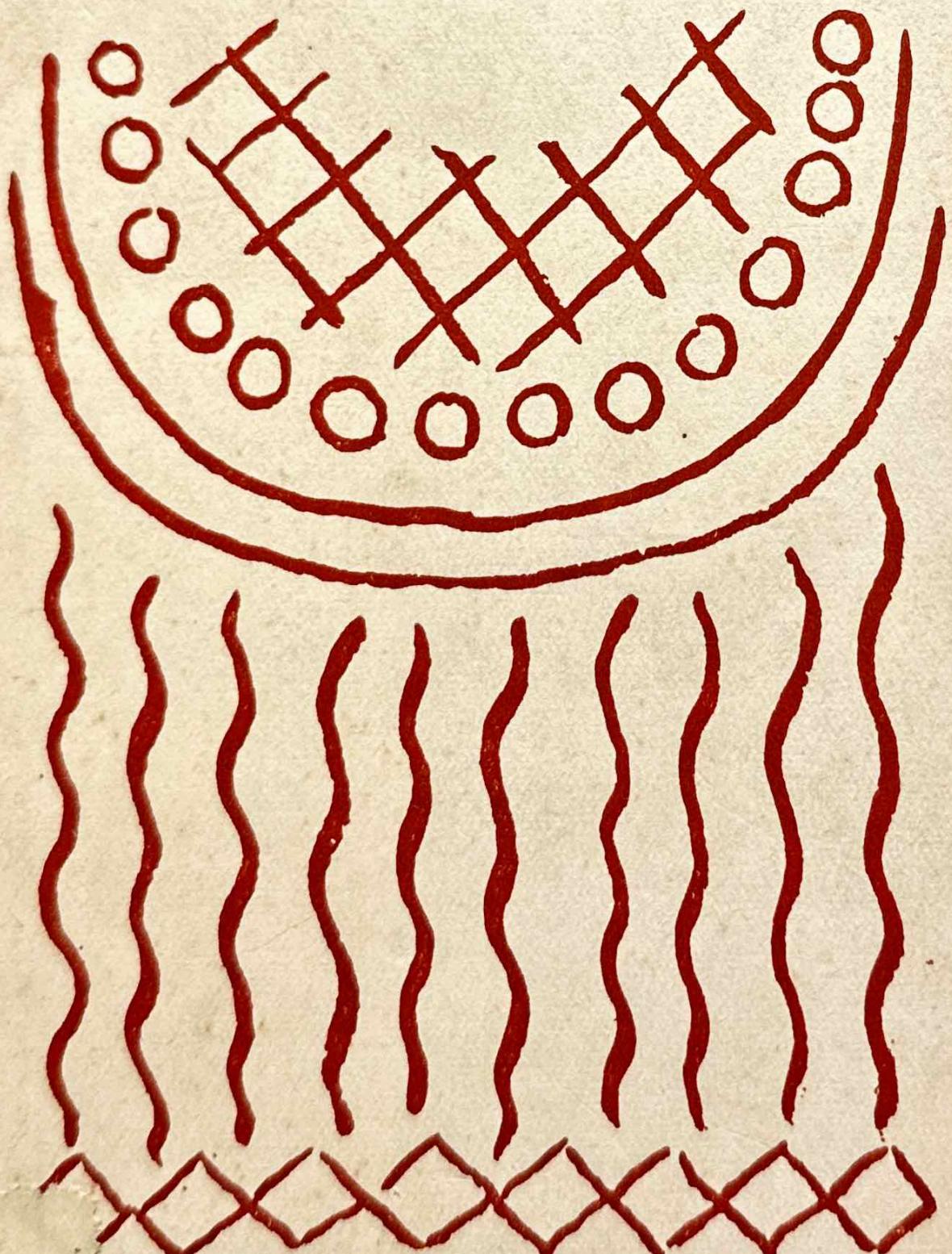


The Enjoyment of Music

Basil de Selincourt



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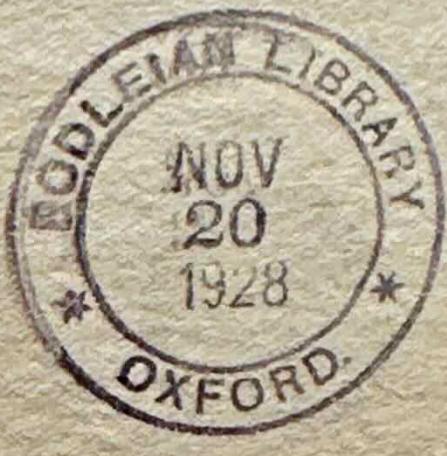
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THE ENJOYMENT OF MUSIC

THERE is pleasure in writing of the enjoyment of music; for numbers of people really do enjoy it. What other joy has life that is at once so enlivening and so enduring? Dr Johnson denied that a man could be completely happy unless he were drunk. Music is not afraid even of that comparison. Its intoxicating pleasures are better than those of common intoxication because they release better faculties; they bring discovery, not forgetfulness; they reveal a world which remains when they are gone. Milton's description of poetry, the "simple, sensuous, passionate," belongs more properly to music; for music is as sweet to sense as sugar

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to a child. But of many advantages that hearing has over taste, the chief is an insatiable appetite; here quantity and quality for once have called a truce. The charm of a note of music comes of the roundness and singleness of tone which fit it to mingle with other notes in a melody; the charm of a melody turns to ravishment when two melodies are heard together. The palate discriminates and is satisfied; the ear discriminates that it may combine. The pure note has the simplicity of the seed, a microscopic point of life, inviting development, implicating the world. It fascinates by its mysterious faculty of attraction, expansion, transformation.

Our satisfaction in this delight is clouded when we reflect that we do not wholly possess it. Why is this essay written in a mist, why are not the elements of music clear and familiar to us all? We were all taught the difficult accomplishments of speaking and read-

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ing, but never to distinguish sounds, to recognise their musical relations, to construct the scale. Therefore, although we may have learned how music comes by its forms and phrases, though we may feel their meaning, they are a foreign language to us. We are like nursery children, understanding the gist of what is said to us, unable to say a word for ourselves. If we are to possess music, if there is to be an end of the pitiable mute groping which passes for possession nowadays, the seeds of sensibility must be planted in us in childhood, and the tender plant fostered that it may grow in us as we grow.

It is strange that the musical alphabet is not generally taught; for it has singular beauty, exercises the mind in science and in art at once, is not, on its mathematical side, so dull or so difficult as arithmetic, and can teach us, as we acquire it, something of the sympathy and compensations which are the source

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of harmony in all created things. The Greeks, who only surmised what music might become, imagining a perfection of which they never found the key, saw in it a value for education to which we, with the perfect instrument in our hand, are blind. We fill our children's heads with knowledge that other people have lived on, and have no time left for a knowledge which is life itself. But this is being changed; and in the meantime there is consolation in reflecting that music, unpossessed, can still be enjoyed.

Indeed, as things go, the unmusical often seem to enjoy it more and judge it better than the musical. It was much the same with literature before literature was the world's. When books are rare, mere reading is a virtue, and standards of excellence are accepted which common sense would disown. A book will be valued because it is difficult or has been very often read. Specialisation breeds pedantry, and specialisation

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is even more stifling to music than to literature; since literature, describing the world, invites its judgment, while music, describing nothing, is at the mercy of those who have nothing but music in their heads. The curious ornithologist does not hear the robin's song for wondering whether the bird is a cock or a hen; the connoisseur distinguishes Bach from Handel in the first bar and goes on distinguishing to the end of the piece. We, who are less engrossed, can be more impartial; we receive music into a context and divine its meaning by what we have discerned of the meaning of all else. However musical we become, that will still be our most fruitful occupation.

In all experience the value of what we receive depends on the value of what we bring. Sound is a summons to attention, a blow on the head. It presupposes a mind dwelling elsewhere. The blind, quickest at discriminating

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one blow from another, are the last to understand where the blows come from; their sense of significance lacks the broadening, corroborating influence of the visible world. Many a renowned composer is in the same predicament. His genius for interthreading sound with sound possesses him until he breathes and feeds for that alone, and instead of a poet becomes a weaver.

The roots of musical susceptibility strike deep, as we see in the familiar reactions of the animals. The horse trembles at the bugle-call, the snake is charmed by the flute, the dog whines and sickens when the violin is played; and birds, whose life is music, have a general code, warning and calling to one another in significant notes which need no interpreter. Men have lost these primitive reactions. Business, culture itself, obliges them to specialise, and nature's wholeness disappears. Yet the faculty, however deeply buried, never

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dies; the corpse turns in the grave. The extreme Victorian gloried in the crude resolution of his German bands; and, to this day, when in church or chapel the hymn is sung, the raw voices, the distempered organ, wrest sweetness from the sweetness of the hour. Blake never forgot the singing of the Charity School children, massed under the high dome of Paul's, when "like a mighty wind they raised to heav'n the voice of song"; and his contemporary, Haydn, noted in his diary: "I was more touched by this innocent and reverent music than by any I ever heard in my life." He was listening with the native ear, and found his art close beside him, because he so little expected to find it there.

I took my gramophone into the woods one romantic summer morning and played Strauss's *Morgen*, with Elizabeth Schumann singing, under a beech-tree's shade. A pair of pigeons were cooing

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in an oak near by, the air was mild, and intermittent drops of rain were forming and falling like a dew. So trance-like was this music in such a setting, that a farmer, passing with his dray along the adjacent high-road, stopped to listen, and moved away reluctantly when it was done; he must have supposed that the trees had regained their voices and the Dryades come back! And how much did he apprehend of the dropping melody as it floated between the leaves and mixed its radiance with theirs? His mind, a vague hum of country sight and sound, a hedgerow tangle, was of a sudden smitten and invaded by achieved serenity; he heard

the unexpressive nuptial-song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.

Not that he followed the music: the words were German, the melody threads its way between the accompanying instruments, the sound flowed through

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him, effacing itself as it went. Yet the suspicion of an unearthly presence broke the crust of his thought, significant in the very fact that it was unseizable, by its remoteness piercing him. Never again could the summons be so imperative, never could it fall on hungrier soil. It is part of the art of listening to cultivate a hunger; when we most need music, it most comes home to us.

I say the art of listening, for listening is, necessarily, an art. How are we to focus attention, to fix ourselves and hold our own in this transparent, undulating medium, how shall we reach down and seize those mystic shapes of changing colour that strew the ocean floor? Pray first for relaxation, leisure. Music has nothing to say to a man with an appointment. It is a holiday pastime, powerless unless permitted, unless invited, to repeat itself. Unfolded in time, it comes upon us like the rising tide, wave after wave, the encroaching

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rim continually nearer, till on a sudden we look round and find shining water where lately there was barren sand. Duration is the first quality of musical pleasure; the most endearing movements do not close-pack their ecstasy, they sustain and prolong it. The pleasure of watching a machine at work is in its swift accomplishment; the mere revolution of wheels in emptiness would be depressing. The pleasure of watching a stream is in its infinite contentedness; we are rocked by the charm of the water and made one with it. In music, similarly, we begin with an element whose very being is delight; we rest in this delightfulness, we long for its continuance.

The medium, then, is pleasure. Musical sound satisfies the ear, charms it to attention; and the secret of the charm is that it admits no extraneous disturbance, that it evokes no image, suggests no object—that all the signs

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point inwards. The sounds of the natural world, the cries of animals, are like dramatic gestures, with a concentrated meaning which they instantly declare; they convey as they fly an image of the circumstances that evoked them; they are representative and therefore unmusical. They could not concentrate meaning unless sound were a natural means for conveying it; but their aim is to pass from sound to meaning. The aim of music is to dwell upon the meaning in sound. The listener's attitude is a meditative, trance-like elation; he has no desire of communication with the world; his mind has discerned an element in which it can move unhindered and commune with itself.

Whether music is rational because we understand it, or we rational because we understand music, let philosophers decide. What is certain is that every note has its affinities and antagonisms, and

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that we can feel and enjoy their strife and amity as we hear them, however little we may know of its cause. Curiously enough, the sound we have called "single," meaning by that "not mixed of different kinds," reveals, as we closely listen to it, in its seeming singleness a composite nature. We find that it carries within it reduced images of itself, like the great waves at sea, crisp every one of them with little waves of the same pattern. The scale in music is an association of these derivative notes, these lesser waves. Each has its direct or secondary relation to a founder. The remoter the kinship, the more urgent the desire for reunion. In simple melody the founder, the key-note, comes first and last, the point we set out from is the point to which we are led back; but its place in the procession is immaterial; its influence is paramount everywhere; it is the centre and source of all significance.

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To measure the range of the musical vehicle we must further reflect that every note of the scale can be a founder in its turn, and that the scale it founds need not repeat the notes of the old one. Then every note of these new scales founds other scales, and so on, in unending series. Coil upon coil, we are launched on a perspective of vanishing refinement; what shall we do with this throng of candidates for discrimination when we have but five fingers on each hand? An infinite series of notes is a temptation and a nuisance; we want something that we can control. It was the achievement of the greatest of musicians to confront and solve this problem. By delicate manipulation of nature and cunning persuasion of the ear, Bach coaxed the serpent to swallow its tail, fixing twelve rungs at equal distances on the ladder, and proving them equally trustworthy by trusting them equally himself. These are the

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makeshift notes we find on the piano. Their meaning is intensified by their relation to a reality which partially eludes them, but which they substantially express. The pianist "holds infinity in the palm of the hand" with a vengeance, and has tamed the infinity he holds.

Significance, we saw, turns, in a melody, on the changing stresses of the notes as they are drawn to a common centre. Their gradated attractions do not follow the order of high and low, they expose more personal affinities; their meaning is directly felt. Its gradations announce themselves so clearly that we do not think of measuring them or even of inquiring how to do so. But then, as the musical design expands, confusion invades our souls. Appeals are made to feeling which imply the retention and possession of previous appeals, and the intellect interferes, explaining and tabulating our impressions by standards of its own. For pleasure's sake, the

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problem of attention, the listener's problem, must be tackled a little more closely: on what principle are melodies combined with melodies, what cohesive power has music, enabling its meanings still to grow? The truth is that we now find between melody and melody the stress, the pull, which we previously found between single notes; but the stresses are concealed from most of us because the span of attention implied in them is very wide. We have now subsidiary gravitational centres dependent on the chief, we have groups of notes, each with their own system, drawn towards the main system group-wise. In music, one might say, as in architecture, all weight comes ultimately to ground; only in music, where the ground is the key, there is as much building below ground as above it. So, in order to follow the developing stresses which constitute a great design in music and convey the meaning, we must cul-

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tivate the sense of what is called "tonality," the sense of the gravitational level; to understand a composition, we must distinguish the levels it employs and appreciate their equilibrium in its quality and in its symmetry.

A specially lucid and convincing illustration may be seen in the first movement of Beethoven's Pastoral Sonata. Beethoven first establishes the meditative atmosphere he wants by gently thrumming the key-note for twenty-four bars. The exposure of the floor-level becomes, in this way, a feature of principal interest in the lay-out of the design. Then, at the critical point of furthest departure from the level and vital return to it (*circa* bar 220), he persistently and emphatically thrums another note, proclaiming for nearly forty bars another level—sheer waste of labour, should he convince us, should we accept this level as our true foundation. But that we have not accepted

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it is proved by our delight in the simple release he contrives, when a door opens and in two steps we are delivered from the ominous crypt and restored to daylight and tranquillity.

The point is this: that as, in a melody, our ear measures the sounds by their relation to the key-note and is not satisfied till they flow back at last to their source, so, in a composition, with its different sections in different keys, we still feel (however little we know or can explain the feeling) one consistent, comprehensive pull, revealed to us as change follows change by varying degrees of relief or embroilment, by images as of departure and return, by movements of surprise, refusal, suspense, anticipation, victory; and it needs to be dwelt upon, because a change of key is often so pleasing as sheer sensation that we may easily suppose the sensation to be its object. Sometimes we should be right; modulation is sometimes the

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mere prolongation of pleasure. But pleasure itself depends on structure; the pleasure which comes at a moment of change lives and lasts by what we have changed *from*, by what we change *to*; the body of it still implies those related planes, that single anchorhold, the level restored where it has been abandoned, or abandoned in order to be restored.

Take a second example from Schubert's Trio in B \flat , which, thanks to the gramophone, has become public property. What influence gives the first chord of that second melody its lulling richness and the whole its luxury of peace? The piano, you recollect, runs up a chromatic scale and passes its top note to the 'cello, which holds the note and prolongs it in solitary reverie; then comes the change, with the sense of a new level taken, or rather with a sense not so much of the new as of the necessary; for the level we are launched

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upon is the level we were waiting for, the level we required. On reflection, or, better still, if we play the movement over from the beginning, we find that the passage preceding the change is a deliberate preparation for it; we have been, literally, "keyed up"; with gathering severity and agitation in the chords and arpeggios, the tonality has been lifted step by step, from F to C, from C to G, from G to D, from D to A, and at A it has remained just long enough to give the ear some illusion of a repose there. But there can be no true repose in the key of A when the piece is in B \flat ; as well wear a poppy on primrose day. We long for the extinction of the irrelevant spot of hectic brightness; it is because the new chord smooths the disturbance away that we find it so delicious, so assuaging.

The charm of pure sound, the mystery of the relation of one sound to another, their concealed meanings, are naturally

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the first things to attract the mind as it meditates upon the pleasures of music or calls on memory to renew them. Yet they are not really the beginning. There would be no music but for a more fundamental influence, shared by sound with the being that perceives it, separable from it as the frame of the loom from the woven tissue: rhythm. Sound itself is simply the condensation of a series of rhythmical vibrations into an image; a note is a pulse, a system of sympathetic pulses, all so rapid that our minds cannot count the movements, can only register the results. Rhythm runs everywhere, everywhere translating motion into perception or into power. Sight is rhythm as well as hearing, life as well as light. The atom is a power-scale with, for key-note, an invisible sun. The pure tone of music is a symphony, melody and harmony are the unravelling, the augmentation, the adaptation to our sense of forces implicit

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wherever sound is heard. So, in submitting sound to rhythm, we do but plunge it a second time in the fountain of its birth, and there is no room for surprise if the impact of music upon the soul provokes thoughts of hidden identities, breeds a presentiment that the forms of death and life are one, touches us with awe as before disembodied spirit or in the suspected presence of a ghost. For the power that possesses it, possesses us. It exists by dividing time and so do we. A piece of music is a note's adventure, its life, growth, death; our sympathy is directly elicited; we are in the same case. Music is called imitative, "most imitative"; but its bond with us is closer than any imitation. Its meanings move from within outwards like our own, evoking analogies, not depending on them. Its essence penetrates the world, for it is underivative, a part of the original creation.

Is it because of this ultimate affiliation

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of rhythm with life that the simplest exposure of the rhythmical frame of a composition is often associated with the most haunting musical effects, so that the throb of the melodies will remain with us, colourless yet convincing, when their sounds are gone? Beethoven begins his Violin Concerto with five soft strokes on the drum. There are no two bars of common time that cannot be accommodated to that figure. But he endows it with penetrating individuality, and instead of using it to support or introduce the melodies, as one might expect, uses the melodies themselves to establish and perpetuate the surprising tyranny of this "one, two, three, four, five." In Schubert's famous C major Symphony two of the movements develop, diversify, and vitalise rhythmical motives which, in description, sound even balder. The pastoral Andante, which seems to muse and saunter, indolent and tireless, like

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a stream in enchanted meadows, sustains itself upon a reiteration of two crotchet-beats, as if it were the stream that spoke and said: "I flow on, because my banks contain me." The impetuous finale draws its range from its rhythm still more decisively. Its "one, two, three, four" rocks and dominates the sense with an insatiable, joyous eagerness, measuring the miles traversed or to be traversed like the wheels of some great continental express for ever journeying westward.

The importance of rhythm in music is paramount; it links the musical with the unmusical, if indeed anything can in the last resort be called unmusical; and in view of this universality of its operation, an amateur may be allowed to make a practical remark. There are two attitudes to rhythm among musicians, both grounded on the observation that its basis is a uniformity,—which one respects, the

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other conceals. Now, in Nature, of which music is a part, uniformity never palls; her staying power is inconceivable; her great effects are given by a fringe of the variable thrown against oceanic immensities which never change. Restless humanity is apt to forget the ocean and imitate the ripple on the shore. The genius of rhythm, therefore, is with that musician who feels in each bar, as it passes, its identity with the other bars with which it is in series, and is chary of tampering with the continuity which is one of the conditions of his structural span. Of course, there is no rhythm without living appreciation of what is unique in the passing bar; but every blade of grass has its uniqueness; and so, though rhythm is life, though life is change, the true translation of these facts into music demands massive regularity in the measure qualified by a variability continuous, yet almost imperceptible.

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Music is separated from most of us by a barrier formed of the hypnotic influence of words. Because its meanings do not take the verbal channel, we allow ourselves to doubt their authenticity, much as people doubt also the speaking expression of a dog, though it says what he means more convincingly than any words could say it. This is a vice of habit. Words convey our meanings so commonly that meaning becomes for us something that words convey. Yet what are words but shadows? The intent mind flies ahead of them. The mechanical inventor thinks in materials, resistances, velocities, grasping an un-made fact which words can describe only when he has made it, as the map shows where the river runs. Musical thought is, in the same way, synthetic, creative; with the combinations it discovers the mind penetrates fields of reality unknown before. Knowing them, we can talk of them, can trace the course they

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have taken, finding, as we do so, what blundering things words are. But the main fact is that a fresh spring is rising, that the river of life has gained a tributary.

The listener's first care, therefore, must be to throw off the verbal chain; and curiously enough, programme music helps some people to do this, since it is music which half accepts the chain, half slips it, and so suggests to them, in their unhappy captivity, what slipping it means. The pitfall of such music is not that it leads us to search for the kind of significance which we find in events or ideas or accounts of them; but that it leads us to expect music to build up its significance in a historical or poetical order, instead of in its own. Words range among familiar topics, they assume a known world. Music assumes nothing, it unfolds a world out of a note. That is why the phrases come back and come back in constant

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repetition. Repetition is to music as the leaves and branches to the tree. The life of the tree, entering into every leaf, gives all one pattern, and as the power of it drives here and there to open the leaves on this and that side to the light, new shapes appear of corresponding branches, the new still sympathetic with the old. So the tree grows on, lifted gradually higher, reaching out with knitted power in broader expanse, building ever upon itself. Music has the same vital identities and continuities.

Programme music, which is half land, half water, hinders rather than helps a voyager to the manner born. It is a derivation from secondary associations, it abandons pure feeling, the natural mould of sound, for people who have had feelings or objects which have occasioned them, and follows, in its course, the accidental adventures of the people and the objects instead of the

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organic development of the feeling itself. But in all our activities the mind gravitates to what is most comprehensive; it will not accept the less when it can have the greater. Obviously the nexus of a programme means the narrowing, the restriction, to one interpretation of a material susceptible of many; to use philosophic jargon, it is the particularisation of a universal. Where music would present the "idea," the programme singles out a special case, and from a succession of such cases makes a chain of which singularity is the thread. It is a defect of vocal music that the words are often a mere thread on which a series of musical suggestions is strung. That never happens when the theme suits the composer; the words then fall into their place as a singularity which the music illuminates and encloses. Programme music is song without words; the conditions of success and failure are the same as in song.

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But since there are no words, the music must hang together of itself, in spite of the dislocating suggestions; and, for this, it must have structure of a kind no programme can give it. In fact, when it succeeds, it does not substitute imitations for coherence, but combines the two, presenting the argument and the exemplification in a breath. *Till Eulenspiegel*, described by Strauss as a rondeau, is packed with the most spirited and ingenious thematic transformations; the same succession of intervals supplies half a dozen different tunes; one never knows in what form or combination to expect them next. That suits the character to be portrayed, and it also makes portrayal possible by providing a musical framework into which fantastic irrelevancies can be introduced without disjointing it.

The order of events in music differs from the order of events in time, because in time events occasion feelings, whereas

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in music the feelings are the events. The second movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony being a funeral march, we are sometimes told that the hero dies between the first movement and the second, and that in the third and fourth he must be dead. The scherzo is compared to the light music with which military bands "blow away the cobwebs," and the finale is called an apotheosis. Of course, composers, even the greatest, constantly use programmes, knowing that they have got music, a totally different thing from attempting, as the crowd and even as some critics do, to get music by using programmes. The scherzo is certainly a relief after the march, but what kind of relief? There is no music in mere contrast; the elements contrasted must converge, must contribute to some single perception. What seems cobweb-light in the scherzo is really compact of fire and fury; mourning is gone

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but not heroism; the tragedy of life has been plumbed, the flame of resolution burns more fiercely; and that nothing is forgotten we know when in the Trio the horns prolong their last meditative note and bring back all that the dead march has said. Then the finale—how hard it is to end a work! The listener's attention is in decline, but the claims of the music are still rising. An accumulation of experience must now be rounded off, released; the vessel which has been built must be launched; the long-riveted mind demands its liberating reassurance. We feel all this the more at the end of the *Eroica*, because the movement does not wholly satisfy us; a failure is easier to analyse than a success. The sense of easy mastery in its chief theme is not the ease of heroic achievement. Beethoven had a fancy for this tune and overlooked its limitations. It gives him happy scope for the farewell to

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energy, when he breaks it up into its parts and sets one to chase another; but the farewell to tragedy and the transcending of tragedy are also attempted, and these fail.

If the *Eroica* can help us to disentangle the musical from the historical, the subtler differences between the musical and the literary may be illustrated in another symphony, where again the “programme” had its influence, but in a more poetical way: that Fifth Symphony, in which fate and free will meet like blazing comets caught from opposing fields of heaven into the influence of one sun. Volumes might be written about the first movement alone, but the crux is yet again in the scherzo. When it begins we have already had two profound and complementary experiences. A defiant display of Promethean force has been followed by a long lyrical expression of devotional acquiescence. To carry us still for-

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ward, our minds must be satisfied with a subtler, our feelings with a more searching, appeal; that is the musical situation. So, in the scherzo, the thought of fate, instead of assaulting, steals over us, like darkness in a solitary place. Hardly has its eeriness possessed us before the stillness is broken by a trumpet-call, and at last a spirit of boisterousness and drollery invades the scene. What is the connection between these motives? what common element makes them one? To describe them in words is merely to emphasise their differences. The first has been compared to the passes of the mesmerist, the third to the gambolling of elephants, the second in its defiance recalls the knock of fate. To find their kinship we must abandon metaphors of imitation and view them from within instead of from without. Associations of resemblances are a poetical expedient; music takes us straight to the reality by

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evoking one after another the feelings which the reality would evoke. The first reaction to eeriness is self-assurance, as we see in the cock who crows when he is afraid to prove that he is not so; the second is diversion, as when animals that do not love the dark grow playful as darkness comes on, to escape the sense of the uncanny. It is upon psychological affinities as deep and elemental as these that the music of the scherzo is built up. The second and third themes corroborate the first, the three together complete the suggestion of a mystical, a "numinous" presence, and deepen the suspense out of which the triumph-song of the finale is suddenly to be hurled. There we see again the intoxication of the musical wind-off displacing in the composer's mind something of the intimacy, the profundity, the splendour of his assembled forces. Its majestic masterfulness has a flavour of the impetuous, the exu-

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berant, the careering; its exultant crash and dash have their moments of inadequacy.

In early days the severer problems of construction and interpretation did not exist, since music was only known as accompanying some kind of action. A glove has a peculiar but not a perplexing shape; it fits the hand. So with the old music; its forms were dance forms, it meant what the dance meant. The dance was figured, the music followed the pattern, sustaining and decorating it with a meditative comment, and gradually the attractions of the comment outweighed those of the dancing. When the revellers paused to listen, instrumental music was born. It did not cease to be a dance though hand and glove had parted company, though the actors and the actions were withdrawn. The mind was now the threshing-floor; the old boundaries were gone. But the sense of a ritual remained; for how

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could lyrical expression live without it? and ritual implies a theatre, an occasion, a celebration, a temple, a divinity. So music, the service in the temple, had now to build the shrine and reveal the god.

Behind our enjoyment there is always that problem lurking: whose is the temple? what are the rites? Our delight is incomplete till we can tell ourselves what we are delighting in; and lest it should seem fatuous for a man to be happy and not know why, let us remind ourselves that it is our usual condition. Musical pleasure is a direct contact with reality, like seeing a fresh face; and how many of us when we see a face see the man behind it? Music made itself known at first, even to its composers, by association with other things they knew, conventionally; the deeper impulse, which bade it grow like a tree and unfold form and meaning out of itself, was a slow divination of the

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most original minds. We need not be downcast, therefore, if it is not always easy to follow them; part of the difficulty comes of the very nature of sound in itself. Its quick pliability, its faithfulness to feeling, lead us to suppose that it can take any form that feeling takes, and we forget that hearing is but one form of feeling and that the physical conditions impose their rules. Sound has its natural limitations. We must love it for what it is, as we love water in rain or sea or fountain, or as we love fire, each beautiful, each limited in beauty. Music indeed is elemental, revealing the inapprehensible as the garment reveals its wearer, assuring us of living goodness by the perfection of its actuality. It is elemental, it is *one* element. If we examine snow under the microscope, we find that every crystal has its design, in each a melody is caught and frozen, none repeats another, all are as intricately decorated,

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as reciprocating as a fugue. None repeats another, but all are hexagonal. Sound, like the snow, has its will, and it is the first part of musical invention to discover that will and of musical enjoyment to delight in it. Then upon this first discovery and delight, a second is grafted, proceeding from expression, speech. The patterns of the snow mean everything and nothing. Into the patterns of sound, as the mind reconstitutes them, flow the qualities of the individual in whose mind they are born. They have essential rationality, they have also their personal interpretation of the rational. Mind made them, or what made them made mind—put it as you will. And now in them the mind returns upon itself. The mind that is coming to be communes through music with the mind that is.

The passage from derivative to essential form is well illustrated in the fugue, which was vocal in origin and may be

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said to represent the reaction of music against that restlessness which drives words to forsake one topic for another. "This sweet and merry month of May"—it is a theme for a symphony; but the poet moves on, "when nature wantons in her prime"; so the voices must move with him and start wantoning. Music resents such a subservience; it gives her no opportunity to deploy her powers; she invented the fugue to show how one phrase could link earth with heaven. To enjoy the fugue we must accept its convention. The fugue has its theme as the tree its leaf; and to object that, because the voices answer one another, the construction is pre-determined, is as if one should object to waterfalls because the water always falls down. The form of the fugue is imposed by the very nature of sound; the composer's problem is to use it expressionaly. Few succeed, because the material fabric of the fugue demands an

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expressional power proportioned to its complexity; which few can command. The fugue is concentrated expression, a consensus of melodies, each reinforcing the rest, all advancing and retreating under a common impulse; with every recurrence of the theme, the capacity for expression and the demand for it increase together. The only objection to the form, not exactly a musical one, is that it is too musical, that it keeps music too much to itself. The virtue of music lies in a reciprocating closeness and aloofness. Standing on its own feet, it measures the world and, its independence once assured, can afford to be accommodating. But the fugue insists on independence, and by its impassioned inter-knitting of ideal emotions carries the spirit away to hypothetical altitudes, with which it may never find any other means of contact.

The fugue is objected to by the un-

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musical because of its monotony of intricacy; another form inherently as musical as the fugue is objected to because of its monotony of simplicity: I mean the air and variations. Variations were at first merely ornamental, but it was soon perceived that the charm of the ornament was its comment upon the air, and in the end the air becomes, ideally, a kind of protoplasmic germ from which a universe of feeling is elicited. Whence we may draw this hint for listeners, that music knows no fixed significances. The same melody, differently delivered, is grave and gay; the phrase which at one moment meant joy, at the next means resignation. Words can only mark these transitions; their rise and fall, their ebb and flow in music have the fluctuating, progressive inconsistency of the waves and tides. Modern musical developments tend to favour that muddle of the literary mind which connects accumulating signifi-

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cance with range and change of reference, and substitutes for composition the splicing together of unfinished fragments in joints that will not hold. In the most satisfying forms, identity of idea is obvious and unquestionable, and its enjoyment fundamental and continuous. The man who does not like the variations which Mozart wrote when he was nine years old will never really like music; not that the magic of Mozart is in them, but that they lay the simple primaries side by side, like the colours of the rainbow. What after all are the most gorgeous pictures but a tempestuous confusion of those translucent bands? and what is music but the elaboration of a sound-spectrum just as clear? The trouble with the set melody is that it is often too highly fashioned, and so determines its decorative treatment, which, to be most musical, must be free. The fugue itself is an air with variations, an air so

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brief that it can be tossed from hand to hand like a ball. The sonata is an organic variation on two reciprocating or complementary melodies which, in certain high-wrought examples, are ultimately heard together. All music is variation upon an air.

The intensity and concentration of musical feeling compel at times the speculation whether to feel so much and so curiously is not a waste. Feeling is our bond with the universe. Does deep exploration of the shadow-world of sound enlarge our general interpenetration, or do we exhaust our energies on these phantoms? The question is partly moral; we all have our emotional, as we have our financial, resources and can no more spend our feeling than our money twice; but there is no law of adjustment, let every man look to his own affairs. The æsthetic aspect of the case, if less interesting, is more pertinent here. One of the more

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mysterious facts of history is the callous cruelty of our forefathers. And if, for the last century or so, a certain kind of obtuseness has been banished from society, we may be sure that the new sensibility is largely due to the circulation of experience through music, to the quickening of the imagination which music brings. Music keeps our susceptibilities at the high tension normally associated with love, and turns the brief insight of passion into a slow-penetrating, impersonal absorption. Who can doubt that love itself has gained as much in tenderness and abnegation as in radiance and ardour, since Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms shared their raptures with the world? Beethoven claimed for music and its transports an ultimate, a metaphysical message; and, of course, though sound has its idiosyncrasy, it cannot really be separable from anything else. The unity of the whole is in it, as the life is

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in every limb. All meaning is implicit in every movement of perception could we but pierce to it; the quality of the creative breath that made and sustains all is with us now. The revelation music brings is singularly close because it is essentially qualitative. When the great composers unfold the implications of sound, its powers and its affinities, releasing the storm or rebuking it at their will, they have passed the barrier which divides the artist from the prophet—we can use either name indifferently.

The channel of communion was wide at first and the conviction of the sacredness of the art natural and general; but by degrees this dedication was conventionalised till at last music came to be associated even in the popular mind with sickliness, with “uplift.” Secularisation was inevitable. Too long bent, the bow had to be unstrung. Jazz itself is tolerable when we see it to be

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necessary. It is a revolutionary infection, a bursting of fetters, the mind's refusal to be shut in with any presuming holiness. But alas! the mind, craving for freedom, can at best but choose its prison and sometimes turns from a sweet cell to a sour one. In any case, the authority of the revelation, as it first came, is unaffected by all our modern ingenuities. The discoveries of Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert show in what kind of world they felt themselves to be moving. Schubert specially convinces, because his nature was so full, his life given so lavishly to the simple pleasures. All he touched turned to music, yet when music possessed him it sustained him in an unearthly trance in which joy and pain are fused together. Schubert's adventurous mysticism becomes reflective in Brahms, whose work is cloying to many in its conscious application to a task they do not understand. But even

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religion can be sincere. The musician has reasons of his own for believing that God is love, and it is rash to rebuke him when he gives his life to the testimony.

Of all musical pleasures, making music is the best. Music is a dance of the mind, and, if many are content to sit out, it is because they have not felt the joy of authentic motion. The gramophone and other contrivances of the kind, in increasing our opportunities of hearing authoritative interpretations, must not be allowed to discourage singing and playing, nor lead us to mistake the order of the virtues in music and put technical proficiency too high. Music only lives as created experience, to be restored to life at each performance, and agile fingers or a flexible throat are no guarantee of understanding. Mastery of an instrument, high virtuosity, command wonder and awe, like the sublime in nature. But only among intimates can

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we respond intimately, forgetting the intoxications of display and discovering serener certitudes. To the world as we apprehend it our reply is an emotion, as the spirit reaches out towards its presentiment of truth. Music freely utters that searching presentiment, and we shall find the most sensitive discernment of the lines it follows among those who feel the world as we do. Nor is the enjoyment of music divided from other joys, though it soars above them. The song of life draws beauty and virtue from the life of which it is the song.



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