiate according to the value of a piece but according to the direction in which it moves; it rejects good things moving in older directions, and honours bad productions with the newest tendencies.

But there is an art which stands "jenseits von Gut und Böse" (beyond good and evil), and which remains a great art in every age; before this art critics of the most advanced kind bow down instinctively as before that of Bach or Beethoven and nolens volens . . . Wagner. These critics are concerned with the living, and amongst these their discriminations divide what is old and what is present-day with the sharpness of a knife and those in the former category are turned aside, the latter honoured. Now a piece is not good because it is new and (this is the comical thing) it is not new because it appears without form or beauty!<sup>1</sup>

There are three things which are made use of by neo-expressionism: harmony, hysteria and temperamental gestures.

The harmony can do no other than draw from the twelve half-tones standing at our disposal, all possible combinations of which have been tried and made use of. The only remaining characteristic is the removal of the consonance, leaving the dissonance unresolved. Whereby the harmony is stunted as a means of expression, and the individuality of the author effaced: to me, at least, the harmonic structure of all neo-expressionists sounds alike, whatever the composer's name may be. This is especially the case in the excessive use of octaves and fifths which one meets everywhere.

The "hysteria" is maintained by using short disconnected forms of sighs and of runs, in the obstinate repetition of one or more sounds, in fading away and using the highest of the high

<sup>1</sup> In the end one can recognise in such a piece a relic from Wagner, a disguised Debussy, shameless salon and dance music.

and the deepest of the deep sounds, in the pauses and in the accumulation of different rhythms within one bar. All available means of expression are used as far as they can have a place appointed for them within the structure of a composition.

The "temperamental gestures" appear chiefly in orchestral works on which, by a semblance of polyphony, still more restlessness is imprinted.

Generally speaking, it is a characteristic that at the commencement of a piece, all means and formulas appear immediately, in full strength and are exhausted, so that every possibility for making any further stress during the course of the composition is forestalled. In general, renunciation is the order of the day in the place of enrichment; to all appearances more has been joined on to the work already done, but in reality this work is blasted by what is joined on to it so that no intermediary road leads to a new starting-point.

There is a pleasant anecdote in which the Shah of Persia, during a visit to foggy London, was asked whether it was true that they prayed to the sun in his country. The Shah is said to have replied: "If you knew the sun you would also pray to it."

Stravinsky told me once, through a third person, that he found it strange to hear that I admired the German classical composers. Whereupon I commissioned the third person to reply to Stravinsky that if he knew the classical composers he would also value them. (I have not been able to ascertain if the reply was delivered.)

But why does harmony (called cacophony by opposers and atonality by adherents) play such a very privileged and decisive rôle? Because it is produced on a system which demands neither skill, nor imagination, nor feeling, and gives everyone the possibility of the right to stagger backwards and forwards at will. But new harmony could only arise naturally from the foundation of an extremely cultivated polyphony and establish a right for its appearance; this requires strict tuition and a considerable mastery of melody. This system does not exclude the

possibility of retaining the traditional harmonic changes where they are in place, and where they would evoke contrast; it does not exclude the use of simple formulas for simple thoughts. And there is certainly a difference between setting a simple "Good morning" to music, and an ironical greeting, or a greeting quite hostilely felt. It is not sensible, with a simple "Good morning" to put harmony which is not simple. I have replied already to the objection that what, to our ears, may sound strange today, may sound simple to other ears in the future. To allow for every differentiation is only possible on these lines. I know too that I have occasioned a great deal of misunderstanding through my little book *A New Aesthetic of Music*. I retract no sentence which stands there, but against certain interpretations of my sentences I must defend myself. By "*freedom of form*" I never meant *formlessness*, by "*Oneness in music*" I did not mean an *illogical and zigzag harmony*, by the "*right of individuality*" I never meant the *noisy expression of any blunderer*.

If a doctor advises the enjoyment of wine, he does not wish his patient to become a drunkard. The state of freedom must not be confused with anarchy, because in anarchy every individual is threatened by the other. Magnanimity is not the mania of prodigality and free love is not prostitution. Moreover, a good idea is not an artistic creation, someone with talent is not a master; a seed of corn, however strong and fruitful it may be, produces no harvest for a long time.

Far from advising against every effective resource being taken up in the workshop of our possibilities, I only desire that it shall be applied aesthetically and intelligently; that the proportions of the measures, sounds and intervals shall be artistically distributed, and that a creation, however it is planned or formed, in its final completion should rise to the rank of a classic in the original sense of the word. I think I have expressed myself sufficiently clearly and remain,

Yours,

F. B.

## FUTURISM IN MUSIC\*

IN the spring of this year Futurism in Music was preached in the Paris paper *La Liberté*—the number reached me late. The leader of the movement preserves his *incognito* but openly expresses his opinion in a manifesto:

The composers of today who are modern devotees of the past only deserve our contempt, for they labour in vain, composing original works with worn-out means. . . . Hear then the aesthetic laws of Futurism. These laws consist, in fact, of nothing more than the division of the octave into fifty intervals. The idea is physical in origin and has been considered repeatedly. Know that shortly we shall have completed "chromatic" pianofortes, stringed instruments, harps, in fact a complete "chromatic" orchestra. Simultaneously with the futuristic composer's work, the work for the realisation of it is carried out. In the shadows of the workshops, the forms of families of instruments arise, whose unsuspected perfection will make the perfect reproduction of futuristic compositions possible.

At the same time similar news comes to me from Moscow where musical Nihilists are at work.

That is right. It pleases me, and I stood on this side long ago, if only as a theorist. Already in the year 1906 I proposed the division of the octave into thirty-six intervals, two rows of tripartite tones (each tone divided into three) at a distance of a semitone from one another.<sup>1</sup>

"The universal instrument" has already been made in America: the electric dynamic organ. It cost a million, remained untouched and fell into ruins.

\* Written in Berlin, September 1912; appeared in *Pan*.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the "Bericht über Drittelöne" (1922).

There are just two questions left:

First, before we begin a new way, can we do everything in the old way as well as it has been done in the past?  
Secondly, in addition to this have we the talent?

The first question is disposed of in concise style in the manifesto. "We wish to approach music with a virgin soul. . . . We trample traditions under our feet. . . . The musical gods are dead. We soar with them no longer at the touch of their creations."

Until the curtain goes up we cannot say whether the answer to the second question will be in the affirmative.

Futurism must wait for that moment. Then it becomes the present. And the manifesto itself teaches: "The present is a vain idea; say 'it is' and already *it is no more*. . . ." *Tout passe*.

REPORT ON THE DIVISION OF THE  
WHOLE TONE INTO THREE PARTS\*

IF there is one thing which is just as bad as wishing to retard progress, it is this: forcing it stupidly. It is sixteen years since I drew up, theoretically, a possible system for the division of tones into three (a tripartite tone) and I have not yet decided to make a conclusive publication of it. Why? Because I am conscious that a responsibility falls on me as the originator of the proposition. The possibility of practical experiment is still withheld from me; and I know very well that I could only put forward my ideas with exactitude through a series of conscientious and thoroughly tried-out investigations. I have accomplished little. In New York an intelligent and aged pianoforte maker from Trentino rebuilt for me an old harmonium which had three manuals, giving it two rows of tripartite tones at a distance of a semitone from one another. The arrangement of

\* Written in Berlin and published in *Melos*, August 1922.



the intervals proved so impracticable that it was not possible to strike them easily one after the other, but still I had heard the new intervals. I played a chromatic scale in tripartite tones to a little circle of intelligent musical friends in the next room. The result, it was agreed, was that they thought they had heard an ordinary chromatic scale in semitones. This impression confirmed my supposition that the ear is able to separate tripartite tones one from another clearly, and not feel them as something like semitones out of tune. In order not to renounce the semitones, and consequently the minor third and perfect fifth, I had a second row of tripartite tones added to the first row at a distance of a semitone. Through this, every third tripartite tone preserves its semitone. The blending of both rows produces, of course, sixths of tones. Thus the melodic system becomes capable of considerably more power of expression, but it complicates the harmony so much that it demands a very strictly thought-out systematisation. This is still unborn and can only begin to exist through the ears. But according to my principle, progress implies an enrichment and not a lessening of means. Innovators without any head on their shoulders, begin with the rejection and obliteration of what already exists. I prefer to place the younger acquisition on what is existent. Therefore in the foregoing case I keep the semitones in the clear consciousness of their value in the power of expression, knowing that to relinquish them would be the most superficial tomfoolery.

The whole-tone scale with Debussy, and with Liszt before him, is like an anticipation of the whole-tone interval being filled in with the not yet existent tripartite whole-tone intervals. In this expectation the semitone is passed over. But only in the melodic parts; the accompanying harmony remains the one that has long been established. Therefore one does not destroy, one builds up! Time automatically rubs off what is wrong and unnecessary and automatically takes up what is good and beneficial in order to keep it. And the great and beautiful thrive.

## MELODY OF THE FUTURE\*

Melody is the watchword of the dilettanti; only ask them what they mean.

SCHUMANN

Three things belong to composing, first of all melody; then again melody; then finally, for the third time, melody.

JADASSON, *Book of Instruction*

That something, greater than ourselves which does not so much exist as seek existence, palpitating between being and not being, how marvellous it is! It has worn the form and visage of ten thousand different gods, sought a shape for itself in stone, ivory and music, and wonderful words. . . .

H. G. WELLS, *The New Machiavelli*

IT can be said—contradict it who may—that Wagner was the first to use melody as a universal law. Before Wagner, this was always “recognised”.

The older art of composition neglects melody, the older the art the more emphasised this is.

Unconsciously we feel the rule of another standard in the classical works and we measure them with a smaller measure.

The broad sweep of the newer symphony diverges from the music before Wagner. There, the eight bars still rule—with short breaths on great heights—and what fills them out is of a more primitive formation. With Beethoven it is most pronounced in his second period—the weakest of the three—in the Fifth, the “Waldstein” Sonata and in the Three Quartets, op. 59.

Again it might be said—again, contradict who may—that in the first of Beethoven’s creative periods feeling overcomes helplessness, in the third period this same feeling, coming up from the depths, drowns the acquired mastery.

In the middle period, on the other hand, feeling withdraws

\* Published 2nd July 1912 in the *Zeitschrift für Musik*. The first sketch was a letter to his wife, 15th March 1911.

before symphonic expansion and splendour of forms. This second period of Beethoven's is the exploitation of the strong ideas in the first period. The passionate defiance of the "Pathétique" remained the basis for ideas in all similar moods of sound during the following periods, from the Fifth Symphony onwards, only more expanded, adorned, and underlined. But the expansion stands in bad relationship to the extensiveness of the melodic element which gets lost on a kind of—what shall I say?—plateau of modulatory and figurative eloquence.

I am thinking, for example, of the exposition in the first movement of the "Appassionata" where the great rising and persistence in temperament takes the place of subject-matter. It is the thrilling eloquence—his own—the infectious conviction of the orator, instead of his theme, which affects the listener here; it has an effect on larger masses of people and makes a more sudden impact. Temperament puts a mask of more physical uncontrollability before thought and the emotion of feeling, that is without thought or feeling.

It has become a permanent commonplace in the history of music to reproach every composition, appearing for the first time, with a lack of melody. *Don Giovanni* met with that reproach on the occasion of the first performance in Berlin; it was the same with Beethoven's Violin Concerto, and with Wagner's music dramas. And again, the increase in technical discoveries is always put as the reason for decrease in melodic invention. It almost seems as if technical mastery could make its effects more through what is unusual, and melodic expression only through what is familiar. But, in fact, Mozart was a richer maker of melodies than his predecessors; Beethoven broader, more ingenious than Mozart; Wagner more luxuriant than Beethoven, if also less noble, more dependent, more material, more of a characteriser, less of a psychologist. It is against this materialism that a group of living composers is attempting to react.

Immateriality is the real essence of music that will ring out in a blossoming and sublime melody.

## AN ATTEMPT AT A DEFINITION OF MELODY\*

A ROW of repeated (1) ascending and descending (2) intervals which (3) organised and moving rhythmically (4) contains in itself a latent harmony and (5) which gives back a certain atmosphere of feeling; which can and does exist (6) independent of text for expression and (7) independent of accompanying voices for form; and in the performance of which the choice of pitch (8) and of instrument (9) exercise no change over its essence. (The nine arguments noted as numbers in brackets should be commented upon explanatorily.)

This "absolute" melody, at first a self-sufficient formation, united itself subsequently with the accompanying harmony, and later melted with it into oneness; out of this oneness the continually progressive poly-harmony aims to free and liberate itself.

It must be asserted here, in contradiction to a point of view which is deeply-rooted, that melody has expanded continuously, that it has grown in line and in capacity for expression, and that it must succeed in attaining universal command in composition.

## PROPORTION†

THERE are three kinds of proportion which surpass all the rest in importance: measurement in time, contrast in sound, and relationships in modulation. And three subordinate ones: movement, sequence of intervals, and atmosphere.

It would be possible to write a detailed chapter about each of them, and a book about them collectively making use of existing and especially composed examples. The section on sequence of intervals leads directly to the system of melody which it is among my plans to draw up. Already in the year

\* Draft published in *Von der Einheit der Musik*, 1922. The first sketch was a letter to his wife, 22nd July 1913.

† Written in Berlin, September 1922.

1915, I wrote in Part II of the *Well-tempered Clavier*: "In theoretical literature there is no book on melodic forms and it would be a valuable publication, if not in order to help towards the production of new and beautiful motives, at least in order to help in the 'recognition of beauty' when it already exists. Perhaps also to hinder a further growth of that demonstrably wrong, melodic formation, which, since Beethoven, has sometimes been met with even among the most highly esteemed German composers. It is even conceivable that in the future an aim, developed to the highest point of pre-eminence, may take the place in art of the instinct which is fading gradually and produce compositions of a quality as alive as those produced by inspiration. But in the compositions of the future (whatever the origin of the motive power) 'melody' should govern with absolute sway and in the perfected manifestation of it there will be a 'final' polyphony."

In order that "the aim may develop to the highest pre-eminence", it is necessary to examine the laws of proportion thoroughly. Looked at as laws and subsequently felt and practised freely as an acquired balance, they lend to the structure which they serve that durability which inspiration alone does not guarantee.

Conception is the same as gift. Intention a matter of character. Direction a sign of the epoch.

It is the form which first raises conception, intention and direction to the rank of a work of art. And inside the form, proportion is one of the strongest and most sensitive demands. In a later volume, which will treat of these questions, I hope to meet the reader again.

## THE THEORY OF ORCHESTRATION\*

ONE day lately I read an announcement of a publication, which was shortly forthcoming, of Berlioz' book on instru-

\* Written for *Die Musik*, Berlin, November 1905.

mentation revised by Richard Strauss. It is to be hoped that this revision will avoid the fundamental defects of all instruction books on instrumentation up to the present, and in so far as a dumb book is able to teach a free and eloquent art, that it will accomplish this also. In my review of Breithaupt's book *Die Natürliche Klaviertechnik*, I remarked that every gifted artist forms his own technique, but there are however rules about things which everyone must avoid and others which everyone must make use of. This applies to instrumentation also. But what are these unchangeable rules?

Above all it must be emphasised and impressed upon the learner from the beginning, that there are two kinds of instrumentation: that which is demanded and directed by musical thought—absolute orchestration—and the instrumentalisation of what was originally only an abstract musical composition, or one conceived for another instrument. The first is the only genuine one, the second belongs to "arrangements". Nevertheless up to now there are more composers who transcribe for the orchestra than those who invent and feel purely orchestrally. Above all, I count Mozart, Weber, Wagner as the foremost "genuine" composers for orchestra, and in the first rank, Berlioz. Even Wagner lapses into orchestration, as for example in the working out of the *Meistersinger* Overture, and there he has endeavoured as clearly as possible to transcribe for orchestra an abstract musical composition. Beethoven almost always "orchestrates". To him the musical idea and the poetic human value are the most important things for him and the first to arise.

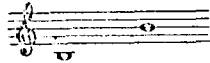
True, "orchestral moments" hover in places before everyone who plans an orchestral piece, yet they are mostly only moments and the learner is directed to these places for the manner in which to design the whole work with all the details. And these moments are constantly as follows: sustained horn notes, roll of kettledrums, flourishes on the trumpets—the childish maladies of instrumental writers. What comes in between is generally "arranged". It must be taught therefore

that the orchestra is a single instrument, a connected organism in which all the organs are active at the same time. There is nothing more unorchestral than long passages for the strings or drawn-out passages for the woodwind, with no participation for the other instruments. Once in a way such writing can be employed as contrast, or as illustration to a special situation, and then not again. That is a "special" effect, and teachers of instrumentation generally busy themselves much too much with such "special effects". "Special effects", therefore—a third point—should be placed in an appendix, or better still, left to the imagination and individuality of the orchestrator who is already mature.

A fourth rule which I do not find even mentioned anywhere and which is yet always confirmed in all Mozart's and Wagner's scores, is that every instrument whether it is used singly or in groups, has to convey its passage with meaning from the beginning to the end, so that it always represents a separate picture. This is not only more beautiful but it sounds better.

The fifth: the woodwind, flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons are still always represented in storeys one after the other. But if the bassoons reach the lowest and the flutes the highest notes, one must not forget that the bassoon reaches up a whole octave into the compass of the flute, and that the clarinet reaches down deep into the bassoon's range of tone, and that for all woodwind there is a stratum of unison in existence: the octave

Ex. 1



the common-room in which all the occupants of the different storeys meet together.

The sixth is to learn that necessary arrangement which, in the orchestra, takes over the function of "the pedals" in the pianoforte. At times one plays the pianoforte without pedal, yet the right foot is usually active, continually helpful, filling

out and joining together, not to speak of the pronounced big pedal effects. This "right foot" is also indispensable in the orchestra. The teacher should devote a whole chapter to it.

A seventh chapter must deal with pianissimo and fortissimo. The rule exists, in spite of model examples to the contrary, that for pianissimo as few instruments and for fortissimo as many as possible should be used. Yet it is proved that one can effect a velvety-soft piano with trumpets and trombones and quite a brilliant forte without them.

That leads to an eighth chapter which I should like to call the "Dynamic Atmosphere" and which should afford the proof that the effect of the plane of intensity is relative and depends upon its surroundings.

The idea of the degree of intensity leads to an extraordinarily important ninth chapter—that which discusses sound proportions. A good score could be created in such a way that the sound gradations are included in it and allowed to be heard without special assistance from the executants. The "prominent" middle voice must be orchestrated, not sounded more loudly or more fully. The crescendo must take place through the arrangement of the instruments, the theme must shine forth of itself. A strict proportion should govern the doubling or trebling of the voices. If a doubled instrument does not reach high or low enough, one should put a substitute at once which is suitable in character and strength. With many voices there are different conditions and the sound-characteristics of the register are to be weighed precisely, and at the same time one must not forget the melodic design!

A tenth chapter could be called: "What is Necessity? What is Luxury?" They should be in the same relation to each other as the skeleton is to the flesh-covered body, as the naked body to the dressed, as the dress to the ornamentation. One learns first of all to put down necessities.

Finally, one learns that orchestral music is, in a pronounced sense, "public music", and that its effects are to be measured for that. As chamber music is allotted to intimate effects, virtuoso

## THE ESSENCE OF MUSIC

music to the large and small salon, choral music to societies, festivals and special occasions, military music to streets and squares, orchestral music is stamped for the big public hall without which it cannot exist. It is after this fashion that I have in mind a book of instruction on instrumentation and it is to be hoped that the realisation of it will be made by Richard Strauss.

### INSUFFICIENCY OF THE MEANS FOR MUSICAL EXPRESSION\*

A CONVERSATION that I had a few days ago with two friends of mine, musicians, opened my eyes in many respects but chiefly to the insufficiency of the means for musical expression, especially with reference to the present-day orchestra. In fact even if the ideas of most of the living composers do not exceed the possibilities offered, and if our "Master" hardly knows how to manage the existing material, it is on the other hand not to be denied that:

1. The incompleteness of the orchestral instrument singly, as well as in the formation of the orchestra as a whole, hampers imagination and the power of creation.
2. Possibly there are musicians and will be musicians who, for sound effect, long to go far beyond the boundaries now drawn (that such musicians in the future will go beyond the boundaries of form, of harmony, indeed perhaps of the whole system of tonality, is now already more than an idea).

But it is to be feared a genius such as this could not succeed in carrying his conception into effect so long as the richer means desired are either not invented, or are not in regular use. So far as a short reflection and the use of what imagination

\* Written to the editor of the *Musikalischen Wochenblattes* (E. W. Fritsch, New York), 14th November 1893, and found in Busoni's posthumous papers. The letter should have been published there but this cannot be ascertained.

## THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

nature has given me allows, I have tried to classify as follows necessary improvements that are possible and improvements not yet invented.

1. Instruments that are permanently in use only in large orchestras of the first rank. As for instance: English horn, bass clarinet, contra-bassoon, harps, bass tuba, Glockenspiel, three and four drums. Although today they cannot be replaced, they are not sufficient in an orchestra of instruments in general use.
2. Instruments used in isolated bars with decided success still count as exceptional means but are to be found permanently in small orchestras. Examples: The family of saxophones, the tenor tubas, the viola-alta, the cymbals (the gypsy cymbals); as far as I know the employment of the latter has not been tried at all yet.
3. Instruments which might be desired, and are capable of being perfected, or the number of which could be increased. Examples: A complete family of flutes, bass-oboos, soprano bassoons, low contra-bassoons, chromatic harps, pedal drums (which can perform passages and other things).
4. New instruments of the future. For example: A glockeninstrument, with a compass of six octaves with keyboard; filling out all gaps in the sound and in the technique of every individual instrument.

### THE FUTURE OF OPERA\*

THE sung word will always remain a convention on the stage, and a hindrance to any semblance of truth; to overcome this deadlock with any success a plot would have to be made in which the singers act what is incredible, fictitious, and improbable from the very start, so that one impossibility supports the

\* Extracts from the *Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst*. Written in Berlin, March 1913.

other and both become possible and acceptable. . . . It is for this reason and because it disregards this most important principle from the beginning, that I look upon the so-called Italian "verismus" for the musical stage as untenable. . . .

On the other hand if the form of a plot accompanied by music and illustrated by song is considered without the text, it might produce a kind of "sung mime" . . . .

It is necessary to be clear about a second point in connection with the question of the future of opera, namely: "At what moments is music indispensable on the stage?"

To this question the precise answer is: "During dances, marches, songs, and at the appearance of the supernatural in the action."

The idea of the supernatural as a theme follows, therefore, as a possibility for the future. And there is yet another: that the stage should be accepted openly as a pretence, as nothing but "acting" and sustained make-believe; with the idea of jest and unreality being contrasts to the seriousness and veracity of life. Then it is not out of place for the singers to declare their love and unload their hate and fall into a melodic duel, and hold on to high notes in pathetic outbursts. There it is in order for them to behave intentionally in a way contrary to life, instead of turning everything upside down unintentionally (as happens in our theatres now and particularly in opera).

The opera should take possession of the supernatural or unnatural as its only proper sphere of representation and feeling and should create a pretence world in such a way that life is reflected in either a magic or a comic mirror, presenting consciously that which is not to be found in real life. The magic mirror is for grand opera, the comic for light opera. And dances and masks and apparitions should be interwoven, so that the onlooker never loses sight of the charms of pretence or gives himself up to it as an actual experience.

The artist, if the control over his medium at certain moments

is not to be lost, must not be moved when he wishes to move others, and in the same way the onlooker, if the artistic enjoyment is not to be debased to human participation, must never consider it as reality. The performer "acts", he does not experience. The onlooker, being incredulous, is thereby unimpeded in mental reception and keen enjoyment.

On such assumptions a future for the opera can well be expected. But the first and greatest obstacle for us will be, I fear, the public itself.

In my view the public has a thoroughly criminal attitude to the theatre for most people demand a strong human experience from the stage, no doubt because such experiences do not come into ordinary lives and also because they crave for excitement for which they lack the courage; and the stage deals out these excitements without involving the audience in the accompanying dangers and disasters and, above all, sparing them any exertion. For the public does not know and does not wish to know that in order to receive a work of art, half the work must be done by the receiver himself.

#### WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE PRESENT TIME\*

EVERYWHERE, not least in Germany, similar symptoms of revolution appear in musical endeavours. They are alike in all countries, and evidently the outbreak of this present-day movement is a post-war expression; in the sense of being transferred, new conditions bring about new manifestations, in art they call forth new expression and the supposed prerogative of the individual to proclaim it. The principle of one single individual is pushed forward; many even renounce this and hammer on the principle of freedom of opinion; the idea of establishing those of their predecessors is simply scorned. The older men,

\* The first publication of an autograph manuscript, found among Busoni's posthumous papers, that has no date or title.

who appear to be liberal and open-minded, are in search of a seeming juvenescence in it, which they agree with and follow and which gives them the illusion that they are at the head of the movement. The youth of the demonstrators and the irregularity of their productions seem to be the outstanding features of the movement; gift and ability are only a secondary consideration, sometimes not considerations at all.

But the movement is too general and consolidated for it to be ignored, nor must it be so. It must be dealt with, the facts registered, and looked at as objectively as possible.

The seeds of these blossoms, however, were sown before the war. Schönberg, the Vienna Secessionist, Stravinsky, the Russian acrobat of sound, laid the foundation for misunderstandings which through over-trumping pass today for positive truths. A little book of mine published in 1906 but only read ten years later, in theory also misled many through a particular interpretation being applied to it in the war. And here over-trumping came forward in the place of the power to convince, and I felt both annoyed and satisfied because, however crooked the result, I could see an effect which came from my teaching. I speak of it in the past because already in the year 1920 (this time in Zürich) I foresaw the end of expressionism, then at the zenith of its importance. From it we have got some possibilities which we add gratefully to our useful means and of which we shall make use from time to time. There is a kernel of truth in each of the bigger movements, the error lies in emphasising this fact, for then one thinks and acts in an exclusive, exaggeratedly intolerant and ridiculous way.

Inborn gift and acquired knowledge will always give the casting vote in the valuation and permanency of a work of art. The "direction" remains a transitory sign of the time from which it sprang, and if the particular type reaches perfection then it becomes a "classic" and (without further dispute) is put into the existing stock of what is good. If it does not reach this perfection the type disappears as it came and it simply marks an "incident" in history which bore no result.

It depends therefore on the gift of the individual, on his self-discipline, self-renunciation, on the tenacious cultivation of his abilities, wherever something "lasting" is formed out of the "direction" he takes or in which he was set going. An achievement such as this cannot emanate simultaneously from a group of people aged about twenty. The craft requires too long a training for that, life too great a number of experiences.

The newcomers deceive themselves, too, in thinking they can break, or have broken, with all their predecessors. This is not the case, in spite of their unshakable conviction, for every child has a mother to whom it is still attached by the navel even after birth. These newest-comers are in fact less original than they themselves suppose. On the other hand it is undeniable that the eyes of the human being are set in such a way that he is obliged to look forward, for only then, if he lives in the present, is he passably competent to exist. It is a question of destiny if the times are confused and have indistinct and oscillating outlines. The creators who are sentenced to come into this confusion have to endure it. Therefore, unless he is narrow-minded, it is the duty and task of anyone who sees this confusion to bring light into these conditions, to differentiate and support wherever there is darkness, complication and oscillation. Besides this, in the development of the artist, whether it appears singly or as a whole group, a manifestation has been observed which changes the initial unruliness into quietude—often into the life of a Philistine. The man who is a considerable innovator at first, turns back and becomes a reformer. Think of Schumann, think of Beethoven. It is more consistent for those who have learnt about practically all that existed in the past, to be satisfied with it no longer and to devise something new; again it is also natural that the store of opposing ideas and energies in the young revolutionary should soon be exhausted and either languish through repetition or return to what is more normal through reaction. Thus it is preferable for a disturbed epoch to close on future order resulting from it; against

this the storm gathers in a heavily laden atmosphere and makes the mariner uneasy.

Now there is an absolute, demonstrable beauty and perfection and there are things that please certain people at certain times and will be looked upon as beautiful by them. Whichever direction the work of art adopts it falls ultimately to one of two destinies, it either remains lost or becomes a classic, just as it happens to belong to the first or second species. Furthermore it is the direction that changes and the perfection that is permanent. The first is accidental and dependent, almost without importance, the second is important, independent and lawful. Not lawful in the sense of dry rules, but in relationship to itself.

The question is not: Is such and such different from the old? But rather: Is it just as good, is it much better than the old? And at intervals it happens that the answer to the latter question is in the affirmative, through either clarification or comparison, but only, and without exception, owing to the combination of gift and ability. It is to be supposed that among such a number of youths a personality will appear sometime—perhaps soon—who will show the revolution's good kernel in its complete circle; he will naturally rise to be a classic, thereby separating himself from his previous companions. It is to be supposed each thinks that this particular one is himself and in this way from among those who were once like-minded, adversaries arise later on. Already one can discern, among the groups, similar dispositions of the whole "school" as well as individuals to make a divergence—in the mass as well as singly (the school lacking a head). Both sides of an angle diverge more and more, the further they go. At first from inborn race characteristics, coming out of the darkness of nationality—the different countries dared not make themselves known to each other. Inside these countries the chosen one will become visible. At present, however, the Germanic people clearly hold more closely together; the Latin people the same; opposition and insufficient training are common to them all.

But on the whole, at all times, the rotation takes place and only what we had not experienced before causes us surprise. But these experiences must recur again at regular intervals of time and under unparalleled conditions. The whole preceding occurrence, for example, was disconcertingly present-day nearly a hundred years ago and was put down in the conversation between Mephistopheles and Baccalaureus (*Faust I*). Two hundred years before that Cervantes said the same thing. And he was hardly a Philistine any more than Goethe.