

*The Complete Book of the*  
**GREAT MUSICIANS**



JOHN BULL, 1580

*The Complete Book of the*  
**GREAT MUSICIANS**

*A Course in Appreciation  
for Young Readers*

by  
*Percy A. Scholes*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**  
**ITHACA, NEW YORK**

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Book of the Great Musicians*, designed for the children on lines calculated to interest them, is an addition to the most important branch of musical education. Its very simplicity is its highest recommendation; it invites the children's confidence and stimulates their curiosity; it makes the whole thing rather like a game in which an individual child or a whole class may find a great deal of pleasure. It combines in a happy way the basic facts of music (such as melody, harmony, structure) with the living examples in composition and the personal qualities of history.

In the hands of an imaginative teacher an Appreciation Class becomes a fascinating employment, and in its form of three separate small volumes this book is perfectly suited to become the basis of work for such a class. But there are many music pupils who have no opportunity of attending an Appreciation Class, and whose musical instruction is, perforce, given in the form of individual Piano or Violin lessons. To these pupils the reading of *The Book of the Great Musicians*, with an occasional friendly hint or suggestion from

teacher or parent, will be a powerful stimulus and tend to remove the whole subject of music from the region of mere 'lesson' and 'practice'.

One suggestion that should hardly be necessary is that this attractive book, with its lavish illustrations, is obviously designed to be put into the hands of the young musician. A mere reading and retelling of its contents by the teacher cannot possibly convey the vivid impressions that go with actual possession and personal reading of the book itself.

H. P. ALLEN

*The First Book of the*  
**GREAT MUSICIANS**

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## TO THE READER

If you want to play a good game at cricket or football or tennis you have to *learn* how the game is played, and to *practise* it. When you have learnt and practised, then you get the enjoyment.

And, in the same way, if you want to listen properly to lots of the very best music you have to *learn* about it and then to *practise* listening. And, here again, when you have learnt and practised you get the enjoyment.

But learning about a game, and practising it, are really quite good fun in themselves.

And I hope you will find that learning about music, and practising listening to it, are also quite good fun in themselves.

If you don't get some fun out of this book as you study it, and then, when you have studied it, get greater enjoyment out of listening to music, you will greatly disappoint—

*The Author*



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CHAPTER I

**THE COUNTRY PEOPLE  
AS COMPOSERS**

**A CHAPTER ON FOLK MUSIC**

THIS is a book about the Great Composers—by which we generally mean men of musical genius, who have had a long training in music, and learnt how to make beautiful songs and long fine pieces for piano, or orchestra, or chorus. But these are not the only composers.

It is not so difficult to compose little tunes as people think, and if you keep your ears open you will often find people composing without knowing they are doing it. For instance, if a boy has to call ‘evening paper’ over and over again in the street, night after night, you will find that he turns it into a little four-note song. Notice this and try to write down his song next time you hear it. Little children of two years old croon to themselves tiny tunes they have made up without knowing it. It would surprise their mothers if you told them their babies were composers—but they are!

And in all countries the simple country people, who

*FIRST BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS*

have had no musical training, have yet made up very charming music—songs or dance tunes, or tunes for playing games. Music such as this we call FOLK MUSIC.

A Folk Tune is never very long or difficult, and it is only a '*Melody*' (that is, it is only a single line of notes, without any accompaniment). But, in their simple style, the Folk Tunes are very beautiful, and no composer can make anything better than the best of them.

Just in the same way you will find that the country people in every land have Folk Tales and often Folk Plays—so they are not only composers, but authors and playwrights too.

*Work Music, Play Music, and Religious Music*

Some of the Folk Tunes are a part of children's games which have come down for centuries. Others are a help in work, such as rowing songs (to help the rowers to keep time with their oars), songs to be sung while milking, and so on. Others, again, are part of the religion—Folk Carols to sing at Christmas from house to house, and songs and dances belonging to far-off times, before Christianity, when people thought they had to sing and dance to welcome the Sun God when he reappeared in spring; such pagan dances and songs as these latter still go on in some places, though people have forgotten their full meaning. Then, of course, there are love songs, hunting songs, and drinking songs, and songs about pirates and highwaymen, songs about going to the wars, and sea songs. There are songs on all

## *THE COUNTRY PEOPLE AS COMPOSERS*

manner of subjects in fact, for everything that interested the country people was put into songs.

### *How Nations Express Their Feelings in Music*

You cannot imagine a sad baby making up happy little tunes, can you? Or a happy baby making sad ones? And so with nations—their general character comes out in their songs. And every nation gets into its own particular way of making its tunes, so as to express its various feelings. English tunes are generally different from Scottish tunes, Irish from Welsh, and so forth. You can generally tell one of the negro songs from the Southern States when you hear it, and nobody who has heard much Folk Music of various nations is likely to hear a Norwegian song and think it an Italian or French one.

### *Collecting Tunes—A Useful Hobby*

The trouble is that the country people are now hearing so many of the town-made tunes, that come to them in cheap music books or as gramophone records, that they are quickly forgetting their own old country songs. So some musicians have made a hobby of collecting the Folk Tunes before they get lost. They go out with note-book and pencil, and get the older folks to sing them the tunes that were sung in the villages when they were boys and girls, and where the old Folk Dances are still used they manage to see these, and to

## *FIRST BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS*

copy down the music of the fiddler and the steps of the dance. So much of the Folk Music is being saved (only just in time!), and some of it is now printed and taught in schools, so that it may be handed down by the children to coming generations.

In America, where so many races mingle, you can collect Folk Music of all nations. In the Southern Appalachian mountains, where the people are descended from British settlers of long ago and have not mingled much with other people because the mountains cut them off, the Folk Songs are still much the same as you find in England and Scotland. You can collect lots of Irish tunes in other parts of America, and Russian, and German, and Hungarian, and Italian tunes. In addition there are, of course, negro tunes (partly descended from African melodies) and American Indian tunes.

### *How Folk Songs Have Influenced Composers*

In all the countries the skilled and trained composers have at times used Folk Songs as parts of their larger pieces. How they do this you will learn later in the book. And the 'Form' or shape of the Folk Tunes has shown composers how to form or shape their big piano and orchestral pieces. It will help us in our study of the big works of the great composers if we can come to understand the little tunes of the people.

The thing to do is to play or sing a Folk Tune and then find out how it is made up. For instance, if we take this little North of England song and examine it we shall learn a good deal.

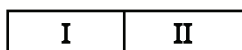


## THE COUNTRY PEOPLE AS COMPOSERS

### BARBARA ALLEN



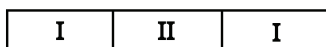
Here you see is a tune that falls into two parts, balancing one another, so to speak. We might call it a 'two-bit tune' (inventing a useful word).



Now we will take another tune; this time it happens to be a Welsh one.

### ALL THRO' THE NIGHT

There you see is a strain (I) which comes at the beginning and the end of the song, and in between, for the sake of variety, another strain (II). We might call that a 'three-bit-tune', or (if you like) a 'sandwich tune'. There are lots of tunes we can call by that name. You see what it means—don't you?



## QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. If somebody said to you 'Can you tell me what is meant by the words "Folk Music"?' what would you reply?

2. What do we mean by a 'melody'?

3. Mention some of the different subjects of the songs sung by the country-folk.

4. What should we mean if we said 'a nation's heart is seen in its songs'?

5. Which do you think is the most useful hobby: (1) collecting foreign stamps, (2) collecting bird's eggs, or (3) collecting Folk Tunes, and why do you think so? (Do not be afraid of saying what *you* really think.)

6. Say two ways in which skilled composers have got help from the music of simple folk.

## THINGS TO DO

*(For School and Home)*

1. Play, or get somebody to play for you, a lot of Folk Tunes from some song book, and find out how each tune is made. You will find a great many of them are either in the two bits (I-II) or the three bits (I-II-I). This exercise is important: it will teach you how to listen.

## THE COUNTRY PEOPLE AS COMPOSERS

2. Get into your head as many good Folk Tunes as you can, so that you will always have something jolly to sing or whistle. This will help to make you musical. Some of the country people in England know as many as 300 or 400 old tunes. How many can *you* learn and remember?

3. Play or listen to a good many Scottish tunes, and see if you can find out from them what sort of people the Scots people are. Then do the same with the tunes of the English, Irish, Welsh, or any other nation.

4. Get somebody to teach you a Folk Dance, or, if you cannot do this, make up your own little dance to one of the Folk Tunes in a song book.

5. Find a really interesting Folk Song that tells a story and then get some friends to act it with you, whilst some one sings the song. Dressing up will help to make this enjoyable.

6. Find a good FOLK tune with a marching or dancing swing; let one play it on the piano whilst the others put in a note here and there on glasses tapped with spoons, and any other domestic orchestral instruments of the kind. Some can also play the tune on combs with paper. (Glasses can be made to sound particular notes by putting more or less water in them.)

7. Discover any other ways of getting some fun out of Folk Tunes and learning a lot of them.

## BRITONS AND BRETONS

### *The Story of a Thousand-year-old Song*

In 1758 a British force landed in France—at St. Cast, in Brittany. A Breton regiment was marching to meet it when all at once it stopped—*the British soldiers were singing one of its own Breton national songs!* The Bretons, carried away by their feelings, joined in the refrain. The officers on each side told their men to fire—and the words of command were found to be in the same language. Instead of firing at each other, the two forces threw down their weapons and became friends.

How was this? The British regiment was Welsh, and the Welsh are descendants of the ancient Britons—driven into the mountains of Wales by the Saxons in the sixth century, at the same time as the ancestors of the Bretons were driven across the sea into Brittany.

After more than a thousand years, the descendants of these two bodies of the old British nation met, and found they knew the same language and the same songs. Differences had crept into the language and into the songs, of course, but the two regiments could talk together without much difficulty, and join in a chorus together.

This shows how people cling to their national songs. This one is now known in Brittany as *Emgann Sant-Kast* (The Battle of St. Cast) and is still popular in Wales as *Captain Morgan's March*. It can be found in some song books.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH MUSIC IN  
THE DAYS OF DRAKE  
AND SHAKESPEARE

A CHAPTER ON THE BEGINNING  
OF MODERN MUSIC

*An Explorer and His Music*

When Francis Drake set out on his expedition round the world in 1577, tiny though his ship was, he yet found room in it for *musicians*. You would imagine that he would use all his little space for sailors and soldiers; but it was not so, and at meal-times he always had the musicians play before him. A Spanish admiral whom he took prisoner and whose diary has lately been printed says 'the Dragon' (for that was what the Spaniards called Drake) 'always dined and supped to the music of viols'.

The music of Drake and his men always interested the natives wherever they went. When the ship approached one island the king came off in a canoe to meet them, with six grave old counsellors with him.

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The ship's boat was towing at the stern and the king made signs asking that the band whose music he heard might get into the boat; then he fastened his canoe to the boat and was towed along in that way, and (says Drake's chaplain, who wrote the story of the voyage) for an hour the king was 'in musical paradise.'

Drake's crew were great singers, and when they went on shore in another place, and built a fort to stay in for a time, the natives used to come to hear them sing their psalms and hymns at the time of prayers. 'Yea, they took such pleasure in our singing of Psalms, that whensoever they resorted to us, their first request was commonly this, Gnaah, by which they entreated that we should sing.'

If you read the chaplain's book, *The World Encompassed*, you will find many other little stories that will show you how musical were Drake and his seamen, or, if you prefer a modern tale book about Drake, Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* will tell you much the same.

So much for an Elizabethan explorer. Now for an actor and author.

### *A Dramatist and His Music*

In these days the Stratford boy William Shakespeare was in London and had become a famous writer of plays. He must have been very fond of music, for we find he brings it into almost everything he writes. When he wants to make his audience believe in fairies (as in

## DRAKE AND SHAKESPEARE

*A Midsummer-Night's Dream*) he has music—pretty little fairy songs. And when he wants to make people realize how horrible witches are (as in *Macbeth*) he has grim witch songs. His mad people (like *King Lear*) sing little, disordered snatches of song in a mad sort of way. His drunken people sing bits of songs in a riotous way. His people in love sing sentimental songs.

When Shakespeare wants to represent a vision of any sort (as when Queen Katharine is about to die, in *Henry VIII*) he prepares the feelings of his audience by music. Whenever a marvellous cure is to be performed (as in *King Lear* and other plays) he has music. When there is fighting he has trumpets and drums, and when there is a funeral procession he has a Dead March.

There is much more music in Shakespeare than this, but enough has been said to show you how musical was that writer of plays and how musical must have been the audience for whom he wrote the plays. Because of course he wrote what he knew people would like.

### *A Queen and Her Music*

Once when an ambassador from Queen Mary of Scotland came to the court of Queen Elizabeth of England, one of the courtiers took him into a room and hid him behind the arras so that he might hear the Queen play the VIRGINALS (a sort of keyboard instrument, something like a small piano)<sup>1</sup>. The courtier told him to be very quiet as the Queen would be angry

<sup>1</sup>The Virginals was a small harpsichord.

## *FIRST BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS*

if she knew. But the Scotsman pulled the arras aside, and the Queen saw him. She seemed very angry with him for taking such a liberty, so he fell on his knees and begged to be forgiven. Then the Queen asked him—‘Which is the better player, the Queen of Scotland or the Queen of England?’ and of course he had to say ‘The Queen of England’. As he did so he saw, of course, that his being taken to hear the Queen had really been at her command, so that she could ask this question.

So queens played in those days and were proud of their playing.

### *Everybody Musical Then*

In those days everybody seems to have been musical. The common people sang their Folk Songs and their Rounds and Catches. The rich people and courtiers sang a sort of part-song called a MADRIGAL, and if you went out to supper it was taken as a matter of course that when the madrigal books were brought out you could sing your part at sight.

There were many musical instruments such as the Virginals (mentioned above), small Organs in churches, Viols (big and little instruments of the violin kind to play together in sets), Recorders (a kind of flute, big and little, also playing together in sets), Lutes (something like mandolines), and Hautboys, Trumpets, and Drums, for military and other purposes.



### *Choral Music*

The choral singing was very famous then. It was so made that every voice or part (Treble, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) had a beautiful melody to sing, and yet all these beautiful melodies put together made a beautiful piece of music. There were lovely Anthems in the churches, made in this way.

The ROUNDS and CATCHES mentioned above were pieces where all the three or four voices sang the same melody, but beginning one after another, and the melody had to be carefully made so as to fit with itself when sung in this way. *You* can sing Catches; they are very good fun. A Round and a Catch are almost the same thing. We might say that when a Round has funny words we call it a Catch. *Three Blind Mice* is an Elizabethan catch.

### *Keyboard Music*

The English composers led the world at that time in writing for the Virginals. They showed how to write music that was not just like the choral music, but was really suited for fingers on a keyboard. All the piano music of the great composers may be said to have sprung from the English virginal music of the sixteenth century. The Elizabethan composers laid the foundation, and Bach and Beethoven and Chopin and others have built upon it.

*Form in Instrumental Music*

When discussing Folk Songs we learnt a little about Form. In Queen Elizabeth's day composers were trying to find out good 'forms' for instrumental music.

One form they found was the VARIATIONS form. They would take some jolly tune (perhaps a popular Folk Tune), and write it out simply; then they would write it again with elaborations, and then again with further elaborations, and so on to the end. All the great composers down to our own day have been fond of the Variations form, and it was the English Elizabethan composers who invented it.

Another form was made by writing two little pieces in the style of the dances of the day and playing them one after the other, to make a longer piece. Generally one was a slow, stately dance called a Pavane, and the other a quick, nimble dance, called a Galliard.

*The Fame of English Musicians*

In these days English musicians were famous all over Europe, and were often sent for by the princes and kings of various countries to be attached to their courts. One called John Dowland became the King of Denmark's lute player and composer, and his music was printed in many European cities. Another, with the truly English name of John Bull, became organist of Antwerp Cathedral. A very famous composer of choral

*DRAKE AND SHAKESPEARE*

and virginal music in these days was William Byrd, and another was Orlando Gibbons. Try to remember the names of these men and to hear some of their music.

## QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. What do you know of Drake and his music?
2. What do you know of Shakespeare and his music?
3. Tell a story about Queen Elizabeth and music.
4. What were the virginals like?
5. What were the viols?
6. What is the difference between a lute and a flute?
7. Mention a kind of flute common in the sixteenth century.
8. What is a Madrigal?
9. What is a Round?
10. What is a Catch? Do you know one?
11. How did English composers lay the foundation of modern piano music (two ways, please!)?
12. Describe 'Variations'.
13. Describe a form which consisted of dance tunes.
14. Mention four great English musicians of Shakespeare's day.

## THINGS TO DO

1. Get two of your friends to learn this Catch with you. (It is quite easy.) Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and the Clown sing it in *Twelfth Night*.

### QUARRELLING CATCH

Hold the peace, and I pri - thee hold thy peace, \*

Thou knave! Hold they peace, thou knave!

Thou knave!

At first practise it, all singing the same notes, as though it were an ordinary song. Count the rests carefully and sing firmly.

Then sing it this way—first singer begins and when *he* gets to the mark \* second singer begins, and when *he* gets to \* third singer begins. Now all three are singing, but each treading on the tail of the one before, so to speak.

When the leader has sung the Catch about five times through he gives a sign and all stop together, or better, as this is a quarrelling Catch, after going through three or four times, shaking fists at each other, you can fall to fighting and so stop.

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2. Then (for a change) practise this quieter Round of Shakespeare's day. Here some occasional soft singing will be in place. Try various ways of arranging soft and loud passages, with *crescendos* and *diminuendos* and settle on the way that sounds best.

CHURCH-GOING CATCH

All in - to ser - - - vice

Let us sing mer - ri - ly to - - geth -

er, Ding dong ding dong bell.

3. Now practise *Three Blind Mice* in the same way.

4. Play this Elizabethan hymn tune on the piano:

The image shows two systems of piano accompaniment for an Elizabethan hymn tune. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first system has four measures, and the second system has four measures, ending with a double bar line. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, while the bass clef provides a harmonic accompaniment.

## DRAKE AND SHAKESPEARE

Glory to thee, my God, this night  
For all the blessings of the light;  
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
Beneath thy own almighty wings.

Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,  
The ill that I this day have done,  
That with the world, myself, and thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

You see that this tune has parts for four voices—Treble and Alto (on the top stave), and Tenor and Bass (on the bottom stave). Play or sing the Tenor by itself. Have you discovered anything?

Now perform the tune in this way. Get a friend to play it on the piano. You sing the Treble and get some grown-up male person to sing the Tenor.

This tune is called *Tallis's Canon*. Tallis was a great composer in Queen Elizabeth's reign. A CANON (as you have now discovered) is a piece in which one voice sings the same as another, but a few beats after it. We say that these two voices are 'singing in Canon'. In your Catches *all* the voices were 'singing in Canon'.

5. Go through any Shakespeare play that you know and find any allusions to music. Where Shakespeare means music to be performed in the play, see if you can find out why he does so.

6. If possible, get some grown-up or other good pianist to play you a piece in Variations form belonging to the Elizabethan times, for example:

## FIRST BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS

John Bull's *The King's Hunting Jig*  
Orlando Gibbons's *The Queen's Command*  
Giles Farnaby's *Pawle's Wharfe*

Get them played several times and listen carefully, so as to find out how the tune is changed in each of the Variations.

7. In the same way get some one to play some of the other Elizabethan Virginals music. Giles Farnaby's is perhaps most likely to please you—especially when you get used to it (of course it is in a different style from the music of to-day, so may take a little getting used to).

He has one little piece called *Giles Farnaby's Dreame* (what sort of a dream was it that suggested this piece to him?) and another called *His Rest*, where you can feel him falling asleep. You can find bits of canon in *His Rest*: try to hear these as the piece is played.

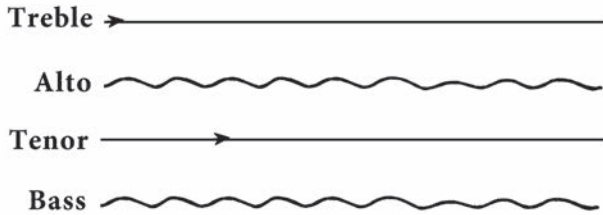
Then there is a bright little piece called *Giles Farnaby's Conceit* ('conceit' in those days simply meant a bright idea), and another called *His Humour* ('humour' then meant character or temperament).

So in his music Farnaby used often to picture himself. Judging by these pictures, what sort of a man do you think he was? Listen to them carefully several times, and then make up your mind.



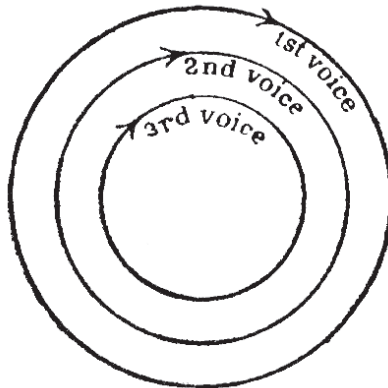
## DIAGRAMS

### 1. TALLIS'S CANON



The straight lines show the two parts that are written in Canon. The wavy lines show the parts which just go on their ordinary way, not in Canon (we call these 'free parts'). The arrow points show where the melody begins.

### 2. A ROUND IN THREE PARTS



It is a very good plan to make diagrams of the pieces you sing and play and hear, because it helps you to grasp how they are made, and so to understand and enjoy them, better.

## CHAPTER III

# HENRY PURCELL

## THE GREATEST BRITISH COMPOSER

*1658-1695*

ON a certain Tuesday afternoon in the month of February, 1660, four men sat before the fire in a Coffee House in Westminster. One was called Pepys, another Locke, another was a Captain Taylor, and the last was a Mr. Purcell.

There they sat chatting, and if you think for a few minutes of what you have read in your history books as occurring at that time you will be able to guess what it was they were discussing so eagerly as they sipped their coffee. What happened at the beginning of the year 1660? Why! *the King came back again!*

That is what excited them so much. The Long Parliament had been recalled and it had been decided to ask Charles to return.

‘Look!’ said Pepys suddenly, pointing at the window, and turning round they saw the glare of bonfires all along the river banks. The city was soon ablaze with

*HENRY PURCELL*



HENRY PURCELL

flames. 'Listen!' said Captain Taylor, and as they did so they heard bells beginning to ring: the bells of St. Clement's, and the bells of St. Martin's, and the bells of Old Bailey, and the bells of Shoreditch, the bells of Stepney, the bells of Old Bow, and, deep below them all, the big booming bells of Westminster Abbey and Old St. Paul's—soon they were all clanging and jangling together.

### ***How They Sang Songs for Joy***

Then some more friends came into the room, and they all began to sing. Locke and Purcell, who were both musicians, sang some Italian and Spanish songs, and Pepys struck up a tune too. And by and by Mr. Locke pulled out of his pocket a fine piece of music he had made as soon as he heard that the King was likely to come in again. It was a 'Canon' for eight voices, with Latin words, *Domine salvum fac Regem*.

So Locke taught them the tune and they all sat round the fire in their high-backed chairs, and one after another, at a sign from the composer, they began to sing the words *Domine salvum*, until they were all singing merrily together.

When Pepys got home that night he took down a little book in which he was accustomed to write his diary, and wrote his account of the day's doings, and how he had gone to the Coffee House, and seen the fires and heard the bells. '*It was a most pleasant sight,*' he wrote, '*to see the city from one end to the other with a glory about it, so bright was the light of the bonfires, and so thick round the city, and the bells rang everywhere.*'

### ***Why Mr. Purcell Rejoiced***

Now when Mr. Purcell got home (he had not far to go, for he lived in Westminster) you may be sure he told his good wife all about his doings, and it is certain that

## HENRY PURCELL

they both remembered one special reason for rejoicing that the King was coming back.

You see Mr. Purcell was a musician—one of the best musicians in London. Now, whilst the Puritans were in power there had been no Church Music. Mr. Purcell had earned money by singing in the Opera<sup>2</sup> and at private houses, and by teaching young ladies to play the harpsichord<sup>3</sup> or teaching men to sing. But with the King would come back the old Church ways, and that meant anthems and choirs and organs. The Puritans liked music—but not in church. The only music they allowed in church was plain psalm-singing by all the congregation—no organs and no choirs. Mr. Purcell loved anthems and other Church music, and knew that it was very likely that now his fine voice would earn him a good position in some choir. Besides he had a little baby son, and he may have had a fancy that he would in a few years make him a choirboy, and so get him a good musical training.

This chapter is really about the baby son, for he became the greatest British composer. But first it must be said that when the King came back and the music began again in Westminster Abbey, Mr. Purcell was chosen to be a member of the choir, as well as master of the choirboys and copyist of the music. (In those days there was little music printed: most of it had to be copied by hand.) And the King made him a member of

<sup>2</sup>An Opera is a play set to music.

<sup>3</sup>A harpsichord is a keyboard instrument that has quills to pluck the strings.

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the Chapel Royal choir too, so he was now very happy.

### *Henry Purcell Becomes an Orphan*

It was a sad thing that the little boy, Henry Purcell, was soon left an orphan. For the father died when the child was only about six years old. However, the father's brother, little Purcell's Uncle Tom, also a good musician, was very kind and adopted him, treating him as his own son.

### *Purcell Becomes a Choir Boy*

In the same year that Purcell's father died his uncle got him admitted as a choirboy in the Chapel Royal. So every Sunday, with the other boys and men, he sang before the King. In Purcell's day they had not only the organ, but also four-and-twenty fiddlers, for the King loved the sound of stringed instruments, and as soon as he had returned had set up a band like that which he had heard at the Court of France.

So for nine or ten years young Henry sang in the King's choir, and in his leisure time practised the harpsichord and organ, and, no doubt, the violin also. And besides all that he soon began to compose. When he was twelve he was chosen, as the cleverest of the choirboys, to write a piece of music as a birthday present for the King. It was called *The Address of the Children of the Chapel Royal to the King on His Majesty's Birthday*, A.D. 1670.

*Purcell's Voice Breaks*

Purcell's voice broke when he was fifteen or sixteen, but they kept him on at the chapel for a time, perhaps making use of him for some odd jobs, such as teaching the younger boys. Then the Westminster Abbey authorities said they would make him a music-copyist (as his father had been twelve years before). And by and by some of the theatre managers heard what a good composer he was, and asked him to write music for their plays. So he soon began to be quite busy.

*Organist of the Abbey and the Chapel Royal*

Purcell was now becoming famous, and when he was twenty-two a wonderful thing happened. Dr. Blow, the organist of Westminster Abbey, seeing how clever Purcell was, offered to resign so that Purcell might take his place.

Purcell must have been grateful to Dr. Blow, for now, as Abbey organist, he had a big enough income to marry a girl of whom he had become very fond. So in a little house in Westminster Purcell settled down. Then two years later the King made him organist of the Chapel Royal. So now he held two great positions and had become the most important musical man in England, and you may be sure that his young wife was very proud of him.

### *Purcell's Compositions*

All this time Purcell was very busy composing. He composed a great deal of church music—Anthems and Services for Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal. Some of the Anthems are very solemn, and those, I believe, were for Westminster Abbey. And others were quite gay; probably these were for the Chapel Royal, for Charles II loved jolly music, even in church.

For the Violin he wrote one piece—a wonderful Sonata—which was only discovered a few years ago.

Purcell also wrote a lot of lovely music for two Violins with one 'Cello and a Harpsichord. This music is very much neglected, which is a great pity.

Besides all this, Purcell wrote a good deal of music for the theatres, and when you hear a Purcell song, such as *Full Fathom Five*, or *Come if you dare*, or *Nymphs and Shepherds*, or *Come unto these Yellow Sands*, you are generally listening to one of Purcell's theatre pieces.

There are, too, some lovely sacred songs that singers to-day neglect frightfully—to their great disgrace.

### *Purcell's Kings and Queens*

When Charles II died Purcell went on being royal organist, and so became a servant of James II. And when James II was turned out of the country, Purcell became organist to William and Mary. So he was royal organist in three reigns.



## HENRY PURCELL

One of his tasks was to write ‘Odes’, or complimentary verses set to music, whenever anything happened in the Royal Family. For instance, when the King came back to London from his holidays, he would be welcomed with the performance of an Ode, for solo voices and chorus and orchestra. And Purcell would sit at the Harpsichord and lead the music.

He also had to play at two Coronations in Westminster Abbey, and at the funeral of Queen Mary.

### *Purcell's Death*

It is a sad thing that the greatest British composer died when he was only thirty-seven years of age. Who knows what he might have done if he had lived twenty or thirty years longer?

### *The Form of Purcell's Music*

If you take any little harpsichord piece of Purcell's and play it on the piano you will generally find that its form is like that of *Barbara Allen* and similar folk songs (p. 5). That is to say, it falls into two strains; in other words, it is a two-bit tune—or, to use the proper term, it is in BINARY FORM. You can find a sort of half-way house in the middle, where we have a CADENCE—that is, a sort of ear-resting place. Then the piece starts again, and we come to the end of the journey with another Cadence. Another word for Cadence is ‘Close’.

It has already been said that the Elizabethan

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Composers often strung two little pieces together to make one longer piece. Purcell went farther than this, and often strung three or four little pieces into one. Such a string of pieces we call a SUITE. Generally these little pieces were all in the style of the dances of the day, except the first piece, which was a PRELUDE, the word 'Prelude' simply meaning an opening piece.

Purcell for some reason does not seem to have cared much for the Air and Variations of which the Elizabethans were so fond. But he sometimes wrote what we might call a Bass with Variations, in which the same little bit of bass comes over and over again, with the tune above it changed every time. This we call a GROUND BASS, or simply GROUND. Some of his songs and some of his Harpsichord pieces are written in this way.

Some of Purcell's songs have a piece of RECITATIVE before them—that is, a piece of singing which does not make much of a tune, but imitates the way in which one would recite the words in a dramatic performance.

### QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. How many historical events can you remember which will fix in your mind the time when Purcell lived? How old was Purcell when the Plague of London happened?—And the Fire?

## HENRY PURCELL

2. How many facts can you remember about Purcell's family?

3. What sort of music do you think Cromwell liked in church? And what sort did Charles II like?

4. In what church was Purcell a choirboy? And in what churches was he organist?

5. How old was Purcell when he died?

6. Mention any instruments for which Purcell wrote music.

7. What is a Cadence? Give another name for it.

8. What is Binary Form?

9. What is a Suite?

10. What is a Prelude?

11. What is a Ground Bass?

12. What is a Recitative?

## THINGS TO DO

1. Learn one of Purcell's songs (*Come if you dare!* and *Britons strike Home* are bold songs, and *Full Fathom Five* and *Come unto these Yellow Sands* are gentler songs. All are quite jolly and they cost very little if you get them in a school singing-class edition. *Full Fathom Five* and *Come unto these Yellow Sands* are settings of words in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. You might turn up the play, if you like, and find out just how they come in.)

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2. Get somebody to play a few of Purcell's Harpsichord pieces, and when you feel the middle Cadence has come, call out 'half-time'. Have each piece played several times and try to notice as much as possible how the piece is made. Some pieces are made almost entirely of one little group of four or five notes, over and over again, sometimes high and sometimes low. And in some pieces you can find bits of IMITATION—that is, one 'part' or 'voice' giving out a little bit of tune and another answering it. Most of the instrumental music by Purcell (like most of the Elizabethan music) is in 'voices' or separate little strands of melody woven together, almost as though (say) a Treble and Tenor and Bass were singing it.

3. If you are a pianist, practise some of Purcell's music for Harpsichord.

4. If you play the fiddle you can buy some little tunes of Purcell which have been arranged for that instrument, and practise them.

5. If you have a School Orchestra get it to play some of the Purcell tunes that have been arranged for stringed instruments.

6. You could make up a dance to some of the Purcell music. For instance, you could dance to the song *Come unto these Yellow Sands*, the words of which are about dancing on the beach.

7. Make a little play of Purcell and his wife giving a little party to celebrate the coronation of William and Mary and have some of his music performed as a part of the play.

*The Second Book of the*  
**GREAT MUSICIANS**

*A Further Course in Appreciation  
for Young Readers*

by

*Percy A. Scholes*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**

**ITHACA, NEW YORK**



## TO THE READER

HERE is a Second Book of the Great Musicians—for those who have already read the first one. As whilst they have been reading it they have been growing older and cleverer, I have not used such simple language this time as I did before, and I have made the chapters rather longer and fuller. I want to offer a word of thanks to Mr. Emery Walker, as well as to Mr. F. Page of the Oxford University Press, who have taken a great deal of trouble to help me to find suitable pictures to illustrate this book, and to Mr. W. R. Anderson, Editor of the monthly journal, *The Music Teacher*, who has read the proofs for me. A Third Book of the Great Musicians is in preparation and will complete the series.

*The Author*





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SCHUBERT

CHAPTER I  
SCHUBERT

1797-1828

*A School Band Practice*

THE school orchestra was practising. The oboe and flute and bassoon and horn and kettle-drum were vigorously playing their parts or counting their rests, and the string players were fiddling away. One of the big boys was the leading Violin. It was a musical school, and this boy had been there a long time and could play beautifully. What were they playing? Well, for a guess, one of Haydn's symphonies. This school was in Vienna, and Haydn and Beethoven both lived in Vienna at that very time, and their music was popular with the Viennese; so we will suppose that the band was playing a Haydn symphony, since a Beethoven symphony is, as a rule, too difficult for a school orchestra. By and by came a break in the playing, as one movement of the symphony ended and before the next began, and the big boy, the leader (Spaun was his name), turned round to see who it could be who was playing behind him, with such firm rhythm and in such good tune.

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There he saw a little new boy, a round-faced, curly-headed fellow, with spectacles. His name was Franz Schubert, but already he had a nickname—‘The Miller’, because when he came to be examined for entrance to the school he wore a light coat. Spaun nodded at him with approval, and then the playing began again. But when the practice was over he learnt more about ‘The Miller’, and in a few days he had become one of his truest friends.

### *School Joys and Troubles*

Franz needed friends. His father was poor, and the school life, though happy in many ways, was in others a hard one. At the time Franz was admitted to this school he had ten or eleven brothers and sisters, and as years went by more came into the world, so that in the end there were seventeen children in the family. Now the father, though a hard-working man, did not earn a great deal of money. So when, to his great joy, he managed to get his clever son Franz into the school I have been speaking of, which was the Emperor’s choir school, and trained the boys for the court chapel, he could not supply him with those little luxuries that boys at a boarding-school seem to expect, and it is quite certain, for instance, that Franz had no ‘tuck box’. ‘Tuck box’ indeed! Why, he had not even enough plain wholesome food, as you may find from a letter he wrote some time after this to his elder brother, Ferdinand, who was his favourite brother and always, through his whole life, very good to him. This is what he wrote:

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MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have been thinking over my life here, and I find it's really not a bad one, on the whole, but there are some ways in which it could be improved. You know how much one enjoys a roll or an apple now and again, and all the more when one has to wait eight-and-a-half hours between dinner and supper! All the money Father gave me, which wasn't much, has gone long ago, so what am I to do? This is what I've been thinking—Can't you let me have a shilling or two a month? . . . .

You see, in those days, neither schoolmasters nor Emperors had any idea of making schoolboys comfortable. They had a notion that if you gave them plenty to eat and well-warmed rooms to work in (the rooms at this school had no fires in winter) the boys would be 'spoiled'. All the same, if you or I were an Emperor we would treat our choir-boys better, wouldn't we? and risk 'spoiling' them!

### *The Young Composer*

Besides food and warmth there was something else of which young Franz felt the lack. He was already a composer, and composition was as necessary to his life as games are to yours. And he couldn't get music-paper. Here was a chance for the big boy, Spaun, to help him, and help him he did, so that Franz just poured out music—songs and piano pieces, and string quartets, and church anthems, all of which his school friends

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were willing and eager to try over as fast as they were written. It was really a splendid school for Franz, in that way, at any rate; there was plenty of music going on. But one thing he missed badly, and really suffered from all his life—though they taught the boys to sing and play, and had a rehearsal of the orchestra every day, nobody ever taught them to compose. So Franz had just to pick up composition as best he could, which was a pity, for even a born composer needs teaching, just as a born cricketer is all the better for some good coaching.

### *Holidays*

You see that Franz lived in music, when at school, and so he did, too, at home, for when there came a holiday time, and he hurried home, he got to work at once with his father and brothers, playing away at string quartets. Franz played the Viola on these occasions, his father the 'Cello, and two brothers the first and second Violins. This family string quartet became well-known in the neighbourhood, and by and by was enlarged to a little band, by taking in other players, so that Haydn's symphonies could be played (with a bit of special arrangement); then neighbours liked to drop in and hear the music, and the room at home became too small, and so another and larger one was taken, and after that a still larger, and then the little band of musicians was increased to a full orchestra. All this time Franz went on playing the Viola, and also composing. In his last year at school he composed a symphony for the school orchestra, and later he wrote some symphonies for the home orchestra too.



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### *Earning a Living*

When Franz left school there was the question of what to do with him. He was determined to be a composer, but to earn a living by composing was even more difficult in those days than in these. So he decided to be a schoolmaster. His father was the master of a parish school in Vienna, and Franz joined him and taught the lowest class. I think he hated the work, and what he really liked was to slam the school door at the end of the day and get home to his composing, or else to run off to see his old friends at the Choir School and join them in their music-making, or take them some new music he had just written. About this time he began to have a few lessons in composition. There was in Vienna a musician named Salieri, the Emperor's chief musician (or 'Capellmeister'). He had helped Beethoven, in his earlier days, by advice and lessons, and now he helped Schubert in the same way, for he saw that the youth was a genius and was well worth helping.

### *How Schubert Wrote and Performed a Mass*

One great event about this time (he was now seventeen) was Schubert's composition of a Mass for one of the churches. He conducted it himself, his brother played the organ, a celebrated violinist, called Mayseder, came and led the violins, and the performance went off very well and made quite a stir. To commemorate the occasion his father, who was delighted to see his son

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doing such great things, spent a good deal of his hard-earned money and gave him a piano. (Harpsichords, of which you have read in the previous volume, were now fast going out, and pianos were becoming quite common.)

### *Schubert's Friendships*

There is one thing you cannot help noticing when you read Schubert's life—the number of friends he made and the splendid way these stuck to him. You have just read how Spaun helped him, when he was a schoolboy, and now you will hear how a young man called Schober did the same. This Schober had come across some of Schubert's songs—in manuscript, for nothing of Schubert's was yet printed. He was so much struck with these that he called to see the young composer, and when he found that he was wasting his days in an occupation for which he was not fitted, he said to him 'Come and live with me, and I'll look after you.' The father was willing, so off the youth went, and now he could compose to his heart's content, instead of correcting short division sums or giving spelling lessons. Other friends gathered round him too, and tried to help him. One thing they felt really should be done was to print some of the lovely songs he had written. But they could not persuade any publisher to look at the work of an unknown youth, so in the end Schubert had to go on composing year after year and living one hardly knows how (for he could not stay very long with his friend Schober, as Schober had to take in

## SCHUBERT

a brother). And when he was twenty-five nothing was yet in print, so that his beautiful music, instead of being at the service of all the world, was known only to a few keen musicians in his own native city.

Now the father of one of Schubert's old friends of his school-days had a large house, and used to give fine concerts there of Schubert's music, so as to make it known, and the plan was hit upon of printing one of the best of the songs, having it sung at a concert, and then offering it for sale to the audience. The first song to be printed was the one which is now perhaps most famous—*The Erl King*. This was sung by one of Schubert's friends, who had a fine voice and a dramatic way of singing, and at once the people in the audience bought one hundred copies. This provided enough money to print another song, for the next concert, and so on! One reason why publishers would not undertake to bring out such a song as this was the difficulty of the piano part, which in *The Erl King* goes very fast and gives a wonderful feeling of a horseman galloping through a dark night and a ghostly enemy following swiftly after. You can get the song as a Gramophone record, and you will notice at once that it is quite as much a piano piece as a song. After hearing it you will be astonished to learn that Schubert wrote it in one afternoon.

### *Schubert's Songs*

Schubert, from a boy upwards, took to song writing like a duck to water, and to instrumental writing (we

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may say) like a man to water. That is to say, song writing seemed natural to him, but instrumental writing he had to learn, as swimming has to be learnt. He wrote a lot of most beautiful instrumental works, but sometimes you feel (especially in a long piece) that he was not quite so much the complete master of this sort of composing as of the other.

If he got hold of a book of poems and opened it, at once he would seize on some verses, read them once or twice through, and see in a flash what was the best way to set them so as to bring out all the meaning and the feeling of the poet's words. Then he would sit down and write the music straight away.

There is a most lovely setting by him of Shakespeare's song, *Hark, hark, the lark*. It came about in this way. Schubert was walking in the country and saw a friend sitting at a table in an inn garden. He joined him, and took up the book he had been reading. It opened at *Cymbeline*, at the poem which Cloten's musicians perform to Imogen, to wake her sweetly in the morning—*Hark, hark, the lark*. 'Oh!' said Schubert, 'I have thought of such a lovely tune for that! What a pity I haven't some music-paper here!' The friend took up the bill of fare and drew some music lines on it with his pencil, and Schubert at once wrote that beautiful song that has now gone all through the world and is loved in every civilized country. (This song also you can get as a Gramophone record.) So quickly did Schubert write his songs that once or twice he actually forgot them again. On one occasion one of his friends put before him on the piano a manuscript song in the friend's own

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writing. Schubert played it through and said, ‘That’s not bad! Who composed it?’ ‘Why,’ said the friend, ‘you yourself did, and you gave it me a fortnight ago, but as it was too high for me I wrote it out afresh in another key.’

Altogether Schubert composed in his lifetime over 600 songs. As you have learnt, the publishers would at first not look at them. Later the tide turned, and the publishers became more willing. But they rarely gave him more than a few shillings for a song, and in spite of his genius he remained ever a poor man.

### *Instrumental Music*

If you have not yet made acquaintance with Schubert’s Piano Music (such as his *Impromptus*, and his *Moments Musicaux*, for instance), let us hope you may soon do so. Then there is some beautiful Chamber Music, and there are some Symphonies, of which two are most heard—the great C major Symphony and the one in B minor, of which only two movements exist, and which is therefore always called *The Unfinished Symphony*.

### *Schubert’s Death*

Like this symphony, Schubert’s life itself was ‘Unfinished’. If you will look back at the heading of this chapter, and see the dates there, you will realize that he only lived thirty-one years. It will strike you, too, that he died the year after Beethoven. For years Beethoven and Schubert had lived in the same city of Vienna, but

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Beethoven was known to everyone, was admired, and had wealthy friends, whereas Schubert was known and loved only by a small circle of people, generally not so high in the social scale as those with whom Beethoven associated. So Beethoven knew nothing of Schubert and Schubert loved Beethoven at a distance. Then one day a friend took Schubert to visit Beethoven, but the younger man was so bashful that when the elder one asked him a question, instead of answering it on the writing-tablet held out to him (you remember, Beethoven was deaf), he caught up his hat and rushed to the door and bolted! Later he got more courage, and as for Beethoven, when he was shown some of the songs, he said, emphatically, 'Truly, Schubert has the divine gift in him!'

When Beethoven was dying Schubert visited him, and at the funeral he was one of the torch-bearers. On the way home he and the two friends who were with him stopped at an inn, and solemnly drank to the memory of the great man. Then they drank another solemn toast to the first of them who should follow him. This, as it turned out, was Schubert himself, who, weakly for many years, fell ill and died, lovingly cared for in the house of that elder brother, Ferdinand, who had been so kind to him from his boyhood. On his death-bed he was cheered by reading *The Last of the Mohicans* and other novels by the American novelist Fenimore Cooper, and a few days before he died he wrote to a friend asking him to lend him more books by the same author. He had begged to be buried near Beethoven, and his wish was fulfilled. In music he left over 1,000 compositions; in money—£2 10s. The stone placed over him has these words:

## SCHUBERT

Music has here entombed a rich treasure—  
But still fairer hopes.

### QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. What was Schubert's nationality?
2. In what city did he spend his life?
3. What other great composers lived there in those days?
4. What was Schubert's father?
5. To what school was Schubert sent?
6. What instrument did he play in the family quartet?
7. How did he earn a living when he left school?
8. Was Schubert in your opinion a surly sort of fellow or a pleasant sort? Why do you think so?
9. Was he a slow, laborious composer, or a quick one? Can you remember any circumstances that will illustrate your answer?
10. Mention two or three of his songs and tell anything about how they were composed, or performed, or published.

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11. Mention one or two Symphonies.

12. How old was Schubert when he died? Did he die poor or rich?

13. Tell anything you remember about Schubert's meetings with Beethoven.

14. Which of the two died first—Schubert or Beethoven?

### **THINGS TO DO**

*(For School and Home)*

1. Get somebody to play you some of Schubert's music. Listen to it carefully and see if you really like it, and which pieces you like best, and why. Write down your opinion.

2. Next day get the same performer to play the pieces again, without your looking over them, and see if you can remember the name of each piece. Then look at what you wrote down yesterday and see if you still like the same pieces best.

3. If there are any parts you don't like, or seem not to understand, get the player to do them again, and look over the music so as to see how these parts are made up. Then listen again and see if you now understand better.

4. If you have a Pianola, Piano-player or Player-piano, get your parents to buy or borrow some Schubert rolls, and practise these yourself.

5. If you can play the Piano pretty well, ask your



## SCHUBERT

teacher if there is any Schubert piece suitable for you.

6. If you know a Singer, get him or her to sing you some Schubert songs. Before each is sung, read the words through and understand them. Then listen to the song the first time just for its music, and the second time to see how the song-part and the piano-part express or set off the words. Then listen a third time just for the pleasure of it.

7. If you have a Gramophone, get hold of some Schubert song records, and of the records of *The Unfinished Symphony*. In listening to the Symphony, see if you can find places that illustrate what Schumann said about the Wind Instruments in Schubert's orchestration—'They chat with one another like human beings'.

8. If you have any of Schubert's music, write a preface to it, giving briefly the chief facts about the composer's life, and paste it on the back of the title-page.

9. Make up a little play about Schubert, write it out and act it with your companions.

10. Prepare a little lecture on Schubert, and give it, with musical illustrations by yourself and friends or by the Pianola or Gramophone.



JOHN FIELD

CHAPTER II

THE INVENTOR OF  
THE NOCTURNE

JOHN FIELD

*1782-1837*

*What is a Nocturne?*

Before you begin to read this chapter play one of Chopin's Nocturnes, or get some one to play one to you. And as you play or hear it try to notice what it is like—what it is that makes a Nocturne a Nocturne, and not (say) a Minuet or a March.

The word 'Nocturne' means, of course, just a Night Piece—the sort of dreamy, tender music that might come into a composer's head as he stood looking over the fields or the sea on a starlight or moonlight night. But, besides suggesting this feeling, Chopin's Nocturnes, you will find, have also got other characteristics in common. Look, for instance, at the favourite one in E flat. You will notice that in the right hand we have a beautiful melody, that *floats*, as it were, on spreading

## *SECOND BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS*

waves of harmony in the left hand, which are made to sound on by the use of the sustaining pedal. Almost all the Chopin Nocturnes are like that, though the left-hand part is not in some of the Nocturnes so wave-like as in this Nocturne, whilst in others it is more so. This way of treating the two hands is really one of the ‘distinguishing marks’ of a Nocturne. If you were to make up a bit of slow melody, put to it a left-hand accompaniment of the sort described, and then play it to any one who knew anything about piano music, they would say at once, ‘Why, that must be the beginning of some Nocturne.’

### *Who First Composed Such Pieces?*

Now most people think the Chopin Nocturne style was invented by Chopin, but this was not so. An Irishman invented Chopin’s Nocturnes for him, which, being a sort of ‘bull’, is just what an Irishman would do. This Irishman was John Field, and he was writing Nocturnes before Chopin was put into trousers. At one time everybody played his music, but now hardly anybody does so, and thus what he did for music is in danger of being forgotten.

### *Where and When Field was Born*

Field was born in Dublin in 1782—that is to say, whilst Haydn was in his prime (how old was he?) and Beethoven a boy (and how old was *he?*). And he died in

## *JOHN FIELD*

1837, the year Queen Victoria came to the throne, when Schubert and Beethoven had been dead respectively nine and ten years, and Chopin and Schumann and Mendelssohn were all young men of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. That fixes him in his chronological place in your mind, I hope.

### *The Young Pianist*

Field's father and grandfather lived together in Dublin and kept a sort of little school of music. The grandfather was an Organist and Pianist and the father played the fiddle in a theatre orchestra, and taught it to as many pupils as he could get. These two elder musicians gave the younger one (for Field had early taken to piano playing) many a good thrashing, thinking perhaps that they could whip music into him through the skin, instead of making him take it up gradually with the mind. Once the boy ran away from home to escape the whippings he got there, but he seems to have gone back again pretty soon.

At that time there was in Dublin a famous Italian pianist named Giordani (pronounce that 'Gee-or-daa-nee', saying the first two syllables quickly, which is as near as I can get to it in English spelling). To this man was young Field sent for lessons, and he got on so well that when he was nine his master made him appear at concerts, describing him on the bills as 'the much admired Master Field, a youth of eight years of age'. I am sorry to tell you that nearly all these youngsters who appear before the public are made out to be

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younger than they really are. When I visited Beethoven's birthplace at Bonn, I saw there a printed bill of his father's announcing the appearance at a concert on March 26, 1778, of his little son of 'six years'. You, who have read the account of Beethoven in my first volume, and know in what year he was born, can see what a shocking lie *that* was!

### *Field in London*

When Field was eleven, his father left Dublin for Bath, and later went to London, where he became a member of the orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre. And in London the boy became pupil to a celebrated pianist of the day, that Clementi whose sonatinas you may know, and who was then the finest player in London. In 1794 young Field (this time 'aged ten') appeared in public, and old Haydn, who was in London just then, was in the audience and predicted that the boy would become a great musician.

Now Clementi was not only a player of pianos but also a maker of them, and he made Field spend a great deal of time in his piano shop, playing brilliant passages to customers, and showing off the instruments. Then when Clementi went abroad for the purposes of giving recitals and of selling pianos he took Field with him. When they got to St. Petersburg (which we now call Petrograd) Clementi opened a show-room for the pianos, and poor Field (aged nineteen, yet, as the great musician Spohr tells us, 'in an Eton suit which he

## *JOHN FIELD*

had much outgrown') was kept at work displaying the qualities of the instruments.

When Clementi left Petrograd, Field remained behind, and a certain general took him in as his guest and introduced him into society. Soon he became very well known as a concert player, and had crowds of aristocratic pupils. Indeed he became so popular that he was spoilt, becoming lazy and frivolous. One of his pupils was Glinka, who became the founder of modern Russian music.

### *Field's Compositions*

So long did Field live in Russia, and so connected with that country in people's minds did he become, that often he is spoken of in books as 'Russian Field'. He did a great deal of composition, and in 1814 composed his first Nocturnes. He also wrote Piano Sonatas and Concertos. The Concertos were for years very much played, and Schumann, in his time, praised them highly, but we never hear them now. Later, Field left Petrograd and lived in Moscow, and sometimes he travelled on recital tours. He played in London, and in Paris, and Florence, and Venice, and elsewhere, and the best judges of music were astonished at his playing, which was very simple and unaffected in style, and very neat and finished.

### *Field's Death*

In Naples Field fell ill, and spent nine months in a hospital. A Russian nobleman found him there, and took him away with him. Gradually he was able to travel back to Russia with the nobleman, but there he fell ill again and died. The city of Moscow, recognizing what a great man he was, gave him a public funeral. His life was not a short one (fifty-five years), but probably it would have been longer and happier if he had not been so sternly treated as a boy at home, and then overworked in youth by Clementi. The result of this harshness seems to have been that when he got away from restraints, and was made much of in Russia, he 'lost his head' and became careless of his health and intemperate.

### *The Two Nocturne Writers*

If possible get your teacher or some friend to play you not only the Chopin Nocturne I have mentioned (the one in E flat, Op. 9, No. 2), but also a certain one by Field in the same key (No. 1).





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If you listen to and look at those extracts carefully you will see how similar they are in style. But, of course, though we may *like* Field's piece, Chopin's is the one we *love*. Why? Because to Field's grace and beauty Chopin has added a deeper poetical feeling. It is as if I were to say to you (as the opening of a word-nocturne):

‘The evening bell is ringing,  
The cattle come home from the fields,’

and somebody were then to read to you Gray's ‘Elegy’, which begins with just this thought, but ever so much more beautifully expressed:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea.

But you see what Chopin learnt from Field, and if you will now look at and listen closely to the two Nocturnes you will see many others of Field's ideas that were adopted by Chopin, such as, for instance, this sort of ornamental, running, chromatic-scaly figure:

Field:

The image shows a musical score for a piece by Field. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in the treble clef and features a complex, chromatic, and scalic figure. The bottom staff is in the bass clef and features a more melodic line. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is not explicitly shown but is likely common time. The score includes dynamic markings: *sf* (sforzando) and *pp* (pianissimo). The piece ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord, marked with a small asterisk.

JOHN FIELD

Chopin:

Musical score for Chopin's piece, showing a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a 12/8 time signature and a complex melodic line with a high leap. The bass staff has a 12/8 time signature and a rhythmic accompaniment. There are 'Ped.' and '\*' markings below the bass staff.

Then notice where Chopin got another of his charming little 'mannerisms', a turn followed by a high leap:

Field:

Musical score for Field's piece, showing a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a 12/8 time signature and a simple melodic line. The bass staff has a 12/8 time signature and a rhythmic accompaniment. There is a 'Ped.' marking below the bass staff.

Chopin:

Musical score for Chopin's piece, showing a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a 12/8 time signature and a simple melodic line. The bass staff has a 12/8 time signature and a rhythmic accompaniment. There are '\*' and 'Ped.' markings below the bass staff.

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And so we could go on, comparing these and various other Field and Chopin Nocturnes.

But, since Field is little played to-day, why have I troubled to write a chapter about him? *Firstly*, because his Nocturnes, though not so deeply poetical as Chopin's, are refined and beautiful and worth more playing than they get. *Secondly*, because people so often forget what British composers have done for music, especially piano music, and they should be reminded of it. Look back again at Chapter II of *The First Book of the Great Musicians* and remind yourself of what the British composers did in laying the very *foundations* of keyboard music. Bach's Suites, we may say, are a building reared on the foundation laid by Bull and Byrd, and other British musicians, a century and more earlier. And, similarly, Chopin's Nocturnes are a building reared on the foundations laid by his elder contemporary, John Field.

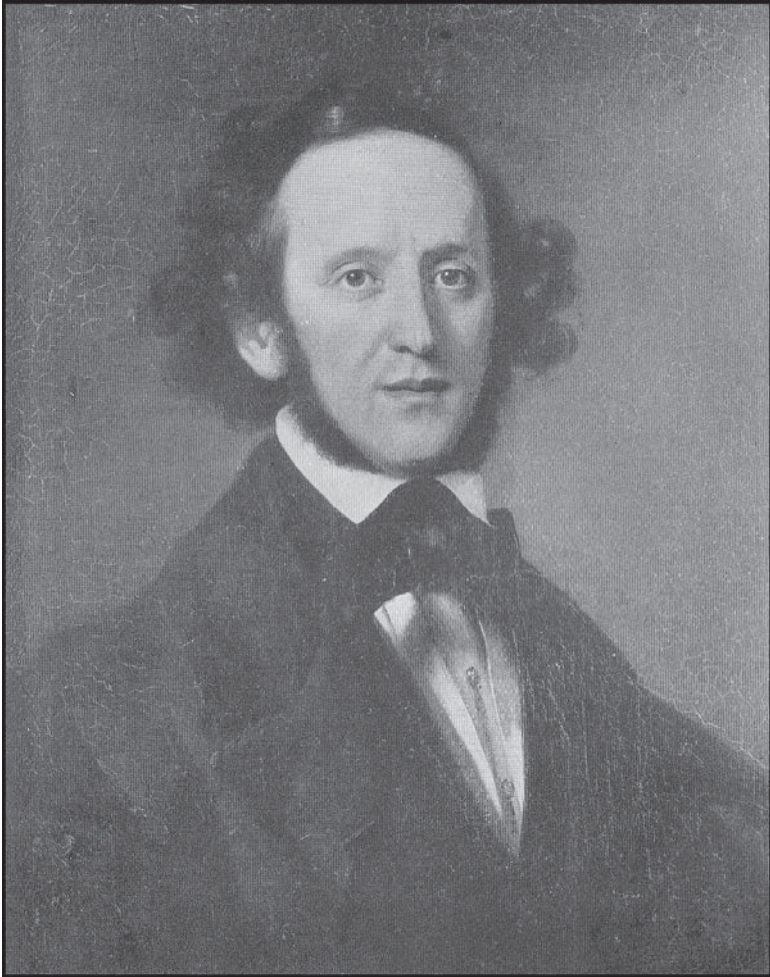
## QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. What is a Nocturne? Describe it as clearly as you can.
2. Where and when was Field born?
3. Where and when did he die?
4. What do you remember of Field's boyhood?
5. Mention one or two of Field's teachers.
6. How did Field come to be in Russia?
7. Tell anything you remember of his life there.
8. What did Field write besides his Nocturnes?
9. Mention a few things that Chopin learned from Field.
10. Why should we remember Field?

## THINGS TO DO

These have already been mentioned in the chapter itself.



FELIX MENDELSSOHN

CHAPTER III  
MENDELSSOHN

*1809-1847*

*The Youth Who Could Do Everything*

We will begin with a picnic in Wales, up amongst the hills. The engineer who is in charge of the mines of the district has had a tent carried up, and brought his family to celebrate his birthday among the miners. And with his family he has brought a guest who is staying with them, a young man from Germany, who has the reputation of being a good musician and who has been appearing at concerts in London. But this young man, it seems, is not only a musician. He throws himself into the fun and it really seems as though he can do everything. He can play all the games, or if there is one he cannot play, it has only to be explained to him and he understands it at once. He can sketch, and that quite beautifully. He can dance. In the evenings when they get home he can play chess and billiards and beat them all, he can ride and swim and is a great gymnast, and when he leaves this Welsh family and goes home they find that he can write the most interesting letters, describing all that he sees and does more like a practised author than a mere friendly letter-writer.

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But it is the music he makes that pleases them most. He sees a creeping plant in the garden, with little blossoms almost the shape of trumpets. 'Fairy trumpets,' he says, and sits down and plays a piece on the piano—music for the fairies to play. Then he writes it out for one of the children, and draws all up the margin of the paper a sprig of the blossoms.

One morning as he is dressing he hears a boy of the family playing on the drawing-room piano a little tune he has made up in the Welsh style, and in the evening when the visitor sits down to play, out comes this very tune, turned into a long piece of beautiful music.

When they are out in the grounds one evening the young man says, 'What a pity we haven't an instrument out here!' One of the boys rushes to the gardener's cottage and borrows a fiddle. It is a wretched old thing, and all the strings are snapped but one. The young man bursts into fits of laughter when he sees such an instrument, but he takes it, and somehow he draws beautiful music out of that one string, to which his companions listen eagerly until darkness comes and it is time to go in.

That is Mendelssohn 'all over'—the youth to whom everything came easily and who was nearly always in high spirits.

### *The Boyhood*

Mendelssohn had had a wonderful musical boyhood. He learnt early to play the Piano, and from nine



## MENDELSSOHN

onwards appeared in concerts; he learnt the Violin too, and did a great deal of composition; and he sang alto in the great choral society of Berlin, his native place, ‘standing amongst the grown-up people in his child’s dress, a tight-fitting jacket cut very low at the neck, over which the trousers were buttoned, into the slanting pockets of these the little fellow liked to thrust his hands, rocking his curly head from side to side, and shifting restlessly from one foot to the other.’

When he was twelve he began to compose more systematically, copying all his pieces into a big album, and, when that was finished, starting another, until, at the end of his life, there were forty-four of these volumes on his shelves—one for each year and a few over.

### *Sunday Music*

Mendelssohn’s parents were rich and had a large and beautiful house, with a big dining-room, where every other Sunday they gave concerts for their friends. The children took a great part in the music. Felix, of whom I have been telling you these things, often composed some of the music, and conducted the Orchestra, standing on a stool; Fanny, his clever sister, played the Piano, Rebecka sang, and Paul played the ‘Cello. This is the very best way of making music, and more families could do it if they tried, though not all could do it on so big a scale, or do it so well as to be worth their friends’ frequent hearing. And of course not all families could provide their own domestic composer.

## *SECOND BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS*

The Mendelssohn family's music-making was so famous that any notable musicians who passed through Berlin were glad to be present to hear it.

### *Some Holiday Music*

The Mendelssohns lived in music, and when they went on holiday they did not leave it behind. When Felix was fourteen he and his two brothers were taken on a tour in Silesia by their father. At one town a Charity Concert was being prepared, and the committee asked if they might announce that Felix would play a Mozart Concerto with their Orchestra. But at the rehearsal the Orchestra played so much out of tune and out of time that Felix made the schoolmaster go on to the platform and say that, instead of playing the Concerto, Master Mendelssohn would extemporize, and this was done, Felix playing a brilliant improvisation on some tunes out of works by Mozart and Weber.

When they went to the seaside next year they found that there was a wind band there, so Felix wrote for it an Overture, which the band played and which he afterwards published.

### *The 'Midsummer Night's Dream' Overture*

When he was seventeen-and-a-half Mendelssohn wrote a most beautiful overture, intended to precede Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To this day, this is the music we generally hear in a London

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theatre when they perform the play, and to the end of his life the composer never composed anything finer. Its opening is very light and fairy-like, so that somebody has said that Mendelssohn was ‘the first composer to bring the fairies into the orchestra.’ But there are others besides fairies in Shakespeare’s play and so there are in Mendelssohn’s overture to it; at one place you can distinctly hear Bottom’s ‘Hee-haw’.

Mendelssohn later wrote other music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—for instance, the famous Wedding March, which is nowadays as much used at church weddings as at stage weddings. And there is also a very beautiful soft Night Piece, or ‘Notturmo’.

### *Other Orchestral Pieces*

Mendelssohn is famous for his Overtures, some of which were not intended for plays, but just as orchestral pieces to begin a concert. Indeed he may be said to have invented the Concert Overture, writing it much on the lines of the first movement of a Beethoven symphony. One of the best of these concert overtures is the *Hebrides Overture*, sometimes called *Fingal’s Cave*. When Mendelssohn was travelling in Scotland, of which country he was very fond, he visited that cave, and there came to his mind a beautiful bit of music, which he wrote down and afterwards used as the opening of this Overture. Some other orchestral works of Mendelssohn are in the form of full symphonies. He gave these names: there are a *Scotch Symphony* and an *Italian Symphony*

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(in which some of his feelings during his tours in Scotland and Italy are reproduced), and a *Reformation Symphony* with the finale made out of the fine old tune which you will find in all Hymn Tune books to Luther's hymn, 'A Safe Stronghold our God is still'.

Pieces for orchestra and a solo instrument are the very popular Violin Concerto and the two Piano Concertos.

There is also a good deal of Chamber Music.

### *Mendelssohn's Oratorios*

Besides the pieces just mentioned, Mendelssohn wrote a good deal of choral music, and especially sacred music, such as settings of the Psalms, and some Oratorios—*St. Paul*, *Elijah*, and the *Hymn of Praise*.

The first performance of *Elijah* was at Birmingham, so English people heard it before Mendelssohn's own countrymen. Mendelssohn himself conducted and was delighted with the solo singers and the chorus and the orchestra, and with the audience, too. He wrote home to his brother saying, 'No work of mine ever went so admirably at the first performance, or was received with such enthusiasm as this. I never in my life heard a better performance, no, nor so good, and almost doubt if I shall ever hear one like it again.'

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### *The Piano Music*

Mendelssohn was himself a fine pianist, so naturally he wrote a good deal of piano music. Amongst this there is a *Rondo Capriccioso* that you may have heard (you know what a Rondo is, and a Capriccioso piece is naturally one that cuts jolly 'capers'). And you must know some of the *Songs without Words*. The idea of these, of course, is a beautiful tune, of a song kind, with an accompaniment to it going on all the time. And there are other pieces, but these are perhaps the best known. At first nobody in England would buy the *Songs without Words*, and when Mendelssohn, being in London, went to Novello's shop to see how much money they had for him from the proceeds of the first book of six of the pieces he found that they had only sold about a hundred copies in four years and had only a pound or two for him. Afterwards people became even too fond of these pieces, so that every home in England where there was a piano had the full set of them, and other good music was in some cases neglected.

### *Mendelssohn as Pianist*

There must be many young pianists amongst the readers of this book, and they may care to have a description of Mendelssohn's playing, which was very famous.

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He was a good sight reader and could play at once anything you put before him. And he was a good memory player, and hardly ever used printed music except when he was sight reading. Train yourself in sight reading and memory playing by all means! And, once his boyhood was past, he *never practised*. But in this you and I cannot, I fear, afford to follow his example—can we? Madame Schumann said that Mendelssohn's playing was one of the most delightful things she had ever heard in her life. She said 'in hearing him one forgot the *player* and only revelled in the full enjoyment of the *music*.'

Joachim said that Mendelssohn's playing in a *staccato* passage was 'the most extraordinary thing possible, for life and crispness.' He had great 'fire' in his playing, yet great delicacy, and he must have listened and trained himself to get very good tone, because in the softest passages everything could be clearly heard, even in the largest hall, whilst in the loudest passages the effect was never harsh. It is in the tone they produce that many well-known players of to-day fail. Mendelssohn's phrasing was beautifully clear, and he used the sustaining pedal with great thoughtfulness. '*Strict time was one of his hobbies.*'

### ***Mendelssohn as Organist***

As an organist, too, Mendelssohn was celebrated. Whenever he came to England he had to play on all the greatest organs. He had written six fine Organ Sonatas, which you can often hear nowadays at recitals,

## MENDELSSOHN

and he was very fond of playing Bach's organ fugues, and did a great deal to make these popular amongst English organists. But one thing he could not do that you or I could probably do quite well. After a church service he could not 'play the people out,' and once at St. Paul's Cathedral, when the organist got him to play a concluding voluntary, as the congregation did not go, the vergers, who wanted to get home to dinner, went to the organ-blower and made him leave his work, so that the playing came to a sudden end in the middle of a bar, and the people quickly dispersed.

### *Mendelssohn and Bach*

You have read about Bach in *The First Book of the Great Musicians*. After his death, the style of music changed for a time; Fugues and Suites went out and Sonatas and Symphonies came in. And old Bach was almost forgotten, and whilst his sons lived their music was more thought of than his. Then came Haydn and Mozart and Beethoven, and so people went on forgetting old Bach. It was Mendelssohn who did more than any one else to bring Bach to life again. As a youth of eighteen he prepared a choir in the great *St. Matthew Passion*, and gave the first performance of this that had taken place since Bach died, over seventy years before. We owe him a great debt for making us realize the beauty of Bach, as we do also an English organist who did much the same here—Samuel Wesley.

*Mendelssohn and an English Composer*

Another thing we owe to Mendelssohn is the discovery of Sterndale Bennett. When Mendelssohn first started coming to this country British people had an idea that no Briton could compose fine music. But Mendelssohn went to a concert at the Royal Academy of Music, heard a student, Bennett, play some of his own music, and was so much struck with his compositions that he invited him to Germany and made much of him there, as did other great German musicians, such as Schumann. Then the English musicians, seeing one of their young countrymen taken up in musical Germany, thought there must be something in him, and so gave him a chance in his own country. And so gradually people awoke to the fact that one can be an Englishman and at the same time a composer. Sterndale Bennett wrote some fine music (a little in Mendelssohn's style) and then, unfortunately, left off composing in middle life, so that he never came to his full development. But, all the same, with him the tide of British music turned. *Thank you, Mendelssohn!*



MENDELSSOHN

**QUESTIONS**

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. Tell anything you remember showing what sort of a youth Mendelssohn was.
2. Were his family musical? If so, tell anything you remember about their musical doings.
3. What do you remember about some music Mendelssohn wrote for a certain Shakespeare play?
4. Mention the names of any other Orchestral pieces by Mendelssohn, and say what you remember about them.
5. What Oratorios did Mendelssohn write?
6. And what Piano music?
7. What do you know about his Piano playing?
8. And his Organ playing?
9. What did he do for Bach?
10. And what for British music?

**THINGS TO DO**

1. Get the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture as a Gramophone record, or a piano piece, and listen to it carefully to see what there is in it, and how it is made

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up. If you get the Gramophone record, try to find out, by listening carefully, which instruments are playing the different bits. Get the *Notturmo* also.

2. Play, or get somebody to play to you, some of the *Songs without Words*, and then study them to find out how they are made. Do the same with any others of the piano pieces.

3. Get Gramophone records of some of Mendelssohn's Chamber Music, and study it until you know it thoroughly.

4. Get somebody to sing you parts of *Elijah*, or else get these for the Gramophone. Look at a copy of the Piano Score, and find out where in the story of *Elijah* comes each song that you hear.

5. Get a friendly church organist to play you one of Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas—several times, so that you can study it, and remember it. It will help you if the organist will play the chief bits first, and explain to you how Mendelssohn has worked them up into his 'movements'.

6. There is a favourite Christmas Hymn Tune of yours which is adapted from a work of Mendelssohn's. Look through a Hymn Tune book and find out what it is.

7. Get a Violinist and Pianist to play you part of the Violin Concerto, or get the Gramophone record of one of the movements of this.

*The Third Book of the*  
**GREAT MUSICIANS**

*A Further Course in Appreciation  
for Young Readers*

by  
*Percy A. Scholes*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**  
**ITHACA, NEW YORK**



## TO MUSIC TEACHERS

THIS *Third Book of the Great Musicians* in intention and plan so much resembles its two predecessors that no Preface is needed. But the author would like to take the opportunity of reminding teachers that his three books are meant to be placed *in the hands of the young people themselves*, not to be read to them, or to be read by the teacher and the contents re-told. The whole design of the books, with the abundant illustrations, and attractive 'lay-out' of the type, surely indicates the method of use.

In Class the books should be used much as school 'reading-books', each chapter being read and then (probably at some subsequent lesson) made the subject of discussion and illustrated by musical performance (the Gramophone will often be useful in this).

But besides the Class the author has had in view the individual young student of Piano or Violin, whose lesson does not allow time for 'appreciative' study, and who, without some such opportunity as these books attempt to give him, is often in danger of looking upon music rather narrowly—as a matter of mere 'lessons'

and 'practice'. Music is just one of many means of human expression (and one of the best) and an implication of the simple humanity of music is one of the aims of the three *Books of the Great Musicians*.

I have once more to offer my thanks to Mr. Emery Walker. And to Mr. F. Page for assistance in finding illustrations, and to Mr. W. R. Anderson, editor of the monthly journal, *The Music Teacher*, for reading the proofs for me.

*The Author*

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**BRAHMS**



CHAPTER I  
**BRAHMS**

*1833-1897*

*On Having Musical Parents*

Do you want to be a composer? If so, I hope your parents are fond of music. Look back over the list of musicians you have read about in the first two volumes of this work, and try to recall which of them inherited their musical talent. Here is the list:

Purcell.	Chopin.
Bach.	Field.
Handel.	Wagner.
Haydn.	Verdi.
Mozart.	Grieg.
Beethoven.	Sullivan.
Schubert.	Elgar.
Mendelssohn.	Macdowell.
Schumann.	Debussy.

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If you think it over I believe that you will find that of all these composers there are only five of whom it is not related that one or both of the parents were musical. These five are Handel, Schumann, Wagner, Verdi, and Debussy. The fact that there have been some composers with unmusical parents is of course an encouragement to any of us whose parents are unmusical. If that boy Handel, whose father positively tried to stop his study of music, could yet develop into one of the world's greatest musicians, there is hope for everybody who seems to have been born with a musical brain and is willing to work. But, of course, the young musician who has inherited his gift, and has, moreover, parents who understand what he is striving after, has the better chance.

#### *The Childhood of Brahms*

Brahms had that better chance. His father was a musician. But the father himself had had no such chance, since *his* father was not a musician, and had even tried his best to prevent his having anything to do with music. The boy, however, took lessons by stealth, learned to play all the bowed instruments as well as the flute and the horn, and when he was old enough to earn his living became a professional double-bass player—one of the best in Hamburg.

Now a man who has had to struggle in youth generally does his best to make things easier for his children, and Brahms's father, finding his son inherited his talent for music, took care to give him good teachers in piano

## *BRAHMS*

and composition. The mother, too, was musical, and used to play piano duets with her son.

The young Brahms very soon began to compose, and while still a boy occasionally made a little money by arranging marches and dances to be played by the little bands of the cafés. His father, in summer, used to form a party of six musicians who played in the open air for money, and for this party the boy sometimes composed music. The family, as you have observed already from what I have told you, was only a poor one, and all its members had to work hard. Brahms said that his best songs came into his head when he was brushing boots before dawn.

We nearly lost one of our greatest musicians before the world had heard anything of him, for once in the street a serious accident occurred: the lad fell and a cart went right over his chest. However, he recovered, and grew up a particularly sturdy man. At fifteen he gave a public concert, and this was the beginning of his being recognized as a musician of promise.

### *The Gipsy Fiddler*

A great turning-point in Brahms's life came when he was a youth of twenty. He met the violinist Remenyi, who was a Hungarian, probably with gipsy blood, and who later became famous all over the world by playing his native melodies with great fire. Brahms accompanied this player at some concerts, and then they went on a concert tour together. Once when Beethoven's

### THIRD BOOK OF THE GREAT MUSICIANS

'Kreutzer' Sonata was to be played they found the piano was tuned very low, so Brahms transposed its part a semitone higher, which rather impressed Remenyi. The Hungarian dances that Remenyi played attracted Brahms very strongly, and later he himself arranged a good many of these in a most effective way as piano duets; these are very delightful music, and all pianists who love bright, jolly, rhythmic tunes should play them.

#### ***Brahms Meets Joachim, Liszt, and Schumann***

Up to this time the young Brahms was quite unknown to the leading musicians of the day. But at the concert at which he so cleverly transposed the sonata there was present the great violinist, Joachim, and when the concert was over he came and congratulated the players and offered to give them letters of introduction to Liszt at Weimar and Schumann at Düsseldorf.

They visited both these great musicians and were well received. Schumann especially was delighted with Brahms. He wrote to a publisher, saying that he really must bring out Brahms's compositions, and in a musical paper he wrote an article called *New Roads*, in which he hailed Brahms as a genius of great originality. The Schumanns used to have weekly musical parties, and Brahms played at these, and was accepted by every one as a 'coming' musician of great promise. He played some of Schumann's music in very masterly fashion. When you come to know a good deal of the music of both Schumann and Brahms you will find that it has much in common. There is no doubt that, like Remenyi,

## *BRAHMS*

Schumann was one of the great influences in Brahms's life. You already know that Schumann's brain gave way and that he died comparatively young, and his wife, you remember, was a fine pianist who toured Europe making her husband's genius known by her playing. All through Frau Schumann's long widowhood Brahms was her staunch friend. He looked on her almost as a mother, and she on him as a son, and she played his music wherever she went and helped to make it known.

### *Brahms as Choral Conductor*

At twenty-one Brahms had already won such recognition that he had more than one good position opened to him. He accepted that of Director of the Court Concerts and the Choral Society of the Prince of Lippe-Ditmold. This gave him good experience, especially in choral training, and no doubt led to his composing such a great deal of fine choral music as he did now and in after-life. Of his choral works many are frequently heard in English-speaking countries, where they have become very popular.

### *The First Piano Concerto*

When Brahms was twenty-six he brought out his first Pianoforte Concerto. It was performed at one of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concerts, a very famous series, at which many great works have had their first hearing. There it had no success, but later Clara Schumann played it all over Germany and it became quite popular.

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Twenty years later it was played again at the Leipzig concerts and had a triumphant success, but even to this day there are musicians in all parts of the world who do not greatly care for it. Some day you may yourself have a chance of hearing it and of forming your own opinion about it.

#### ***Brahms as Pianist and Piano Composer***

Brahms himself played this work on its first appearance, and perhaps this was a little against it, for his playing, though in many ways very capable indeed, did not show that he sufficiently considered the nature of the instrument. He was very accurate and very vigorous, and got a big, full tone, but, as Schumann once put it, 'Brahms seemed to turn the piano into a full orchestra.' Many of his piano compositions show this same tendency. They would sound equally well, or almost so, rearranged for other instruments. You will gather better what I mean by this if you think of Chopin's music, which, of all piano music, is perhaps most thoroughly based upon a knowledge of what is effective *on a piano*.

#### ***Brahms and the Orchestra***

Similarly, when writing for orchestra, Brahms did not get quite the full effect out of his orchestral instruments. If you hear one of his pieces, and then one of (say) Wagner or Elgar, you will feel that these

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latter composers get, so to speak, many more 'tone-colours' from their orchestral palette than does Brahms from his. Brahms's orchestral works, which include four Symphonies, are very fine indeed, but their scoring (that is, their laying out for the various instruments) is generally rather thick and not so clear and bright as that of most other great Composers. In this he takes somewhat after Schumann. Of both these Composers it has been said, 'He was more a draughtsman than a colourist.'

### *Brahms at Vienna*

When Brahms was about forty he settled in Vienna, which, as you have already learned, has long been a great musical centre. He became conductor of the great choral society there, and got up fine performances of works of Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, and others.

One pleasure in Vienna was listening to the gipsy bands which played in the various public gardens. He used to stop and listen and clap loudly, and once was very delighted when the conductor, seeing him there, suddenly stopped the music, whispered to his men, and then struck up one of Brahms's own compositions. Earlier in this chapter you read something of the composer's love of the gipsy music.

*A Lover of Light Music*

Brahms was by no means opposed to light, pleasant music if it was good. He used to like to hear the famous dance music of Johann Strauss (Yo-han Strowss—pronounce the ‘ow’ as in ‘cow’), who composed popular waltzes that were played all over Europe and America. When, at a musical party, Strauss’s wife was persuading the musicians present to give her their autographs, Brahms wrote for her a few bars of the famous *Blue Danube Waltz* of Strauss and put under it the words, ‘Not, I am sorry to say, by your devoted friend, Johannes Brahms.’

Once, when a friend wrote to him complaining of the rather crude music played by the working men’s brass bands and sung by the working men’s choirs, he replied saying that he thought these things, though not so good as they might be, were nevertheless the only music then existing in which the working man was able to take part, and hence were to be encouraged.

*Brahms’s Advice to your Parents*

He added something which some of my readers may care to read to their parents. He felt that it was a mistake that all the better-class children should learn the same one instrument, the Piano, and said, ‘It is much to be wished that parents should have their children taught other instruments, such as Violin, ’Cello, Horn, Flute,



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or Clarinet, which would be the means of arousing interest in all kinds of music.’

### *Brahms's Requiem*

One of Brahms's most important works that has not yet been mentioned is his 'German Requiem'. He wrote this after his mother's death, and much of it is very beautiful and touching. Generally speaking, 'Requiem' means a 'Requiem Mass' (i.e. the Roman Catholic service for the dead), but this 'Requiem' is, instead, a setting of texts from the Bible. The 'German Requiem' is constantly sung by choral societies in Britain and in America, and can sooner or later be heard by any of my readers who live in any large town.

### *Brahms's Death*

There are no adventures in Brahms's life, and little to tell about it. In 1897 his dear friend, Schumann's widow, died, and at her funeral he caught cold, fell ill himself, and died at the age of sixty-four. He was buried in Vienna, in the same cemetery as Beethoven and Schubert.

### *What Brahms Was Like*

Brahms was a big, strong, stout man, who dressed carelessly, and loved the open air. He was very athletic, and loved of all things to go on long walking tours or

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mountain expeditions. At the seaside he used to swim a great deal and liked to dive for coins thrown into the water by his friends. When he was a boy he had a lovely voice, but he spoilt it by using it too much when it was breaking, and so his voice as a man was gruff.

He loved children and was always playing with them. Once in a Swiss city he was seen going through all the streets, with the five-year-old daughter of a friend on his back, and from Italy an American lady wrote to her friends, 'We saw Brahms on the hotel verandah at Domodossola, and what do you think! He was down on all fours, with three children on his back, riding him as a horse.' In the street he constantly stopped to talk to the children, and they would follow him about.

Brahms paid very little attention to other people's praise or blame, and just went on his own way, behaving as he liked and composing as he liked and what he liked. He was often rude to people, and hurt their feelings, especially if they came to him with praise on their lips. Once when he was lying under a tree in a garden a stranger came up and began to flatter him, so Brahms said, 'I think, sir, you must be mistaken. No doubt you are looking for my brother, the composer. Most unfortunately he has just gone out for a walk, but if you will make haste and run along that path through the wood and up the hill, perhaps you will be able to catch him.'

Brahms was always very fond of a joke and did not like very 'starchy' people. Nobody could ever persuade him to come to England, because, as he said,

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he would have to be always respectably dressed. There is an anecdote about Brahms which illustrates both his kindness of heart and his humour. When he had become a fairly well-to-do man and went to visit his parents at Hamburg, he called the attention of his father, before he left, to his own old copy of Handel's *Saul*. 'Dear father,' he said, 'if things go badly with one the best consolation is always in music. Read carefully in my old *Saul*, and you'll find what you need.' And when the old fellow did look into *Saul* what did he find there?—Bank-notes between the pages!

### *Brahms and Wagner*

Many people who objected to Wagner's music tried to pit that of Brahms against it. They maintained that Wagner's music was very unpleasant, whereas that of Brahms was 'pure' and wholesome. But Brahms himself took no part in this and expressed the greatest admiration for the music of Wagner, although Wagner himself did not care for his. Of course, there is the greatest difference between Wagner's music and that of Brahms. For one thing, Wagner wrote for the stage, while Brahms, on the other hand, never wrote an opera or music drama in his life, as he did not feel drawn to this sort of composition.

Despite the difference in their music both Brahms and Wagner are much indebted to the same inspiration—Beethoven. You have already learned how Beethoven's works excited and inspired Wagner, and now you may learn that they also inspired Brahms. In the first

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volume of this book you have learned to understand the differences between ‘classical’ and ‘romantic’ music. We may say that Beethoven is both classical and romantic, and that Brahms continued his work more on the classical side, and Wagner on the romantic side. Beethoven, as you know, wrote nine Symphonies, and when Brahms wrote his first somebody called it ‘Beethoven’s Tenth’. Brahms loved Beethoven’s works, and could play from memory almost any one of them you cared to ask for.

Like Beethoven, Brahms wrote a good deal of fine chamber music. He also wrote a large number of beautiful songs (more than 200), and a good deal of piano music. In many of his pieces you find several conflicting rhythms going on at the same time. You might look out for this when you hear some of his instrumental music.

Brahms loved Folk Songs and Folk Dances, and a good deal of his music is influenced by these.

## QUESTIONS

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. Without looking back at the beginning of the chapter, write down on a sheet of paper the names of all the musicians you can remember who have been discussed in the two previous volumes of this book. Leave a little space under each name, and then write

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under each what you remember as to the parents being musical or otherwise.

2. What do you remember about Beethoven's father and grandfather?

3. Was Brahms born rich?

4. Tell all you remember about that Hungarian violinist whom Brahms met when he was a youth.

5. Do you remember any other great violinist he met?

6. What do you know about Brahms's relations with Schumann?

7. Say what you know (a) about Brahms's Piano Playing style, and Piano Composing style, and (b) about his Orchestration.

8. Where did Brahms settle in middle life?

9. When Brahms heard a good Waltz played by a band in the street did he turn up his nose and say 'What rubbish!' do you suppose? Or do you think he gave the band sixpence? What is *your* idea about 'light music'? Do you like (a) *bad* light music, or (b) *all* light music, or (c) only *good* light music? Have you any idea what makes the difference between good and bad light music? Can you mention any English composer of good light music?

10. What was Brahms's advice to parents?

11. Tell what you know about 'Requiems' in general, and Brahms's Requiem in particular.

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12. How old (roughly) was Brahms when he died?

13. Was Brahms a well-dressed man? How did he spend his holidays? Some people did not like him; was he the sort of fellow *you* would have liked? Why? or Why not? (as the case may be).

14. In what way did Brahms continue the work of Beethoven?

**THINGS TO DO**

*(For School and Home)*

1. If you have a Gramophone try to get some records of works of Brahms.

2. If you have a Pianola try to get some rolls of his music.

3. If you have neither (or even if you have) try to find some friend who can play you some of Brahms's music, or sing you some of his songs.

4. Look out for the announcement of the performance of any of Brahms's works in your town, and go to hear them. If they are Choral or Orchestral works perhaps you can get in to the rehearsal, so that at the concert you will be hearing the music for a second time, and so understanding it better.

## CHAPTER II

# CÉSAR FRANCK

*1822-1890*

IF you had seen César Franck in the streets of Paris probably you would have thought little of him—a short man with grey side-whiskers, and a face making queer grimaces, an overcoat too big and trousers too small. But if you had followed him to the church to which he was hurrying, crept up the dark stairs behind him to the organ gallery, and seen him seated at his fine instrument and surrounded by some of his admiring friends and pupils, you would have had a different idea of him. People who have seen him at those moments, as he prepared the stops of his organ and broke into some wonderful improvisation, say that ‘he seemed to be surrounded by music as by a halo.’ The great musician Liszt once visited him there and came away lost in astonishment and saying that to have heard old Bach himself must have been a similar experience.

### *Franck's Sincerity*

It was not only Franck's skill that so much impressed people who heard him; it was his sincerity, too. We say



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of a man sometimes, 'he means every word he says,' and people might have said of Franck 'he means every note he plays.' There was in Franck's playing and his composing nothing put in just for effect or to win applause; he did not compose to make money, but to express his true thoughts and feelings, and these were often very deep.

Perhaps you have not yet heard any of Franck's music, but you will some day have the chance, for it is now much performed. If you hear the fine *Symphony* or the *Violin and Piano Sonata*, or the *String Quartet*, or the *Prelude, Choral, and Fugue* for Piano, or the *Prelude, Aria, and Finale* for the same instrument, or any of the *Organ Pieces*, or the great Choral work *The Beatitudes*, I think you will feel the truth of what I have just said. But you must be prepared to study them a little, or to hear them two or three times before making up your mind about them, for great works like this are not to be thoroughly understood the very first time we hear them. If you can get some pianist to play you one of the piano works do so, but, before he begins, get him to go through the work with you, playing you the few chief tunes and showing you how the whole thing is made out of these.

### *Franck's Early Life*

Franck was born at Liège, in Belgium, on December 10, 1822, which was the very day on which Beethoven wrote the last note of what is, perhaps, his greatest work, his Mass in D. This is worth remembering, because,

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more even than Brahms, Franck was the continuer of Beethoven, carrying further Beethoven's style and his ideas in the Sonata and Symphony just mentioned, and in other works.

Franck's father was a business man, and, seeing his son had musical talent, wished him to turn it to account. When the boy was ten he took him for a tour in Belgium, giving concerts everywhere, and when he was fourteen he took him to Paris to be trained at the great Conservatoire there.

#### *Young Franck at the Conservatoire*

When Franck had been a year at the Conservatoire he entered for a competition in piano-playing. He played very brilliantly the set piece he had prepared, and was then given a piece to play at sight. Some queer idea that came into his head prompted him to do a clever yet foolish thing. Instead of just playing the piece as it stood he transposed it three notes lower—and played it perfectly with this added difficulty. The judges said he had broken the rules by doing this, and so they could not give him the prize, but old Cherubini (Ker-oo-bee-ny), the head of the Conservatoire, said such a feat ought, after all, not to go unrewarded, so they invented a special distinction for Franck, and conferred on him the 'Grand Prix d'Honneur', a prize which had never been given before and has never been given since.

A year or two later, at an Organ competition at the Conservatoire, Franck did another strange thing.

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Amongst other tests, the students had to improvise a Sonata on a 'subject' given them by the examiners, and then a Fugue on another subject, also given. When Franck came to improvise the Fugue, it struck him that the Sonata subject and the Fugue subject would work together, so he brought them both in, and made a long and elaborate composition out of them that surprised the examiners, but compelled them to say again that the regulations were broken. However, they gave him the Second Prize.

### *Franck Leaves the Conservatoire*

About this time Franck's father removed him from the Conservatoire. He wanted him to be a piano 'virtuoso' (that is, a great performer, travelling everywhere and giving recitals) and also to compose piano music that would have a large sale and bring in much money. This, however, did not attract Franck, who did not care for fame, or desire more money than was really necessary to live upon comfortably, and before long this difference of opinion, and one upon another question, drew father and son rather apart.

### *He Gets Married*

The other question was that of Franck's marriage. When he was 26 he fell in love with a young actress and wished to marry her. His father objected, but Franck was not going to give way, and was supported in his intention by a good priest who was fond of him.

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This was in 1848, when Paris was in revolution. To get to the church the young couple had to climb over the barricades that the revolutionaries had set up in the streets, but the armed men who were guarding them helped them over and let them pass.

Pupils were scarce just then, for the city was, of course, in a very disturbed state; thus Franck began his married life in some poverty. However, shortly afterwards, the priest who had helped him at the time of his marriage was appointed to a church where there was a fine organ, and he made Franck the organist. This delighted Franck, who was a great lover of the organ, and, as a very devout Christian, was never happier than when taking his part in the church service. Later Franck was appointed to a larger church with a still finer organ, the new basilica of Sainte-Clothilde.

#### *A Disappointment*

Every composer has some disappointments, and Franck had more than most. About this time he spent all the time he could spare, for over a year, in writing an Opera called *The Farmer's Man*. Often he sat up almost all night, working at it, and when it was done he was quite worn out and his brain was so tired that he could hardly think. Yet he never got it performed. But note this—years after, when somebody mentioned it, he said he had come to see that it was not worth very much after all, and he should certainly never have allowed it to be printed.

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This is what often happens: one works at a thing, expecting to make a great success and then, instead, comes failure. For a time one is cast down, and not till long after does one realize that the failure was a blessing in disguise. But perhaps no good work is ever really wasted, and one realizes in time that though the thing itself failed, one is the better for the effort and for what it taught one. So although Franck never saw the Opera performed, in writing it he had gained strength as a composer, and no doubt afterwards profited by this.

Later Franck had a little greater success as an Opera composer, but Instrumental Music and Choral Music, not Theatre Music, were really the lines in which he was fitted to excel.

### *A Modest Life*

Many other disappointments came to Franck in the course of his life, but where other men would have been cast down he just went quietly on. Largely his time was occupied in going about Paris and giving Piano lessons here and there, or Singing lessons at schools, or Organ lessons at the Conservatoire, or, on Sundays and Saints' Days, in playing at his church. He rose at half-past five and 'worked *for himself*' (as he put it) for two hours. Then he had breakfast and hurried off to do his teaching. By 'working for himself' he meant composing or studying, for, busy as he was, he never dropped composition and study.

*Franck as the Friend of Young Composers*

In the evening when he got home he would have dinner and then, often, there would gather round him a group of young musicians who wanted his help and advice. There were at that time in Paris some of these young men who felt that the teaching of Composition at the Conservatoire did not give them what they wanted, since it was so largely concerned with writing in the Operatic style, and they were more interested in Instrumental music, in which France had dropped a good deal behind.

These men realized that in Franck they had a man who could guide them and they liked to get his advice, and to bring their compositions to him, for him to suggest to them where these could be improved and strengthened. But Franck was very modest, and would sometimes play *his* music to *them*, and ask what they thought of it, and if they made suggestions that seemed to be sound, he would accept them and put them into practice. Thus there grew up a sort of Franck 'school', as we say—using the word 'school' to mean a set of people more or less influenced by the same ideas and having much the same way of looking at things.

*The 'Schola Cantorum'*

After Franck's death there sprang out of his teaching a school in the other sense of the word—an institution where music was taught much on the lines of his teaching.

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This still exists and is called the 'Schola Cantorum'. Its head is a composer called Vincent d'Indy (*Van-son Dan-dy* is as near as I can get the pronunciation, in English spelling). D'Indy has written a fine book about his old master, Franck, and a good deal of what I am telling you now is, of course, what I have learnt from that book.

One thing which they do at this school is to go back to the works of Palestrina and Bach, and others of the greatest writers of the best periods of old-time music, and to learn from them as much as they can. Similarly they study the old Plainsong (the traditional chants of the church). In this way they feel they are laying a solid foundation, and after such training as this their pupils may write in as modern a way as they like but will not be out of touch with the past. For of course the present-day music must be founded on that of past days, and future music, we may be sure, will be to some extent founded on that of the present.

### *Some of Franck's Sayings*

When Franck was talking to some of his pupils he would say, 'Don't try to do a great deal; rather try to do a little *well*.' And when he set them an exercise in composition he expected them to work it in all possible ways, and show him the best working they could make—'Bring me the results of *many* trials, which you can honestly say represent the *very best* you can do.'

Then he would add, 'Don't think you can learn

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anything from my corrections of faults of which you were aware—unless before bringing the exercises you had done your level best to correct them yourself.

All these are sound maxims, and should be applied by all students. It really comes to this—‘Don’t rely on your teachers to do things for you that you can do yourself. Learn for yourself everything you possibly can do, and then let your teacher’s help be *additional to that*.’ This applies to Piano practice as much as to Composing, and, indeed, to every possible subject of study.

#### *A Concert That Failed*

When Franck was 65 his pupils and friends felt it to be a wrong thing that some of his best works had yet hardly been heard in public. So they got up a subscription to pay for a great concert of his works. A famous Parisian conductor was to direct the first part and Franck the second. But the famous conductor got quite muddled in the middle of one of the pieces, and conducted it at double its proper speed, so that it broke down. And as for Franck, when his turn came, he was so busy thinking of the music he had written that he did not pay enough attention to helping the singers and players, so that he, too, made rather a mess of things. (It often happens that fine composers are poor conductors.)

When the concert was over Franck’s pupils gathered round him and said how sorry they felt that things had gone so badly, but he replied, ‘No, no, my dear boys; you



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are really too exacting; for my part I was *quite* satisfied.'

I suppose he heard the music in his mind as he meant it to be, and not as it was really performed. And it was a great treat to the dear old man to hear any sort of performance of his works, since they had up to then been so much neglected.

### *Franck's Death*

When Franck was 68 his beautiful String Quartet was performed, and the audience applauded very heartily. Franck could not believe his ears when he heard the applause, and thought it was all for the performers. But it was applause for him. And he had to go on to the platform and bow, and to be made much of. When he got home he said, 'There, you see, the public is beginning to understand me at last!'

It is pleasant to think that this had at last happened, but success came only just in time, for later in the same year he was knocked down by an omnibus. He seemed to recover, and went about his work as usual, but in a few months he was taken ill and died.

He had written three beautiful Chorales for the organ, and wanted very much to be able to go to the church to try them over, but this was not possible, and they were lying on the bed when the priest came to give him the last comforts of religion.

His was a noble, hard-working, self-sacrificing life.

*What Franck's Music Is Like*

It is always difficult to describe music in words. Franck's we may say was very fervent, and very pure, and often very tender, and generally mystical. By mystical, what do we mean? It is as difficult to describe mysticism as I just said it was to describe music, but I think I can make you understand if I say that in a piece of Franck's you can generally feel that its composer was not just thinking of the things around him, but in a sort of vision was peering forward into a life beyond what our eyes can see.

**QUESTIONS**

*(To See Whether You Remember  
the Chapter and Understand It)*

1. When and where was Franck born?
2. What great musicians were then alive? Think of four or five, and say whether they were old men nearing the end of their work, or young ones beginning their lives.
3. Where was Franck trained in music?
4. Repeat any anecdotes you can remember of his work as an examination candidate.
5. What traits in Franck's nature came out in his disagreement with his father?

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6. What sort of a life did Franck lead in Paris?
7. What did he mean by working *for himself*?
8. How did he influence younger musicians?
9. What is the Schola Cantorum, and who is the head of it?
10. Repeat some of Franck's advice to young composers.
11. Was Franck an old man or a young one when he died?
12. Try to give in words some idea of Franck's music.

## THINGS TO DO

1. Of course the chief thing to do is to hear and study some of Franck's music. Try to find a good pianist who can play some of it, and get him (or her) to play you the 'subjects' of a piece before playing the piece as a whole, and to show you how the piece is made out of its subjects.

2. Get a Gramophone record of something of Franck's, e.g. his *Chasseur maudit* (or *Accursed Hunter*). This is published by the Columbia Company, and they give away with it a leaflet telling the story Franck has illustrated in his music.

3. Be on the watch for the announcement of any performance of the great Symphony by Franck. If you see it announced try to get somebody to explain it to you and to play you the 'subjects', before you hear the

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performance. Do the same with the Violin and Piano Sonata. Both these are very beautiful works that you are sure to like as soon as you really know them.

4. Older readers might get d'Indy's book on Franck (translated by Mrs. Newmarch and published by John Lane), and read it carefully.