

# THE STRAND MUSICAL MAGAZINE

A MUSICAL MONTHLY

EDITED BY

EMILE HATZFELD

JANUARY 1895 THROUGH DECEMBER 1897

“INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS”

Edited 2011 by David Trutt  
Los Angeles, California, USA  
email: [davettt@verizon.net](mailto:davettt@verizon.net)  
Web Site: [www.haddon-hall.com](http://www.haddon-hall.com)

The *Strand Musical Magazine* was first published in January 1895 and continued through December 1897. Each monthly issue contained from sixty-four to eighty pages at a cost of sixpence. The first twenty or so pages were devoted to articles and short stories. The remaining pages contained various songs complete with music, and musical pieces — usually for piano. A feature included at irregular intervals was the *Interviews with Eminent Musicians*. This book contains the eleven Interviews plus two more\* which did not have the designation, but which could belong in the category.

It should be noted that publication was suspended in December 1897; publication was resumed in September 1898. The last number was issued early in 1899.

INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS

|            |      |                            |      |      |
|------------|------|----------------------------|------|------|
| JANUARY    | 1895 | SIR CHARLES AND LADY HALLE | Page | 4 +  |
| FEBRUARY   | 1895 | MR. AND MRS. HENSCHEL      | Page | 10 + |
| MARCH      | 1895 | SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN        | Page | 14   |
| APRIL      | 1895 | MR. FREDERIC H. COWEN      | Page | 21 + |
| JUNE       | 1895 | MR. AUGUST MANNS           | Page | 25   |
| JULY       | 1895 | SIR JOSEPH BARNBY          | Page | 31 + |
| SEPTEMBER  | 1895 | M. PADEREWSKI              | Page | 37 + |
| OCTOBER    | 1895 | M. AMBROISE THOMAS         | Page | 41 # |
| MARCH      | 1896 | M. MASSENET                | Page | 45 # |
| MAY        | 1896 | SIGNOR F. PAOLO TOSTI      | Page | 52 + |
| SEPTEMBER  | 1897 | G. VERDI                   | Page | 56   |
| SEPTEMBER* | 1896 | MDLLE. CECILE CHAMINADE    | Page | 62 # |
| MARCH*     | 1897 | MDLLE. AUGUSTA HOLMES      | PAGE | 67 # |

+ Interview by John Evans Woolacott

# Interview by Jean Bernac

In placing the first number of *The Strand Musical Magazine* before the public, the Editor desires briefly to foreshadow the lines on which it will be conducted.

*The Strand Musical Magazine* will contain illustrated articles on the great musical institutions of the world, written by their principals; interviews with celebrated musicians, short stories, humorous sketches, and other literary and artistic features, which, it is confidently expected, will prove highly interesting to the general as well as to the musical reader.

The chief aim of the Editor will, of course, be to present to his readers, a varied budget of good music, so as to supply the wants of all classes of musicians. Not only will the Magazine contain Songs and Pianoforte pieces, which represent the most popular forms of music, but from time to time there will appear in its pages compositions for other instruments, as well as glees and part songs, both in the old and in the Tonic Sol-fa notation.

In order to afford some idea of the extraordinary value which is being offered, the Editor desires to point out that, apart from the literary matter, the public will be able to secure, for sixpence [1/2 shilling], through the medium of the Magazine, twelve songs and pieces of music which, in sheet form, would cost about a guinea [21 shillings].

The unprecedented success achieved by the *Strand Magazine* and other publications issued by George Newnes, Limited, affords the most striking evidence that the great public appreciate good and healthful literature, when presented in an artistic form at popular prices.

The Editor is confident that the public will equally appreciate a magazine which will provide a periodical supply of the best music by the most eminent and popular composers; and he is fortified in his opinion by the emphatic expressions of approval which have reached him from musicians of world-wide fame, including Sir Charles Hallé, Dr. A. C. Mackenzie, Sir George Grove, Prof. C. Villiers Stanford, Madame Mary Davies, Sir Joseph Barnby, Mr. Frederic H. Cowen, Mr. George Henschel, Mr. J. S. Curwen, and Mr. Eaton Fanning.

*The Strand Musical Magazine* will occupy a unique position in musical literature. Its contributors will include the greatest living musicians of every country. No effort will be spared to maintain the Magazine at a high level of excellence, and the Editor, convinced that the British are a music-loving people, respectfully and confidently submits the first number to their generous consideration.

INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 1  
SIR CHARLES AND LADY [WILMA NERUDA] HALLE  
[Pianist and Conductor, 1819-1895] & [Female Violin Prodigy, 1839-1911]  
Interview by John Evans Woolcott

“I played one of Beethoven’s trios when Beethoven was still alive; and, when I heard of the master’s death, I wept. Beethoven died in 1827, when I was a boy of eight years, and living at Hagen.” The speaker was Sir Charles Hallé, whom I had called upon, at his house, in Holland Park. “Beethoven was as a god to me, and I cannot describe to you how distressed I was at the news of the termination of his career,” Sir Charles continued, as, with Lady Hallé, he submitted himself to the operation of being interviewed at my hands.

*“And when did your musical career begin, Sir Charles?”*

“I was a musician at the age of three,” replied the veteran, with a smile. “You will, perhaps, be surprised to hear that I was a very delicate child; indeed, my friends were afraid that I should never grow up. But all their fears turned out to be unfounded, and now, I assure you, I feel like a boy, and am no more fatigued after conducting or playing than I was fifty years ago.”

“I was born,” continued Sir Charles, “at Hagen, in Westphalia, where my father, an excellent musician, was organist of the principal church, and musical director of the town. When I was three years old, my mother taught me my notes, and I learnt the piano that way. I suppose I promised to be a sort of infant prodigy, for, when I was four, a sonata was composed expressly for me, and I played it in public. I remember so well standing at the piano, and giving my first public performance in my native town. Hagen, you know, was a little place of five thousand inhabitants, and the people took a great deal of interest in my youthful efforts at their subscription concerts. The orchestra was composed of amateurs, and you will be interested to hear that, at the age of nine, I was promoted to play the kettledrum,” and Sir Charles’ eye twinkled at the reminiscence.

“At this period, my father, who was a native of Arholtzen, near Cassel, where Spohr was then living, took me there, and asked Spohr to hear me play. Spohr at once agreed, and, after he had heard me, he turned to my father, and said, ‘That boy must give a concert here.’ So a concert was arranged, and I played several pieces with great success. I can only remember one of them now, some variations on ‘Am Rhein,’ by Ferdinand Ries, which was very popular in those days. After that, my father said to me, ‘You’re not going to be an infant prodigy, my boy.’ And so I remained in my native town until I was fifteen, my father giving me all the instruction that was necessary.”

*“And the next important step in your career, Sir Charles?”*

“Well, when I was fifteen, my father decided to send me to Darmstadt, to Rinck, and to Gottfried Weber to learn harmony and counterpoint. Weber, who wrote one of the best works on the method of harmony in existence, was very kind to me. The first time I saw [German composer and organist Johann Christian Heinrich] Rinck and asked him to give me a lesson, he replied, to my surprise, ‘Very well, come to-morrow morning at six o’clock, because from five to six, I compose.’ I have never forgotten that. And so, during the summer, we went to work at the early hour of six, while in the winter we began at seven.”

“After I had gone through a course at Darmstadt, my father resolved to send me to Paris to study with [German composer and pianist Friedrich Wilhelm Michael] Kalkbrenner, the celebrated pianist. Kalkbrenner, however, was unable to take me, as he had long before given up receiving pupils, but he was kind enough to play me something, and I recollect how delighted I was to detect him playing wrong notes. Until then I thought it was only young beginners who committed such heinous crimes.”

“I was introduced in Paris to some of the very best musicians, including Chopin and Liszt; indeed, I had not been a week in Paris before I received an invitation to dine with Chopin, and, when I heard him play, it was a marvel to me. He was a wonderful player — a wonderful player. Liszt, too, was extremely kind to me, and I also became acquainted with Thalberg. With all these eminent musicians at hand, I could not make up my mind which I should study under, and so I went on practising by myself for ten or fifteen hours a day; in fact, I worked so hard that my hand became swollen, and I was compelled to rest.”

*“Did you eventually take lessons from anyone in Paris?”*

“No, I took no lessons, and what I know, I know through hearing others, and comparing their methods. I had no desire to play in public until I felt quite sure of myself, and I lived in Paris three years before I came out. Music then was not what it is now, and when I decided to play some of Beethoven’s sonatas, a friend said to me, ‘Don’t do that, it will never go down.’ However, I stuck to my intention, and I was justified by what happened. The sonatas did ‘go down,’ and were enthusiastically received, both by the public and the Press. I played at the Conservatoire, and had a reception that was thoroughly satisfactory. In those days, Paris was indeed a centre of genius, and among my friends I numbered Victor Hugo, Guizot, Lamartine, Alexander Dumas, the elder, and George Sand. It was then, by the way, that I commenced composing — I have never had time for composition since. Curiously enough, only the other day Lady Hallé was looking at some of my pieces, and said to me, ‘You must play these when you go to Edinburgh.’”

*“And did you remain in Paris long?”*

“Well, I will tell you how it was that I left France for England, the story I think is rather interesting. In 1846 [age 27] I organised chamber music concerts, my colleagues being Franchomme and Alard. The venture proved quite as successful as we could have wished, and we had brilliant audiences — Victor Hugo, for instance, had a *loge*, and so had Lamartine, Guizot, Sand, and other people of eminence. In the third year, when the whole of the seats had been subscribed for, the revolution broke out, just after our season commenced. At the concert that followed the outbreak we found about fifty persons in the room. The next week there were fewer still, and at length many of our subscribers who had been rich were glad enough to receive their money back, although in each case, the amount was not very large. Up to that time, Alard, Franchomme and myself had as many pupils as we wished to take, but owing to the political troubles that prevailed, they gradually dwindled away. When we met we used to ask each other ‘How many pupils have you left?’ ‘Oh, I still have four,’ would be the reply. And then it came to three, to two, and finally we had none left. Most of my friends had been connected with the Ministry, or with the Court of Louis Phillipe, and as I had a wife and two children dependent on me, I said to myself, ‘I must leave Paris; it is useless remaining here,’ and that was how I came to England.”

*“May I ask, Sir Charles, whether you experienced any difficulty when you first arrived in this country?”*

“Happily I did not. I was known here, and soon after my arrival, I was asked to play at the grand concerts at Covent Garden. Then I got an engagement with Ella, the Director of the Musical Union, and shortly afterwards a brother of Leo, the banker, who lived in Manchester, wrote to me, and asked me to come there. ‘We want someone like you in Manchester,’ he said, ‘there are many musical people here. Won’t you come?’”

“At the time I speak of there was no winter season in London. The usual season was drawing to a close, so I said I would come to Manchester if I were guaranteed a certain number of pupils. A week later I received a reply that the pupils had been found, and to Manchester I went.”

*“And you have remained there ever since?”*

“Yes, although after the first orchestral concert I wanted to come away [leave Manchester]. My friends asked me to [stay and] conduct. ‘Yes,’ I replied, on ‘condition that you send the band away.’ This was agreed to, and I got together a small but competent orchestra, several members of which are with me to this day.”

“But you have no idea,” continued Sir Charles, with enthusiasm, “of the improvement that has taken place in the musical taste of Manchester; in fact, I maintain that nowhere else in England will you find an audience with such a highly-educated musical taste as you will in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. This applies to all classes who frequent the concerts. The people who pay their shilling for admission are as appreciative as their richer neighbours.”

*“Were the orchestral concerts successful from the outset, Sir Charles?”*

“Yes,” replied Sir Charles, with a quiet smile, “I can say that I never closed a season with a loss. Let me tell you my first experience. In 1857, when the Art Traders’ Exhibition was held, I engaged a very good orchestra, including musicians from France, Germany, and Holland. At the expiration of their engagement I felt sorry to think that they would have to disperse, and this gave me the idea of organising orchestral concerts, and I arranged the first series for that winter. The Free Trade Hall had just been built, and I began without any subscriptions whatever. At first the attendance was so poor that my friends predicted financial failure. There were thirty concerts in the series, and after the tenth or eleventh the tide turned, and I determined to go right on to the end. At the close of the season my agent, Mr. Forsyth, came to me, bringing with him my profit in threepenny-pieces, amounting to half a crown! There was exactly a penny for each concert; but, small as the total was, it enables me to say that I never closed a season with the balance on the wrong side.”

*“Since then the success of your orchestral concerts has been phenomenal?” I observed.*

“Well, I went straight on, and people began to see there was something in a symphony after all. And it gives one great satisfaction to find how good music is appreciated. Among the wealthier classes there are now many excellent amateurs, but the love of music is not confined to any class of society. For instance, when I was changing trains at Derby, the porter who carried my luggage startled me by saying, ‘Will you please tell me, Sir Charles, when the *Elijah* will be performed at Manchester?’ I at once told him, when he exclaimed with enthusiasm, ‘I have got permission to go, and I’ve promised to take my missus with me to give her a treat.’ A working-man too, sometime sends me a little present, made by himself, asking me to accept it in return for the great pleasure he has derived from the concerts.”

“Yes, the change that has taken place within my experience is remarkable. I will give you another illustration. When Mr. Ella engaged me, I told him I proposed to play one of Beethoven’s sonatas. ‘What,’ he cried, ‘No, no; you can’t play that in public.’ I insisted, however, and it proved eminently successful.”

“Before 1848 solo sonatas were never played in public. Musicians held that the public did not understand them. Now you hesitate to select one, lest it be too well known. The difference is wonderful. I need scarcely tell you that when I commenced giving orchestral concerts, I did not play Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. But now I can play what I like, and my orchestra has increased from between fifty and sixty to one hundred and two performers. I don’t know that I can tell you any more about my musical career,” continued Sir Charles. “I lost my first wife in 1866, and in 1888. after being knighted, I married Madame Norman-Neruda.”

*“Well, I am sure, Sir Charles, the valuable facts you have been good enough to give me will be read with intense interest by all lovers of music. And now, perhaps I may be permitted to ask Lady Hallé to tell me when she became a musician?”*

“Well,” said Lady Hallé, “I think I will let my husband speak for me,” and Sir Charles, readily assenting, observed, “The story of Lady Hallé’s first efforts on the violin is a curious one. My wife was born at Brünn, Ernst’s native town. Her family had been musicians for generations, and her father was an organist, and the principal teacher of music in Brünn. As a child, Lady Hallé could not be persuaded to take any interest in the piano, but she was greatly attracted by the violin, which her little brother played.”

“It was a red violin, and the child took it into her head to try to play it when the others were out of the way. This went on for some time, until, one day, her father came in suddenly, and hearing, as he thought, his son playing, remarked, ‘My boy certainly makes great progress.’ Judge of his astonishment when he discovered that the musician was really his daughter, who had never had a lesson in her life. The little girl was terribly frightened, and thinking she had done wrong, burst into tears, and cried, ‘Oh, I won’t do it again!’”

“Her father, who was highly pleased, at once decided that she should be taught the violin. First of all, he gave her lessons himself, and then sent her to Jansa, at Vienna. She swears by him as the best teacher in the world. Jansa insisted on her playing in public, and from that time she was regarded as a child prodigy, and was taken to Russia, and to other countries, to give performances. She played at the Philharmonic concerts, and at the Prince’s Theatre, in London, in 1847, and also at Manchester.”

“Ernst was in London then, and we gave an orchestral concert together, at which I played Mendelssohn’s concerto in G minor. Miss Neruda’s father took her to this concert, and many years after, when I made her acquaintance, she told her father, on returning to Brünn, that she had become acquainted with Hallé. ‘Really?’ replied the father. ‘Why, you went with me to his concert, in London.’ ‘No, no!’ she maintained, stoutly. ‘There was no pianist at the concert; there was only Ernst,’ so small was the impression my pianoforte playing had made on her.”

“After her first marriage, she lived for some years at Stockholm, but in 1868 she was induced to go to Paris once more. A few years later she played in England, Germany, and Holland, with great success, and of her later career in England, it is unnecessary for me to speak.”

*As I rose to bid Sir Charles and his charming wife adieu, the veteran musician spoke hopefully of the future of music. Sir Charles is no pessimist; and his devotion to the art with which his name has been so long and so honourably associated, cannot fail to impress even the most casual observer. Despite his years, Sir Charles is still hale and hearty, affording another illustration of the truth that an active life is the surest passport to a green old age.*

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 2

MR. [GEORGE] AND MRS. [LILIAN BAILEY] HENSCHEL

[Pianist, Baritone, Conductor, Composer, 1850-1934] &amp; [Soprano, 1860-1901]

Interview by John Evans Woolcott

*Mr. and Mrs. Henschel are amongst the most popular musicians in this country. Their industry, too, is remarkable. It was on a Thursday morning that I called at their house, at Campden Hill; and while I waited for Mr. Henschel's appearance, Mrs. Henschel told me that her husband, who had arrived from the North an hour or two before, was engaged in hearing a young violinist play. At two o'clock that afternoon he had to attend a rehearsal, and in the evening he would conduct the Scottish Orchestra in the Queen's Hall. On the Tuesday morning he had appeared at a concert in Glasgow, on the Wednesday evening at another at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and here on the Thursday morning, after travelling all night, he was prepared to face a violinist, a rehearsal, a Queen's Hall audience, and last, if not least, an inquisitive interviewer.*

*At length the violinist departed, and Mr. Henschel, looking as fresh as if he had just returned from a holiday, appeared on the scene.*

"My musical career?" said Mr. Henschel, when I had explained the object of my visit. "Well, I will begin at the beginning. My parents had musical tastes, and I commenced studying the pianoforte when I was five years old. My first appearance in public was as a soprano boy at Breslau, in 1858, when I sang 'Hear my Prayer.' Four years later, on the 31st October, 1862, I made my *debût* as a pianist."

*"And where were your studies carried on?"*

"In the first instance I studied with Professor Schaeffer in Breslau, but in 1867 I went to Leipzig, and became a pupil in the Conservatoire there. I studied the piano under Moscheles, while old Richter taught me composition, and Professor Goetze singing. In 1870 I returned for a few months to Breslau, but soon felt that I ought to go on with my studies, so I left Breslau for Berlin. At Berlin, Schultze gave me lessons in singing, and Kiel taught me composition. It was in 1872 that I had my first call outside Germany, for in that year I sang in the 'Messiah' at Brussels. I had previously sung in the 'Messiah' in 1868, in Halle."

"The real turning point in my career," continued Mr. Henschel, "was my appearance, in 1874, at Cologne, at the Rhine Musical Festival. After that I visited nearly every town in Germany, and I sang also in Russia, Switzerland, and Holland. Finally, in 1877, I received an invitation from Mr. Chappell, the director of the Monday Popular Concerts, to sing in London, and after I had appeared at St. James's Hall, I came to the conclusion that London was the place for me to settle down in. So my stay here extended here from three weeks to three months, and at the end of that time I definitely resolved to make London my home. I may tell you that at this period I had almost given up public performances on the piano."

“The first year I was in England I sang at the Handel Festival; and two years later, in 1879, at an evening party, given by the then conductor of the Philharmonic Society, I met Miss Bailey, who became my pupil, and is now Mrs. Henschel. It was on the 9th of March, 1879, that Miss Bailey and I first became acquainted, and two years later to the day, on the 9th of March, 1881, we were married.”

*“It was about this time that you went to America, was it not, Mr. Henschel?”*

“I paid my first visit to the United States in August, 1880, with my *fiancée* and her family, returning for the Leeds Festival.”

“When we were on our wedding trip — two days after we were married, in fact — I received a letter from Mr. Higginson, asking me whether I would undertake to found and conduct a new orchestra in Boston. I accepted the proposal, and retained the position for three years. At the end of that period I was asked to renew the engagement for five years, but I could not see my way to abandon my European connections altogether, and I decided to return to my native continent, For a year I travelled with my wife in Germany, giving recitals, and then I settled in London and established the London Symphony Concerts.”

*“I presume, Mr. Henschel, you did not find the task an easy one at the outset?”*

“No; for years it was very up-hill work, I assure you; but after the seventh year I succeeded in placing the concerts on a firm basis. For seven years I had worked not only without any remuneration whatever, but with an actual loss, both to myself and the guarantors. In 1893, I accepted the position of conductor of the newly founded Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow.”

*“When did you commence composing?”*

“My first song was published in 1867, but it had been composed long before — when I was twelve years old.”

*“Your life throughout has been an extremely busy one, Mr. Henschel,” I observed.*

“Yes, I have always worked hard; indeed, who could be happy without work? Of course I have had my struggles like most other musicians. When studying at Berlin, I gave lessons for fifteenpence, and in those days my life was of necessity simple. Sixpence had to suffice for my dinner, whilst threepence purchased supper for my trusty dog and myself. Nowadays I work as hard as ever I did in my life. Last season, for instance, I conducted seventy-three orchestral concerts, and a hundred and forty rehearsals; while between October and March I travelled seventeen thousand miles.”

*“As to the progress of music in various countries; what was your experience in the United States, for instance?”*

“The Americans are very musically inclined, especially in the Eastern States,” replied Mr. Henschel. “The orchestra which Mr. Higginson enabled me to found in Boston is now in its fourteenth season, and what Mr. Higginson has done for Boston, Mr. Carnegie has done for New York. America being a new country naturally lacks the musical traditions which European nations possess. Music, so to speak, is a hot-house plant in the States; it does not grow wild there. But time may change all that.”

“Take another country I know well — Scotland. I cannot speak too highly of the appreciation which the Scottish people show for good music. The only difference between a classical concert and a popular concert in Edinburgh or Glasgow is the difference in the price. I can assure you that at some of the popular concerts where we have given music of the highest class, as many as five hundred people have been unable to obtain admission. At the first Popular Concert in Glasgow this season we had a great and enthusiastic audience of three thousand. The orchestral pieces included Auber’s Overture, ‘Part du Diable’; one of Haydn’s Symphonies; a selection from Wagner’s Mastersingers; ‘Kamarinskaja,’ a Russian Dance by Glinka; and the music to ‘Peer Gynt,’ by Grieg. Mrs. Henschel sang ‘Rossignols Amoureux,’ by Rameau, and two little Songs of my own, ‘Little Lauchin Jean’ and ‘Sing Heigho.’”

Mrs. Henschel here remarked, with enthusiasm, “It is really a pleasure to step up on the platform and to see the eager faces of a crowded audience turned towards one.”

*“You have had a wide experience of musical audiences, Mrs. Henschel,” I observed.*

“Yes; I have been singing practically all my life. Indeed, I might say I was taught music so soon as I could speak.”

*“You commenced your studies in America, of course?”*

“Yes. I was born in the United States in 1860. I studied at Boston with Madam Rudersdorff, and also with an uncle of mine, the late Mr. Charles Hayden. When I was sixteen I made my first professional appearance, and since then I have been constantly before the public. My first training, I should say, was with the piano, and I played in public at the age of twelve. But I was only taking lessons then preparatory to going in for singing.”

*“And you are devoted to your profession, Mrs. Henschel?”*

“Yes. But I have to work very hard, I assure you; and constant practice is necessary in order to maintain success. But the audiences are very nice everywhere, and my musical life has been an extremely pleasant one to me.”

*“Do you find that audiences vary much in their appreciation of good music?”*

“Well, audiences of two thousand people seem to be alike all the world over, so far as outward demonstrations are concerned, for if you were to give any large audience trash some of them would applaud. Naturally the percentage of those who have more highly developed musical tastes differs in different audiences.”

“Oh, yes,” said Mrs. Henschel, in reply to a further question, “I like the English public. You have as charming a public in this country as is to be found in Berlin or Vienna, where musical people are exceedingly appreciative. I am looking forward to another visit to Vienna shortly, for my recollections of Viennese audiences are of the most pleasant character.”

*As a composer, Mr. Henschel's popularity is unquestioned. Among his important works are "Out of the Darkness" (130th Psalm), his "Te Deum Laudamus," and his "Stabat Mater." The last-named work was performed at the Birmingham Festival of 1894 with great success. In addition, Mr. Henschel has written "Servian Romances," vocal quartettes which are familiar to the audiences at the Monday Popular Concerts; and a number of vocal duets songs, and pianoforte pieces. His setting of Scheffel's "Trompeter Von Säkkingen" is well-known in this country, and the words have been beautifully translated by Lady Macfarren. Mrs. Henschel's rendering of several of her husband's songs, it is scarcely necessary to remark, have unquestionably added to their fame.*

*Devoted as Mr. and Mrs. Henschel are to their art, they are still more devoted to their charming daughter, who, needless to say, is receiving a thorough musical training. Miss Henschel already gives promise of becoming a good musician, and certainly her environment is in every respect favourable to a successful musical career, though her parents by no means favour the idea of her adopting music as a profession.*

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 3

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN [Composer and Conductor, 1842-1900]

Interview by M. A. von Zedlitz

*Sir Arthur Sullivan's career has been a particularly brilliant one. Characterised by a by a fervent love for this art, the chief aim of his life has been to devote himself heart and soul to the achievement of a maximum of true excellence in his compositions. From his earliest infancy he was surrounded by musical elements, for his father, to whom he was passionately attached, was an enthusiastic musician, who for many years held the position of bandmaster at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst.*

*Mr. Sullivan fostered his little son's sensibilities with the warmest care, and encouraged the child to accompany him daily to the band rehearsals, thereby initiating him in the mysteries of instrumental practice. Incredible as it may seem, little Arthur had barely reached the age of eight when he was thoroughly acquainted with, and could play, all the wind instruments, save two.*

*The father's watchful eye having detected exceptional signs of musical instinct in his son, Thomas Sullivan lost no time in prevailing upon Sir George Smart, who, in his turn, induced the Rev. T. Helmore, the then Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal, St. James's, to hear the boy's voice. A meeting took place, and the master was delighted at the sweet, pure rendering of "With Verdure Clad," by little Arthur Sullivan, who accompanied himself on the pianoforte. So deep an impression had the boy's singing made upon Mr. Helmore that a few days after the meeting he notified to Mr. Sullivan that his son might join the choir of the Chapel Royal.*

*With his entry to the Chapel Royal practically began a very remarkable and zealous career, for it was during his three years' sojourn there that the young musician made his first attempts at musical composition.*

*"What was the name of the very first song you composed, Sir Arthur?" I enquired, when I called upon the famous composer at Queen's Mansions.*

*"'O Israel,' and it was shortly afterwards followed by an anthem, which was sung in chapel. Bishop Blomfield, who was then Dean of the Chapel Royal, on hearing that one of the chapel boys had composed the anthem, sent for me," continued Sir Arthur, "and gave me half a sovereign, with an affectionate pat on the back and some words of kindly encouragement. I remember I felt extraordinarily proud on that occasion, for it was the first money I had earned for myself."*

*"In 1856 I competed for the Mendelssohn Scholarship, with the invaluable advice and assistance of the Rev. Mr. Helmore, who urged me to work very hard, so that on the result of the stringent examinations being made public, I was delighted and surprised to learn that I had been elected first Mendelssohn scholar."*

*“Who were your masters, Sir Arthur?” I asked, presently.*

*“For two years I studied harmony and counterpoint with Goss,” was his reply, “and the pianoforte with Sterndale Bennett and O’Leary. After that time my voice broke, and it was then decided that I should go to Leipzig. Here I entered the Conservatoire, and my masters were Hauptmann, Rietz, Moscheles, and Plaidy.”*

*“Did you work very hard at Leipzig?”*

*“Sometimes,” replied Sir Arthur, with a smile; “but you know what a student’s life means: loafing as well as working.”*

*“Who were your ideal composers in the early days of your career?”*

*“Mendelssohn, Schumann and Schubert appealed most strongly to my feelings, and ‘Tannhauser’ and ‘Lohengrin’ of Wagner were especial favourites of mine, but I am very eclectic in my tastes.”*

*Sir Arthur composed an overture called “The Light of the Harem” in Leipzig, which was received with acclimation at the students’ annual concert, and received warm commendation from the press.*

*Spohr was in Leipzig at the time when Arthur Sullivan’s successful overture was followed by the production of a string quartette. Young Sullivan was then a mere lad, and on being introduced to Spohr, surprised the master by his youthful appearance. Spohr, moreover, could scarcely believe that so excellent a composition was the creation of so young a man.*

*The incidental music written to Shakespeare’s “Tempest,” which was produced in Leipzig in 1861, and afterwards made a sensation in London at the Crystal Palace Concerts, where it was repeatedly given, proved that the young musician’s powers had not been overrated. Sir Arthur’s early career was brightened and made pleasurable to him by reason of his association and friendship with many great musical men. Amongst those whom he remembers with keen delight is Rossini. The Italian maestro took more than an ordinary interest in Sullivan’s talent, and was particularly attracted by “The Tempest” music, which he used to play over repeatedly with the young musician, who had arranged several of the numbers as pianoforte duets.*

*“I think,” said Sir Arthur, speaking of Rossini, “that he first inspired me with a love for the stage and things operatic, and this feeling and departure led to my undertaking the duties of organist at the Royal Italian Opera, under the conductorship of my friend Sir (then Signor) Michael Costa. At his request I wrote a ballet, entitled ‘L’Ile Enchantée,’ and my necessary intercourse with the stage employees, dancers and others gave me much insight in the blending of music and stage management, which became very valuable to me as time progressed.”*

*From '62 to '66 Sir Arthur was called upon to produce a great variety of compositions, and his truly inspirational knowledge, accumulated by this time with astounding copiousness, enabled him to prove himself equal to any unexpected requirement or sudden emergency. An anecdote illustrative of this of this capacity is worthy of record here.*

*One night "Faust" was being performed, with Mr. Costa as conductor and Arthur Sullivan at the organ. In the midst of the church scene the wire connecting the pedal under Costa's foot with the metronome stick at the organ gave way. Such an untoward occurrence might have meant trouble for the organist had not his usual presence of mind and savoir faire come to the rescue, for it is easy to understand that under the circumstances the organist would be unable to hear anything save his own instrument, and therefore it would be impossible for him to keep time with the conductor of the orchestra.*

*A brilliant thought struck him instantly. He summoned a stage-carpenter, and whispered to him, without further ado, "Run sharp, and tell Mr. Costa that the connecting wire has broken, and that he must keep his ears open and follow me." This happy inspiration saved the situation, and all went without a hitch. No one was more delighted or grateful than the illustrious conductor himself, who loudly praised Mr. Sullivan for the apt manner in which he had saved the situation.*

*It was in 1866 that Sir Arthur Sullivan produced, together with Mr. Frank Burnand, an adaptation of J. Maddison Morton's farce, "Box and Cox," under the title of "Cox and Box."*

*"That was quick work," said Sir Arthur, smiling at the reminiscences of his early feats in the direction of rapid composing and scoring: "for the operetta was announced for public production one Saturday, while upon the previous Monday evening I had not yet written one note for the orchestra! 'Cox and Box' had been performed several times in private, and I had generally extemporised the accompaniments when they were required on those occasions. But we had arranged to give a performance at the Adelphi Theatre, for the benefit of a fund organised by the staff of *Punch*, and I was to conduct a full orchestra on the afternoon of the Saturday in question. Where there's a will there's a way, however, and I made up my mind to complete the orchestration in good time. I succeeded by dint of perseverance, and having completed the score by 11 A.M., at 12 the dress rehearsal took place, followed two hours later by the performance."*

*"The Contrabandista" was composed, scored, and rehearsed within sixteen days; while, incredible as it will seem to all, Sir Arthur began the overture to "Iolanthe" late one night and finished it by seven o'clock on the following morning.*

*I asked Sir Arthur to tell me something about his method of work.*

*He replied characteristically, and in a very few words. Taking bulky volumes from his huge bookcases, he showed me his compositions admirably scored and faultlessly inscribed therein in a minute hand, while I observed that they were completely scored for full orchestra.*

*“But,” I exclaimed, “you sometimes jot your ideas down in the rough before notating them with this precision in your books?”*

*“Oh, yes,” said Sir Arthur, “I make a hieroglyphic sketch before writing out the full score, as I know exactly which instrument I require in order to produce the desired effects, combinations and harmonies. I never use a piano when composing, for it would limit my ear as to the effects I want; therefore, while writing I score the compositions right off for a complete band, and I do not hear the result of my creations until they are performed and I am conducting them.”*

*Speaking about the difficulties of composition and the want of something suggestive and sympathetic oft-times to aid the writer, Sir Arthur told me two very touching incidents connected with his work. He had been asked to compose an overture for the Norwich Festival in 1866, and could find no subject suitable to the style of composition which recommended itself to his creative mood at the time. He confided the cause of his trouble to his father, who would not hear of his son giving up the commission entrusted to him.*

*“Try again, my boy,” said his father; “something is sure to occur to direct your thoughts into a new channel. Don’t give it up.”*

*Thomas Sullivan’s words proved to be strangely and solemnly true, for in three days he suddenly died of aneurism of the heart, and his son, who was passionately attached to his father, flung himself into his work on the night of the funeral in order to take refuge from his overwhelming grief. “In Memoriam” contained all the pent-up, passionate sorrow which Arthur Sullivan experienced at the irretrievable loss of his best friend, and the funereal, mournful strains which burst from the tear-stained paper he inscribed them on proved how intensely the subject, which had so suddenly come upon him, had stirred his innermost feelings.*

*The other anecdote relates to “The Lost Chord,” Sir Arthur’s most popular song, which Madame Antoinette Sterling renders so magnificently. This, as “In Memoriam,” was the production of an overwrought brain, racked by much mental anxiety and suffering.*

*“I was nursing my brother through a severe illness,” said Sir Arthur, meditatively, “and had hardly left his bedside for several days and nights. Finding one evening that he had fallen into a doze, I crept away into a room adjoining his, and tried to snatch a few minutes’ rest. I found this impossible, however, so I roused myself to work, and made one more of many attempts during four years to set music to Adelaide Proctor’s interesting words. This time I felt that the right inspiration had come to me at last, and there and then I composed ‘The Lost Chord.’ That song was evolved under the most trying circumstances, and was the outcome of a very unhappy and troubled state of mind.”*

*I gathered from facts which Sir Arthur touched upon, dealing with his career, that he has never felt the slightest inclination for teaching. In spite, however, of his disinclination, he was persuaded to accept the post of principal to the National Training School for music (1875). The National Training School became, after some years, the Royal College of Music, on which occasion the Queen conferred the honour of knighthood upon the composer simultaneously with Professor Macfarren.*

*Speaking about his early works, and especially concerning those with which Mr. W. S. Gilbert has aided him in earning a world-wide reputation, Sir Arthur told me that he decidedly preferred "The Yeomen of the Guard" to all others. His operettas have achieved a universal renown, and once, when he was travelling in the United States, a very funny incident occurred, which he related to me.*

"Together with a party of friends," said Sir Arthur, "I was traversing a rather uncivilised district in the State of California when we stopped at a mining camp for some refreshments. The driver informed me that I was expected there, and feeling rather gratified to hear this, I made my way towards the whisky store. Three or four fellows were lounging about, and one approached a big, sturdy man, who was standing near me, and said to him, 'Are you Mr. Sullivan?' The man shook his head and pointed his finger in my direction. After looking me up and down, the man demanded, 'What do you weigh?' 'About 162 pounds,' was my reply. 'Pooh!' said my interrogator, 'that's a queer start. Do you mean to tell me you gave J. Blackman fits in Kansas city?' 'Certainly not,' I answered. 'Well, who are you, anyway?' I answered that my name was Sullivan. Quite disappointed, he said, 'Oh, ain't you John L. Sullivan, the slogger?' 'No, I am only Arthur Sullivan,' I replied. 'What!' he said, with evident surprise, 'are you the man as put *Pinafore* together?' I said 'Yes,' and smiled at him. 'Well, I never!' he answered; 'but I'm glad to meet you anyway. Come and have a drink with us.'"

*Another, and this a curious coincidence — for, of course, it was nothing more — occurred upon the occasion of Sir Arthur's first visit to San Francisco. He told it me as follows.*

"I had arrived one morning, and was strolling about the hotel, waiting in a rather undecided way for something to turn up. Quite by accident I met a lady whom I had known in London, and as she was just about to step into her carriage to take a drive, she invited me to accompany her to the promenade, where an excellent band was to be heard every day. I accepted her invitation and we had a delightful drive, finally drawing up near the band-stand. Imagine my surprise, nay, I must add, my deep emotion, when the bandmaster, as if by enchantment, struck up 'The Lost Chord,' which was played admirably from beginning to end. It was a pure accident, of course, for my visit to California was not known to anyone at the time; but I need not say how much I was touched to hear those strains, which carried me back so many thousands of miles to Home!"

*In his capacity as a conductor it should be stated that as in all his actions, musical and otherwise, Sir Arthur is vigorously prompted by the soundest instincts of justice and common sense. Who would imagine that, experienced and celebrated as Sir Arthur is, he could feel the anguish of nervousness? And yet he told me that on a first night he suffers tortures ere the moment arrives for him to take his seat and conduct his new work.*

“For an hour before the curtain rises,” he said, “I shut myself up in the little room adjoining the orchestra and refuse to see anyone. The suspense is horrible, I assure you. It is not because I fear that the work will not please the public, for they are so kind to me that perhaps even if this were the case they would not tell me so; but it is the reflex of the mental excitement I have undergone during the elaboration of the opera. Then I am so overcome by the kind welcome and warm reception accorded to me when I appear at the orchestra door that I feel as though I must burst into tears. But from the moment I am seated, and have taken the baton in my hand, my nervousness vanishes like a dream. I am no longer the composer, but a part of the orchestra, aiming to pull the work successfully through before the most critical and important public in the world.”

*Sir Arthur is a great favourite with the Royal Family, if I may judge by the many photographic and other souvenirs which adorn his home. Her Majesty Queen Victoria holds, of course, the place of honour in the musician's drawing-room. A pretty story is told of Her Majesty in connection with that portrait. The background being very sombre, she inscribed her name on it, contrary to her custom, in white ink. When handing the photograph to a trusted envoy who was commanded to convey it to Sir Arthur, the Queen said naively, “Mind you tell him that I wrote my name in white ink so that he would be sure to see it.”*

One cause of serious worry to Sir Arthur Sullivan is his enormous correspondence. “It is the burden of my life,” he explained to me, somewhat aggrievedly. “I receive about forty letters a day, and I assure you that thirty-five of these are, as a rule, begging letters. Is it not curious,” he continued, “that people should ignore the fact that a composer's life is fraught with hard work and consequent anxieties, and that one's time is not one's own to devote to letter-writing? You would be surprised to see some of the letters I receive. Not only do they mostly contain demands for money, but even persons who are utterly unknown to me ask me for letters of introduction to managers and musical people generally.”

*The lesson which Sir Arthur teaches us in his Art may be learned over and over again in his apartments in Queen's Mansions. During his vast travels abroad he has amassed a large collection of rare antiquities, his taste apparently inclining him towards those curios hailing from the far East.*

*In his entrance hall Arabian lamps hang, giving out their mysterious quaint lights in softly sombre rays, while you peep through a lovely screen of old Cairo wood-work before reaching the dwelling rooms. The doors are artistically draped with elaborate Persian and Greek hangings and, nestling beneath the spreading leaves of rare palms, you meet with large restful divans upon which Oriental silks of great beauty and price are carelessly thrown.*

*Sir Arthur's material surroundings convey to the casual visitor an impression of artistic calm and physical comfort. The harmonious colouring of the Persian tiles affixed to the walls is so soothing to the eye, the exquisite taste and judiciousness characterising the adventitious decorations are so perfectly in keeping with the personality of the genius loci, that Sir Arthur's home may be accepted by the aesthetic and the worldling alike as the aptest of "modern instances," or typical of the "eternal fitness of things."*

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 4

MR. FREDERIC HYMEN COWEN [Pianist, Conductor and Composer, 1852-1935]

Interview by John Evans Woolcott

*Mr. Frederic H. Cowen, who stands in the foremost rank of living composers, is an interesting personality. A musician from his early youth, Mr. Cowen holds strong views on the art with which his name is so honourably associated; and during an hour's chat at his house in Hamilton Terrace, I was able to obtain from him many interesting facts touching his own brilliant career, as well as his opinions on matters of vital interest to the musical world. Mr. Cowen was born at Kingston, Jamaica, in 1852, but his father brought him to England four years later. Mr. Cowen senior at this time took up the position of treasurer to Her Majesty's Theatre, and after the destruction of that house by fire, he acted in a similar capacity at Drury Lane, under Messrs. Mapleson & Gye's management.*

*Mr. Frederic Cowen thus practically commenced his life amid musical surroundings, and at a very early age gave distinct evidence of the talent which has since developed in so remarkable a degree. In 1865 the young musician, who had been taking lessons from Julius Benedict and Goss proceeded to Leipzig, and entered the Conservatoire, where his masters were Moscheles for pianoforte, Hauptmann for harmony and counterpoint and Reinecke for composition. He subsequently studied at Berlin, where Frederick Kiel taught him composition. In 1869 his first symphony and a concerto for pianoforte and orchestra were successfully produced at St. James's Hall, and the composer's musical reputation was at once established.*

*When I asked Mr. Cowen which of his symphonies had attained most popularity, he promptly replied:*

*"The most popular is the 'Scandinavian,' but I consider No. 5 is the best. It (the 'Scandinavian') was produced in December, 1880, at a concert I gave in London. Richter then performed it in Vienna. Although No. 5 is not so widely known in this country as the 'Scandinavian,' I produced it in Vienna and Leipzig with great success. In 1880 there were very few English symphonies, but nowadays more are being written. People, however, seem to stick to the old ones."*

*"And your cantatas, Mr. Cowen?"*

*"Well, the most popular of these was the 'Rose Maiden,' because it was the easiest and the most melodious. The 'Sleeping Beauty' too, has attained considerable popularity. But I consider the best to be the 'Water Lily,' which I did for the Norwich Festival in 1893."*

*"Then I take it, that the works which give a composer the most pleasure to write do not always attain the greatest popularity?"*

“I think, as a rule, just the reverse is the case, and that is easily accounted for. Sometimes the best works are the most difficult to perform, and this applies especially to choral works. For modern orchestration, considerable financial resources are required as a large orchestra is absolutely essential, and at the present time, although nearly every town of note may have a choral society, only a dozen have the means to take up a big work.”

*“Do you consider, Mr. Cowen, that the love of good music is spreading in England?”*

“Well, that is a vexed question. Certainly, English music is performed a great deal more than it used to be, but I think there is plenty of room for improvement still. Music that aims at a high standard is very seldom remunerative to the composer. The applies the world over and to almost every art except, perhaps, painting. Even here, however, painters will tell you that their best works are not those which fetch the highest prices. In poetry it undoubtedly is so.”

“How do I account for this? Well, as regards music, the reason is to be found in the fact that the field is very limited. Take the symphony for instance. No publisher would pay a good price for a symphony, because there are so few chances of having it performed. Fortunately for me the Scandinavian Symphony was published in Vienna and in consequence, it has gone all through Germany and in fact, all over the Continent. There are, probably, fifty orchestral societies on the Continent to one in England. If a publisher saw his way to sell a hundred full scores of his symphony, he would be much more likely to pay a decent price.”

“It is the same with opera in England, for here the field is very restricted indeed. We have only Sir Augustus Harris and the Carl Rosa Company in the whole of the country. The production of an opera is quite a lottery with us. If it is performed ten times in the season, it is considered an enormous success. On the other hand, if it is a financial loss, the loss may not be due to any lack of artistic merit in the work. A great deal depends on the subject, and on the interpretation; and, unless both are good, the music, though it may be divine, will never carry it through. If a composer is dependent on his art, and has to live on it, his best chance is with comic opera, or with songs. There is no other way open to him. If a comic opera is successful, of course, the composer may derive a large income, because the work may be played for a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred nights.”

*“May I ask, Mr. Cowen, which of your songs you consider to be the best?”*

“Well, the ‘Better Land’ and the ‘Promise of Life’ have been the most popular, but I am bound to say that there are fifty or sixty of my songs which, though comparatively little known, contain some of my best work.”

*In reply to a question respecting the value of musical festivals, Mr. Cowen said:*

“I think musical festivals are undoubtedly productive of much good. The only fault of the festivals of the present day is that they are too strenuous in searching after novelty. A new work is always demanded, and in consequence there is an accumulation of works, some of which die a premature death. But I suppose, here as elsewhere, the rule of the ‘survival of the fittest’ comes into operation. Mind you, I think that the demand for new works is good up to a certain point; but it is carried too far. I do not approve of writing on commission at all, but in these things you can hardly help yourself. I believe in taking time over a work, and then offering it to anyone who cares to buy it. It is not satisfactory for a man to go on year after year producing works without intermission, but he is practically bound to do it. If you stand aside someone else is only too willing to take your place, and you are left out in the cold. I am now writing an opera for Sir Augustus Harris, which will be produced next year, and the moment I have finished it I shall have to commence a work for the Gloucester Festival, whether I like it or not.”

*“What remedy do you propose for this, Mr. Cowen?”*

“My own opinion is that it would be well if every composer had a thousand a year independent of his profession. Of course, it may be urged that a man with a thousand a year would not produce any work at all; but this would not be the case with a true artist. Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, for example, were quite independent of their profession, but they worked hard nevertheless. Mendelssohn, indeed, worked quite as hard as if he had to rely entirely upon his compositions.”

*“You have had considerable experience as a conductor, Mr. Cowen. Do you consider that the members of our orchestras are artists in the real sense of the word?”*

“Certainly I do. Our best instrumentalists are first-rate artists, and the very best readers in the world. One great fault is the want of adequate rehearsal, and in order to remedy the evil, the expenditure of a much larger sum would be necessary, for, naturally, a man cannot afford to give an unlimited number of rehearsals without receiving payment.”

“Get together an orchestra of our best men, and I do not think you could beat it in any part of the world. If you were to give me my choice, however, I would rather have a somewhat inferior orchestra. At the Melbourne Exhibition, where the performers were not individually great artists, we had rehearsals every day for a month, and then we played together for six months consecutively. The result was that we got the men trained to a pitch that would have been impossible in this country under existing circumstances. If rich Englishmen were to spend more money on music, or, if music were supported by the State in some way, a great improvement in our orchestra would be possible. There is some talk now of a sort of a Co-operative Musical Society, in which the performers should share in the profits. Whether this would answer or not, I do not know. Orchestral players abroad can live on much smaller incomes than our people can in England, and this, naturally, gives them an advantage.”

*“Do you consider that State endowments to music would be productive of good?”*

“Undoubtedly. I believe if one great National Institution comprising an Opera, a School of Music, subsidised by the State, and under State control — were established, the result would be eminently satisfactory. There mere fact of giving money would not be sufficient. I think art in this country should be recognised by the nation as it is elsewhere.”

*“You were a pianist, I think, in the early part of your career, Mr. Cowen?”*

“Yes; I appeared in public as a pianist up to the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. I then gave it up because I was very nervous when playing in public, and I never I felt I could do myself justice. I preferred composition, and considered that I was not strong enough to combine the two. I gave my first concert when I was eleven in the little bijou theatre inside Her Majesty’s Theatre. The programme included

|                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Prelude and Fugue                    | Bach         |
| Studies                              | Henselt      |
| Prelude and Fugue (E minor)          | Mendelssohn  |
| Soirées de Pausilippe                | Thalberg     |
| Fantasia ‘Erin’                      | Benedict     |
| Lied ohne Worte [Song without Words] | F. H. Cowen” |

*“And you commenced composing at an early age?”*

“Yes; my career as a composer commenced at the age of six. When I was eight years old, I wrote an opera ‘Garibaldi; or, The Rival Patriots,’ which was performed by my brothers and sisters, the libretto having been written by one of my cousins.”

*And Mr. Cowen smiled at the recollection of his early ventures, as I rose to take my leave. In the time which he can spare to devote to recreation, Mr. Cowen delights to participate in outdoor exercises. He is an energetic mountaineer, and can tell many excellent stories of this exciting pursuit. A chat with him is rendered all the more pleasant by the fact that he is endowed with that keen sense of humour which is invaluable to every member of society, and especially to a public man.*

INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 5  
MR. AUGUST MANNS [Conductor, 1825-1907]  
Interview by Flora Klickmann

*The veteran musician whose name is so closely associated with the Crystal Palace, was born at Stolzenburg, in Pomerania, in 1825. He was the son of a glass-blower, and he learnt the violin, clarionet, and flute from a local musician, subsequently being articled to Urban, the town musician of Elbing. Mr. Manns played regularly in the orchestra at that town, and presently entered a regimental band, at Dantzig, as first clarionet, at the same time filling an engagement as first violin at the theatre.*

*In 1848, his regiment being ordered to Posen, Mr. Manns' ability attracted the attention of Wieprecht, who obtained him an appointment in Gungl's orchestra at Berlin, and after holding this for a time he became solo violinist and conductor at Kroll's gardens, in the same city. In 1851, Mr. Manns was appointed bandmaster of one of the finest infantry regiments in Germany, and during his tenure of the post he materially improved the condition of the music, and even arranged the Beethoven symphonies for the band. Three years later, Mr. Manns became assistant conductor of the Crystal Palace band, which then consisted of wind instruments only. He, however, resigned the position in the same year, but on October 14, 1855, he was engaged as conductor at the Palace. The band, in those days, performed in the centre transept only. Mr. Manns gradually worked a reformation in the musical arrangements, beginning by introducing a string quartette into the band, and eventually organising a complete orchestra.*

*Mr. Manns sometimes accepts engagements outside the Crystal Palace. He is conductor of the Handel Society, and has also conducted the Glasgow Choral Union. During fifteen successive years he conducted between thirty and forty concerts each season in Scotland, but as the season there now extends to twenty-two weeks he has found it impossible to continue the work.*

*When I entered Mr. Manns' sanctum in the Crystal Palace, for the purpose of interviewing him, I found him literally surrounded by scores. In addition to the shelves filled with these valuable treasures that completely occupy one side of the room, a profusion of music was all about the place, his writing table was piled with it, and Full Scores were even in the back of the arm-chair in which he was sitting!*

*"Will you tell me how you first started the classical concerts, now so famous?" I asked.*

“It came about in this way. In 1855, when I began to conduct the military band here, I introduced, occasionally, excerpts from the great masters, and sandwiched them between the light pieces. But the Directors would have none of it, and were altogether so averse to anything of the kind that, in the spring of 1856, I had to agree to discontinue the practice. The only days on which I was allowed to include anything from classical works were Fridays. But gradually the regular frequenters of the place noticed that on Fridays they had a different class of music to that performed on other days, and letters came in asking why it was that they could not have good music on the half-crown days too, until at last these letters coming before the Directors, they gave in to me; and so we have gone on from less to more.”

*“But how was it you so firmly believed that classical music would eventually win the day?”*

“Because I knew it was the best music, and that it contained those indefinable elements which always make their way direct to people’s hearts, and appeal to their higher natures.”

*“Do you consider the English are behind foreigners in their appreciation of music, as is usually said?”*

“They were at one time, but that was not their fault. Forty years ago, musical students here had practically no advantages whatever. Concerts were few and expensive. The Italian Opera reigned supreme. Sterndale Bennett was almost the only English composer who was generally acknowledged, and even he had difficulty in getting his orchestral works performed. What chance had anyone, when compared with the facilities for listening to good music which Germany presented? Now everything is different. Look at the Colleges, see the academical training students can now obtain in London, and other large towns, and then it is no longer surprising that the audiences of the present day are highly educated, and able to understand and enjoy the finest masterpieces.”

*“Which composer do you find the most popular at your concerts?” I asked. “Mendelssohn?”*

“Not at all. Beethoven, without doubt, stands first; while Wagner is the best draw for special occasions. Yet there is a never ceasing demand for everything that is good. We give the whole of Beethoven’s nine Symphonies more than once in the course of the year; the band play them now without a rehearsal. We also give twenty of Haydn’s Symphonies, seven of Mozart’s, Mendelssohn’s four, Schumann’s four, and two of Schubert’s, and I cannot tell you how many concerti and overtures. Still, Beethoven is the favourite.”

*“I have heard it remarked that English people cannot appreciate Wagner,” I hazarded.*

“But that is a great mistake. I think they can. Of course his music is difficult, and requires to be well played; it also necessitates an increased orchestra; but I find the people enjoy it. The brilliant colouring — so to speak—attracts them. At any rate, my experience is that a Wagner concert always draws a full hall.”

*“How about Handel? Are the Triennial Festivals as popular as ever?”*

“Yes,” he replied. “I have seen no falling off in interest yet. Personally I consider that the influence of Handel has been, more than anything else, the means of fostering and cultivating music in this country. I know some people hold a contrary opinion. Nevertheless, I feel convinced that Handel has had a more beneficial effect than any other composer on the English people. If you want to judge whether a people are musical or not, don’t look at their concerts, look at their homes. See the kind of music indulged in there. Now Handel has been the means of bringing good music right into the homes. The choral societies about the country have studied his works more than those of any other composer, and the choral societies are not made up of professionals, but of all classes and conditions of people. Thus it is Handel who has universally trained the people, and without him I am certain they would not be what they are to-day.”

*“From an artistic standpoint, do you prefer his works done on the colossal scale of the Festivals, or on the smaller scale of an average concert room?”*

“There is no doubt that much more artistic results can be produced by a smaller body of executants,” he replied thoughtfully. “But there is one important matter of which one must not lose sight. The educated musician, the person who would be the most susceptible to the more artistic results and alive to every minute detail, seldom goes to hear Handel. He prefers Beethoven, or Brahms, and the progressive men. Whereas the stupendous volume of sound at a Handel Festival and the simple grandeur of the chords appeal to the ordinary amateur in a way that baffles description. He cannot explain why he enjoys the broad massiveness of it; he simply remembers it afterwards, and feels that he has been in the presence of a mysterious and inspiring ‘something.’ Therefore I advocate Handel’s works being given on a large scale.”

*“Is the Handel Festival Choir the largest in the world?” I asked.*

“Yes; it consists of over 3,000 voices. I have conducted these festivals, as you know, ever since 1883. The largest orchestra I ever conducted was, I think, that of the last Handel Festival, comprising, as it did, 513 performers. But this number was surpassed by the combination band, at the visit of the Russian Emperor, Alexander II, on May 16th, 1874, which consisted of eleven full military bands, besides a string orchestra of 200 performers, making a total of about 700 instrumentalists.”

*From Beethoven, Wagner, and Handel, we wandered to Schubert; indeed it would be well-nigh impossible to keep off that name when talking with the musician who has practically planted Schubert in this country. "Did the public readily take to his works?" I inquired.*

"Yes; they quickly met with a hearty reception," he replied. "His music is of the kind that naturally appeals at once to the hearer. He avoids elaborate counterpoint and intricate forms, and captivates at once with his beautiful melodies and rich harmonies. Schumann, on the other hand, is much more difficult to understand; it takes time for an audience to adequately comprehend him."

*"Why is it that we never hear the other Schubert Symphonies?"*

"I have given the others, but they are not distinctly Schubertian in character. He had not felt his feet when he wrote them; consequently they can in no way be compared with the B minor and the C major."

"I think that a large majority of the compositions of Franz Schubert, and the most prominent composers since Mendelssohn's death, which are now repertoire-pieces of all the large concert societies in Great Britain, were introduced for the first time at the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts. The list of native composers whose works were occasionally introduced at high-class concerts about a generation ago, comprised barely a dozen of names; now it has grown to the respectable number of eighty, as shown by the catalogue of the music performed at the Saturday Concerts within the last thirty years or so. Sullivan, Mackenzie, Cowen, Stanford, Parry, Hamish MacCunn, Wingham, and about seventy others have received 'debut-baptism' under my care."

*"Is there a constant craving on the part of the public for new works?"*

"To a certain extent, yes. Those who regularly attend our concerts like to hear fresh things — as I do myself; but never at a sacrifice of the old friends. The great masters always remain first and foremost in the estimation of the audience. And of course it could hardly be otherwise; their works are for all time and all people."

*"With regard to soloists at your orchestral concerts: which are in greater demand, vocalists or instrumentalists?"*

"Vocalists. It even now takes an exceptional audience to enjoy a concert at which no vocalist appears. This is the last remnant of ancient prejudice. At one time a 'concert' meant 'singing.' Often and often in the old days, when I passed through the crowd, I heard this question: 'Will there be a concert to-day?' And the reply would frequently be, 'No, but the band will play.' They could not understand a concert without singing."

*“Speaking of the band, is there an increasing demand for good orchestral players or the reverse?”*

*“There is no lack of good strings, but there is a great opening for good wood-wind and brass players, especially principals.”*

*“And as to conductors themselves: are they born, or is theirs an art that can, and should, be studied?”*

*“The art of conducting should be studied, though a conductor requires certain qualities to start with.”*

*And here I was much impressed with the totally unconscious way the musician actually described himself as he continued:*

*“A conductor must be a man of firm will and strong personality, yet must possess great tact, and be polite and courteous. The strong-willed man who rides roughshod over everybody’s feelings will soon come to grief with his band. In addition to these qualifications he must have his musical instincts very highly developed; he should also understand the mechanism and capabilities of the various instruments; and — oh, a conductor *does* need to be born, I am sure, but some are born, yet have no chance of getting any further. I myself suggested to Sir George Grove that a class should be formed at the Royal College for the special training of conductors. I think something ought to be done.”*

*“And now to a much discussed question. Do you advocate composers conducting their own works?”*

*“Oh, yes, when they have ability and experience I certainly do.”*

*Mr. Manns spoke warmly of Sir Arthur Sullivan’s work.*

*“His music,” he said, “is unequalled for aesthetic grace, beautiful melody, and a sense of pleasing rhythm. I know he spends a good deal of work over operas, but there is so little incentive to a man to write orchestral music pure and simple. There is no market for it. Publishers will not buy it, and so many young composers have their works performed at the Crystal Palace, and then they are heard of no more. They cannot keep on sending MS. parts all over the country. Why even Sullivan’s ‘In Memoriam’ was not published till a few years ago.”*

*“By the way, how came you to be so musical, Mr. Manns?” I suddenly asked, wondering what assistance he himself had had in his very early days.*

“My father used to play the violin — not remarkably well, but in tune. He only played dances, and *volkslieder*, and airs that he heard, but we used to sit and watch him, with our mouths open, and think how wonderful it was. Every evening when he came in from his work, he would take down the violin that was hanging on the wall and amuse himself with it. Then we all wanted to play, and one by one, as we grew old enough, we tried some instrument. I began on a small flute. You see we just grew up with the music.”

*“Will you tell me, in conclusion, what you think of the future of music in England?”*

“I think that the outlook is most brilliant. I believe that in the next generation England will accomplish things as great as any that have been known in the world of music, perhaps even greater. We are more religious in spirit, more conservative, more inspired by good than any other nation, and Art flourishes in such a soil. We are progressing by most rapid strides; there is plenty of material here, it only wants more cultivation and opportunity. I think wonderful things are in store for this land — my country, by the way. Do you know I am an Englishman, now?” he added. “Yes; I am naturalised. I have in my possession an important document from Mr. Asquith certifying to my citizenship.”

*Mr. Manns thinks that orchestral music in the provinces owes a large debt to Sir Charles Hallé. He considers, too, that every town ought to have a permanent orchestra, and, in spite of the financial difficulties standing in the way, he holds the opinion that in the course of time this will be an accomplished fact.*

INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 6  
SIR JOSEPH BARNBY [Composer and Conductor, 1838-1896]  
Interview by John Evans Woolcott

*Sir Joseph Barnby is unquestionably one of the hardest workers in the musical world. His capacity for work is extraordinary, and yet in the midst of his arduous tasks and serious responsibilities, the famous musician is ever ready to give a cheery word of encouragement to those in need of encouragement, or of kindly counsel to any who seek his advice. Sir Joseph is fortunate in being wedded to a lady who is thoroughly in sympathy with his aims and aspirations, and in being the father of children who are his pride and delight. Lady Barnby is one of the most charming of hostesses, and Sir Joseph must be helped in no small degree in his musical work by the happiness of his home life.*

*"Your duties at the Guildhall School are a great strain on your mental and physical resources," I observed, when I had cornered Sir Joseph for interviewing purposes.*

*"The pupils at the Guildhall number 3,700, and," said Sir Joseph, with a smile, "most of them have parents, as the unfortunate principal knows to his cost. An incredible number of them want to see me, and to tell me the history of their daughter from her birth; when she first showed signs of the brilliant talent which they are convinced she possesses, and what they believe the future has in store for her. I have frequently to cut the interesting story short, and, would you believe it? some of them actually come a second time in order to resume the interesting narrative!"*

*"Most of the girls," continued Sir Joseph, thoughtfully, "tell me all their troubles, and very sad are the tales of sorrow and struggles I have occasionally to hear. There are times indeed when one's task is hard, when it is painful to be compelled to say what honesty compels one to say. Picture to yourself a poor widow coming to me with an anxious, careworn face, and telling me that she has made great sacrifices in order to pay her daughter's fees at the school, in the hope that the girl may, by teaching or performing, aid in keeping the wolf from the door. Imagine her asking me whether the time has now arrived when her daughter can go out into the world and earn money by her music; and then imagine my feelings when, after hearing the daughter play, I am compelled to tell the heartbroken mother that her daughter has no talent, and never can be a musician."*

*The responsibility for every branch of the Guildhall School of Music rests entirely on the shoulders of the principal. In the not distant future, if the School continue to increase in numbers, as there is no reason to doubt will be the case, a change in the system of administration will, according to Sir Joseph, be inevitable. It will be necessary to appoint heads of departments, responsible for the various branches of music taught, the principal, of course, supervising the whole.*

*At present, in addition to having charge of the various departments of the school, Sir Joseph has to take in hand an enormous number of examinations. Sometimes he is engaged in examining for ten days in succession, all his other work remaining at a standstill meanwhile. The pressure when the examinations are over is thus of the most trying character. In reply to my request that he should give me a brief sketch of his musical life, Sir Joseph said:*

“I was born at York, and as a boy was a chorister in York Cathedral. I remember so well, by the way, singing ‘I Know that my Redeemer Liveth’ on the day of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington. The place was crowded, and immediately this portion of the service commenced those of the congregation who had been standing near the altar came down close to where the choir sat, and so tightly were they packed that, literally, it would have been possible to walk on their heads. I remember now that I had no tremor, no feeling of nervousness of any kind, though the solo is a most trying one.”

“When I was about fifteen my voice broke, and then I came up to the Royal Academy of Music, where I studied for two or three years. While at the Academy I competed for the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and Arthur Sullivan and I, who had been selected out of thirty-nine competitors, ran a dead heat. We were accordingly tried again, and this time Sullivan proved successful.”

*“And after leaving the Academy what was your next step?”*

“I returned to York, but very soon came to the conclusion that I would not remain there. So I came back to London, and shortly afterwards was appointed organist of St. Andrew’s, Wells Street. Here I commenced giving Gounod’s music with orchestral accompaniment. It was the first time anything of the kind had been done in England, apart, of course, from the old-fashioned village choirs, with their bassoon, double bass, and violin. Then I was appointed musical adviser to Messrs. Novello, a position which I retained for fifteen years. During the time I was with them I started a musical society, known as the Barnby Choir, giving concerts first at St. James’s Hall and afterwards at Exeter Hall.”

“At length, upon the return of Gounod, the first conductor of the Albert Hall concerts, to Paris, there was a vacancy at the Albert Hall, and I received the appointment; meanwhile I had left St. Andrew’s, Wells Street, for St. Anne’s, Soho. In 1875 I was offered the position of precentor [choir leader] and musical instructor at Eton College, which I accepted, retaining, however, my work at St. Anne’s, and the Albert Hall. Then, in 1892, I exchanged Eton for the Guildhall School. I was knighted in the same year, and in 1894 the Duke of Saxe-Coburg bestowed on me the Coburg Order. There, I think that’s a brief outline of my career.”

*“You must find the work at the Guildhall a great contrast to that you carried on at Eton?” I interposed.*

“Yes; at Eton music could only be proceeded with during play hours, but really, considering this, I must say the boys took very kindly to it. Only twenty-five years have passed since music began to be regarded as an essential part of the curriculum, and yet, in a very short time, I had 250 out of the 900 boys taking lessons. During the whole of the time I was at Eton I had the captain of the eleven and the captain of the boats in my musical society, and the effect of this was very great, for I needn’t tell you that these two gentlemen are invariably the most important persons in the school.”

“The main difficulty, of course, was that the boys were not obliged to learn music, so one had no hold on them. They generally took more kindly to songs of the music-hall type and to light waltzes than to music of any great value; and it was impossible to bring pressure to bear upon them as they could simply retaliate by discontinuing their musical studies.”

“I remember,” continued Sir Joseph, “a humorous incident at Eton. There was a lad in the College who was supposed to have talent as a composer. One day a master happening to hear a discordant noise proceeded to investigate the source, whereupon he found this lad in the centre of a crowd of small boys, directing them in what purported to be a musical performance. As the lad was old enough to know better, the master gave him a good wiggling before the smaller boys, to his great discomfiture. Shortly afterwards the master came to me and said, in a tone of gratification, ‘You know young Blank? Well, he has written a Dead March and dedicated it to me.’ I burst into laughter at once, and then it dawned on the master that this was the youth’s subtle method of obtaining revenge for the wiggling he had received. The same rising composer wrote an Oratorio, entitled ‘David,’ in which there was a solo for the hero, commencing ‘Come Out, you Cad, and Fight!’”

*Sir Joseph has many entertaining reminiscences of Eton. At the time Mr. Warr, who was a great friend of the musician’s, was appointed head-master, he called on Sir Joseph, and they went out for a walk together. In the course of the walk Sir Joseph said to his friend,*

“By the way, I knew a long time ago that you would be head-master.” “What do you mean?” was the reply. “That I had it from your own mouth.” “Explain yourself,” said Mr. Warr. “Why, don’t you remember,” observed Sir Joseph, “preaching in chapel three years ago, and looking at Hornby, who was then head-master, as you gave out the text, ‘Occupy till I come’?” His companion burst into a laugh, and then, turning grave, remarked, “I remember preaching from that text well. And do you know who gave me the text? It was our dear old friend Pearson.” The Pearson in question was the well-known Canon of Windsor.

*Sir Joseph had a very interesting experience of Kingsley, for whose memory he has the highest regard.*

“I was staying with my brother in the Cloisters at Westminster,” he remarked, “at the time Kingsley was appointed Canon of Westminster. One day, ‘Canon Kingsley’ was announced, and that eminent preacher and writer rushed into the room, and seizing me warmly by the hand, said, ‘Now I have kept my word. I always declared that one of the first things I would do when I came to London would be to make the acquaintance of Barnby in E [key of well-known chant by Barnby].’”

“You see that piece of china?” continued Sir Joseph, pointing to a piece of old china standing on a cabinet in his study. “Well, that was given me by Kingsley, when I was staying with him at Eversley. I can see him now as he welcomed me to his house. He wore high-lows, ribbed stockings, velveteen knickerbockers, and a velveteen coat, with its pockets bulging out, as if they had been the receptacle of many a hare or rabbit. There was a collection of old china in the room which I admired, my fancy being especially taken by one curious-looking piece. I asked Kingsley what it was, but he could give me no information. At length his wife came into the room, whereupon Kingsley quietly said, ‘My dear, Mr. Barnby admires that piece of china; you’ll see it is put into his portmanteau.’ I protested in the most emphatic manner, but was overborne, and that is the piece of china I brought from Eversley.”

*Conversing on church matters, I ventured, “I take it, Sir Joseph, you have seen a striking change in church music of late years?”*

“The change is marvellous. When I first became organist of St. Andrew’s, Wells Street, cathedral music in England was at a low ebb. I was present at a service in St. Paul’s Cathedral many years ago, when there were only two altos in the choir, and one of them sat down, so that the service was left to one alto and a number of boys. I can confidently say that the services at St. Andrew’s, Wells Street, woke up the whole of England.”

“In 1870 I made a proposal to Dean Stanley to have a performance of Bach’s ‘Passion’ music in Westminster Abbey, with a full orchestra and a choir of 500 voices, as an integral portion of the service. Afterwards the small ‘Passion’ of Bach was given regularly at St. Anne’s, Soho, during Lent, and it seemed to me to be the nearest approach to the Oberammergau Passion Play ever done in this country. The singers kept their seats, while the Christus got up and sang his words, the Pilate and the various representatives of the other characters rising in their turn to sing their parts.”

*As a conductor Sir Joseph has the happy faculty inspiring the performers with confidence in him and in themselves. He knows how to say the right thing at the right time. When he took his place at the conductor's desk at the Cardiff Festival, he made a witty little speech which at once established pleasant relations between him and his chorus.*

"I am not an ogre," said the conductor. "I realise how absolutely essential it is that I should not only gain your esteem but your affection; let me say the esteem of the basses and the tenors, and the affection of the ladies."

*This little sally evoked hearty laughter and produced a most happy effect. Here is another characteristic incident which occurred at Cardiff. The choir on one occasion commenced to sing "Thanks be to God" in a somewhat sluggish fashion.*

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried the conductor, rapping his desk, "you've been without water for three years. Now you've got to show your gratitude." And they did.

"In conducting," said Sir Joseph to me, "I find that a word will sometimes do more than a whole sentence. For instance, if I want the orchestra to strike hard, I say 'Slog!' Again, when I say that a chorus must go 'merrily' or 'snappily,' my people know exactly what I mean. Or in the case of a smooth, sinister phrase, I say I want it done in a 'slimy' fashion, and that conveys my meaning better than a whole string of explanations. The great thing is to make the performers understand that the marks of expression are but the outward and visible signs of an inward and musical grace — that when a conductor marks a crescendo he means not merely an increase in the volume of sound, but an increase in intensity of feeling. I try to make my choir *feel* what they are playing, for that is the secret of faithful interpretation."

*"And how, in your opinion, do our choirs and bands stand compared with those of other countries?"*

"As regards choirs we lead the world. Gounod, Hiller, and other great foreign authorities have admitted that. But with our orchestras we have a great deal to do yet before we get up to the standard of the continent. We want the opera developed in England. Why, if we had an opera house in London, like that at Frankfort, for instance, it would be one of the sights of the Metropolis. In Germany every town has not only its orchestra but its opera; and while at a leading watering place like Brighton we can only hear an incomplete band, at every German Kursaal they play the finest works of Wagner, in the finest style, too."

"I suppose the fact is the faculty of appreciation has lain dormant so long that many people have got out of the way of wanting good orchestral music. And certainly the lack of intellectual recreation in our country and cathedral towns is deplorable."

*“But do you not consider that the outlook is hopeful?”*

“Yes, decidedly hopeful. Sir Charles Hallé has helped considerably by taking his Manchester band from place to place and letting people know what a good performance really means. The result is that many towns have got up good bands of their own. Manns, Von Büllow, and others have also done good work, and I feel convinced that what we are doing now will bear fruit in the next generation.”

“Talking about orchestras,” continued Sir Joseph, “it is rather striking that while five-and-twenty years ago such a thing as a girl putting a violin to her shoulder was never seen, lady violinists are now to be found in swarms all over the country. A girl, with her sensitive, delicate nervous system has proved to be the very person for such a sensitive, delicate instrument as the violin; and the result of this, to my thinking, will be that in the course of time we shall have local orchestras as numerous as local choirs are now. Of course I cannot imagine that girls will remain satisfied with playing little pieces in their own or their friends’ drawing-rooms. They are naturally gregarious, and they will certainly form amateur orchestras. For remember, not only have they taken kindly to the violin, but it is not at all uncommon to see girls nowadays embracing cellos and even double-basses.”

*Sir Joseph, in discussing English composers, held strongly that the renaissance of composition in England is one of the most remarkable features in the advance of music.*

“But it becomes a question,” he added, “where our composers are going to land themselves. Sullivan, of course, has done his work in a straightforward way, and gained all the success he could have hoped for. With regard, however, to men bitten with a desire to produce advanced music, the result so far has been scarcely so satisfactory.”

*“Can you tell me,” said I at length, “the secret of your ability to get through so much trying work?”*

“Well, like Abraham Lincoln, I keep ‘pegging away.’ I am not devoted to music alone, I am thankful to say. I care for architecture, sculpture, painting, and the applied arts. It is my delight to surround myself with beautiful things; I don’t think anyone enjoys them more than I do. And I am essentially an optimist, taking a cheerful view of life. When I look around me in my home I feel the utmost gratitude to Providence for having given me such a wife and such children. Another secret of any success I have attained is the fact that I have taken an intense interest in whatever I have had in hand without looking forward to the pecuniary result. Indeed, the pleasure I get out of my work is the main-spring of all my exertions.”

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 7

M. [MONSIEUR IGNACY JAN] PADEREWSKI [Pianist and Composer 1860-1941]

Interview by John Evans Woolcott

*While M. Paderewski is one of the most interesting of living musicians, he is none the less interesting as a man. A brilliant conversationalist, endowed with a ready wit and a keen sense of humour, the famous pianist is singularly modest in his demeanour and generous of heart. His vivacity is remarkable, and if the multitudes who have been charmed by the display of his marvellous gifts had the opportunity of knowing him in private life, their admiration of the man would equal their appreciation of the musician.*

*M. Paderewski was born at Kurylowka in the province of Podolia. His father, a landowner, had no musical tastes, but his mother was devoted to the art. When still very young it became necessary for him to go out into the world to develop his musical talents, and at the age of twelve we find him at the Warsaw Conservatoire, where he studied harmony and counterpoint under Roguski, at the same time taking lessons on the piano. When he was sixteen he made a tour of Russia, playing his own compositions, as well as the compositions of others, which he rendered in a style distinctly his own. During this tour he gained valuable experience by watching his audiences, and also had an opportunity of acquiring the characteristic intonations of every dialect, and the melody of the folk-song.*

*M. Paderewski gave me these particulars of the early portion of his famous career when I met him during his recent visit to London.*

*“After this,” he continued, “I returned to the Conservatoire at Warsaw, and by the wish of my father continued my studies. Six months later I received my diploma, and when I was eighteen I was appointed a professor. In those days I was a diligent student of literature, reading hard at night after my day’s teaching was over. I accustomed myself so thoroughly to late hours that I am even now a bad sleeper and frequently suffer from insomnia.”*

*While he was at Warsaw M. Paderewski included amongst his most intimate friends Professor Chalubinski, who was not only an eminent physician but one of Poland’s greatest intellects. It may be said that M. Paderewski himself is an accomplished linguist, speaking a number of languages. The young musician married when he was nineteen, and a year later he was plunged into despair by the loss of his wife. He then threw himself passionately into music and resolved to devote his whole life to his art.*

*From Warsaw M. Paderewski went to Berlin, where he studied composition with Kiel and Urban. His next step was to proceed to Strasburg. Here he was appointed a Professor of the Strasburg Conservatoire, and played in public from time to time.*

*It was in 1886 that he decided to become a virtuoso, and with that end in view he worked for some time with Leschetizky.*

“To him,” said M. Paderewski, “I owe to a large extent what finish I possess in piano playing.”

*“How many hours a day do you practise?” I asked, presently.*

“I have practised as long as eighteen hours at a stretch; and during my visit to America, when I had to play seven programmes in one week, I frequently put in eight or ten hours a day. My usual period of practice is, however, about four hours a day.”

*M. Paderewski made his debut as a virtuoso in Vienna in 1887, and from that time his career has been crowned with success. His first appearance in England was at St. James’s Hall, in May, 1890, and sixteen months later he made his bow to an American audience in New York.*

*In reply to my question as to his compositions, M. Paderewski observed,*

“I commenced composing when I was nine, but I did not publish anything until I had reached the age of seventeen. In 1882 I published several of my works, amongst them being a Minuet. Then came the ‘Chants du Voyageur,’ ‘Mélodie,’ ‘Légende,’ ‘Concerto for piano and Orchestra,’ the ‘Minuet in G,’ and the ‘Polish Fantasia.’ The last named I played in public for the first time at the Norwich Festival in 1893. Since then I have played it at the Philharmonic Society’s Concert, at the Henschel Symphony Concerts, at Sir Charles Hallé’s Concerts in Manchester, at the Aix-la-Chapelle Musical Festival, at the Royal Opera, Dresden, and at the Lamoureux Concerts in Paris.”

*“Is it the case that you first appeared in Paris at M. Munkacsy’s?”*

“No; the great painter invited me to his house and I accepted his invitation, but this was two years after I had made my debut in Paris.”

*“Where was it that you appeared first in the French capital?”*

“I went to Paris in 1888, and decided to give a recital at Erard’s. The recital was very poorly attended, for I had few acquaintances apart from the Polish colony and a number of friends from Strasburg. Among the musicians in the audience, however, were Lamoureux and Colonne, and after they had heard the first part of my recital both asked me to play with their orchestra. As Lamoureux came first I accepted his proposal, and four days later I had an opportunity of playing before an audience of 3,000 people. I am told that my appearance on that occasion was a successful one; and in the following year I played with Lamoureux several times as well as at the Conservatoire. It is considered a great honour to be asked to appear at the Conservatoire, and a foreigner is very seldom invited to play there. After this I had many private as well as public engagements offered me, but nowadays it is seldom that I am able to accept a private engagement.”

“Among the many statements attributed to me,” continued M. Paderewski, “is one to the effect that the only musical people in the world are the Jews and the gipsies. I never said that. What I did say was that the Jews and gipsies have a most remarkable natural instinct for music, which is quite a different thing. In my own country I have sat at the piano and played a piece through, and a band composed of gipsies has accompanied me throughout, although they had not heard the piece before. They fell in instinctively with the harmonies, and after a little wavering in the first two or three bars, they proceeded without hesitation. I have on several occasions seen the same thing occur in the case of other artists in Hungary and Galicia.”

*“And do you consider, M. Paderewski, that we English are a musical people?”*

“Yes, but not by nature as some other nations are. In this country musical proficiency is the result of culture. I like England very much; I find my work here most charming. Indeed, I like all the English-speaking peoples; they are so hospitable and so desirous of making one feel thoroughly at home.”

*“Your recollections of America are then, I take it, very pleasant?”*

“Yes; but the distances I had to travel were so great and the work so hard that my capacity for receiving impressions was to a certain extent numbed. I may say, however, that it is a great mistake for anyone to imagine that the Americans are backward in art. I was surprised to find that even in the small cities audiences applauded the works of Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, and other classical music which appealed to the intellect. One of my greatest engagements in America was to play with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Nikisch. This orchestra is unquestionably one of the finest in the world. There are excellent classical concerts given in the United States, and many novelties are performed in New York before they are heard in the principal cities of Europe.”

*The extraordinary statements that have from time to time been circulated respecting M. Paderewski would fill volumes, and they afford the famous pianist endless amusement, for he is the embodiment of good humour. In the course of conversation on the peculiar epistles he has received during his career, M. Paderewski observed,*

“Some time back, while I was travelling in England, a number of letters reached me from the proprietor of a circus. The first ran something like this: ‘My dear Paderewski, why don’t you come? Why don’t you keep your engagement? You are engaged to appear at my circus at Warrington with a dancing bear. The public are very disappointed because you do not come.’ As this appeal elicited no response, the energetic circus proprietor forwarded me a printed form of contract, in which it was set out in writing that ‘Paderewski is engaged to appear with a dancing bear for £10 a week. No play, no pay.’”

*It appears that there is a circus performer in existence who styles himself Paderewski. When M. Paderewski's secretary enquired of this gentleman why he had assumed the pianist's name, he replied that he had the right to assume any name he pleased. "It isn't worth making a fuss about," he added, confidentially. "I shall be a good advertisement for M. Paderewski."*

*M. Paderewski tells an interesting story of an experience which befell him during a recent visit to Bristol. I will give it as nearly as possible in his own words.*

"One day I received a letter from a lady, who said she had an invalid friend who was very anxious to hear me play, but could not possibly attend a public recital. 'My friend,' she added, 'would come anywhere you like to name to hear you play privately. As we are not rich we cannot afford a high fee, but we shall be happy to pay you half a guinea for your loss of time.' I asked my secretary, Mr. Gorlitz, to write and invite the lady to come to the hotel the next morning. She came, and I played five or six pieces to her. She was delighted and thanked me heartily. At the close, to my surprise, her companion offered me ten and sixpence, upon which I said, 'No, thank you, madam; it has been a great pleasure to me to play to you.'"

*Wonderful to relate, certain Paris journals got hold of a perverted version of this story, in which M. Paderewski's extreme good nature was represented as rudeness; and the editors of these papers solemnly advised the musician to avoid such behaviour in future.*

In talking over the matter, M. Paderewski remarked to me with emphasis, "I assure you nothing was further from my mind than to ridicule those ladies. My only desire was to gratify the wish of the invalid who was so anxious to hear me play."

*It was an American lady, by the way, who, after M. Paderewski had good-humouredly complied with her request for his autograph, pulled out a bundle of five-dollar bills, and anxiously enquired "How much?" Such incidents as this amuse the famous pianist, but of a more troublesome nature are the applications for pecuniary help with which he is inundated, thanks to the reputation for generosity which he has deservedly acquired. If all the riches of the Rothschilds were at his command he would be unable to satisfy the claims which the post brings him during a single month's sojourn in England.*

*M. Paderewski's favourite recreations are croquet, swimming, and billiards. He is a capital pool player, and in billiards he finds a healthy exercise which, after a hard day's work at music is peculiarly restful to the brain.*

"I like your wonderful STRAND MUSICAL MAGAZINE," said M. Paderewski, as we parted, "and I hope it will continue to have the great success it deserves."

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 8

M. [MONSIEUR CHARLES LOUIS] AMBROISE THOMAS [Composer, 1811-1896]

Interview at his residence in Paris by Jean Bernac

*At the time when the Paris Conservatoire and the French Institute are celebrating their centenary, an interview with the Director of the one and the President of the other is of special interest. M. Ambroise Thomas, the illustrious master who combines these two exalted functions, has reached the age of eighty-four, and yet he still presides over the musical competitions with a courage that commands admiration.*

*Ambroise Thomas, whose "Hamlet" is to be given at the opera, when Madame Melba returns from America, is the only composer who has assisted in the flesh at the 1,000th representation of one of his own works. Gounod died shortly before a similar representation, and even then it was the author of "Mignon" [Ambroise Thomas] who wrote a suitable piece for the apotheosis of his old friend on the occasion of the great jubilee of "Faust."*

"I have lived too long, you see," said M. Thomas to me with a smile; "not that I have reason to complain of my existence, since my life, contrasted with that of many composers, has been pleasant on the whole. Fortune has treated me with clemency. Arriving in Paris in 1828 from Metz, where I was born, I entered the Conservatoire, then under the direction of Cherubini. My father was a music-master, and he had taught me the piano and the violin."

"I would have studied both instruments, but I had to make a choice of one or the other, according to the rules of the Conservatoire, which forbid a pupil to attend two classes of instrumental music. I therefore chose the piano, believing it to be more materially helpful to the composer. Zimmermann directed the pianoforte class, and in the year following my entry I carried off my first prize. I then studied harmony and accompaniment with Dourten, counterpoint with Barbereau, and composition with Lesueur. Successively I obtained in 1830 and 1832 first prizes for harmony and musical composition. Then as soon as I gained the Prix de Rome I left for Italy."

"In those days the students at the Villa Medici were obliged to send a religious composition as a contribution from the Eternal city during their first year. The second one had to be a purely dramatic production. I therefore wrote a Requiem mass, which formed, as it were the first landmark in my career as a composer."

*Whilst M. Thomas was dealing with his recollections of the School in Rome, I asked him if this institution is still a useful one, taking into account the wave which is passing over the province of music.*

“I do not deny,” he replied, “that Italian music is no longer in accordance with the taste of the day, and I recognise fully that since Verdi’s time it has fallen considerably. But students now only remain two years in Rome, and can still be inspired by the beauty that surrounds them even if the Italian school of music no longer directs them. The Villa Medici is naturally denuded of its ancient splendour, but although it may sound strangely contradictory, it is excellent for the development of the taste of our pupils and maintains its level. Further in the speech that I shall deliver at the centenary, I shall bid our young people beware of those who pretend that discipline arrests the development and manifestation of genius. To-day, a *parti-pris* [pre-conceived opinion] exists among certain individuals to disparage the teachings that have hitherto formed so many generations of artists.”

“I do not wish,” continued M. Thomas, “to appear opposed to modern music, only I do not like imitators of the German school, that is all. There is too much nebulous philosophy and not sufficient inspiration. I have been too delightfully soothed by those I call my idols — Bach, Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Weber, and Mendelssohn — ever to change my mind. Mendelssohn, marvellous musician as he was, is unjustly neglected nowadays.”

“New currents are established in France, but time will put things in their right places again. We are actually surrounded by Germanism. Wagner? A great musician, a great intellect, but too German — for us. His subjects are puerile and, I am not afraid to add, tedious; at least all those that are derived from the Scandinavian mythology.”

“The length of the themes is insupportable. Further, the Germans have no measure in their time, and even in their symphonic music they manage to provoke the same feeling of weariness. When the situation is a beautiful one, I can understand its amplification, but the great principles of art are immutable; if the details are modified the architecture of music remains the same. Even in the literature of our Teutonic neighbours this prolixity is equally manifest. For instance, I have tried, times out of number, to finish the whole of Goethe’s ‘Faust,’ and I have never been able to manage it. The second part has always baffled me despite my resolutions. Shakespeare, who combines everything, and with whom I have lived my whole life, is not altogether free from obscurity. No, our Latin genius has its own essence, and surrounded as we are by the Teutonic element, it adds piquancy to the situation to observe that our dramatic art preponderates in Germany.”

“The ancient German masters did not bring into their music what I call divergations. Weber at times allowed himself to be drawn into poetical reveries, but his intellect always remained sound and comprehensible. Nevertheless, Wagner has indisputably written very beautiful passages. Since ‘Tannhäuser’ is in the actual repertoire of our opera, I would call attention to the ‘Song of the Star,’ and ‘The Pilgrims’ Chorus,’ the ‘Account of the Return from Rome,’ which are my favourites.”

“Of course, I know all his scores, but have only assisted at the representations of those works which have been given in Paris. I have never been to Bayreuth, having had neither the opportunity nor the wish to do so. I know that from the point of view of *mise-en-scene* [stage setting] they have discovered some very curious things over there; but this manner of staging, although very phantasmagoric, is not great art. What do I care if the double-basses are concealed or not as long as I can see the stage sufficiently well? No; all that is mere *trompe l'oeil*, [visual deception] details that scarcely impress me, for I am not of the opinion that one should go to the theatre *to see the theatre*, but only what emanates therefrom.”

“A reaction has arisen against Italian music? A rebellion against the ‘gargouillades’ of the old repertoire, but even Beethoven was not exempt from them. Side by side with an *andante* of exalted power we find ridiculous elaborations. Wagner was not the first to discover this; and Rossini, after having succumbed to these inauspicious influences, came to Paris, where he wrote ‘William Tell’ I think that after a time an inevitable reaction will set in against the excessive infatuation that is now the order of the day.”

*I then interrogated the master with regard to his own music.*

“Why have I never written symphonies? I have never dared to; the glamour of Beethoven is so dazzling that I felt myself timid, diffident. At the start I found myself engaged in dramatic music, and, indeed, on having found success in that direction, I thought it wiser to continue. To begin with, I composed at the piano, but as I progressed I took to writing my scores straight off. In a dramatic situation the order of composition is subordinated to the inspiration. Sometimes the finale occurs to one before the prelude, and the piano has that particular use that it seems to arrest the ‘motifs’ — and I have arrested a few,” added M. Ambroise Thomas, laughing — “since ‘La Double Echelle,’ my first comic opera, represented in 1837.”

“Ah, I have heard some music and some musicians! Hummel, a contemporary of Beethoven; Chopin, whom I saw composing some of his works; Zingarelli, one of the old composers of the ancient Italian school, whom I met in Naples. And as for artists! Nilsson, who is my most delightful recollection of [Ambroise Thomas’s opera] ‘Hamlet.’ What a great artist she was, and how fortunate for a composer to have met such an interpreter. This daughter of the North, with her strange eyes and her golden hair, was the very incarnation of Ophelia. And Faure, and Madame Carvalho, who also sang my compositions, and who was destined, at the close of her career, to become the admirable and impeccable artist of such renown.”

*And Ambroise Thomas, with eyes that are moist as he gazes back over seventy fateful years, takes me by the arm and leads me to a corner of the drawing-room.*

“Here is my portrait by my dear, good Flandrin, whom I knew in Rome, and who repeatedly painted me. Do you see those ‘Studies from the Antique’? Well, those are also intended for your humble servant, surprised in slumber by Flandrin. Here is Cherubini by Ingres; the ‘London Sandwich Man’ by Géricault. There is no lack of souvenirs here. Here are dedicated portraits of my friends Gounod, Verdi, the King of Holland, and Pedro d’Alcantara.” This sheaf was offered me on the 1,000th performance of ‘Mignon,’ by the artists of the Opera Comique. It was on this occasion that the Minister handed me the Cordon of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, but what specially moved me was the free performance of ‘Mignon’ on the day following the gala, which gave an imprint of a national character to my work. This was the most gratifying emotion that I have experienced during my Ion; career.”

*And whilst the author of “Songe d’une Nuit d’été” takes me through his apartments, veritable museums filled with ancient furniture, tapestry, stained glass, busts, and works of art, I speak to him concerning the teaching of the Conservatoire, which for some time past has received repeated attacks.*

“Three years ago,” said he “a commission was appointed to modify the errors that had hitherto existed. This came to an abrupt conclusion, seeing that the best thing that could happen was to continue the old traditions. Moreover, during November, which is the month chosen for the fetes of the Centenary, I shall make a summary of the criticisms to justify our work once for all.”

*“And what will these fetes consist of?”*

“First we shall give a great concert at the Trocadéro, where, although the acoustics are not good, the space is more in keeping with a solemn function of this sort than the accommodation of the little room belonging to the Conservatoire. Then there will be a banquet, doubtless given at the Continental. For the Centenary of the Institute there will be a four days’ fete. Foreign correspondents will be invited. The President of the Republic will open the proceedings in the large amphitheatre of the Sorbonne, and that evening there will be a reception at the Elysée. A gala representation will moreover be given at the Comédie Française in honour of the foreign members, and the following day the whole of the Institute will be received by the Duc d’Aumale at Chantilly. This is about all that has been decided up to now.”

*At this moment an usher came to notify to the Director of the Conservatoire that they were awaiting him to preside at the singing competition. I therefore took leave of M. Ambroise Thomas, thanking him for his gracious reception, and once more admiring this grand old man who bears so lightly his weight of years.*

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 9

M. [MONSIEUR JULES EMILE FREDERIC] MASSENET [Composer, 1842-1912]

Interview at his residence in Paris by Jean Bernac

*If activity were to assume the guise of an individual and to seek to embody itself in the physiognomy of a strange and sympathetic artist, amongst all others, we should identify it in the person of M. Massenet. This prolific composer, who is ever to the front, expending his inexhaustible "go" and his astonishing facility on some new work, is in point of fact a man leading the most laborious existence conceivable. Under these circumstances one is not surprised to learn that the author of "Manon," in order to complete the numerous tasks that his high position imposes upon him, is obliged to see the sun rise, and even to precede it when the latter, lazier than he, tarries late after the long winter nights.*

"It is a habit that I acquired," M. Massenet tells me, "in my college days. Whatever the season may be, every morning I am up by five, and instantly seat myself at my table. When, by chance, I am forced to sacrifice a morning, it is a lost day for my work, for the afternoons belong to me no more. Without mentioning the visitors of all sorts that come to see me for various purposes, I am obliged to devote myself nearly every day to the artists who interpret my works in France or abroad. This necessarily occupies a great deal of my time; but I owe it to them, and we render each other mutual service. A good interpretation constitutes success in my eyes, and opportune advice, moreover, often brings about a favourable reception."

"I invariably notice that the artists who stand least in need of my counsel are the most attentive to my suggestions. But life is sown with contradictions. For instance, I adore silence — the intense silence of those long, dark nights, when one dreams, and a benediction steals over one's being! I love tranquility, and circumstances compel me to adapt my inclinations to the exact reverse. An English politician, I think, has said, 'If one only concerned oneself with useful things how much easier existence would become.' A thought replete with wisdom, which unfortunately presents a trifling difficulty, seeing that we busy ourselves with many things, believing them to be useful — and it is only later on that we realise the error of our ways. Anyway, one must set up a scheme of philosophy and apply it, as much as possible, to one's habits," adds M. Massenet, with a smile.

"One precept is to go to bed early, and before going to sleep to read some book on history or biography, or on archaeology — my passion! This last disposition has been nursed into existence by the splendours of Rome, and perhaps also by an adventure that has played a considerable part in my life. It dates back to the time when I was a boarder at the Villa Medici."

“One Christmas Eve, I went with my companions, Falguière and Henner, to visit the church of Ara Coeli. Whilst walking in the temple we met Liszt, who at that date was not yet an abbé [secular clergyman] . He was accompanied by a young girl, to whom he presented us; we all continued our walk together, and just as he was leaving us, our introducer said to me, ‘I should like you to hear this young girl; she is an excellent musician, and I am sure her talent would appeal immensely to you.’ My face fell; already I saw myself compelled to submit out of politeness to those inevitable piano variations executed by a young lady just issuing from the convent. Horror of horrors! Seeing my discomfiture, Liszt insisted, ‘I assure you it is worth your while, and I reckon on you.’ A refusal was out of the question. That evening I presented myself at the house, and after awarding a suitable time to conversation, we seated ourselves at the piano. We even played, if my memory serves me rightly, the preludes after Lamartine, by Liszt, and a transcription of Wagner, by Tausig. I afterwards learnt that my gracious companion was not an artist by profession, and that she was travelling in Italy for her pleasure.”

“Now all this happened about thirty-one years ago, and if I mention it specially it is because the young lady of the Ara Coeli Church has been my wife ever since! And now, if you are looking out for the moral that should always be tacked on to every self-respecting anecdote, you can note that since our marriage my wife has ceased to play the piano.”

“You perceive, by the way, that there is an instrument here; and no very important one, as you can attest. Nor is it ever opened except when my intimate friends insist on my letting them hear — much against my will — a fragment of my works. Sometimes, again, my wife, who never knows a note of my new works until they are completely finished, asks me to give her a performance, which I proceed to do during the pleasant tête-à-tête of an agreeable evening spent by one’s own fireside. The curious part of it consists in the fact that I seem then to be listening to the execution of an unknown work; and stranger still, if the score that I interpret had not been originally written by myself, I should not be able to play it by heart. For what I specially possess is a memory for what is written down, and when I hear a friend’s opera without previously reading over the score, I can only recollect it accurately by writing it out.”

*This peculiarity prompts one to question the master if — admitting that the greater part is due to inspiration — this may not be the indirect cause that allows him to present us each year with a new work.*

“No. Do not think that an opera is a spontaneous growth. I know that I am sometimes reproached on account of my rapid production. Some critics say that six months do not suffice to thoroughly develop any great lyric work. They ignore the fact that an opera that only takes me six months to write has been thought about continually and uninterruptedly for a space of more than eighteen months. For, from the moment that my subject is chosen I think of nothing else, and gradually the score develops in my mind. When it is *mentally* complete I have only to write it down, which I do just as if I were copying it out. From that time I can set to work at the task for fifteen or sixteen hours a day, and my wife can read aloud by my side, or talk to me, without in any way disturbing me, so definitely is the written scheme fixed in my brain.”

“Now, as to how I choose my subjects. Possibly an idea occurs to me resulting from something I have been reading, and I speak to my librettists about it; or perhaps they may come and suggest a musical theme to me. In this latter event I ask them more for an idea than for a piece. Then I see what I can make out of it. Once the subject is settled I prepare it as an editor who is about to publish a work in numbers, that is to say, in portions, without giving a thought as to whether it be in prose or verse, nor do I desire any conventional form. Then I proceed in the manner I have already explained to you.”

“For the orchestral score, my manner of writing assumes another form. As I rule my paper I realise in advance the proportions the different forms of time that are to be established assume. As for the piano score, I set about it before retiring to bed, and it becomes, as it were, the abridged synthesis of my day’s work.”

*In spite of the ease and facility of his inspiration, the composer is not exempt from his hours of melancholy and gloom.*

“Ah! the work that we revise, that we educate, as it were, that we live with unceasingly, in intimate communion — what a dream! But again, what despair, what discouragement! Then comes the public to take it up — from that moment it is no longer ours but theirs. And further, there are interpreters who, not having ‘lived’ with one’s idea, only partially comprehend it. Alas! But luckily there are exceptions, and such artists contrive to make up for all these troubles — and many others.”

“Then there are the multiplied appreciations that greet one’s work — praise and criticism. I let Madame Massenet or my publisher repeat them to me, but I never personally read a *compte rendu* [complete report]. I prefer to ignore the authors of these articles, by which means I cannot be hostile to anyone; and if I ever find myself face to face with someone who wishes me ill, I continue to ignore the fact, which course I consider the wisest to adopt.”

“Moreover, I suppress, as much as possible, everything that does not relate to the impressions I am developing. I never, for instance, read a paper, and but few works, and almost exclusively devote myself to past recollections. Geography interests me, for I like to know about the country I live in, that is to say — the earth!” M. Massenet adds with a smile. “It is on this account that I travel the greater part of the year, and my departures mostly occur on the eve of my ‘first nights.’ By this means I avoid the inseparable emotion which repeats itself with each new production, and at the same time I dispense with the demand for seats by a crowd of individuals I know little or nothing of. You can have no idea what a herd of people demand seats. And mark this, it is not with the intention of applauding, but more often for reasons of a contrary nature. You know the remark of a Parisienne: ‘When I see a piece that succeeds it pleases me, but when it fails, that means joy!’ Well, many people share this sentiment.”

*I ask the author of “La Navarraise” for incidental recollections concerning his works.*

“First, if you have no objection, let us rectify the errors that are due to my biographers. First, one of them makes me the pupil of Reyer — for whom I have an unbounded admiration; then another mistakes a melody for an opera! and I don’t know what more besides. Now I mean to give you exact notes concerning my career, and you will be in a position to state that only your readers will be in possession of absolutely correct information.”

“I was born at St. Etienne, in the Loire, on May 12th, 1842. In 1853 I entered the Conservatoire, and six years later I obtained the first piano prize. I was the pupil of Ambroise Thomas for composition, and in 1863 carried off the 1st grand prix de Rome, and the 1st grand prix de fugue. I stayed two years in Rome, Naples, and Venice.”

“I gave at the Opera Comique in 1867 ‘La Grand-Tante’ in one act, and in 1872 at the same theatre ‘Don César de Bazan’ in three acts. Then in 1877 ‘Le Roi de Lahore’ at the Opera; ‘Hérodiade’ at the Monnaie in Brussels in 1881; ‘Manon’ at the Opera Comique in 1884; ‘Le Cid’ at the Opera in 1885; ‘Esclarmonde’ in 1889 at the Opera Comique; ‘Le Mage’ in 1891 at the Opera; ‘Werther’ at the Opera in Vienna 1892, and also at the Opera Comique in 1893; ‘Thais’ in 1894 at the Opera; ‘Le Portrait de Manon’ the same year at the Opera Comique; and finally, ‘La Navarraise’ at Covent Garden June 21st 1894 and in October 1895 at the Opera Comique.”

“At concerts I had performed ‘Marie Magdeleine’ a sacred drama in four acts in 1873 at the Odeon; ‘Eve’ a mystery in three parts in 1875 at the Concert Lamoureux; and ‘La Vierge’ a sacred legend which was given at the Opera in 1880.

“After ‘Les Erinnyes’ which music was for the antique tragedy of Leconte de Lisle at the Odeon in 1873, the following were executed more or less everywhere:

‘Scènes Hongroises,’ ‘Scènes Pittoresques,’ ‘Dramatiques Napolitaines,’ ‘Scènes de Féerie,’ ‘Scènes Alsaciennes,’ and since these, my ‘First Suite for Orchestra,’ which brings us up to 1867. Shall I remind you of my poems for the voice and piano? First in 1867, ‘Poème d’Avril,’ followed by ‘Poèmes du Souvenir,’ ‘D’Amour,’ ‘D’Automne,’ ‘Pastorale d’Hiver,’ and ‘Poèmes du Soir.’”

“Further, I have to the good four books of twenty melodies for song, with piano accompaniments, and various pieces for the piano and orchestra.”

*I must not omit that M. Massenet was made Chevalier of the Légion d’Honneur in 1876, promoted to Officer in 1888, to Commander in 1895, and appointed Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire in 1878, in which year he was elected a member of the Institute.*

*M. Massenet reverts to his recollections.*

“When I obtained my first prize for piano, my professor, M. Laurent, was so delighted that he sent me, the same evening, his own score of his ‘Morceau de Concours,’ ‘Les Noces de Figaro,’ on which he wrote: ‘It is thirty-seven years ago that I carried off, as you have done, the first prize for piano. I do not think I could give you any greater pleasure than to offer you the score which gained me the distinction. Continue your career and you will become a great musician. This is the opinion entertained by the members of the jury that has to-day awarded you this prize.’”

*Whilst recalling this incident M. Massenet becomes pensive.*

“Who knows,” he adds, after a prolonged pause, “if I had not done better by holding my peace?”

*The master continues.*

“After my sojourn at the Villa Medici, Padeloup, who knew me as a boy at the Conservatoire, asked me if I had nothing to show him. I answered that I had a ‘First Orchestral Suite’ that I had sent from Rome, upon which he bade me come round one morning and to play it him. Padeloup was then in the height of his glory, and I acceded to his request by calling on him in the Rue Lepelletier. There I met Joachim, the great violinist, and in the presence of these two I seated myself at the piano. My piece finished, I closed my manuscript and prepared to put my things together.

‘What are you doing there?’ Padeloup enquired.

‘You see, master!’ ‘Not at all, leave it there; I want to keep it.’ ‘What will you do with it?’

At that time it was not customary to play modern music at concerts.

‘The future will show you!’”

“I had quite forgotten this incident when two months later I accidentally met one of my friends, who was first violinist at the Popular Concerts. We talked, and I asked him what he was working at just then. ‘To-day we are rehearsing,’ he made reply, ‘an orchestral suite. I do not know the author, but I am inclined to think it must be by Saint-Saëns, or some foreign composer. It opens with a pastorale and a fugue.’ — ‘Why it is my own!’ I exclaimed, with enthusiasm.”

“Some days elapsed, when Padeloup sent me this laconic note: ‘Be at the Salle des Concerts du Conservatoire on Thursday at eight o’clock in the morning!’ Naturally I did not miss the appointment, and — I assisted at the rehearsal of my work. This ended, the orchestra applauded, and Padeloup, with tears in his eyes, shook me by the hand.”

“I went to the performance of my work, as a humble onlooker in the third gallery, in a seat that cost me seventy-five centimes. They played it, and it was abominably hissed! I must say that I had had an exceptional opportunity! A critic of the epoch devoted a leading article to cutting up my suite in one of the principal papers. But this violence brought about very solid manifestations of friendship, notably in the instance of my friend Théodore Dubois — whom I had known in Rome — and who courageously defended me with an indignant epistle addressed to the paper in question. The individual who had attacked me so roughly regretted it subsequently, and he made it up to me by upholding me on divers occasions when his opinion was solicited. My feeling at the time, I must own, was more of immense astonishment than veritable sorrow! At that happy age one does not readily realise rebuffs, having a whole existence in which to recover oneself. Later on in life one is prostrated and condemned without appeal, as unfortunately has been the case with so many artists.”

“How I wrote ‘Manon?’ I had a work by me that was an order. I worked at it a year. One afternoon I called on Meilhac where I met my second collaborator Philippe Gille. ‘What news?’ they asked. ‘The news is that I renounce our work altogether.’ ‘Why?’ they exclaim. ‘It does not inspire me!’

Whilst we were conversing, I mechanically turned towards Meilhac’s library, and there I saw ‘Manon.’ ‘That is what I want,’ I tell them.

‘Manon Lescaut?’ ‘No, *Manon!* The general type, the character. Make a Manon for me, and the anecdotal part, Manon Lescaut will come later on.’”

“As with all my works, I addressed myself to all sources, and the admirable preface of Alexandre Dumas fils was of particular use to me.”

*We got on to “Werther.” M. Massenet laughingly hands me a piece of soiled letter paper.*

“This is a joke of my excellent friend Philippe Gille, who wrote me this note the day after its production, signed ‘Werther’ — ‘What consoles me for my death is that Massenet will one day set it to music!’”

After this I ask M. Massenet to give me a few lines with his autograph. The author of "Le Cid" instantly seats himself at the table, and whilst writing tells me:

"These are the first bars of a song that I heard in the Roman mountains, and that later served me as a starting point for 'Marie Magdeleine.' Moreover, Rome with its red walls easily evokes thoughts of the gates of Magdala, and in these same mountains, where the seed of my sacred drama first germinated in me, the trees of Judea flourish as if to complete the illusion. But then in that marvellous Italy all is music and poetry. The very peasant is a poet."

"One evening in Florence, on the banks of the Arno, under the influence of the admirable pictures which I had been contemplating, I met a waterman, of whom I asked the time. I was drinking my fill of artistic satisfaction, gazing at the magnificent sunset that gilded all the world about me, which the sound of bells from a neighbouring monastery in their soft and melancholy cadence seemed to envelope with a very atmosphere of music, when he made this reply which will ever remain engraved on my memory: 'Seven o'clock has just struck — the air is still trembling with it.'"

*Certainly conversation with M. Massenet is a veritable feast. The colour that he puts into his expressions, the accent that each of his words borrows, make the hours fly past under the spell of his presence. Unfortunately, one is compelled to conclude, and I question him finally concerning the condition of contemporary music.*

"It is actually," he answers, "an open door on the threshold of a new future. Will this future consist of complicated sentiment or simplicity? Personally I cannot say. But in any case matters will not remain as they are. The education of the public has been achieved. It is no longer what it was twenty years ago, and the decision will rest in their hands, for their appreciations are most healthy and reasonable, except when constantly harassed and perplexed by continually being told this is good, or that bad. I believe altogether in the judgment of the public. What ruined the ancient school was the applause at fixed points. The day the audience realised they must wait until the end of the act to manifest satisfaction, that day the symphony of the whole could develop freely without being limited by the villainous full stop."

"The future then must decide. We number many young musicians of talent who will most assuredly open up new roads in the formulae of to-morrow"

*"Then doubtless they will be found amongst your own pupils, my dear master, since in their ranks you have already recruited twelve grands prix de Rome."*

*M. Massenet takes leave of me with a friendly shake of the hand as I thank him and quit his hospitable abode, which model of taste evinces ample proof of his artistic temperament in the very smallest details that are gathered round his personality.*

INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 10  
 SIGNOR F. [knighted 1908 SIR FRANCESCO] PAOLO TOSTI  
 [Composer and Music Teacher, 1846-1916]  
 Interview by John Evans Woolacott

*Signor Tosti, whose delightful songs are known the world over, has had a most interesting career, though it is difficult to induce him to speak of his own successes in the domain of music. As a teacher, Signor Tosti has achieved many triumphs, for, in addition to the musical amateurs who become his pupils, professional singers of the highest rank seek his aid in order to obtain the finishing touches which are indispensable to expositors of musical art in its highest form. I have reason to know that within the last few weeks an operatic singer of worldwide fame, in fact, one of the most eminent artistes of the century, after achieving a brilliant success, at once attributed her triumph to the assistance she had received from the subject of this interview, who modestly rejoined, "No; you owe it to your great genius."*

*Signor Tosti numbers among his friends the principal musicians of every country. On the walls of his studio in Mandeville Place are to be seen autographed portraits of composers like Verdi, Boito, Gounod, Massenet, Sullivan, Mackenzie, Saint-Saens, Delibes, Paderewski, and Mascagni; and of such vocalists as Melba, Calvé, Maurel, Patti, and the De Reszkés, and on these portraits are inscribed messages expressing the high regard and esteem in which the various musicians hold their friend and confrère.*

*It was in his studio that I met Signor Tosti, who was at length induced to recount briefly his experiences as a musician.*

"I was born at Ortona al Mare in the Abruzzi on April 9th, 1846," said Signor Tosti, "and at the age of eleven I commenced learning to play the violin. Two years later I gained a scholarship at the Naples Conservatoire, where I studied the violin under Pinto. I was very anxious to learn other things, but under the rules in force at that time, a pupil entering the Conservatoire as an instrumentalist was forbidden to take up other studies."

*"And your progress here, Signor Tosti?"*

"Well, later on I was appointed a sub-professor at the Conservatoire, receiving from the Government the munificent salary of sixty lire a month. The director, whose pupil I became, gave me lessons in Harmony and Counterpoint. I also worked at Orchestration, but I never studied the piano."

*"Never studied the piano!" I exclaimed, having in mind the skill with which Signor Tosti accompanies a song at the pianoforte.*

"No; I never worked at pianoforte exercises in my life; but," continued Signor Tosti after a pause, "I always sang. When at the Conservatoire I went round to all the professors of singing, following class after class, so desirous was I of perfecting my vocal studies."

*“And your first attempt at composition?”*

“One of my earliest compositions,” replied the musician with a laugh, “was a Mass.”

*“A Mass!”*

“Yes; it was in this way. My good father’s greatest ambition was that he should see me in the proud position of organist and choir-master in the church of Ortona al Mare, so I became a candidate for the position.”

*“And failed to succeed?”*

“*Non, mon ami*; unfortunately I succeeded,” and Signor Tosti, with an amused air, produced a most elaborate diploma, dated February 25th, 1869, appointing him to the position of choir-master and organist, and setting out that his salary of £4 a month would commence from the date of the signing of the contract.

“While holding this office,” said Signor Tosti, “it was my duty to play the organ on Saturdays and Sundays, and to write vocal quartettes and other pieces that were required. And it was here that my Mass saw the light. However, I only remained for a brief period. I didn’t care about living in a small town, so I left and went to Ancona, where I lived for two years and gave lessons.”

*“Did you find teaching very remunerative at this stage of your career?”*

The musician shook his head. “My teaching brought me in fifty centimes a lesson, and the principal dish in my daily menu was bread and cheese. But I was proud if poor, and I remember once when invited to a grand dinner putting in an appearance at the close, just as the coffee was being served, a toothpick ostentatiously figuring in my mouth as if I had been dining sumptuously at home. I had a suspicion, you see, that my invitation was due to a feeling of commiseration.”

*Later on Signor Tosti went to Rome, where he occasionally played the violin in the theatre as deputy for a professor of his acquaintance, receiving as remuneration a lira a night. Talking of these days, Signor Tosti said,*

“I had written two songs which I couldn’t get published, though I offered to hand the copyright over to a firm of publishers if they would give me fifty copies in exchange. But no, my songs were returned with a polite note from the publishers intimating that they were unable to agree to my proposal.”

*“But your opportunity came at last?”*

“Yes, I knew Sgambati, who was getting up a charity concert, at which Liszt was to play. Sgambati showed me the manuscript of a ballad he had written for me, and asked me to sing it at this concert. I assented, and my appearance was so successful that within a few days I had plenty of pupils. The Princess Margherita, now Queen of Italy, who had attended the concert, appointed me her teacher of singing, and from that day forward matters went smoothly enough.”

*“Did you experience any difficulty in getting your songs published after that?” I asked.*

*“At the close of the year the publishers who had rejected my two ballads asked to be allowed to purchase them. I replied that the songs were theirs if they cared to buy them for 500 lire (£20) each. I purposely put them at what I considered a prohibitive price, the usual sum given for a song being about fifty lire. However, the publishers promptly accepted my offer, and requested me to enter into a contract to write for them only for ten years.”*

*Signor Tosti’s experience has been that of many other eminent composers, but few men have experienced the swing of fortune’s pendulum in so remarkable a degree, His first ballad he could not dispose of even for the paltry consideration of fifty printed copies; while since then his songs have been bought outright for larger sums than any other song-writer has been able to command. Some of his charming ballads have reached eleven editions in eleven different languages. “For Ever and For Ever,” “Good-bye,” the “Venetian Song,” and “Beauty’s Eyes” have attained the widest popularity in all quarters of the globe, thanks to their high artistic merit and the tenderness of the sentiment which the composer has infused into them.*

*From Signor Tosti’s career in Italy we turned at length to his experiences in England which have been of a happy character.*

*“I had, however,” said the composer, “to begin at the beginning again when I first came here. ‘For Ever and For Ever’ was refused by publisher after publisher, and several singers went so far as to say that it was an impossible song — that it could not be sung. ‘For Ever and For Ever’ was sung frequently in drawing-rooms, and at length it was introduced into an operetta at the Globe Theatre, and rendered by Violet Cameron with such success that it became quite the rage.”*

*“May I ask whether you had a cordial reception at the hands of our English musicians when you came to this country?”*

*“Most cordial,” replied Signor Tosti. “Sir Arthur Sullivan in particular did everything he could for me. We have always remained the very best of friends, and I must say he is truly *un bon confrere*. Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, to whom I had a letter of introduction, was also most kind, and I have every reason to look back with pleasure on my early days in England. One day,” continued the musician, “Lord Dupplin came to me and said that the Duchess of Cambridge liked my music, and desired me to call on her at St. James’s Palace. Of course I did so, and from that time until her death I called on her daily. During my visits I had the honour of meeting the Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family.”*

*Signor Tosti's fame as a teacher is so widespread that I asked him whether he pursued any particular method with his pupils.*

“Yes,” was the reply; “but I never forget that each individual claims modification according to his wants. The best physiological view of this subject I ever heard came from my friend Henry Russell, who, speaking in reference to the voice as an instrument, said, ‘In the same way as our features differ so must our vocal organs.’”

*“And you find English pupils intelligent at their music?”*

“Certainly. Some of my brightest pupils have been English. There is a tendency, however, among them to imagine that sentiment ought not to be displayed in public — that it is to be shown only amongst friends; and of course music cannot exist without sentiment. I will tell you a little anecdote which illustrates this. Many years ago, in Rome, an English lady asked me to give singing lessons to her daughter. The mother was present at the lessons but sat in the room without saying a word. During the third lesson, however, when her daughter was singing without the slightest sentiment, I called to her, ‘Put more soul into it.’ Upon this the mother jumped up from the chair, and coming to the piano, exclaimed, ‘I regret to have to say it, Signor Tosti, but I will not allow my daughter to sing like an artiste.’ ‘Madam,’ I replied ‘the greatest compliment that could be paid to your daughter would be to say that she sings like an artiste.’”

*And Signor Tosti laughed heartily at the recollection.*

“During the last twenty years,” he went on, “I have noticed that music has made enormous progress in England, and there is not a city in the world where music is as widely known as it is in London. In this country music enters into a child’s education from its earliest years. If you were to take a hundred people in a drawing-room in Rome, you would probably find that only ten of them could read music; while in a London drawing-room, out of a hundred people ninety would be able to read their notes. We Italians may be more musical naturally, thanks to our climate and language, but in England musical education is cultivated to a far greater extent than in Italy.”

*There is a charm about Signor Tosti's music which is beyond definition, and his genial and unaffected manner and his unlimited store of anecdotes bearing on music and musicians, render him equally charming as a companion and as a friend. Some idea of his industry may be gathered from the fact that in addition to writing songs he imparts instruction to over forty pupils.*

## INTERVIEWS WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 11

G. [GIUSEPPE FORTUNINO FRANCESCO] VERDI [Composer, 1813-1901]

*Like many another great genius, the eminent Italian composer, Verdi, can boast of very humble parentage, his father being a peasant in the little hamlet of Roncole, near Busseto, where young Giuseppe spent his earliest years amid surroundings which were not at all conducive to the cultivation of musical talent. He is said, as a little child, to have followed itinerant organ-grinders from place to place with tireless persistency, and he probably showed his love of music in other ways, for his father purchased a spinet for the lad to practise upon when he was just seven years of age; the instrument, battered and worn with age, and with not one of its strings left, still remaining one of the Master's most cherished possessions.*

*Verdi's first musical education was obtained from one Baistrocchi, the organist of the little church at Roncole; but in two years he had learned all that his master had to teach him, and when only ten years old the boy succeeded to the position of organist vacated by his instructor. His salary at this time, it is interesting to note, amounted in all to less than £4 per annum, whilst his personal expenditure was necessarily regulated by his income.*

*Shortly after his appointment as organist he was sent to school at Busseto, whence he walked every Sunday to Roncole to conduct the services, this arrangement continuing for two years, when a M. Barezzi, an enthusiastic musical amateur, recognising the youth's genius, took him into his business, whilst affording him every opportunity of gratifying his musical tastes. Verdi studied in this town under Ferdinando Provesi, the organist of the cathedral, until he was sixteen, when he secured a scholarship which enabled him to proceed to Milan, where he studied for some time, returning to Busseto, on the death of Provesi, in 1833. Here, although unsuccessful in his candidature for the vacant post at the cathedral, he remained for five years, during which period he wrote his first opera, "Oberto, Contedi San Bonifacio," which was produced by the impresario, Merelli, in 1840, at La Scala Theatre, Milan, meeting with a most favourable reception.*

*This was followed by the comic opera, "Un Giorno di Regno," "Nabucco," and "I Lombardi," the last of which has enjoyed an immense popularity. Verdi's reputation as a composer was still further enhanced by the production, in 1844, of "Ernani," at the Fenice Theatre, Venice. The libretto of this opera was taken from Victor Hugo's "Hernani," and contained so much of the spirit of revolution so prevalent at the time, as to occasion trouble with the authorities. A few months later, "I Due Foscari" was produced at the Argentina Theatre in Rome, but showed no advance on the operas that had preceded it. Then followed in quick succession "Giovanna D'Arco" and "Alzira," both played at La Scala of Milan, and he had his next real triumph in "Attila," the first performance of which was given in Venice, on March 17, 1846. "Macbeth," produced a year later, was a failure, mainly on account of its containing no tenor part.*

Verdi now began to receive many offers from operatic managers abroad, and accepting a commission from Lumley, then lessee of Her Majesty's Theatre, wrote "I Masnadieri," an opera founded on Schiller's "Robbers," which was performed for the first time in London on July 22, 1847, the cast including Jenny Lind and Lablache. It was, however, not a success, and Verdi shortly afterwards went to Passy, where he composed "Il Corsaro" and "La Battaglia di Legnano." These, too, excited no enthusiasm, and "Luisa Miller," given in 1849 at the San Carlo of Naples, although very successful, is scarcely to be classed with such examples of the composer's work as "Ernani" and "I Lombardi."

In 1851, "Rigoletto," the first of the three operas which rank as Verdi's masterpieces, was given to the public, being received with unbounded enthusiasm in every opera house in Europe. After "Rigoletto" came "Il Trovatore," which remains one of the most popular operas on the stage, and "La Traviata," which was given a few weeks later, although a failure in Venice owing to its indifferent interpretation, met everywhere else with a splendid reception. Verdi had now reached the zenith of his fame, and was universally hailed as the greatest living Italian opera composer.

His next work, written for the Paris Grand Opera, was "Les Vêpres Siciliennes," presented for the first time on June 13, 1855, followed, four years later, by "Un Ballo in Maschera," the text and original title of which were at first objected to by the censor. Each of these operas proved a popular success. Another notable production was "Don Carlos," at the Grand Opera in Paris in 1867, about which time also the Master was elected a foreign member, on the death of Meyerbeer, of the Académie des Beaux Arts in the French capital. He likewise became a member of the Italian Parliament, but politics were not to his taste and he soon resigned.

Four years elapsed after the production of "Don Carlos" before another opera by Verdi was given to the public, when "Aïda" was written for the opening of the Italian Theatre in Cairo, in 1871. In 1874 there appeared the well-known Requiem commemorating the anniversary of the death of Manzoni. There was, however, an interval of sixteen years between the production of "Aïda" and his next opera, "Otello," in 1887. "Falstaff," one of the composer's finest works, which followed a few years later, was written when he was eighty years of age.

Although it is as an operatic composer that Verdi has won his great name, he has published many marches, symphonies, and cantatas, principally his earlier efforts. One of his cantatas was written for the inauguration of the World's Fair in London in 1862, and was performed with great success at Her Majesty's Theatre. Besides a number of lighter compositions, Verdi wrote choruses to some of Manzoni's tragedies, and was one of the thirteen Italian composers who combined to write a Requiem to the memory of Rossini.

*“And so you are writing a new opera, Maestro?” I began, on being received by Verdi at the Hotel Milan, in a room which has begun to acquire an historical interest through the oft-repeated and prolonged visits of the illustrious Master.*

*“What folly!” he rejoined. “When a man has reached my time of life, he is content to watch the work of the younger generation.”*

*“And yet, dear Maestro, the newspapers have already given the name of your new opera, ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ and some go so far as to publish details of your future masterpiece.”*

*“There is absolutely no foundation for such reports. I shall not write another note for the theatre. The idea of ‘Romeo and Juliet’ has often appealed to me in the past, but I never met with a libretto that came up to my ideal of the subject; and now — well, now it is too late!”*

*“But,” I interrupted, growing bolder through curiosity, “how, then, do you account for your constant visits to Milan, and your frequent interviews with Signor Boito, your librettist?”*

*“You are labouring under a totally wrong impression. I meet Boito every time I come to Milan, but now I more frequently see his brother, the architect; and the sole object of all my present journeys to Milan is the superintendence of the construction of a Home.”*

*“A Home? For whom — for what?” And then Verdi unfolded to me his great scheme, which has grown into a reality, for it is, at the present time, being carried into effect.*

*Outside the Gate Magenta, at Milan, a building is in course of construction. It is Verdi’s Home for old Italian artists of all classes. The funds for its establishment and maintenance are given by the great Master, and the cost of erection alone of the building, as designed by Signor Camille Boito (a brother of Arigo, the librettist of Othello and Falstaff), will amount to £16,000. The Home will provide shelter for 100 inmates — 60 men and 40 women. There will be no common dormitory, for Verdi, with thoughtful tact, wishes to spare the feelings of people who may have known a certain comfort in their youth. There will be reading-rooms, a concert-room, and bath-rooms, all lighted by electricity and heated by hot-air stoves. The meals only will be in common.*

*To secure the funds necessary for the yearly expenditure of the endowment, Verdi has already given up part of the income due to him for his copyrights. The fruits of his genius will thus provide for the wants of those whom he calls his “fellow-artists.”*

*A weighty question, and one to which Verdi attached great importance, was the choice of a name for the institution, the Master rejecting the titles of “Hospital,” “Refuge,” and “Home,” as not conveying his meaning. At last, the name of Casa di Riposo (House of Rest) occurred to him, as expressing the most nearly his philanthropic idea. The construction of the building is already far advanced, and the work is expected to be entirely completed within two years. The “House of Rest” is, however, only to be opened at the composer’s demise — at least, such are the stipulations laid down at the present time.*

*Whilst Verdi was speaking, I felt that I could not take my eyes from his face, nor could I refrain from admiring, with the deepest and most affectionate reverence, the simple and noble way in which he spoke of his great plan; his eyes, especially, which shone with a brightness seldom seen even in young men, revealed an exquisite kindness and an uprightness of soul as great as the intellectual gifts of this sublime genius.*

*After I had been given these details, there was a long pause, during which the Master seemed absorbed in thought. What was passing in his mind? Perhaps the reference to unfortunate artists had recalled to his memory the first painful years which he had spent in this very town of Milan, when, on the finding of old Professor Basily, he had been denied admittance at the Conservatoire, "because he had no aptitude for music." I had heard that anecdote, and had regarded it as merely an apocryphal legend; but, on my questioning the Master, he replied,*

*"It is an absolute fact. In 1832 — I was then 19 years of age — I tried to enter the Conservatoire, and to that end went through an examination in composition and pianoforte-playing. I had to perform a piece before Basily, Angeleri, Rolla, and a few others, and after a couple of weeks had elapsed, I went to Rolla to learn the result of the examination. He said, 'Don't think anymore of the Conservatoire. Choose a professor in town.' It was at that time that I began to study with Lavigna."*

*"How did it happen, Maestro, that you allowed almost half a century to pass between the production of your first comic opera, 'Il Finto Stanislao,' and 'Falstaff,' for, if I am not mistaken, the former was given at Milan in 1840?"*

*"Yes; 'Il Finto Stanislao' — or, rather, 'Un Giorno di Regno' — was produced in the month of September, 1840, and it proved a tremendous fiasco. I must, however, confess that I had had to write a comic opera during the greatest trials of my life. Within a period of less than three months, my wife, Margherita Barezzi, the daughter of my patron, and my two little children, were carried off by a cruel illness, and I found myself alone, broken-hearted, and with a written contract compelling me to complete for the autumn the full score of 'Un Giorno di Regno.' The courage I had summoned to overcome my grief and permit me to set to work deserted me entirely after my failure. I felt persuaded that it was useless for me to seek in my art the solace to my troubles, and I made up my mind that I would not write any more. Consequently, I broke off a contract for three operas which I had made with the impresario, Merelli, and tried to banish all thoughts of music from my mind."*

“How, then, did you come to write the ‘Nabucco,’ which proved the starting-point of all your successes?”

“One winter’s evening, in 1841, as I was coming out of my house, I met Merelli, who, putting his arm through mine, asked me to accompany him to the theatre, where he was going at the time. On the way he told me that he was in great perplexity, because Nicolai, who was to write the opera for the season, was not satisfied with his libretto, a magnificent work of Solera, and had left his impresario at a loss to find a suitable text in good time.”

“‘I can help you out of your trouble,’ I replied. ‘I have the libretto of *Proscritto* by me, and have not written a note of it yet. You are welcome to it.’ ‘My dear boy, this is a God-send! You don’t know how grateful I shall be!’”

“By that time we had reached the theatre, and Merelli, showing me a manuscript written in a bold hand, said, ‘This is the libretto of Solera. Such a splendid subject! Take it, and read.’ ‘What for? I will have nothing more to do with libretti.’ ‘Well, take it all the same; read it, and give it back to me.’ I took the manuscript, and left the theatre. On my way back, I felt overcome with an unspeakable sadness, and when I reached home I flung the book despondently on the table; the leaves flew open, and my eyes fell on the beautiful verse beginning ‘Va, pensiero, sull’ ali dorate’ (Go, my thought, on the golden wings). I read, almost mechanically, the verses that followed. They left a deep impression upon my mind, the more so because they were a paraphrase of the Bible, of which I was an earnest reader in those days.”

“I went on reading one passage, then another, and at last, remembering my vow, closed the manuscript and went to bed. But the ‘Nabucco’ [Nebuchadnezzar] kept running in my head; all hope of sleep vanished; I could not even shut my eyes. At last I got up and began to read a second time, then a third and a fourth, the whole libretto. In the morning I knew it by heart.”

“Yet, I did not wish to break my pledge, and, on the following day, I brought the manuscript back to Merelli. ‘What do you think of the libretto?’ he asked, ‘Is it not beautiful?’ — ‘It is splendid!’ — ‘Well then, set it to music.’ — ‘No, no, never! I won’t do it at any price!’ But Merelli took the manuscript, forced it into the pocket of my overcoat, turned me out of the room, and locked the door.”

“What could I do? I went home with the ‘Nabucco’ in my pocket. I began to write one bar, one sentence at a time, so that in the autumn of the same year ‘Nabucco’ was finished; and it was given at La Scala of Milan, in March, 1842.”

*“And how did you come to write ‘Falstaff,’ a regular comic opera, after all your serious dramatic works?”*

“Well, as soon as I began to write again, in spite of the fiasco attending ‘Un Giorno di Regno,’ I thought of trying another comic opera; but for many years I never found a suitable subject, or a librettist who could thoroughly understand me. After ‘Otello,’ I mentioned the matter to Boito, but without any definite idea in view. We were discussing the character of Falstaff as one of the most interesting and most complete personalities that has ever been represented on the stage.”

“A few days after that conversation, Boito brought me the sketch of the libretto, and I found it so interesting that I made up my mind to write it, but without mentioning the fact to anyone. It was only long afterwards, when the libretto was quite finished and the music already begun, that I announced to Ricordi, my publisher, who was dining at my house with his wife and Boito, that I was going to undertake a new work.”

“After dinner my wife proposed a toast to ‘the jolly old knight,’ and Boito and I responded heartily, leaving Ricordi and his wife at a loss to find a solution of the riddle. Before very long, however, the mystery was unveiled, and ‘Falstaff’ was played for the first time at La Scala of Milan.”

*“Then, you are quite determined, Master, never to give us any more operas? Or may we hope that your resolution may yet be shaken, like the one you took in 1840?”*

“No! after my long career — I am over eighty-three years of age, and have worked for sixty years — I consider myself entitled to some rest. I shall not write another bar for the theatre, emphatically not another bar!”

*As I prepared to take leave of my illustrious host, he rose from his seat. With one movement he was up, erect and stately, giving me an energetic shake of the hand, and accompanying me to the door with a firm step. As I reflected upon the wonderful combination of physical and intellectual power displayed by the great composer, I could not help thinking that his decision, emphatically though it was expressed, might not, after all, prove irrevocable. Who knows whether he has not some surprise in store of us?*

INTERVIEWS [WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 12]  
 MDLLE. CECILE [LOUISE STEPHANIE] CHAMINADE  
 [Composer and Pianist, 1857-1944]  
 Interview at her residence in Paris by Jean Bernac

*Mdlle. Cécile Chaminade resides in a country-house at Le Vesinet, near Paris. The eminent pianist and composer leads a simple and quiet life.*

“I played a good deal during this last season,” she remarked to me; “so feeling rather tired at the end of the autumn, I decided on spending the winter in the country. This house has belonged to my parents ever since my early childhood, and here I passed a certain part of my life of study, and practised a great deal, accompanied by other artists, amongst whom were Delsart and Marsick, who also lived at Vesinet.”

“Although my father, who was director of a company in Paris, was much taken up with his business, yet we had a good deal of music at home. My father had some talent as an amateur violinist, and my mother played the piano very well. Indeed, it was she who taught me the elements of my art. My musical taste was noticed from my cradle, and I have been told that I was found, when not more than two or three years old, in my bed singing the ‘andante’ of one of Beethoven’s Sonatas for piano and violin that my parents were fond of playing. Their house was a rendezvous for artists. Almost all the composers called there, especially Bizet, who was good enough to adjudicate on my first musical attempts. After having made me interpret all kinds of complicated combinations, he said to my parents, ‘You must make her play, but do not torment her!’ I was not deaf to this observation, and whenever they wanted to keep me at the piano longer than I liked, I never failed to answer, ‘Remember what M. Bizet said: You must not torment me!’”

“If Bizet encouraged me, I must also express my gratitude to Benjamin Godard, who took no small interest in me, though I never was his pupil. But my regular masters were Le Couppey and Savard, who taught me thorough-bass. My first published compositions were two mazurkas. But I did not begin to work seriously until I was sixteen. It was then that I composed a ‘trio,’ marked Opus 11.”

“Here is a little fact that perhaps will interest you. As an exercise I wrote whole scores over again. In this way I trained myself for composition. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to tell you that my version of ‘Faust,’ or ‘The Huguenots,’ for instance, was equal to Gounod’s or Meyerbeer’s. But my practice was allowable at the age of fifteen or sixteen.”

*“You have not done much for the theatre as yet?”*

“With the exception of a little comic opera, ‘La Sévillane,’ fragments of which have been executed, and a ballet ‘Callirhoë,’ played recently at Marseilles and Lyons, I have not done anything in this direction. Having found my way in music for the piano and voice, I have simply continued. But I acknowledge that the stage tempts me, however full it may be of deceptions and difficulties. I am not naturally fitted for these, and I acknowledge that the preparatory steps alarm me. But the public, and even friends, who are not obliged to conceal their views, say, ‘So long as you have not been played, it is as if you have done nothing!’ and yet, without venturing a rash comparison, I might mention a rather celebrated musician — Chopin, who also was not played, and who, notwithstanding that, has left some little pieces for the piano that have come down to us. I would rather have the shortest of his preludes to my credit than have written certain operas, in spite of their five acts. But one can’t go against the stream. At one time I was very near attempting to write for the stage. I was offered the libretto of a ‘Daphnis and Chloé,’ and asked to compose the opera for a musical enterprise. But there was a condition: the work had to be done within two months. So as I consider that it takes at least a year to do anything worth while, I refused, on account of the shortness of the time, not choosing to risk an attempt that might compromise my career. It was well I did, for the theatre closed its doors three weeks after it had opened them.”

“One of these days, I shall probably write a lyrical drama, but a ‘drama’ without murder and bloodshed. Oh no, no murder! What I like, is poetry in music. What is fantastic and supernatural charms me also; but I am very hard to please about the libretti offered me. You will tell me that the best plan would be to write them myself? I have read much with this object, but, unfortunately, whenever I have found a subject that suited me, I discovered also that it had been taken in hand before. But I do not lose my courage for all that; the field of imagination is still large enough. However, I do not think that the theatre takes the first rank as a means of expression.”

“The symphony, which does not require so many intermediaries, seems superior to me. But it is as difficult for a composer to make himself known in the symphony as in the theatre. For instance, when I finished my symphony, ‘Les Amazones,’ my father was absolutely set on seeing it performed. He even made an offer to a well-known director of concerts to pay all the expenses. Notwithstanding this, he did not succeed. Two years afterwards I was asked (without our having to incur any outlay) to put it on the programme of a great choral and instrumental festival at Antwerp. This was done, and done successfully; it was a lesson for me. So, since then I have always patiently waited for my hour. However, I think one must wait longer for it in France than elsewhere.”

“We are continually in communication with rich people who affect to love music and yet do nothing at all for it! But, who knows, after all, it may be just the same thing everywhere else. What we want is a theatre for experiments, but where are we to find the disinterested Maecenas who would supply the funds? That is the question.”

*“When did you make your first appearance at a concert?” I asked.*

“The first time I appeared at a concert, was at the ‘Salle Erard.’ Ambroise Thomas was among the audience. When he had heard some of my works, he said aloud, ‘It is not a woman who composed these, it’s a man!’ Formerly, when I began playing in public, I had a wonderful assurance, but I have it no longer, now that I know the public better. Nor am I alone in feeling these impressions, for most artists to whom I have spoken on the subject feel them also. In spite of the kindness of the public and their sympathy for some of us, one is never sure of one’s hold upon them. And it is this dread of not being always equally well received that creates in artists about to appear the ever-recurring emotion that always surprises the uninitiated. Notwithstanding what I have just said to you, I am sufficiently sure of my execution not to require to keep continually at work and to practise the piano daily. Whenever I give a concert, I rehearse for a couple of days before, and that suffices to recover my fingering; but one must have worked during long years to be able to take it up again just when wanted.”

“Do I think the piano the first of instruments? Certainly; quite apart from all professional views I can assert, without any fear of being mistaken, that it is the one which forms the ear best. Whatever Reyer may say, it is the most complete instrument; it is also the only one that can be a reduction of the orchestra. With two pianos one obtains effects that the ‘orchestrophobes’ cannot deny. Then, again, there is the great organ; what a wonderful aid for the composer! Unfortunately it is not practical.”

“How do I compose? Sometimes travelling, sometimes at the piano, often at my table, but never in the morning. I must gradually warm to my work. I prelude for ten days or a fortnight, and when the ideas come I set to work. I cannot work to order, but only by fits and starts. Thus, for some time I have had a melody to write for Princess Beatrice. Well, although I ought to have set about it at once, oughtn’t I? I have not yet found it possible to fulfill the Princess’s august request. And then I have just returned from travelling in Switzerland, where I gave six concerts. Every year I go to London, and in my last tour, I visited Scotland, where I played nearly every day.”

*I asked Mdlle. Chaminade what she thinks of England and the English, from a musical point of view.*

“England,” she replied, “is the country where they have the worst and the best music. What the English like best, I think, are the grand and tuneful pieces that draw nearest to chorals. They can appreciate music very well when they have time to understand. Light music, such as we like in France, pleases them less. On the other hand, at Vienna, where I also gave concerts, the taste resembles much more that of Paris. It is the general opinion in Paris that the provinces don’t understand music. This is a profound error, as I know by my own experience. What the Departments won’t have at all, is the music of the ‘Sous-Wagneriens’ that has nothing in it, but ennui! In Paris, the public holds its tongue, but elsewhere the audience would not take it so easily.”

“I admire Wagner very much, but not everything in his works. I often find a complete work long. His influence, in my opinion, has been very bad in France. Composers without imagination have supposed that they could write like one who had so much imagination! And all do the same thing. They all want to give more than they can, but I do not think it will last. They have gone as far as possible; and the best proof that the public only follows this forward movement from afar is that they return with pleasure to the old music into which they plunge as into a pure stream. People will return, I think, to extreme simplicity. The classics, whatever some may assert, are not dead. Mozart and Haydn are immortal. In music the ‘Wagneriens’ only know one name — Wagner! For them he is the past and the future.”

“I quite admit that red is a fine colour, but if we had no other we might get tired of it at length. Just see Delibes — what a charming musician, full of heart and of ideas! Well, for the present, they will have no more of him. All for Wagner, that is the maxim of to-day, and note that those who talk the most of him are frequently those who know him least. I have often been able to ascertain it; for instance, when I am in company with people who are not sincere I amuse myself with mystifying them. There was a journalist who had often turned his wit against me. The chances of Parisian life brought us together one evening in the house of a friend. The conversation turned on music. We even had some lively discussions as to our preferences. In the conversation, I had remarked that my opponent’s convictions were not always on a level with his knowledge. I resolved to play a trick on him. Sitting down at the piano, I played him some fragments of ‘Parsifal’ and ‘Tristan!’ ‘That is something like music!’ he cried. ‘Ah! Wagner, what a genius!’ I left him to his enthusiasm; but what he never knew and, no doubt will never know, is that the fragments of ‘Parsifal’ and ‘Tristan’ that I had played to him, were simply a few bars of my own composition!”

“No, do you see, what has been good remains good always, and the inspirations of the heart last for ever. My own taste is for Mozart, Haydn, and the ‘Clavecinists.’ I have a weakness for St. Saëns, though I acknowledge that he is not very attractive at first; but at all events he is sufficiently so to make one wish to hear him again. I like Grieg immensely. He may not have great breadth, but what individuality, and, above all, what a special colour! His success just now is enormous, and I think it will last. In Brahms there are very fine works, but they are rather for professional appreciation. But I do not care for Italian music, except for the people’s songs.”

*In this way Mdlle. Chaminade had been kind enough to run over her preferences. Two days after my visit she wrote me these lines:*

“I have a kind of remorse for having forgotten to speak to you of my unbounded admiration for Schumann. I know his works thoroughly, and when I wish to please myself, it is Schumann that I play. He is for me, the most exquisite of the romantic school; but now, when they place him among the classics, I cannot help finding it amusing; for as to form he is certainly the most fantastic and the most independent of all.”

*I hope Mdlle. Chaminade’s conscience will now be at rest. Though still young, the works of Mdlle. Chaminade are considerable.*

“I have written about a hundred pieces for the piano alone,” she said to me, “with transcriptions for duets and for two pianos. I have also composed some concerted pieces and choruses for women’s voices, and a number of duets. As to my melodies for piano and voice, there are about sixty of them. When I was quite a child I wrote music for ballets that my little friends used to dance. You see, I was born a composer!”

*And Mdlle. Chaminade is one still, for everywhere in her house we find the constant homage paid to her talent. In fact, we see dedicated photographs of most of the contemporary artists on the walls and about the furniture. Among others, above her writing-table, we see the picture of Benjamin Godard and his sister Madeleine; those of Liszt, by Rippl-Ronai, after Munkacsy. Then a flattering homage from Chabrier. A legion of portraits of singers: Albani, Clement, Plançon, Mdlle. Landi, Eugene Oudin, etc.; again, composers: Theodore Dubois, Tosti, and Sullivan.*

*On leaving the hall conservatory I congratulated Mdlle. Chaminade on the pretty retreat she had chosen.*

“Yes,” she said to me, “among all the suburbs of Paris, Vesinet is perhaps the only one which has preserved its ‘country style.’ Besides, they have wished to maintain its park-like character, and it is forbidden to enclose the grounds with walls.”

*Le Vesinet is, in fact, a large garden, and one understands that amid such surroundings Mdlle. Chaminade has been able to obtain the fresh inspirations and melodious accents with which her compositions are stamped.*

INTERVIEWS [WITH EMINENT MUSICIANS: NO. 13]

MDLLE. AUGUSTA [MARY ANNE] HOLMES

[Composer and Pianist, 1847-1903]

Interview at her residence in Paris by Jean Bernac

*It was a curious and striking coincidence that this composer, who has realized her happiest inspiration through her glorification of patriotism, has elected to live in a street that bears the name of another woman whose eloquent pen has ever been devoted to the burning questions of her country. And it is in this very flat in the Rue Juliette Lamber that I first made the acquaintance of Mdlle. Augusta Holmès. The features of the authoress of the "Montagne Noire" are too well known to require description, and it will suffice for me to mention that in her case the face of the autocrat — which is tempered by a sweet smile, the smile of the poet, and accompanied by a voice of surpassing charm — bears in every line the aspect of a personality predestined to struggle.*

"For I have had to struggle," she tells me, "both as a composer and a woman. Do not believe, whatever may be said, that the artistic career is more accessible to my sex. This is a grave error. The steps are infinitely more difficult, and the good fellowship, which helps so many artists, is in a way shut out from a woman who has the good — or the ill — luck to be born a musician! Ill, if the composer is obliged to live by her music, for how rarely can she live by it. She, who would be able, if circumstances were not unduly hard, to devote all her time to the Muse, is obliged to give lessons, to bother about fees, and, harried and tired out with this occupation, from which she can seldom withdraw herself, is further expected to produce a *work!* What a profession! I have never known a woman and but one man who could lead these two lives simultaneously, and he was my dear and illustrious master, César Franck."

"True, he was a genuine saint! He ignored all evil, and lived in retirement in a sort of hermitage in a distant quarter; and, after having spent the day imparting his marvellous teaching without a murmur, a recrimination, without the faintest expression of impatience, he returned to his home, straightway forgot everything, and heaven was thrown open to him whilst he dictated his 'Beatitudes,' which will always live as a unique monument of musical and religious grandeur. And since I have started talking to you of my revered master — the greatest French musician after Berlioz — let me add that he was unique even in his teaching. He never substituted his own way of thinking for that of his pupils. After having opened the highways to them, he left them entirely to their initiative. This is why those who attended his classes have no distinctive mark, although they profited immensely by his counsels. I knew him at Versailles, where I lived until 1870. I had worked previously with M. Henri Lambert, organist at the Cathedral; but my veritable musical career dates from Cesar Franck."

“My family — Irish on my father’s side and Scotch on my mother’s — in no way intended me to devote myself to music. My poor mother, indeed, could not endure it. They would rather have directed my tastes towards painting, if they had thought at all of my embracing a professional career. I learned to draw and paint, and this knowledge has stood me in good stead. I have thus been enabled to sketch my own ideas for costume and scenery for my different works. But it was music that attracted me. In Paris, where I was born, where I have always lived, and where, in about 1874, I was officially naturalized, I passed — forgive me the expression, since it is in current use — as an infant musical prodigy! I already occupied myself with composition. At a concert given at the Hotel de Ville, under the direction of Baron Haussmann, I made public a ‘Chanson de la Caravane’ with choruses, which incited Padeloup to observe, ‘That little girl will make her way.’”

*“What was your first published work?”*

“My first melody, published when I was fourteen, was ‘La Chanson du Chamelier.’ These were the only examples of my work in which I did not write my own words. Since then, I have always written my own poems. Strange to relate, I have no musical ideas unless I proceed in this manner. It is a special gift, and I say it with no intention of praising myself, for it is an inborn characteristic.”

“When I write a poem, I vaguely hear the music which I afterwards set to it, and with regard to the composition of my melodies, I sing, and the words simultaneously place themselves in my themes. This, by the way, was the method of the ancient bards, which faculty was, perhaps (who knows ?) handed down to me by one of my ancestors, the bard, Henry of Huntingdon. Moreover, verse is the great lever of my work. For example, for the ‘Pays Bleu,’ a purely symphonic production, I wrote poetry merely for the purpose of helping me, and without any intention of publication. And if verse is a lever for me, the piano is the spring-board to my composition. I do not compose at the piano, but to coax my inspiration I seat myself before the instrument. I need to intoxicate myself with sound and melody. Do not believe — however stoutly individuals may maintain it — that any composer dispenses entirely with the piano. It is incorrect. What is bad, really bad, is to make use of the piano and write at the same time.”

“But to come back to myself — since you insist on putting me in the confessional — when I have attained the necessary degree of inspiration I listen to my themes, and if one appears feasible, I retain it, in order to make use of it at a future date. When a ‘motif’ once gets into my brain, it is indelibly fixed there, nor, once arrested, is it necessary for me to see it again or correct it. Thus I have arrived at being able to write two whole acts entirely from memory. Look” — and Mdlle. Holmes reached a volume from her bookcase — “here is the original manuscript of the ‘Montagne Noire.’ You can see for yourself there is not a single erasure or amendment. Well, almost all my copy-books are similar.”

*I interrogated Mdlle. Holmès concerning her different works.*

“After ‘Lutèce’ a dramatic symphony, and ‘Pologne’ which is purely orchestral, I presented myself at the ‘Concours de la Ville de Paris,’ with a dramatic symphony ‘Les Argonautes.’ I had nine votes against eleven. The first prize was awarded to ‘La Tempête’ by Alphonse Duvernoy, and the ‘ex-acquis’ was taken by Guiraud for ‘Le Paradis Perdu.’ Two votes debarred me from acquiring the first distinction, and a single one for the ‘ex-acquis’ prize. I consoled myself for this check by laying the flattering unction to my soul that St. Saëns, Massenet, César Franck, Octave Fouque, Lascoux, Benjamin Godard, Lamoureux, Colonne, and Emile Perrin had voted in my favour. I had against me M. Herold, Préfet de la Seine, Ambroise Thomas, and the Municipal Councillors. But these were not the only tribulations that lay in wait for my unfortunate score. After asking for a grant to defray the expenses of its public performance — which was denied me — I had to submit to rebuffs at the hands of many publishers. One day, having almost renounced the idea of publication, I was passing the establishment of M. Grus, whom I scarcely knew. I walked in on the chance, and asked, without any preamble, if he would undertake the publication of my work? What was my surprise when he replied simply, ‘Why not?’ He then took my symphony, published it, and, further, submitted it to Padeloup, who liked it as soon as he had read it through. The latter had it performed at his concert on the 24th of April, 1881, and it achieved, I may say without false modesty, an immense success.”

“An incident in connection with this has remained imprinted on my memory as an example of the devotion of which artists are sometimes capable. Madame Rose Caron, then at the outset of her career, was to sing one of the principal parts in my work. At the last rehearsal I remarked that she looked much agitated, as if burdened by some pre-occupation. I interrogated her, and she told me her child was very ill. Very naturally I offered to replace her, but this she would not hear of. Two days later, the hour had come for ‘Les Argonautes’ to be produced. All my interpreters were present, and in the excitement of this first public production I forgot the incident. Rose Caron surpassed herself, and was received with well-merited applause. The piece finished, everyone was congratulating everyone else, and I proceeded to thank my singers, when, on approaching Rose Caron, I saw that she was deathly pale under the inevitable make-up. Then the remembrance flashed on me, and uneasily I said, ‘And your child?’ In a voice, the sound of which I can never forget, she answered as in a dream, ‘He died yesterday, madame, but I could not mar the success of your work!’ Since that day my friend, Rose Caron, has known that she can always depend on me to stand by her as staunchly as she stood by me under such tragic circumstances.”

“After ‘Les Argonautes,’ I composed successively ‘Irlande,’ ‘Les Sept Ivresses,’ a collection of melodies, ‘Vision de Sainte Therese,’ a ‘Veni Creator,’ ‘Ludus pro Patria,’ after the admirable picture by Puvis de Chavannes, and then the ‘Ode Triomphale.’”

“For ten years I had cherished the project of creating a patriotic work executed by great choral and orchestral masses. I will tell you how my idea was realized. The anniversary of 1789 presented itself, and funds were voted for popular fêtes and banquets to take place; but there was no talk of anything novel in the spectacular line. I thought the moment was ripe to make known my views, and I proceeded to pay a visit to Joffrin, the Paris deputy. The idea fascinated him, and he introduced me to Alphand, the great municipal organiser. The latter instantly adopted my project, and devoted to it the entire three hundred thousand francs which had been voted as a subsidy for the fêtes, on account of the novelty it presented. You must remember the gigantic representations given at the Palais de l’Industrie, which was transformed into the auditorium? The orchestra comprised three hundred musicians, directed by Colonne, and in addition to the supers there were over nine hundred choristers on the stage. Four performances of the ‘Ode [Triomphale]’ took place; the first was given for notabilities, the second for school children, while the third was a free performance for the people. The last was supplementary, with admission by payment, the proceeds, which were given for the relief of the sufferers from the floods in Antwerp, amounting to 90,000 francs.”

“The year following, the Committee of the fêtes to be given in honour of Beatrice and Dante wrote me from Florence to ask if a French voice might be included to participate in the cause of concord. It was thus that I composed the ‘Hymne à la Paix,’ that was executed at the Politeama, under the direction of Contrucci. I was recalled eighteen times on the stage! Returning from Italy, I composed the symphony the ‘Pays Bleu,’ which I have previously mentioned to you, but which I again allude to in order to mention a matter that I consider rather original. For the first time, and contrary to the usual custom, I had a violin and violoncello duet, accompanied by a choir singing with closed lips. The attempt met with great success at the Colonne Concerts, where it was given.”

“As for my melodies for the voice and piano, I have written almost a hundred, the first of which appeared under my pseudonym, *Hermann Zenta*. ‘Noël!’ ‘Les Griffes d’Or,’ ‘Sérénade Printanière,’ ‘La Belle du Roy,’ are among the most popular ones.”

*An autographed portrait of Richard Wagner attracted my attention.*

“I had an interview with the Master,” said Mdlle. Holmès, “in 1869, and it took place at Triebchen, near Lucerne. Hans Richter undertook the introduction. I shall never forget my first impression when Wagner appeared to my father and myself. He wore a cap and a long black velvet dressing-gown, and round his throat was a necktie of orange velvet! Richter wanted me to sing Erda’s song out of the ‘Rheingold’ to the author of ‘Parsifal.’ You can imagine my emotion, especially as Richter had told me, ‘If Wagner does not care for the music he hears, he goes away!’”

“I commenced. The Master beat the time; then, when I had finished, he shook me by the hand, and — walked out of the room! I thought this was to be the end of our acquaintance, but the same evening Richter took us again to Wagner’s house, and I let him hear one of my melodies — ‘Nox Amor,’ I think. When I had concluded, Wagner said to me, in bad French, ‘Sing me something else of your own.’ I commenced ‘l’Hymne au Soleil,” and at the close Wagner embraced me, and congratulated my father, taking his hand, and ejaculating ‘Bon Papa!’”

“He impressed upon me emphatically not to imitate him; yet this is the very reproach that a critic — himself under the influence of Wagner — levelled at my music, the day after the production of ‘La Montagne Noire’ at the Opera. This is unjust, for, whilst patronising the modern orchestration, I still wish to keep it subordinate, so that the vocal part retains the preponderance.”

*I questioned Mdlle. Holmes concerning her future projects.*

“For the moment I am thinking about the ‘Montagne Noire,’ and should like to have my opera mounted on some large lyric stage — for example, in London — where Alvarez, who created my first role with the magnificent success that the Press unanimously accorded him, could again win golden opinions for his glorious voice and great talent: but,” Mdlle. Holmès adds, with a smile, “I do not only live in the contemplation of my last work, I am busily preparing others!”

“There is ‘La Belle Ronserose,’ a lyric conception in three acts, of which the scenario is already completed; ‘Le fils d’Olivier,’ a lyrical drama, founded on scenes belonging to the time of Charlemagne, and others of which the ideas are not completely ripe.”

*Mdlle. Holmès has not yet made up her mind whether she will commence with her heroic drama, or ‘La Belle Ronserose,’ which pertains to Fairyland; but I am inclined to believe that the latter work will first see the glare of the footlights.*