Eric Blom

SOME GREAT COMPOSERS



Oxford
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THIS BOOK

by a well-known music critic and musical editor, contains sketches of the lives of the great composers, and not studies of their work critically considered. It tries to show how much an artist's life is bound up with his work, and to present his creative efforts as being part of his human experience. Pure biography and pure criticism are apt to suggest that an artist's life is divided into two separate streams, and this is an attempt to remove that sense of a false division and to show the gifted individual's experience of life as a whole used in a certain and a public way. The composers considered are :

Purcell	Mozart	Chopin	Brahms
Handel	Beethoven	Schumann	Tchaikovsky
Bach	Schubert	Wagner	Dvořák
Haydn	Berlioz	Verdi	

Birmingham Post

". . It is refreshing to find a biographer who does not attempt to fill gaps with ingenious hypotheses, and dares to say that if there are mysteries about Handel's music, the greatest mystery is Handel himself. These studies, taken all in all, tell both what it is essential to know about the composers' lives and also what educated musicians of to-day think about them. . ."

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SOME GREAT
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SOME GREAT COMPOSERS

by

ERIC BLOM



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PURCELL

IN the world of music England is supposed to be a mere province. If she produces an indifferent composer or performer, that is regarded elsewhere as perfectly normal and natural; but if foreign students of musical history have to acknowledge a British musical genius, he is considered a freak.

Such a freak is Henry Purcell. Yet if we make a choice of fifteen of the world's musical classics, as here, we find that we cannot omit this English master. He presents himself inevitably as the earliest whose music endures as an artistic achievement of vital importance to the world at large—if that world will only admit the indisputable fact. To be sure, there are earlier composers who matter considerably. Palestrina is one of the main musical pillars of the Roman Catholic Church. Lully is a pioneer in opera. Byrd is perhaps the greatest creative musician ever produced by England. But their work has to be explained as being important practically or historically. Not so Purcell's, which is still current, or at any rate has all the vitality to make it so. To speak of 'Fairest Isle' to any English person who can sing a little is to name the kind of thing 'Heidenröslein' means to any Austrian and German, or 'La donna è mobile' to any Italian. The difference is that Schubert's and Verdi's tunes are known also to the rest of the world; but the fact that Purcell's on the whole are not is merely due to that long-standing prejudice against English music.

If Purcell's work is still to a large extent unknown to the wider world, his life remains something of a mystery even to us. Its earliest stages, at any rate, emerge out of a fog. Tradition has it that he was born in St. Anne's Lane, a narrow alley off Great Pye Street, in Westminster; but the house no longer stands, and although he spent his infancy there, it is by no means certain to have been his birthplace. For he was born the year before the Restoration, some time between June and November 20th 1659. We are not sure that London is his native place at all, for although his father was there once Charles II had re-established the monarchy, he may have been

in exile before. However, Westminster was the scene, not only of Purcell's childhood, but of the whole of his short life—not much longer than Schubert's and only a little longer than Mozart's.

Until recently Purcell was not even considered to have been his father's son, so to speak. He was always supposed, on quite insufficient evidence, as it turned out, to have lost his father, an elder Henry Purcell, when he was five years of age and to have been adopted by his uncle Thomas. But Thomas spoke of him as his son. To take it calmly for granted that the uncle must have meant 'son by adoption' would have been reasonable only if there had been other grounds for the supposition that the elder Henry was his father. Since there are more arguments in favour of Thomas's parenthood, we are justified in thinking that he meant by 'son' exactly what he said and what the word obviously suggests.

Another fable is that Henry entered the Chapel Royal as a chorister at the age of about six. We may confidently place his entry there in approximately his tenth year, for even that would, according to the usual practice, have been quite early. But then he was uncommonly gifted, even if it is not certain that he composed an ode for Charles II's fortieth birthday in 1670 and if the three-part song, 'Sweet Tyranness', published in Playford's *Musical Companion* in 1667, was a work left by the elder Henry and not the remarkable early achievement of a boy of eight.

The Master of the Children in the Chapel Royal was Henry Cooke, a man in his early fifties and a good disciplinarian, having been a captain in the royalist army during the Civil War. Captain Cooke, as he was called for the rest of his life, was suitably rewarded with this post not merely because he had been loyal to the dynasty which revived the Chapel Royal with the rest of the court, but because, though not an exceptional musician, he was an admirable choir-trainer and, according to Pepys, had 'the best manner of singing in the world'. We hear of 'brave musique' from the diarist.

The boys were taught the usual school subjects, including Latin. Their musical instruction took in the lute, the violin and keyboard instruments, as well as singing and composition.

The most talented practised their gifts by writing anthems, much encouraged, as one of them, Thomas Tudway, said later on, by the king, who indulged 'their youthfull fancys'. They produced new works at frequent intervals. It cannot be doubted that Purcell took his full share in these exercises, surpassed the comrades of his own age and outdid even those older than himself.

Cooke died in 1672 and was succeeded by Pelham Humfrey, his son-in-law, who was created a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, a distinction that had been conferred on both Purcell's father and uncle. No doubt the boy of thirteen learnt something about French and Italian musical styles from Humfrey, who had been sent to study abroad at the expense of the court. But he too died, in July 1674, aged only twenty-seven. Purcell, who had left the choir the previous year because his voice broke, seems to have remained connected with the chapel for theoretical instruction, and perhaps as a musician who proved exceptionally useful when new music was wanted at short notice. And the king, after his long exile in France, did like music to be new and fashionable. He cared nothing for the old English church tradition, which made a virtue of solid textures of elaborately interlaced vocal parts, but liked anthems to be lightly tuneful, strongly rhythmic and richly accompanied by an orchestra of string instruments.

Humfrey was succeeded by John Blow, who was a year younger and already organist at Westminster Abbey. Blow was greatly interested in the gifted youth of fifteen, who by this time had become assistant to the keeper of the king's instruments, and charged him with the tuning of the Abbey organ. These two functions gave Purcell a special insight into the nature of musical instruments, even if only through such mechanical tasks as the stringing of viols and violins, the re-hairing of bows, the tuning of harpsichords or the mending of organ pipes and bellows. He also copied organ parts for Blow's use, and perhaps for his own when he deputized; but it is not true, as all but the most recent biographers have impressively stated, that he received the appointment of Copyist to Westminster Abbey, for the simple reason that there never was such an office. He was paid £5 for the copying. For tuning the Westminster organ he

received £2 a year. Musicians were poorly paid, when indeed they could obtain their money from the royal treasury at all, which was as notoriously lax in paying as it was extravagant in planning expenditure. The purchasing power of money, however, was enormously greater than it is to-day.

In August 1677 died one of the composers who had made their mark during the Commonwealth: Matthew Locke. Purcell, whose family was on friendly terms with that original and disputatious character, wrote an elegy to his memory and was appointed to succeed him as Composer in Ordinary for the King's Violins: that is to say the string orchestra Charles had established in imitation of the 'Vingt-quatre violons du Roi' he had known at the French court. At eighteen the youth had thus placed himself, by sheer surpassing talent, in one of the most coveted musical posts of the time, usually attainable only by musicianship seasoned by a long term of humbler service. Little more than two years later he succeeded Blow as Abbey organist, the elder musician having made way for him of his own free will.

Purcell's music now began to be published, too. Songs of his appeared in such collections as *Choice Ayres*—one when he was only sixteen—and *New Ayres and Dialogues* (duets). In 1680, when he came of age, he was first commissioned to write incidental music for a play, Nathaniel Lee's tragedy, *Theodosius, or The Force of Love*, which began a series of nearly fifty similar scores containing an almost inexhaustible treasury of melody in the form partly of songs and duets and partly of orchestral dances and 'act-tunes'. The same year he also turned out the first of his Welcome Songs, addressed to the reigning sovereign. They contain splendidly festive and often very artfully wrought music, but are set to grossly flattering doggerel written by inferior poets on the slightest provocation. The king's return from Newmarket, for instance, would be quite good enough an excuse for one of those fulsome effusions. All through the three reigns of Charles II, James II and William and Mary, Purcell also wrote a large number of odes, similarly laid out for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, designed for royal birthdays and suchlike occasions, and he anticipated the era of the queen he did not live to serve by setting an ode on the marriage of Princess Anne to Prince George of Denmark in 1683. Some

of his finest music of this kind is to be found in his Odes for St. Cecilia's Day. He had to write for royal patrons whether he was in the mood for flattery or not, but the patron saint of music could not fail to inspire him.

By 1681 Purcell was married, to a shadowy person of whom we know little more than that her Christian name was Frances. There were numerous children, many of whom died before they knew their parents, as usually happened in the seventeenth century. Professionally his life went on without any great changes until he was twenty-five. Then, in 1685, the king's death drew a song from him: *If prayers and tears* (*Sighs for our late Sovereign King Charles II*); and the coming to the throne of James II occasioned the magnificent coronation anthem—rather questionably named, as things turned out—*My heart is inditing of a good matter*. Also there was an ode on the frustration of Monmouth's rebellion, as there had been one in 1683 on that of the Rye House Plot.

All through the 1680's Purcell was particularly busy with the composition of anthems, which made splendid and exciting concerts—'brave musique' indeed—in church. Most of them were verse anthems, i.e. interspersed with solos written for highly accomplished singers in a manner approximating to that of Handel's operatic airs half a century later. But there were also some full anthems, which are purely choral and as a rule written much more in accordance with the older church traditions uninfluenced by Charles II's preference for brilliant display and laying stress on great elaborateness and beauty of texture. To hear these full anthems, with their intricately entwined vocal lines, is to imagine how often Purcell must have looked at the wonderful fan-tracery in Henry VII's chapel at the Abbey. His almost unbelievable skill in polyphony or counterpoint—to use the technical terms for such writing—also became apparent in the fantasies for strings he wrote when he was twenty-one in imitation of the 'fancies' for consorts of viols, rather in a style of madrigals for instruments instead of voices, by Elizabethan and Jacobean masters. For Purcell's genius faced two ways: it could look back to them as well as forward to so modern a composer—from his point of view—as Handel, who was only ten years of age at Purcell's death.

For the coronation of William and Mary, Purcell wrote no anthem, but he played the organ, and incidentally got into some trouble for making a little extra money by admitting visitors to the organ-loft. The dean and chapter, however, made no further complaint about this once they had compelled him to hand over these not quite well-gotten gains to them. For the new queen, whose consort reigned jointly with her only by her own wish (or his), he seems to have had a profound affection. That he wrote a birthday ode for her each year until she died in 1694 might have meant nothing in particular, if the music were less fine in quality; but he also composed an anthem for her funeral and two elegies on her death, the heartfelt expression of which is as humanly sincere as it is artistically superb.

On the stage Purcell was as much at home as in the church. Many of the songs and duets he set for the production of plays by authors of the day, the most eminent of whom was Dryden, as well as for some exceedingly odd perversions of Beaumont and Fletcher and even Shakespeare, were published in a periodical collection entitled *The Theater of Music.* Operas in the proper sense of the term he wrote few—some people would say only one. Such works as *King Arthur* (1691), *The Fairy Queen* (1692) and *The Indian Queen* (1695) have been called semi-operas, because the music is intermittent and there is a great deal of dialogue. But if they are not full operas, is it possible, allowing for the difference in period-style, to maintain that Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Weber's *Freischütz* are? They too contain spoken dialogue.

The one stage work by Purcell to which nobody could deny the name of opera is *Dido and Æneas*, one of the great musico-dramatic masterpieces of all time, in spite of its small proportions and Nahum Tate's lamentable words. It was written for a girls' school at Chelsea, probably in 1689, but it fired Purcell to an incomparable feat of melodic invention, dramatic truth and effectiveness, harmonic eloquence, originality and sharp characterization. The music combines the highest technical skill with the greatest expressive beauty in a way only genius of the first order can achieve.

Such a genius was Henry Purcell, and his creative force was in full spate when he died—probably of the consequences of a

mere chill—on November 21st 1695. He had been immensely productive during the last few years, and he remained so to the end. There was nothing he could not turn a master-hand to, so far as it lay within his experience, and one can imagine no sort of greatness he could not have reached. Had he linked up with Handel, at whose coming to England he would have been only fifty-two, and induced the younger master to abandon Italian librettos, the two in succession might have established a school of great English opera long before there was a German one.

HANDEL

ANY one who hears Handel mentioned at once thinks of him as the best-known of all the great composers. Indeed none is more familiar by name. But is he really so very well known by his music? Asked to enumerate those works of his with which they are most intimate, most people would at once confidently begin with *Messiah*, add the *Largo*, and then—so soon—begin to falter. Another oratorio, another tune, possibly an organ concerto, one of the coronation anthems, the *Water Music* or more likely *The Harmonious Blacksmith* may occur to somebody or other; but the list will not be an impressive one, considering how very imposing a figure Handel is in music and in everyone's estimation. What should we think of a man who claimed to admire Shakespeare and then proved himself acquainted with little more than *Hamlet* and one of the 154 sonnets?

In Handel's case worse would be sure to follow if one insisted on further particulars. What exactly is the *Largo*? Where does it come from? What was it written for? Does not the fact that it is simply an air in one of at least forty Italian operas Handel wrote for London surprise many people? And do they not wonder why he should have supplied London with Italian operas at all? As for this particular tune, Handel wrote innumerable slow songs and movements in 3–4 time marked with the tempo direction '*largo*', and many of them are so like 'Ombra mai fù (Shade never was [sweeter than the plane-tree's])'—as the song from *Serse* (*Xerxes*) had now better be called—that it seems difficult to imagine why just this one out of a possible 154 or more should have acquired such unique popularity. It is a very fine tune: so are most of the others.

There are more mysteries connected with Handel's music, even some of the most familiar. We know that the *Water Music* is so called because it was most probably played on the Thames to entertain George I on a pleasure trip in a state barge; but we are not at all sure that the story is true according

to which the king was reconciled to Handel—we shall see presently what their difference was—by the great liking he took to these fresh, sane, and exhilarating pieces. The tale attached to *The Harmonious Blacksmith*, which is certainly untrue, is better known than the piece itself, simply a movement in one of Handel's suites for the harpsichord: a set of variations on a French tune, known to him for some reason, but certainly not because he heard a blacksmith at Edgware sing it at the anvil. There is no evidence that this workman ever existed, though he was confidently given the name of Powell, nor for that matter the anvil, which did not prevent an auctioneer from selling it—more than a century after the composition of the suite.

But the greatest mystery of all is Handel himself. We know a great deal about his life and have a very fair idea of his character, but seem to be far more uncertain about his mind than we are about that of any other great master. It is quite impossible to form the least notion, for instance, of his attitude towards women. We cannot just say that he never married because he was never earnestly enough in love with any woman we know of, for the fact is that we cannot even tell whether he was ever in love at all, or assert that love meant nothing to him. So far as biography informs us we can only see that he seems always to have dealt with women exactly as he did with men, as professional colleagues, as acquaintances, as friends, and sometimes as enemies, or at least nuisances.

Some German biographers, more remarkable for racial jealousy than for common sense, have hinted that Handel could never have been happy in England, and they might quite readily have concluded from this that he could not have conceived happiness with any Englishwoman as lying within the bounds of possibility. There is a tendency among these good people to represent eighteenth-century England, and London in particular, as a sink of corruption in which an honest German could not be expected to live comfortably. It is quite true that a good deal of iniquity of all sorts was rampant at that time, and we know that it roused pictorial and literary satirists like Hogarth and John Gay (in *The Beggar's Opera*) to indignation; but this was by no means peculiar to London or to England, for the goings-on abroad, not least in the small German duchies and palatinates,

were at least as bad and did not meet with such honest and outspoken condemnation, which in itself shows the presence of a better element.

To suggest that Handel felt himself to be a misfit in England is sheer nonsense. A man who at the age of twenty-five visits a foreign capital and likes musical life there so much that he decides to return and to remain, at the risk of seriously displeasing an exalted employer; who is still there fourteen years after his settling down and becomes naturalized at his own wish; who among a number of rogues (a good many of them foreigners) finds plenty of fine, high-minded characters with whom to make friends: such a man need hardly be pitied for having stayed in what, for all his trials and disappointments, were evidently the most congenial surroundings he could possibly have discovered. From 1712 to his death in 1759 Handel never thought of any other home for himself than London, and after 1726 he never regarded himself as anything but an Englishman. He even anglicized his name into George Frideric Handel.

At his birth, which occurred at Halle in Saxony on February 23rd 1685, his name was Georg Friedrich Händel. He dropped the diaeresis on the a in his surname as unnecessary, though in German ä has a less open sound than that with which we pronounce his name, which no doubt is the reason why his contemporaries in England, who never cared very much about orthography, even in their own names, often wrote 'Hendel' or 'Hendell'. This seems to indicate that he went on pronouncing it so, and indeed we may well believe that he never lost his foreign accent, as hardly any German ever does completely, whatever spy stories and films may tell us. But there is no need to think that he talked anything like the atrocious jargon shown in various anecdotes where his alleged sayings are often so crazily spelt as to be all but unintelligible ('You tog!' 'The tefil!' &c.: a Saxon would in fact be much more likely to soften the hard consonants and talk about a 'dea gup' rather than a 'tog pasket'.) What we do know for certain is that Handel sometimes slightly mismanaged English prosody in his setting of words, even in so mature a work as *Messiah*, where he wrote cadences that turned 'have seen a *great* light' and 'imagine a *vain* thing' into 'have seen *a* great light' and

'imagine *a* vain thing', so that these phrases have to be deliberately altered by the singer.

As a child Handel showed musical talent quite early, at the age of about four. His father did not encourage it, perhaps because he thought music hardly respectable and quite unprofitable as a profession, and possibly because he at first wished his son to succeed him in his own calling, which at any rate was safe. It is sometimes said that Handel came of very humble parentage; but the street in which he was born was not at all a mean one, and although it is correct to describe his father as a barber, it must be remembered that the surgeon's profession was connected with that humbler one in those days. Moreover, Georg Händel, who was old enough to be the composer's grandfather, being sixty-three in 1685, was a 'district surgeon': he worked in an official capacity, which surgeons still sometimes do with considerable distinction.

Without any teaching or the least encouragement this old and unmusical father's son learnt to play the clavichord, a keyboard instrument which, unlike the more aggressively toned harpsichord, touched its strings so gently that it could not be heard in the next room. This was fortunate, for the boy could practise undetected, which he did until he was about seven, when one day his father found him out. What he discovered at the same time was so outstanding a talent that he relented so far as to allow lessons. During a visit to relations at Weissenfels, then the capital of a small duchy, the reigning prince as well as the Händels' family council advised the old man to let his son, who had played the organ most admirably at the Saxe-Weissenfels court, take up the musical profession. This was refused, but lessons were continued, from 1694 on under Zachau, the best organist at Halle and a composer and theorist of some standing. In addition to the keyboard instruments the boy learnt the violin and the oboe.

His father, after disallowing a musical court appointment offered during a visit to Berlin in 1696, died the following year, a few days before the son's twelfth birthday. But he had expressed a wish that the boy should be trained, not for a surgeon-barber after all, but for a lawyer; and that desire was so far respected that the young genius was sent to the Latin

school and entered the University of Halle in February 1702. He had already composed a good deal of music, however; he also frequently deputized for the cathedral organist, Leporin, who seems to have been only too ready to hand over his duties to the gifted lad. Indeed he began to make such a habit of staying away from the services that he was dismissed in March 1702, early in Handel's first university term, and the young law student, at the age of seventeen, was appointed his successor. But he gave up this post, together with his legal studies, the following summer, being anxious to try his luck in a larger musical centre.

His choice fell on Hamburg, where he made himself known as a performer, but where the main attraction was the opera. In order to gain a foothold there he joined the orchestra as violinist. This theatre, the manager and chief composer of which was Reinhard Keiser, differed from all others in Germany by making an attempt to introduce operas in the native tongue. At all the German courts the operas produced were Italian, even when composed or (much more rarely) sung by Germans. But the free Hanseatic town of Hamburg had no court, and the opera relied for support on the townsfolk, who not unreasonably demanded to understand what was being sung. So a repertory of translations and of local operas specially composed by resident musicians, such as Mattheson and Keiser himself, had to be kept in supply. This was Handel's opportunity. As early as 1704 he had begun an opera of his own, *Almira, Queen of Castile*, and it was produced before he was twenty, in January of the following year. A second, *Nero*, followed in the incredibly short time of seven weeks. In form and style, of course, in fact in all but language, these Hamburg operas were indistinguishable from foreign models, so that it was here that Handel, though composing German operas, learnt how to write Italian opera. He continued to cultivate it unchanged until 1741: it was he, not any Italian, who was the leader of a thirty years' vogue of Italian opera in England and the originator there of a fashion that was to persist for more than two centuries.

How different a career this visit to Hamburg meant for him from that which he could so easily have pursued at Halle! He had begun there by writing church cantatas and organ works

exactly as Bach did at Leipzig, and if he had remained at home there is every reason to suppose that he would have become a musician very much like the master who was not only his equal in genius but his nearest contemporary, for the two were born within a month of each other. In temperament, however, they were very different. Bach, members of whose family had served their home towns as professional musicians for generations, had no thought beyond doing the same at some place not too far distant where he could make a decent living. Handel, with no such tradition behind him, was not rooted in German musical life. Nor, for that matter, in German musical art: he shares with Mozart an artistic internationalism which none but Germans would think of denying.

Before long Hamburg satisfied his ambitions as little as Halle had done. The opera had sadly deteriorated by 1706. He was off to Italy, then the musician's land of promise. The next four years were spent there, by turns at Florence, Rome, Venice and Naples, under the patronage of art-loving princes and cardinals and in touch with the eminent composers of the day. He heard the church music of Lotti, the operas of Alessandro Scarlatti, the concertos of Corelli, to mention only a few of the influences through which he absorbed the Italian style of the time, and there is evidence also that he knew the chamber duets which were the speciality of Steffani, for he wrote twenty vocal pieces of the kind himself. He produced psalms in Rome, his first opera composed to an Italian libretto, *Rodrigo*, at Florence, and also wrote an oratorio, secular cantatas and a pastoral play, *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*, a forerunner of his later *Acis and Galatea*. The second Italian opera, *Agrippina*, was produced at Venice.

There he had already met the younger Scarlatti, Domenico, who was born the same year as he. The two played the harpsichord in friendly rivalry, which means that Handel must have shown remarkable skill to hold his own against the greatest Italian player of the day, who was also to become the most original composer for the instrument. It was in Venice, too, that he was discovered by visitors from Hanover and from England, who in 1710 persuaded him to seek his fortune at their homes. Deciding to try both, he first of all went to Hanover

with Steffani, who was musical director and some sort of envoy at the electoral court there. The Elector Georg Ludwig appointed him Steffani's successor, apparently at that composer-diplomat's own suggestion, and this postponed the visit to England until the autumn. However, he did obtain leave to go to London, where Queen Anne received him graciously and he was at once engaged to write a work for the Italian opera in the Haymarket. This was *Rinaldo*, produced on February 24th 1711, the day after his twenty-sixth birthday. It was given fifteen times. Handel was made much of by society and met many musicians. It must thus have been with some reluctance that he returned to Hanover, where musical life was narrowly confined to the court. At any rate he soon asked for leave to revisit London, which was granted him in the autumn of 1712, on condition that he should not outstay a reasonable time. As it turned out, the time he judged reasonable was a lifetime. Once he had got away again he stayed away indefinitely. He continued to turn out new operas and wrote a *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* for the celebration of the Peace of Utrecht, highly approved of by the queen. He was invited by the youthful Earl of Burlington to live at his palatial house in Piccadilly, where he met many distinguished leaders of society and of the arts, including Pope. All went well with him. There could be no doubt that London was the place for him.

But Anne died in 1714, and Handel must have been not a little dismayed to find Georg Ludwig, whom he had forsaken, succeeding her on the English throne as George I. However, after a year or so of strained relations between him and the court, a reconciliation was brought about, perhaps by a ruse on Geminiani's part, who insisted on being accompanied there by Handel, perhaps by the *Water Music* incident already mentioned. At any rate London was safe for him once more, and but for a few visits abroad in search of singers for the opera or renewed health after illness, he never left it.

At least he never left its neighbourhood. For in 1718 the Earl of Carnarvon invited him to go and live at his magnificent country mansion, Canons, near Edgware, to conduct the band, play the organ and compose to his heart's content. There he wrote twelve anthems for performance in his patron's private





chapel, now known as the *Chandos Anthems* because the earl was created Duke of Chandos in 1719. There too the new *Acis and Galatea* was written, in the form of a semi-scenic pastoral cantata, to a charming poem by John Gay.

Handel was now as much a composer of English as of Italian music, although his contribution to what Addison called 'an exotic and irrational entertainment' went on steadily. The influence of Purcell was clearly evident in the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, the anthems showed his acquaintance with Anglican church music and some of the tunes in *Acis* have an open-air freshness about them which makes them unmistakably English songs, as distinct from Italian arias. He also wrote his first English oratorio, *Esther*, at Canons, although for the moment it appeared in the form of a masque entitled *Haman and Mordecai*. Instrumental as well as vocal music occupied him there, for his first suites for harpsichord and most of the first set of *Concerti grossi* for strings date from 1720.

Although the Opera, pompously styled Royal Academy of Musick on the Parisian model since 1719, continued to produce works by Handel and others—Bononcini being the important newcomer—it began to decline in its appeal to high society and, being 'exotic', it had of course never attracted the general public. Sometimes a passing sensation helped to draw attention to it where the music as such failed to do so: the formation of two parties which artificially turned Handel and Bononcini into fierce rivals in 1721 or the tale of the former's threatening to throw the prima donna, Francesca Cuzzoni, out of the window because she would not sing an aria as he had written it. On the other hand the financial panic created by the bursting of the South Sea Bubble did it much harm, and so, no doubt, did the growing dissatisfaction, stirred up by Addison, with an art that remained rigidly stereotyped in its musical form and conventional in its stilted librettos based on mythological or heroic themes too remote from ordinary human life to move anybody, quite apart from the fact that few people understood the Italian words.

Then, in 1728, Gay dealt the species a further blow by making cruel fun of it in *The Beggar's Opera*, where the quarrel between Polly and Lucy is a direct allusion to the hand-to-hand fight that broke out at a performance between Cuzzoni and another prima

donna, Faustina Bordoni. The Royal Academy collapsed and the King's Theatre was closed. A new company was formed, with which the Haymarket house reopened in December 1729, but it never had the old success, although it dragged out a precarious existence, with some ups and many downs, until January 1741, when Handel's last opera, *Deidamia*, was produced.

Meanwhile George II had succeeded to the throne in 1727, when Handel's four coronation anthems were sung in Westminster Abbey. In 1733 appeared *Deborah*, the second English oratorio, to which form Handel now gradually changed over from that of Italian opera. Actually they differed very little, apart from language and the important share given to the chorus in the latter, which for that reason, oddly enough, was on the whole the more dramatic of the two. But it did not take on easily at first, while opera continued to fall into disfavour, at any rate Handel's side of it, for it had now split into two factions, the rival house in Lincoln's Inn Fields being patronized by the Prince of Wales, who was supported by most of the opera-going society in his quarrel with the king. Bankruptcy and illness stared Handel in the face more than once. In 1737, utterly worn out, he was attacked by some kind of paralysis.

Fundamentally he was a splendidly healthy man, however, and nothing could daunt his enterprising spirit for long. He could think of others too, even in misfortune. In 1738 he joined the Royal Society for the Support of Decayed Musicians, founded by the composer Maurice Greene and the violinist Michael Festing, other members being Arne and Boyce, and the following year he took an active interest in Captain Coram's new Foundling Hospital, of which he, like Hogarth, eventually became a governor.

On April 8th 1741 he gave a farewell concert. Ruined in health and fortune, miserably discouraged, he decided to retire from public activities at the age of only fifty-six. But in the summer Charles Jennens, a wealthy dabbler in literature, brought him the libretto of an oratorio dealing with episodes in the life of Christ, compiled from biblical passages, probably by his chaplain, Pooley, though Jennens took all the credit. This fanned Handel's creative fire anew. He set to work feverishly on August 22nd. The work, which he called *Messiah*, was finished on September 12th—in exactly three weeks. What is more, he wrote *Samson* immediately afterwards and had it ready, but for two numbers, on October 29th. *Messiah* was produced at Dublin on April 13th 1742, *Samson* in London on Feburary 18th 1743, at Covent Garden Theatre, where *Messiah* came out on March 23rd.

Israel in Egypt and *Saul* had preceded these two great oratorios in 1739. About a dozen others followed, including *Belshazzar* (1744), *Judas Maccabaeus* (1746), *Joshua* (1747), *Solomon* (1748) and *Theodora* (1749). The *Jephtha* of 1751 is associated in the minds of musicians with the tragedy that overtook Handel while he wrote it. There is a pathetic note in the autograph saying that at a certain point near the end his eyesight failed him. He feared that he would go blind, as Bach had done the preceding year. Both were, curiously enough, operated on by a charlatan oculist named Taylor, who had travelled from place to place on the Continent and returned to England; and both went irrevocably blind. *Samson* also is connected with this calamity, for at a performance in 1753, when Handel was led to the organ by his faithful assistant John Christopher Smith, the whole audience burst into tears at the singing of the air 'Total eclipse'. But he still worked during these last sad years, with Smith's devoted help and the encouragement of his friends; and though aged seventy-four and very frail, he conducted a performance of *Messiah* on March 30th 1759. A fortnight later on April 14th, he died at his house in Brook Street, Mayfair.

BACH

AS we have seen, compared with Handel, Bach was a local musician. If we look at a map of central Germany and make Weimar the centre of the different places in which he was active there, we find that they all lie within a radius of sixty miles at farthest, in Thuringia (which also holds his birthplace, Eisenach), Hesse-Cassel, Anhalt and Saxony. The only place outside Germany he once visited, Carlsbad in Bohemia, is but a very short way across the frontier. He did go to some of the northern cities at various times, the most distant being Lübeck, some two hundred miles away. But vast tracts of his own country remained unknown to him, including all the south and west and all that lies east of Dresden and Berlin. Handel, born in the next 'county', was a great traveller by comparison, especially as travel went in the early eighteenth century: he went as far south as Naples and as far west as Dublin.

We could not call Bach a cosmopolitan master, so far as his own intentions went, as we must call Handel if we understand his work aright. All the same, while he is one of the monumental figures in German music, that music, as a school, barely existed before his time, in the sense that a French, an Italian, an English, even a Spanish school existed. There had been many German composers, of course, the greatest among them being Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) and several distinct movements, such as those of the *Minnesinger* and *Meistersinger* (twelfth–sixteenth century); but the country's music was saturated with foreign influences. Schütz was trained at Venice and that early blossoming of song stemmed from the art of the French *troubadours*. English musicians of the sixteenth century had a considerable vogue in Germany, and even after Bach's times Italian and French currents continued to pour into that country. The plain fact is that these last two are very clearly seen in Bach's work. He was also influenced in his youth by Buxtehude, a Scandinavian, and by Reinken, who may have been a Dutchman. Among the manuscripts he left was a Toccata for harpsichord which got itself included in the complete edition

of his works among the compositions probably attributable to him, for it was certainly found in his handwriting. It turned out later to be a work by Purcell he must have copied from some unknown source, as indeed he copied vast quantities of music for the purpose of study or performance. In spite of this and the so-called *English Suites*, however, we must not allow ourselves to talk of an English influence on Bach. He was interested in such English music as he may have come across just as he was interested in any music, being a greedy student and reader as well as one of the most broadminded musicians who ever lived: that is all. But the other influences just hinted at are important. Buxtehude and Reinken helped to form his organ and cantata style, while Italian masters, including Albinoni and Vivaldi, some of whose works he arranged, affected mainly his concertos for string instruments (there is also the *Italian Concerto* for harpsichord) and French composers his orchestral and many of his keyboard works (Couperin especially).

It is fortunate for the world that Bach had this open mind. Without it he would have become a busy worker within very narrow limits. His skill might have been as great, and nothing could have suppressed his native genius; but he would probably never have had the universal love and admiration that is his to-day. It was hard-won even so, for in his lifetime he was far better known as an astonishing organist than as a composer even in Germany, and not until three-quarters of a century after his death was any serious attempt made to study, perform and publish his work as attentively as that of a supreme master should be.

John Sebastian Bach—as we like to call him familiarly in Britain—was born at Eisenach on March 21st 1685, twenty-six days after Handel, and christened Johann Sebastian. His father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, was a 'town musician' there, employed by the municipality against a small salary and the benefit of allowances of such things as wine and firewood. The Bachs were a large musical family with many branches in various towns in the neighbourhood. They lived simple lives, cultivated such music for the church and for social gatherings as the community demanded, knew little else, and scarcely went anywhere except to some occasional family reunions at one home or another,

where they held endless vocal and instrumental concerts among themselves and excelled particularly in the singing of quodlibets —popular songs thrown together so that they formed complicated mixtures of parts. No doubt John Sebastian soon took his share as soprano or alto in these exercises in offhand counterpoint. But among kinsfolk who were all musical as a matter of course such exceptional gifts as he must have had can hardly have been noticed. We hear little of them, at any rate, until about his tenth year.

He lost his mother not long after his ninth birthday and his father shortly before his tenth. Both parents were about fifty at their death and had grown-up children. The eldest, Johann Christoph, was twenty-four, married and employed as organist at Ohrdruf. He adopted his orphan brother, sent him to school and taught him the harpsichord, together with any other musical subject, no doubt, that happened to come up. Like all musicians at a time when little music was published, and printed works did not circulate easily, Johann Christoph copied a collection for himself. For some reason, however, he does not seem to have allowed John Sebastian to use it, and it is said that the boy secretly recopied much of it at night and, being denied candles, by moonlight. If this is true, he must have sown early in life the seed of his later blindness. The brother has been accused of cruelty for sending the boy to bed on discovering this and forbidding him thus to indulge his interest in music. If biographers were not in the habit of judging from their later knowledge of a great man and forgetting that those who knew him as a child could not have recognized a future 'classic' in him, they would rather interpret this brotherly severity as a piece of sound common sense.

What is certain is that Johann Sebastian must, one way or another, have learnt a great deal from his brother, who allowed him to sing in his church services. At fifteen he was an accomplished chorister, so much so that when Johann Christoph's family grew too large to make his support of the lad possible any longer, the latter was ready to become a church singer at Lüneburg. This was the first northern city to be visited by him, a good hundred and fifty miles off, and the journey must have been very trying for a boy who was too poor to travel by

stage-coach and must have relied on his feet and on such charitable lifts as he could secure. But he was clearly a good walker, for from Lüneburg he went several times to Hamburg, about twenty-five miles north-west, to hear Reinken play the organ, and once, at seventeen, he tramped some forty-five south to Celle, where he somehow managed to hear the court band—at rehearsal, probably, for he could not have had an introduction to the ducal household. It was there that he first came into close contact with French music, which the duke particularly cultivated.

At Lüneburg itself there was a great organist, Georg Böhm, from whom Bach learnt much, whether directly or by hearing only, and by the time he was sixteen he had begun to write for the instrument. We may be sure that he played it at St. Michael's church, where he could no longer sing when his voice broke, but was kept in service as a violinist.

In April 1703, at the age of eighteen, he returned to his native central Germany, having somehow secured an appointment as violinist at the court of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. But in August he left Weimar for Arnstadt, a poky little town, where he settled down as church organist. It was from there that he went to Lübeck on leave to meet Buxtehude and to hear him play, an experience that must have been worth while, since it meant a journey that swallowed up a great part of the four weeks he was granted. Perhaps he had some notion of succeeding the great man, who was getting on for seventy, as indeed both Handel and Mattheson had had when they visited him two years earlier. But there was a snag. Buxtehude was not prepared to hand over his church appointment to any young man unless he were prepared to marry his daughter, who was ten years older than Handel and Bach. So the latter returned to Arnstadt without an engagement of any kind.

This was not until February 1706: he had stayed away four months instead of four weeks and got into trouble with the authorities, who also complained that he accompanied the hymns in church so elaborately as to confuse the congregation. Nor was this all. In November he was summoned again for having entertained a young girl in church when he ought to have been there only to practise for the service. It made no

difference that this girl was his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, with whom he did as a matter of fact fall in love.

Tired of being hectored by his superiors, Bach accepted another church appointment at Mühlhausen and removed there in June 1707. He married Maria Barbara the following October, when he was twenty-two and she twenty-three. By this time he had begun to write sacred cantatas, which in the Lutheran church took the place the anthem does in the Anglican. They were accompanied by an orchestra—or whatever was available in the way of orchestral instruments—as well as the organ, and made much of recitatives and arias for solo vocalists, the choir being used according to its merits, sometimes merely for a more or less elaborate setting of hymn-tunes and sometimes for complicated and lengthy choruses. Most of Bach's church cantatas belong to a later period in his life.

In 1708, indeed, he gave up serving the established church for a time, being recalled by Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, who appointed him organist of the court chapel and chamber musician. Most of the great organ music belongs to this Weimar period, which lasted until 1717. As a composer Bach was as astonishingly productive as Handel, and unlike his great contemporary he was also very prolific as a family man. Of his twenty children, of whom for that time a large number survived, the first son, Wilhelm Friedemann, was born at Weimar in 1710 and the second, Carl Philipp Emanuel, in 1714. These two, as well as another born much later, cut something of a figure in musical history, the first being the most naturally gifted but not the steadiest in character, the second an important pioneer in the development of keyboard style and sonata form, the third an early model for Mozart.

John Sebastian composed a few cantatas, sacred and secular, at Weimar; but it was as an organist chiefly that he became famous there. He was much in request as adviser to churches who required new organs and as a player engaged to celebrate the establishment of a new instrument. He went to play the new organ commissioned during his residence at Mühlhausen, for instance, and another at Halle, where he would have succeeded Handel's former master, Zachau, if the salary had not been too small. He also visited the courts of the hereditary

Prince of Hesse-Cassel and the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels; but his most important visit was the first he paid to the electoral court at Dresden in the autumn of 1717. The famous French organist Marchand had played there with great success, but fled when he heard that Bach had been asked to come and meet him in contest.

No wonder Duke Wilhelm Ernst was loth to let him go when Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, a young musical enthusiast, wished to draw him to his court. He was actually put under arrest on a charge of breach of discipline; but the duke had to release him a month later on finding that nothing would break his resolution.

Bach went to Cöthen in December 1717. He found an inferior organ there, which is doubtless the reason why his great output of organ works suddenly came to an end. The court orchestra, on the other hand, though small, contained some good players, which again explains why his production during the Cöthen years was concentrated mainly on instrumental works, especially concertos and keyboard music. The prince was kind and friendly as well as genuinely musical: Bach paid him homage in a birthday cantata, *Illustrious Leopold*. It was with him that he visited Carlsbad in the summer of 1720, being perhaps in need of the health-giving waters there.

On his return he found that disaster had overtaken his family. His wife had died during his absence and been buried on July 7th. No information had reached him, and he had not even known of her illness. It was a severe blow, but no doubt his work helped him over it, and he may have been glad of the distraction of a journey to Hamburg in the autumn. Although Cöthen suited him well enough, perhaps he wished for a change of scene after his bereavement, or quite possibly he missed church music and the organ. He certainly tried to obtain a post at St. Jacob's church at Hamburg, offered him by old Reinken, now in his ninety-seventh year. However, after his return to Cöthen he decided for some reason to decline the invitation. It may be that the visit of the Margrave of Brandenburg to Prince Leopold had something to do with it: perhaps he hoped for a new appointment in that direction. At any rate he wrote six orchestral concertos for various instrumental combinations (the so-

called *Brandenburg Concertos*) for that ruler, to whom he presented them with a flattering dedication in French. But it is possible that his meeting with Anna Magdalena Wilcken, the daughter of a court trumpeter at Weissenfels, who sang at the Cöthen court occasionally, caused his decision not to be in any hurry to leave. For he fell in love with this girl of twenty-one, who became his second wife on December 3rd, 1721, when he was well on in his thirty-seventh year. And a very good wife she made him, the best a great composer ever had, with not half a dozen possible exceptions; for in addition to an excellent disposition she possessed great musical gifts which enabled her to help her husband in trying out, copying and performing his compositions. He dedicated to her a *Keyboard Booklet* not long after the marriage.

About the same time (1722) he finished the first volume of his *Well-tempered Clavier*, a set of twenty-four preludes and fugues for the harpsichord or clavichord (or either, at the player's will), to be followed by a similar set twenty-two years later. The title indicated the composer's intention of writing pieces in all the major and minor keys to demonstrate the usefulness of the tempered scale, a system of tuning with equal proportions of sound-wave vibrations between all the semitones instead of the old 'just intonation', which brought the notes into accord with the natural harmonics or overtones, but made any music in the extreme sharp or flat keys sound out of tune.

That same year Bach applied for the post of cantor at St. Thomas's church in Leipzig, Prince Leopold having married a wife who discouraged music at his court. The *Passion According to St. John*, one of the world's greatest oratorios, was performed there as a trial of his skill in March 1723. He was elected without a single adverse vote in May and left Cöthen with his family for the Saxon city where he was to remain for the rest of his life, by no means always contented, but on the whole in circumstances well suited to his genius.

A choir-school which also provided general education was attached to St. Thomas's, and here Bach taught music to the boys, who sang at all the services in church, together with male choristers and solo singers, accompanied by the organ and orchestral instruments. It was for this church that Bach wrote

innumerable cantatas as well as the *Passion According to St. Matthew* (1728–9), an even greater work than the St. John Passion, and various other sacred works, including the *Christmas Oratorio* (1734). The greatest of all, however, the Latin Mass in B minor (finished 1738), was not, of course, intended for the Lutheran service, but written for the Roman Catholic court of Dresden. In his own church the hymns, in which the congregation joined, were very important, and Bach not only set many of them in the cantatas and Passions, but wrote a large number of organ preludes, to be played before the singing of the hymns separately. These magnificent fantasies on familiar tunes, which are among Bach's most original and beautiful compositions, might thus quite well bear the name of *Hymn-tune Preludes* instead of the more current but rather outlandish one of *Chorale-Preludes*.

Of the remaining years little need be told. They went on uniformly, though Bach had occasional disagreements with the authorities caused by his dissatisfaction with the conditions at the school, the difficulty of finding singers and players who could do justice to his music, or the excess of work expected of him, not only as cantor at St. Thomas's, but also as supervisor of the music at three other Leipzig churches. However, in 1729 he accepted the conductorship of a musical society in addition to his other duties, and for this he provided much instrumental music, including arrangements of some of his violin concertos for the harpsichord, made perhaps when he had no time to write new works. Still, he laboured ceaselessly at composition, so much so that one wonders how he found time even merely to write down his music, as well as to copy that of other composers for church and concert use. By this time, though, not only his wife but his elder children and some of his pupils did much to help him. His last son, Johann Christian, who was to make his name as a composer in Milan and London, was born in 1735.

All this incessant writing must have done much harm to Bach's eyesight, which had long deteriorated and by 1740 showed serious signs of decline. By 1749 it had become so bad that the council of St. Thomas's considered appointing a successor to Bach, and Taylor's unsuccessful operation in March 1750 finally ruined it. Before that, in 1747, Bach had paid his famous visit

to Berlin and to Frederick the Great at Potsdam. The King of Prussia, who played the flute and dabbled in composition, was greatly struck by Bach's improvisations and gave him a theme of his own to elaborate on the spot. Bach later wrote a work for flute, violin and harpsichord on it and dedicated it to Frederick. His last great composition was *The Art of Fugue*, in which he embodied all his amazing learning and showed how a single theme could be treated in all sorts of combinations and made to appear in various forms at the same time—twice as fast, twice as slow, turned upside down or backwards, and so on. But his final piece was a simple and touching fantasy on the hymn 'Before Thy throne I come, O Lord'. Blind and failing, he dedicated it to his pupil and son-in-law Johann Altnikol a few days before his death, which occurred on July 28th 1750.

HAYDN

WHEN Joseph Haydn was born, in the night between March 31st and April 1st 1732, no supremely great composer was active in his native Austria or in Germany apart from Bach, who was then at the height of his career. Handel had been in England for twenty years. Böhm, the famous north German organist, and Fux, the learned Austrian theorist, were both over seventy. Telemann, at fifty-one, was a distinguished and very industrious composer, but not a forceful creative personality. Among musicians in their thirties none was more important than Graun, whose weak and florid Passion (*The Death of Jesus*) has alone survived into the present century; Quantz, better known for his playing of and treatise on the flute; and Hasse, not long married to the Handelian prima donna, Faustina Bordoni, who was anyhow a thoroughly Italianized composer of operas.

For all that anybody could have told just then, the Germanic school might have been heading for a sad decline into old-fogeydom, superficiality and outlandishness. Actually, however, new forces were forming. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Gluck, who were both eighteen at Haydn's birth, were to make drastic changes, the former in keyboard style and sonata form, the latter in opera. Also, several musicians, of no particular importance each by himself, were shaping into a group which before Haydn was fully matured became known as the Mannheim School, attached to the court of the Elector Palatine of the Rhine, a school that became one of the chief influences on the formation of the classical symphony at its earliest stages. The one Austrian composer of the first rank to be born in the whole first half of the eighteenth century, however—and there was no equally great German at all—was Haydn. Although he was not what he is so often called, the father of the symphony, it was he, unquestionably, who nourished that form and let it grow up safely. There are more profound and more imposing later symphonies than the hundred and four of his which have survived: there is none of which one would positively say that it reaches

greater perfection than the best of his do in their own special way.

Franz Joseph Haydn, as he was christened, was the son of a humble wheelwright at the small market town of Rohrau in Lower Austria, hard on the Hungarian border. His parents belonged to the peasant class, but were by no means devoid of a certain modest degree of culture. Their house, low and thatched, with a rough, barn-like workshop attached to it, had some pretensions to dignity in its lintelled windows and arched doorway. It was no unfit birthplace for an artist of such simplicity and uprightness.

It may be as well to dispose of the claim made with a considerable show of authority not long ago that Haydn was a Slavonic composer and that his family came of Croatian stock. The evidence, though it cannot be definitely refuted, is far from conclusive. Most of it rests on the resemblance of many of Haydn's themes to more or less well-known Croat folk-songs; but it is obvious that a composer of any nationality could have used such songs if he had special facilities for hearing them. As it happened, many Croats and Slovenes had settled round about the neighbourhood where Haydn was born and where he worked later on, so that although they were a long way from their native region, it was quite easy for him to pick up their popular songs. Whether he was clearly aware or not that he was making use of them, it is surely easier to believe that he had them in his mind and in his ear merely because of his acquaintance with them from early childhood than to fancy that he reproduced them as a kind of racial heritage almost without knowing what he was doing.

Whether or not Matthias Haydn had greater ambitions for his son than to let him succeed to his own trade, he had him taught music from the age of about six. The boy made rapid progress in singing as well as violin and harpsichord playing. At the age of eight he was sent to Vienna. The cathedral of St. Stephen had a school for its choristers attached to it where the boys were given a good general education while they were taught music by the chapel-master, who at that time was Johann Reutter, a composer who wrote in the florid and melodious style that was fashionable just then, in the church as well

as in the opera-house. The gifted boy was at first instructed by assistants, though the chapel-master exercised his supervision strictly enough to discourage attempts at composition on the part of the pupil, who began to try his hand at it at the age of ten or eleven.

Michael Haydn, the younger brother, also joined St. Stephen's at the age of eight, when Joseph was thirteen. He too became a composer, but only a minor one. Joseph's voice broke when he was fifteen, and the following year (1748) Michael took his place as principal soprano in the cathedral choir. At seventeen Joseph, having finished his education at the school and being no longer of any use in the choir, was dismissed. He was penniless, and if he had lived in any other capital, he might have been so stricken with poverty as to disappear, for all his genius, which after all nobody had as yet discovered. But fortunately Vienna was so music-loving a city that any lad who played instruments more than ordinarily well could not fail to make his way, however modestly. There were always street bands who played decent music for the entertainment of idlers and passers-by, and made some kind of a living from collections among their casual audiences. They were by no means despised as beggars, and there was always a chance for a specially talented player to attract a patron's attention. Haydn was not only such a player, but he had begun to write for the bands. Performances of his early works were thus heard about Vienna before anybody knew who he was.

One day a listener insisted on knowing. The band played under the windows of a well-known comedian and theatre manager, who heard one of Haydn's pieces, asked the composer's name and, on discovering him among the players, immediately commissioned him to write music for an operetta. This was successfully produced in 1752, and Haydn was saved for a career that meant no looking back from his twentieth year onwards.

He continued to study seriously wherever he could pick up instruction. Here another friendly peculiarity of Vienna happened to bring him luck. In those days it was possible for quite poor people to live in good houses, so long as they were respectable and did not mind climbing steep and numerous

stairs. Families of distinction occupied the lower floors, but the occupants' rank became progressively lower as they rose higher towards the roof, and the attics could be rented very cheaply. Now in the house where Haydn obtained such lodgings happened to live the Italian court poet (Italian being the language of culture in eighteenth-century Vienna), who was no other than Metastasio, the greatest purveyor of opera librettos at that time. He soon took an interest in the young genius and procured him the post of music teacher to Marianne Martinez, a highly gifted girl of ten, daughter of a Spanish gentleman attached to the household of the Pope's nuncio.

Metastasio also introduced Haydn to the Italian composer and singing-teacher Porpora, who had been one of Handel's operatic rivals in London. The young genius, for the sake of picking up what knowledge he could in music and Italian from that master, who was then getting on for seventy, became his pupil and, because he could not pay for the teaching, also his valet. He blacked boots, trimmed wigs and ironed clothes in return for lessons. The social conditions being what they were, it doubtless never occurred to either pupil or master that the exchange was anything but fair. Composers were servants, not gentlemen, in the eighteenth century; but if they were great musicians they knew how to give dignity to servitude. Handel's independence was quite exceptional, and even he could not have maintained it if he had not made England his home. Not until after the French Revolution did it become possible for a man like Beethoven to put his 'betters' into their place as being, from his point of view, his inferiors. Haydn remained in service until he was near sixty, and he did not feel himself to be a master, in the social sense, until he visited London in 1791.

To return to his youth: by the time he was twenty-three he obtained his first appointment at a nobleman's country seat. The following year (1756) he returned to Vienna with far better credentials. He became known in society as a teacher and was able to make a modest living by giving lessons. In his spare time he devoted himself to composition. He had now written his first string quartets, a category of his work no less important than that of the symphonies and almost as abundant: eighty-four quartets of his are preserved. In 1759 Count Morzin invited

him to become musical director at his estate of Lukaveč in Bohemia. Haydn found a small but excellent orchestra at his disposal, and it was there that he began his long series of symphonies. But he left the following year, probably because he took a wife on November 26th 1760, and his patron would not have married men at his establishment. He had become acquainted with two barber's daughters by the name of Keller in Vienna and fallen in love with the younger one, who, however, for some reason preferred to go to a nunnery. He then became engaged to the sister, Anna Maria, who was four years older than he. She turned out an unsympathetic wife for an artist, and a shrew. Haydn was no Petruchio; so before long, instead of taming her, he managed to find an excellent excuse for seeing as little as possible of her.

For in 1761 he entered the service of the Esterházy family, the greatest of the Hungarian grandees. The head was then Prince Paul Anton Esterházy, who settled Haydn at his splendid town residence at Eisenstadt (Kismarton), where, as at Lukaveč, wives were not welcomed. The following year Paul Anton died and was succeeded by his younger brother, Prince Nicolas, who was an ideal patron, as patronage went, until his death in 1790. He was passionately devoted to music and cultivated it on a lavish scale, as indeed he lived a life of enlightened extravagance altogether. He was even then building on the shores of the Neusiedler lake, just inside the Hungarian frontier, the palace of Esterház, which vied with Versailles in magnificence. The princely household removed there in 1766, and but for occasional visits to Vienna it remained Haydn's permanent residence until his retirement.

The duties were strictly laid down by contract. Obedience was one of the stipulations, but they were not uncomfortably enforced. The resident musicians included an orchestra consisting of first-rate artists and as complete as any composer of the period would dream of desiring. There was chamber music too, and Esterház boasted even an opera, of course with an Italian company, as also a marionette theatre. Haydn wrote at least a dozen stage works, both for living actors and for puppets. Drama was also cultivated: in 1776 he provided incidental music for a performance of *King Lear*.

At Eisenstadt he had been in a subordinate position under the old musical director, Werner, who died, however, before the migration to the new residence, where Haydn was in full charge at the head of the musical establishment. He was both loved and respected by his subordinates, his easy-going, friendly temperament making their relations with him most agreeable and his genius at the same time filling them with an admiration that must have had something of awe in it. With the prince he was on excellent terms also. A memorandum once drawn up to complain that he was not sufficiently industrious cannot have been taken very seriously by him, seeing that it must obviously have been dictated by a whim, not by a grievance his master could justifiably have felt. Few composers can have led busier lives than Haydn, who found time to write only early in the morning, the rest of the day and the evening being taken up by rehearsals, administration and performances. The prince must have known well enough that he had good reason to be proud of his musical director, whose fame had begun to spread abroad before the world began to become aware of the splendours of Esterház. For even in 1764, before the palace was finished, instrumental works by Haydn were published in Paris, and the following year Amsterdam followed suit. He wrote an enormous amount of music: even what is preserved is more than enough for a man's lifetime, and we know that a great deal was destroyed in two fires at the palace, though nobody can tell how much.

Year after year passed thus in pleasant and fruitful occupation. There were few excitements. The musicians, cut off from their wives and families, sometimes found their peaceful existence monotonous and longed for leave, which came round too rarely. Once, in 1772, when it was postponed for some reason, Haydn wrote the 'Farewell' Symphony (No. 45, F sharp minor), during the finale of which the musicians blow out their candles one by one and depart from the platform; a delicate hint which so delighted the prince that he at once let the orchestra go home. The following year the Empress Maria Theresa came to stay at Esterház, for which event Haydn wrote a special symphony (No. 48, C major); and four years later the Esterházy musicians paid her a return visit at Schönbrunn.

Haydn's foreign fame spread more and more. In 1781 his *Stabat Mater* was performed in Paris and songs were published in London; in 1785 even Spain showed signs of having heard of him: the cathedral of Cadiz commissioned an instrumental accompaniment to *The Seven Words of Our Saviour on the Cross*, a work of which Haydn made a vocal setting twelve years later. In 1786 the Loge Olympique in Paris ordered six symphonies Nos. 82–7). The next year he refused invitations to London and Naples.

Prince Nicolas died in September 1790, and Hadyn retired to Vienna with a pension. There he now came into closer contact with his fellow-musicians. But he had made great friends with Mozart as early as 1781, when he was forty-nine and the younger master twenty-five, and they often played chamber music together at the houses or lodgings of other musicians.

It was soon after his retirement that Johann Peter Salomon, a German violinist and impresario settled in London, invited him to England. He went in December 1790, staying at Bonn on the way and meeting a number of musicians at dinner there, including Beethoven, who was then twenty. In London he had a resounding success at Salomon's orchestral concerts, for which he wrote six new symphonies (Nos. 93–8). During a visit to Oxford, where he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Music, he performed an earlier symphony (No. 92, G major), written in 1788. He returned to Vienna in June 1792, where Beethoven, newly settled there, became his pupil for a short time. In February 1794 he was off to England again, staying until August 1795. His popularity had, if anything, grown even greater, and his last six symphonies (Nos. 99–104) testify to the happy influence his success had on his fertile genius.

But he was growing old and longed for quiet work in Vienna without social obligations and wild public acclamations. It was there, in January 1797, that he wrote the Austrian national hymn. Almost his last link with England was his meeting, at Eisenstadt that year, with Nelson, to whom he dedicated his D minor Mass the next year. Not quite the last, though. For his two oratorios, *The Creation* of 1797 and *The Seasons* of 1800, are settings of German librettos modelled on English poets: Milton and Thomson. It was at a performance of *The Creation*

in March 1808 that he appeared in public for the last time, aged and infirm. Greatly moved by the affection the audience showed him, he seems to have felt that this was his final farewell. He lived another year and bravely bore the French bombardment of Vienna early in 1809. But his strength had gone, and he died on May 31st at the age of seventy-seven.

MOZART

ONE of the greatest artistic wonders of the world, and certainly the greatest in music, is Mozart. Actually the miracle is a twofold one: the very early age at which his genius showed itself and the perfection it reached long before he died, not quite thirty-six years old. His amazing childhood naturally attracted great attention at the time; but to us to-day his mature work is more marvellous. What he did as a child was after all mainly for his own world alone to admire, for it was as an executive musician that he attracted attention at first. He could play, improvise, transpose, memorize, keep in mind the pitch of a note to the smallest fraction; but all that has gone, as though it had never been, and written accounts, though they may still astonish, fail to concern us closely. His works alone remain, and those of his youth are not particularly valuable, much as we may be surprised that they were possible at all. He began to compose at the age of five, before he knew how to write out his music, which was taken down by his father, and he went on setting down his boyish inventions all through his childhood. But the music, though technically often—not always—perfectly sound, was both unripe and unoriginal; nor can we tell how much of it was corrected or even added to by a father who was so anxious to display his wonder-child before the world that he would hardly have hesitated to practise a little harmless deception. When all is said, even Mozart had to learn his craft and, more particularly, to develop his inventive genius by experience. He reached perfection long before his death, but he never ceased to grow.

His birthplace, Salzburg, in a smilingly mountainous rather than severely alpine district of Austria, was the ideal setting for him and his music. Its baroque architecture is delightfully artificial and highly civilized. It was the seat of an archbishop, but looks as though it were devoted to art rather than to religion. There was trade, but no industry, and though the town was very small it had—rather like Bath in England—the look of a little capital about it and nothing whatever of a countrified place.

It may be due to the early impressions of Salzburg on Mozart that his music, unlike Haydn's, scarcely ever has the feeling of nature about it. When it does suggest the open air, it is that of ornamental gardens rather than of the country.

It was on January 27th 1756 that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in a rather handsome middle-class town house shared with his family by other tenants. His father, Leopold Mozart, a composer in a small way and an excellent violinist and teacher, was employed at the archbishop's court as what one can only call a musical official. For that court was administered like a government office, its servants holding various ranks, the musicians standing no higher than the cooks and valets. Yet music was cultivated extensively and with some understanding, although that was often in such establishments a matter of fashion rather than of real enlightenment. The church services were elaborate and included Masses with lavish orchestral accompaniments, often specially composed by resident musicians; and chamber music, orchestral symphonies, serenades and diversions as well as opera were frequently heard at court, according to the archbishop's whim.

Leopold had another gifted child, Maria Anna, who was five years older than her brother, and though he was a devoted father anxious to do his best for his clever offspring, he could not resist exhibiting their exceptional talents to the world, not perhaps so much for material gain as from pride. Wolfgang was only just six, early in 1762, when Leopold took him and his sister to Munich to play before the Elector of Bavaria. The following September he presented them in Vienna and to the imperial court at the palace of Schönbrunn. The next year an extensive tour was started right across southern Germany and as far as Brussels and Paris. There the children played at many concerts and the family, including the mother this time, was invited to supper at Versailles by Louis XV. This was on New Year's Day 1764. The following April they were in London, where they stayed until the summer of 1765. They were made much of at George III's court and enjoyed a series of successes at public concerts and at private houses.

It was in London that little Mozart first more or less systematically learnt something about composition, apart from what his

father had already taught him. For the family here made the acquaintance of John Christian Bach, the great John Sebastian's youngest son, who had settled permanently in England. One's first reaction to J. C. Bach's works is to declare that they are strikingly Mozartian. The fact is, of course, that the influence worked the other way round, for he was thirty when Mozart was nine. The boy's first three symphonies date from the London sojourn.

After a prolonged visit to Holland, the Mozarts went to Paris once more and thence returned to Salzburg by way of Switzerland and Munich in November 1766. In 1767 Wolfgang wrote two more symphonies as well as part of an oratorio (another part being by Michael Haydn, who was also at the Salzburg court) and a Latin comedy for the University. Then came another tour, with two visits to Vienna separated by an excursion into Moravia. In Vienna he wrote his first Italian opera, *La finta semplice* (*The Pretended Simpleton*) and the little German operetta, *Bastien und Bastienne*, a simple but astonishingly dramatic and characteristic work for a boy of twelve.

The great events of Mozart's teens were the three visits to Italy, where Leopold took him alone, partly for the sake of his further education and partly because he knew that no composer of the time could be said to have had a full success until he had been acclaimed in more than one Italian city. Venice, Milan, Bologna and Naples in particular, rather than Rome and Florence, were the places whose good opinion had to be courted. Three of them had the most famous opera-houses in the world, while at Bologna lived Padre Martini, the greatest theorist of the age, whose pupil every aspiring composer strove to become, if he proved at all accessible.

The three visits may be summarized as follows in regard to dates and itinerary: (i) December 1769 to March 1771 (Mozart's age thirteen–fifteen): Verona, Mantua, Milan, Parma, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Rome, Bologna, Milan, Turin, Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona. (ii) August to December 1771 (age fifteen): Milan. (iii) October 1772 to March 1773 (age sixteen–seventeen): Milan.

It will be seen that it was the first journey that amounted to a grand tour for Mozart, though the two later visits to Milan

meant special operatic successes. He was then young enough still to make a sensation by his uncommon gifts, which had developed staggeringly by the time he was thirteen. At fourteen, at Lodi on the way to Parma, he wrote his first string quartet, and in Rome another symphony. It was there that he heard Allegri's *Miserere* and wrote it down from memory, and that he received the Order of the Golden Spur from the Pope. The lessons from Martini he had during the second visit to Bologna, and they resulted in some amazingly complicated exercises in counterpoint. Four more symphonies followed after the return to Milan at the end of 1770, but the chief event there was the production of the opera *Mitridate*, commissioned by the Teatro Regio Ducal. The operas for the later visits to Milan were, respectively, *Ascanio in Alba* and *Lucio Silla*. In the course of the first tour the Philharmonic Society of Bologna elected him a member, after a very severe test, and that of Verona gave him the title of *maestro di cappella*.

Meanwhile a new archbishop had come to Salzburg, a taskmaster who had no personal regard for his musicians. The Mozarts were uncomfortable at his court. Leopold, who took the world as it was, resigned himself more or less to the uncongenial conditions, but his son fretted. He tried for a court appointment in Vienna at the age of seventeen, but Maria Theresa had nothing to offer him. He wrote a notable set of six string quartets there, but on his return to Salzburg he was occupied mainly with more entertaining music of the serenade and divertimento type. The success of his comic opera, *La finta giardiniera* (*The Pretended Garden-girl*), in Munich made him more anxious than ever to exercise his genius independently. The writing of another stage work, *Il rè pastore* (*The Shepherd King*), for Salzburg did nothing to relieve his feelings, since it was done merely to order for a visit ot the Archduke Maximilian. Among the more independent Salzburg works of that period (1775–7) are five violin concertos, the serenade written for the wedding of burgomaster Haffner's daughter and the piano Concerto in E flat major (K. 271), the first outstandingly interesting work of a long series that is among the most original and fascinating species of his instrumental music.

At last, in September 1777, he obtained leave for another

tour. Leopold being unable to get off as well, Wolfgang was accompanied by his mother. After vainly seeking an appointment at Munich, they made for Mannheim, the place where a fine resident orchestra had done so much to see the symphony as a form through its early stages and where the electoral court was still an important musical centre. The real goal was Paris, but they lingered at Mannheim until March 1778, Mozart having made many friends among the resident musicians and fallen in love with the daughter of one of them, Aloysia Weber, a girl of sixteen who promised to become an exceptionally fine singer. He seriously thought of marrying her and going off on a combined honeymoon and professional trip, much to the horror of Leopold, who wrote sternly to recall him to his duty as a son and to pack him off to Paris.

He arrived there with his mother on March 23rd 1778, not without the idea of returning to Mannheim and to Aloysia as soon as he had made his fortune in the French capital. But no fortune awaited him there. He was no longer the wonder-child who had once astonished the Parisians, who were just then interested almost exclusively in the literary war between the partisans of Gluck on the one side and of Piccinni on the other. He wrote a symphony (K. 297) for the 'Concert spirituel', a ballet, *Les Petits Riens* (*Little Nothings*), a concerto for flute and harp for the Duke of Guines and his daughter to play, seven violin and piano sonatas and some other things, but his public success was no more than moderate. Moreover, a major calamity overtook him: his mother died on July 3rd. He went back to Mannheim in November and on to Munich the following month, the court having removed there, only to find that Aloysia had jilted him.

In January 1779, when he was just twenty-three, he returned to Salzburg in very low spirits, to resume the daily round there. The only bright spots were the inspiration of an exceptionally fine work now and again, such as the *Sinfonia concertante* for violin, viola and orchestra and the serious opera on a classical subject, *Idomeneo*, commissioned by Munich and produced there on January 29th 1781, two days after his twenty-fifth birthday. This noble work made him feel that his position at Salzburg, where he still sat at dinner with the valets and cooks, was no

longer to be endured by a self-respecting artist. During a visit to Vienna with the court, where the archbhisop refused to give him leave to appear independently, he resigned his post and was sent packing in the most humiliating manner.

Having decided to try his luck by remaining in Vienna, he chanced to find lodgings in the house of Aloysia Weber's mother, who had by that time become a widow and settled in the Austrian capital. He now fell in love with the younger sister, Constanze, who was eighteen. Leopold, aghast at his once more falling a prey to 'a Weberish one', at once wrote ordering him to leave. He was right, though he did not know it. His son, however, was already entangled, and the mother played her cards so well that the inexperienced young man felt in honour bound to become formally engaged and to marry even against his father's wish, which he did on August 4th 1782. Actually he asked Leopold's consent, but it did not arrive until after the wedding.

Constanze was not to blame, for she was no doubt genuinely in love with Mozart, so far as her conception of love went. But she made him no more than an indifferent wife, being feckless and rather flighty. What he wanted, being highly unpractical himself, was a partner who could look after his interests and manage a household properly without running beyond his resources. However, he had his work, in which he was always passionately engrossed, and, hardly knowing what he missed, he was affectionately devoted to Constanze in his own absent-minded fashion. Never coming within sight of a love as profound as his absorption in music, he was happy enough with her to the end of his short life.

For he had now less than ten years left, years empty of material comfort, short of outward success compared with the triumphs he had enjoyed as a child, but crowded with the incomparable experiences of great artistic creation. Many children came, and greater cares came with them, although almost as many died in babyhood, poverty and illness being rarely held at arm's length. But however much he might he harassed at any moment, he could always become wholly taken up with composition, and nothing could disturb the all-subduing perfection of his workmanship. He wrote out his D minor string Quartet, for instance, while his first child was being

brought into the world in the next room. This was the second of the six great quartets dedicated to Haydn, who declared to Leopold that his son was the greatest artist alive.

It may be thought that the superiority of these quartets is due to the fact that Mozart wrote them of his own free will as a tribute to another master. But he could become equally absorbed in a work undertaken in the first place under the pressure of some special necessity. Most of his piano concertos were written for performance by himself at the concerts he gave in order to make some much-needed money; yet they never show a trace of haste in their almost incredibly perfect writing and shaping, nor of shallowness in their invention. On a little operetta, *Der Schauspieldirektor* (*The Impresario*), commissioned for performance at court in February 1786, he lavished as great a skill and power of characterization and elegant musical beauty as on the contemporary *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), although the latter is undoubtedly the greatest comic opera ever written, whereas the former was merely an occasional piece with a very poor libretto which he could hardly expect ever to be revived again, as indeed it could not possibly be in its original form.

Opera, of course, held Mozart's interest from first to last. He was equally happy with Italian and with German words, as probably also with Italian and German singers for different reasons, the former being better technicians and the latter more devoted artists. His first German stage work of real importance was produced in Vienna shortly before his marriage, on July 16th 1782. It is the enchanting *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Elopement from the Harem*), with its youthfully tender feeling and its delightful 'Turkish' music in the Viennese manner. The Italian *Figaro* appeared on May 1st 1786, and *Don Giovanni*, probably the greatest of all operas, judged all round, came out in Prague on October 29th 1787, having been specially commissioned by that city. *Così fan tutte* (*Women's Ways*), a charmingly artificial comedy with music of a quite peculiar flavour, appeared in Vienna on January 26th 1790. The last opera was German again: *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), produced at a suburban theatre in Vienna on September 30th 1791. It was rather like a pantomime; but so, after all, is

A Midsummer Night's Dream, which is ennobled by Shakespeare's imagination and poetry, just as Mozart's last opera is by his inspiration, his unfailing grasp of dramatic situation and human character (in which, in fact, he exactly resembles Shakespeare) and the amazing beauty and variety of his music.

To return a few years: he wrote an incredible number of other works of all kinds during the last decade or so of his life, and we encounter perfection in them again and again. There are, to give but a few instances, the symphonies written for performance at Linz and Prague as well as that wonderful final group of three written between June and early August 1788; the passionate G minor piano Quartet of 1785; several fine violin sonatas and many more piano concertos; the superb string quintets, with two violas, of 1789–91; the string quartets written for the King of Prussia after a visit to Berlin in 1789; the poignantly lovely clarinet Quintet and Concerto of the same year and 1791; and, last of all, the *Requiem* (Mass for the Dead), ordered by a mysterious stranger on behalf of an unknown nobleman who wished to pass it off as his own—as though any obscure amateur could suddenly produce such an intensely personal and highly wrought work without being found out in a fraud.

Mozart might have refused to accept the condition that he should keep this work secret; but he was sorely in need of money. Indeed he had been dreadfully hard pressed and often reduced to borrowing from a well-to-do fellow freemason. He was keenly sensitive to the humiliation of being thus reduced to beggary; but there was no help for it, for in all Vienna, to which he had given so much, there was no employment for him to do justice to his genius. He wore himself out with work and worry, and in 1791 he suffered from some disease that baffled the medical men of his time and remained a mystery for a long time, but has now been established with reasonable certainty as having been uraemia. He died on December 5th after having portions of the *Requiem* sung through to him by friends. That was a kind service; yet there was no one to pay for a decent funeral. He was buried, with others, in a pauper's grave, at the public expense, but with no public honours.

BEETHOVEN

AT the time of Ludwig van Beethoven, who was born on December 16th 1770, and certainly with his aid, music left eighteenth-century polish and courtliness behind. We may or may not attribute this mainly to the French Revolution, which undoubtedly had something to do with making artists aware of their rights and anxious to enjoy as much liberty as the conditions of their profession would allow. On the whole the circumstances of Beethoven's youth seem to have been quite enough in themselves to turn him into a revolutionary.

His birthplace was Bonn on the Rhine, a dull but attractive small town where the Elector of Cologne had his palatial residence. His father was an unimportant musician there, so that court life held no glamour for the Beethoven family. At Bonn, moreover, it was more than usually corrupt, and Beethoven learnt early not to respect people for holding high rank or occupying high places, but to judge them simply for their qualities as human beings. It has been said, too, that his love of independence came to him from his Flemish ancestry. His grandfather had come to the Bonn court from Louvain or Liége.

The Beethoven household was not calculated to teach fine manners to the future composer, whom it brought up to his art in a haphazard way only genius of the first order could have turned to any real profit. The father, though always insisting on his children's working hard under threat of severe punishment, was himself lazy and given to drink. He doubtless dreamt of making as much of his son's talents as Mozart's father had been lucky enough to make of his own gifted children's, but he entirely lacked Leopold Mozart's steadiness and commonsense. The mother, who had been the daughter of a cook and the widow of a valet—in rather high service, it is true—had no particular education or breeding and, being a gentle and sensitive person, gave her children no firm guidance, though plenty of affection. She died when Beethoven was seventeen, and the youth had to act as the head of the family from that time on, the father having become incapable of shouldering any responsibility. This heavy

burden left him no leisure to cultivate the finer arts of living. The high-handed way he had with people in later years, the uncouth manners and violent impatience he so often showed, must be attributed to the hard fight he had to put up as a mere lad, and it may well be that even those whom he most grossly insulted always forgave him before long because they felt that his character had been formed in a very hard school in which, all things considered, he passed the severest tests with credit.

It was his father who began to teach him music when he was about five, two years or so before he entered school. He made rapid progress on the violin and pianoforte, so that he could appear at a concert when he was seven. Unlike Mozart's early triumphs, this was a purely local affair, but it raised great hopes. He passed on to a tenor singer in the electoral chapel and, at the age of ten, to Neefe, the court organist, and to two church organists, one of them being in charge of the music at the minster, the fine romanesque church which is Bonn's most ancient architectural ornament. Another teacher developed him as a violin and viola player.

In 1783, before he was thirteen, appeared his first published work, a set of pianoforte variations on a march by Dressler, a minor composer of Haydn's age. That instrument, or even the harpsichord, was still used to 'accompany' the orchestra, and Beethoven was now employed to do this in the court band, where he took this subordinate part both in concert and in operatic performances. In the latter the task was a more responsible one, since it was the keyboard player who had to accompany the recitatives which connected the set musical pieces—arias, duets, choruses and concerted numbers. But he received no pay: he was supposed to be thankful for the experience. A new elector, however, who succeeded in April 1784, appointed him second organist with a salary.

At the age of sixteen, not long before his mother's death, he visited Vienna—a very long journey in those days, with some five hundred miles to be covered by stage coach. There he was introduced to Mozart, whose pupil he would have liked to become and who told some friends that they would find it worth their while keeping an eye on him. Mozart was only thirty-one then, but he was dead by the time Beethoven at last succeeded

in making Vienna his home. Back at Bonn, he strained every nerve to make more money for his hard-pressed family. Fortunately the court recognized that it was he who was responsible for the household, for part of his father's salary—the part he failed to earn because of his drunkenness—was withheld and paid over to the youth. One of the latter's new occupations was teaching, which brought him into touch with distinguished families, including that of the young Count Waldstein, who remained a friend and was later to be honoured with the dedication of a great pianoforte sonata. Beethoven also played the viola in the opera orchestra. The repertory, according to the fashion that prevailed at Bonn, consisted mainly of French operas, given in German translations (which is interesting in view of the fact that later on the libretto of his only opera was that of a French piece previously used by Gaveaux); but he must also have played in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, given at Bonn in translation in 1789.

Haydn he met not only when that master was on the way to London at the end of 1790, but again on his return in the summer of 1792. It may have been what he heard about Vienna from Haydn that made him long to revisit the Austrian capital. This he succeeded in doing the following November, when the elector agreed to send him there for the purpose of study. He never returned to Bonn. A month later his father died. The court ceased to pay him his salary the following year and in 1794 it collapsed altogether owing to a political situation which three years later resulted in Bonn's being incorporated in the French Republic. There would have been nothing for it but to remain in Vienna, even if Beethoven had not liked it. But he did. It gave him the scope his genius demanded.

First of all, however, he realized that he needed more solid study. He went to Haydn, but found him too easy-going, while the ageing master may have felt that his pupil was too exacting and of too uncertain a temper. So the young man picked up what he could from other teachers. He went to Schenk for dramatic composition, to Albrechtsberger for counterpoint (which he found difficult all his life and often tackled in his own wilful fashion), to Salieri for Italian vocal composition (still in the air in Vienna) and to Aloys Förster for string quartet writing.

Even while these studies were still going on he made the acquaintance of several noblemen, including Prince Lichnowsky, an enthusiast still in his early middle years, and the elderly Baron van Swieten, for whom Mozart had edited four works by Handel, including *Messiah* (the version with which the public is still most familiar.)

In 1795, before he was twenty-five, Beethoven made his first public appearance in the capital, both as composer and performer, by playing his piano Concerto in B flat major (published as No. 2, but actually the first he wrote). That year he also composed the three piano Trios, Op. 1, and the three piano Sonatas, Op. 2, which he dedicated to Haydn. He now did pretty well with publication, performances and lessons. As a teacher he was much sought after by the nobility, in spite of the fact that he was as likely to fall in love with the young ladies he taught as he was to lose his temper with them and slap their delicate hands. He could make things very uncomfortable for his high-born and well-bred patrons and be atrociously rude to them; but somehow it was understood that allowances had to be made for genius, and perhaps that was a little the fashion in those days, when 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' were the new catchwords. Anyway, he was forgiven again and again, the more readily perhaps because his outbursts were felt to proceed from genuine affection and his amorous disposition was tempered by sincere respect for an ideal of womanhood he never ceased to cherish, however great and numerous his later disappointments in love.

The year 1800 marked the turn of the century quite distinctly in his music. The first Symphony remains akin to Haydn in character, though it did shock audiences by beginning on a dominant instead of a tonic chord, and not even the dominant of the principal key; and the Septet, Op. 20, was still in the courtly vein of eighteenth-century serenades and divertimenti. Nor were the first six string Quartets, Op. 18, particularly enterprising. But the B flat major piano Sonata, Op. 22, was a bold new departure indeed, and so to a lesser extent was the third Concerto, in C minor.

The next two years brought him well into what is called his middle period, where his style has grown wholly individual and his musical expression may cover an enormous range, from the

profoundest tenderness to the most raging passion or the sublimest grandeur. Typical works of this phase—to name only some very well-known ones—are the two Fantasy-Sonatas for pianoforte, Op. 27, the violin Sonata dedicated to the French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer, whom Beethoven had met at the house of Bernadotte when he was French ambassador in Vienna, and the third Symphony, in E flat major, the so-called *Sinfonia eroica* (Heroic), first intended as a tribute to Napoleon, whom Beethoven however deemed unworthy of the honour when he heard that the First Consul had assumed the title of Emperor. The 'Waldstein' Sonata, Op. 53, already referred to, also belongs to this period. So, of course, does the opera he first called, after the French original, *Leonora, or Wedded Love*, though it appeared under the title of *Fidelio* on November 20th 1805. It was soon withdrawn and revised, to be afterwards forgotten until 1814; but during all that time Beethoven always had it more or less on his mind as a favourite work that gave him endless trouble. He wrote no less than four different overtures for it, three of them now known as concert works under the title of *Leonora*. Musical invention never came to him easily: his sketch-books show that his themes often went through many different forms before they satisfied him.

In 1801 there was a minor crisis in Beethoven's life, due to his having fallen in love with his pupil, the young Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, to whom he dedicated the 'Moonlight' Sonata, Op. 27, No. 2. (The fancy title, not his own, is absurdly ill-suited to the second and third movements.) This young gentlewoman may have flirted mildly with him, but there could be no question of marriage. The affair hardly broke his heart, and he said later on that Giulietta, who had by then married a man of her own rank, had come to him weeping, but that he despised her. He was destined to fall more seriously in love more than once, but the very fact that he did it so often, thinking each time that he had found the ideal companion, only to be quickly disappointed again, proves that he was more in love with some unrealizable notion of love than with any particular woman. He never married, and if he had, his wife would often have felt herself so much less important than his work that she could neither have been happy herself nor given him happiness.

His mission in life as well as his difficult character marked him out for a lonely existence. The wonder is that he had so many faithful friends, for all that he sooner or later quarrelled so unreasonably with them.

A great tragedy came to a head in 1802. He had for some time begun to notice signs of approaching deafness. In the summer of that year, when he was living, as his custom was during the hot months, in one of the pleasant villages in the neighbourhood of Vienna—it was Heiligenstadt that time—he seems to have felt that he was inevitably doomed to lose his hearing. He wrote a kind of farewell to the world, a distressing document known as the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', which indicates plainly enough that he thought of making an end to his life. But his creative vitality saved him. It was to be some years yet before he became stone-deaf, and he must have known that he possessed that kind of inward hearing which enables most composers to set down their music on paper without having to try it out on any instrument. There is little doubt that in the music of his last years, which he could never hear, he made some miscalculations in the matter of instrumentation and in the balance of loud and soft, and it is quite possible that he might have written this or that chord differently if he could have tried it out on the pianoforte; but he hardly ever set down anything of which one would care to say with certainty that it must be a mistake.

Some further characteristic middle-period works dating from shortly after the 1806 revision of *Fidelio*, of which the great third *Leonora* overture is an important part, are the violin Concerto, the so-called 'Appassionata' Sonata, the fourth, fifth and sixth ('Pastoral') Symphonies (1807–8), the G major and E flat major piano Concertos, the latter the so-called—or rather miscalled—'Emperor' Concerto, the three string Quartets dedicated to the Russian ambassador, Count Rasumovsky, the *Coriolanus* overture (not for Shakespeare's tragedy, but suiting it very well), the incidental music, including an important overture, for Goethe's *Egmont*, the Sonata known as 'Farewell, Absence and Return', dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph on his departure before the French occupation of Vienna in 1809, and the Sonata in F sharp major inscribed to the

Countess Therese von Brunswick, who was not only a noblewoman, but a noble woman in the fullest sense of the term, and the one he had loved most deeply. But whether it was she to whom he addressed the so-called 'Letter to the Immortal Beloved' has never been determined, its date having remained uncertain. He fell in love again—the doctor's daughter Therese Malfatti, a young singer from Berlin, Amalie Sebald, and perhaps the poetess Bettina Brentano are the outstanding cases—and there is no doubt that he was very seriously affected more than once, for the time being.

In 1812 Beethoven met Goethe at one of the Bohemian watering places, but the two great men did not get on very well. The poet, who was the complete courtier and diplomat, was rather aghast at the composer's uncouth behaviour and utter indifference to any considerations of rank, even where the imperial family was concerned, a member of which, the Archduke Rudolph, was in fact his pupil.

A new affliction came to Beethoven, less tragic but more nagging than his deafness, when one of his brothers died in 1815 and he undertook to look after his nephew Carl, a boy of nine whom he felt it would be unwise to leave under the care of the mother, a woman whose character he regarded with distrust, to say the least. Unhappily, in a different way, Beethoven was himself even less fitted to take charge of a child, having always lived in fantastically untidy lodgings and involved himself in endless trouble with servants. He became entangled in a long law-suit with his sister-in-law, and when at last it was decided in his favour, Carl was fourteen and more troublesome than ever. He caused his uncle no end of worry and unhappiness, and of course the fault lay not entirely with him, though he was a weak and shifty character. In the end, when he was twenty, he failed in his examinations and attempted to commit suicide, causing a disastrous breakdown in Beethoven's health.

It was only when he had a great work in hand that Beethoven could rise above the fearful trials of his existence. But as an artist he triumphed again and again, and the music he produced, although he was fated never to hear it himself, made life endurable for him and indeed often filled it with a joy that made up for all his sufferings. The works of his final period have a

mystery and sublimity all their own. Among them are the last six pianoforte sonatas. They came to an end five years before his death, no doubt because, having always played his keyboard works himself in the first place, he preferred to write what he had in any case to leave for others to produce once his hearing had hopelessly gone. The great set of Variations on a theme by Diabelli, Op. 120, was still to come, it is true, but that owed its existence to a commission. Other important works of the last years are the great *Solemn Mass* in D major, the ninth Symphony with the choral *Hymn to Joy* for its final movement and, most wonderful and mysterious of all, the last five string quartets, written between 1824 and 1826.

His fame had spread greatly towards the end of his life, particularly to England. The Philharmonic Society in London was very anxious that he should pay it a visit in 1824, which he nearly did, and early in 1827, when he was dangerously ill with dropsy, it sent him £100—a large sum for those days—as a gift and a token of admiration. But this came too late to do more than give him a passing moment of pleasure, for he died on March 26th, in his fifty-seventh year.

SCHUBERT

THE revolutionary movement at the end of the eighteenth century did not by any means dispose of the aristocracy in Europe; but it put the aristocracy into a place that was no longer the only one in which life could be endured with tolerable ease. The middle classes, many of whose members were to grow very rich in the coming industrial developments, enjoyed greater comfort and so had more leisure to cultivate their minds. Naturally the arts responded to these new demands, music among them. Even Beethoven's work, which was often the music of revolt, here and there show a kind of snug, beslippered contentment: there it is the music of simple people, but of townsfolk, not of the peasantry.

The great exponent of that kind of music, however, is Franz Schubert, who was born in a suburb of Vienna on January 31st 1797, at the very time these great changes were wrought in France and to a lesser extent elsewhere in Europe, in the very city where the middle classes responded most readily to musical cultivation. (It is remarkable, by the way, that he is the only born Viennese among the masters who made the Austrian capital the world's musical metropolis for more than a century and a half: Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Bruckner, Brahms, Wolf.) Schubert's greatness can be as impressive as any composer's, but he is never majestic in the worldly sense, much less pompous: his work does not strike awe into the hearer, but engages his affection. The chief impression it leaves is one of comfortable humanity, of a world of humble but dignified citizens who enjoy the simpler pleasures of life, including frequent excursions into the country, but a country never out of sight of the suburbs with their hospitable inns and their cheerful dance-bands.

The Schubert household was one of just such people. The composer's father was an official schoolmaster who taught the children from the neighbourhood of Liechtental, the half-countrified district outside the ring of ramparts which enclosed the old city of Vienna. The family was moderately but genuinely

musical. The father played the cello, and later on the children more or less skilfully handled various instruments, Franz soon outdoing them on the violin, viola and pianoforte. He showed uncommon gifts at the age of about six and was at first taught by his father and his brother Ignaz, who was thirteen years older. Next he went to the organist at the parish church, and at the age of eleven he was admitted to the seminary which trained choristers for the imperial chapel and gave them a sound general education at the same time. There he soon became first violinist in the school orchestra and proved so outstandingly gifted that he was sometimes made to act as deputy conductor. Classical symphonies and overtures, including some French and Italian works, thus became his regular musical fare.

At thirteen he began to sketch various compositions and finished a fantasy for piano duet. His first song, *Hagar's Lament*, followed in the spring of 1811, when he was a little over fourteen. This is a landmark not only in his career, but in musical history, for songs set to German poetry had never yet formed one of the main categories of a great composer's work. Mozart and Beethoven had not succeeded in making more than a sideline of them, and Reichardt, Zelter and Zumsteeg have some importance only as pioneers in that species, but none as creative artists. This did not prevent the boy Schubert from imitating them, as boys will, and some of his early romantic ballads—they are that rather than songs—have the same sprawling, sectional form as those by such experimental composers.

But he practised his hand at other forms, partly under the guidance of Salieri, the old Italian master of opera who had lived in Vienna for half a century. A cantata for his father's name-day and string quartets for the home team in which he played the viola (and often corrected his father and brothers) were called for as a matter of course by the domestic circle, whose musical activities were sadly interrupted for a time, however, by the mother's death in 1812. (By the following year a stepmother was installed, but not the traditional fairy-tale stepmother, for she became the young composer's excellent friend.)

The first Symphony was finished in October 1813 and an opera, *The Devil's Pleasaunce*, as well as a Mass the following year.

This was the time when Schubert, now aged seventeen, had to think of making a living. After some preliminary study at a training-school his father gave him a place as assistant teacher in his own establishment. The youth found the teaching of small and often far from interesting children very irksome and longed to be free to devote himself wholly to music; but this seemed out of the question in a family where money was short and had always been earned by some ordinary trade or employment.

However, he could not leave composition alone, and teaching, which means long holidays and a good deal of free time even during term, made it possible for him to write almost as much as he wanted. Indeed in his eighteenth year he composed more than even the greediest music-lover could reasonably ask: two symphonies, half a dozen works for the stage (none of them produced), a Mass and other church music, a quartet, several pianoforte works and nearly a hundred and fifty songs. Not everything was valuable, of course, but nearly everything bore some signs of a distinctive character that was now rapidly developing.

The preceding year he had met the first of the poets who later formed part of his circle of friends, Johann Mayrhofer, whose song, *By the Lake*, he set in December 1814. But the great achievement, indeed the miracle of that year was his first setting of Goethe, whose genius seems to have fired his own: one of the songs in *Faust* which he named 'Margaret at the Spinning-wheel'. Like many other great masterpieces, it is not a particularly new creation, for it is strikingly similar in key and figuration to the spinning song and chorus in Haydn's *Seasons*; but it is sheer perfection in the matter of shape, vocal treatment, mood, pathos and truthful dramatic expression. Another Goethe song of the next year, *Erl-King*, reached the same unsurpassable quality.

His genius gradually made him known among the cultivated young men about town, and in 1816 one of them, the well-to-do Franz von Schober, who was slightly younger than himself, offered him a free share in his lodgings. Schubert, tired of his schoolmastering and hoping to earn a modest living somehow by teaching and possibly publication, decided to take the risk

and cut himself off from home, much to the annoyance of his father, who however came round before long. Song, piano sonatas, the fourth and fifth Symphonies and a miscellany of other works now poured from his pen in an unceasing stream.

At twenty he was introduced to Vogl, the very popular singer of the court opera, a man of nearly fifty who was at first inclined to be patronizing, but soon realized that he was face to face with genius and began enthusiastically to do all he could for Schubert's songs by singing them in public and at the private parties to which he was invited. What is more, he got Schubert invited too by telling his wealthy friends that the songs would gain much if they were accompanied by the composer, who was indeed a profoundly musical if not an outstandingly brilliant player. It was Vogl, again, who managed to get an operetta by Schubert, *The Twin Brothers*, accepted by the imperial 'Theatre at the Carinthian Gate' (Kärntnertor), where it was produced in June 1820. Meanwhile, in 1818, Schubert's new aristocratic connexions had resulted in his being invited as music master to the Hungarian summer residence of a branch of the Esterházy family in whose service Haydn had spent most of his life. He went there a second time later on, in 1824, when he is said to have fallen hopelessly in love with one of the young countesses. There is just one scrap of evidence to support this romantic tale, and it is a very unreliable scrap. Altogether the popular view of Schubert, supported by irresponsible books and films, not to mention that musical and biographical concoction entitled *Lilac Time*, of a gawky young man who was always sheepishly in love with some pretty damsel or other, only to be turned down by her and to sit tearfully in the nearest arbour to pour out his heart in yet another song, had better be firmly dismissed as being without foundation. No doubt Schubert fell in love as often as any other young man, but he did have other things to do, as we can tell from the enormous catalogue of his work, which is larger than that of almost any composer, though he died earlier than any other great master—five years earlier even than Mozart.

He was also much occupied with his friends and took part in no end of country rambles, dances, theatre outings, parties and convivial meetings at taverns and coffee-houses. That he was

the life and soul of some of the gatherings where singing, games, readings and charades were the entertainments is evident from the fact that they came to be known as Schubertiads. A picture is preserved of a charade on the subject of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise and a play in which the friends enacted a satire on their own circle. For that circle included painters and literary men rather than musicians, Schubert being the one shining musical light in it. Portraits and scenes which give us vivid impressions of its personalities and activities were drawn or painted by its own members, particularly by the two best painters among them, Kupelwieser and Schwind. The great Viennese poet and dramatist of the time, Grillparzer, did not belong to the circle, but was well acquainted with its members.

One can hardly think of Schubert away from Vienna, at any rate beyond its outskirts; and indeed, except for a few summer excursions with Vogl and others, to Steyr, Salzburg, Graz, Gastein and so on, he never left it all his life, nor did he ever go outside Austria unless one counts those two summers on the other side of the Hungarian border.

Soon after *The Twin Brothers* another operetta, *The Magic Harp*, was produced at the humbler 'Theatre by the Wien'—the small tributary to the Danube from which Vienna derives its name. This was in August 1820. The following March Vogl sang the *Erl-King* in public, and from that time on Schubert began to be more generally known about musical Vienna, though he never gave more than one concert of his own. In 1821 a group of friends undertook to have twenty of his songs published, and from that time on songs and other small works frequently appeared, though he had greater difficulty with the pianoforte sonatas and never succeeded in selling many of the chamber works or any of the orchestral compositions. The unfinished Symphony, in B minor, did not become known until the 1860s, for the manuscript was kept by his friend Anselm Hüttenbrenner, to whom he had sent it to Graz. The Musical Society there elected him an honorary member in 1822 and he wished to make some suitable return. No doubt he intended to dedicate a whole symphony to them, but he forwarded the first two movements as soon as they were done. Then he got busy with something else, and although he must have thought of

finishing the work some time, it was set aside. There is no need to make any greater mystery of the case.

A comparatively large number of songs was published in his lifetime, though nothing like the six hundred odd he wrote. They were also frequently performed, and so were his quartets for male voices, a form of music then much favoured in Vienna. One of the great successes, and not a lasting one only because of its connexion with an absurdly poor play of a spectacular order, was the music to Helmine von Chézy's *Rosamunde*, produced at the Wien Theatre in December 1823. The overture and other pieces enchanted all Vienna, but were afterwards mislaid and not recovered until Sir George Grove and Sullivan lighted on them in 1867. To the same year belongs the cycle of songs, *The Fair Maid of the Mill*, which was to be followed by its counterpart, *The Winter Journey*, four years later. Both contain some of Schubert's finest songs and both are connected stories of unhappy love, but set in the very different atmospheres of summer and winter. Between these two masterworks came others of different kinds: the captivating Octet and the lovely A minor string Quartet in 1824, the songs from Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (set, of course, in German translations) in 1825 and the B flat major piano Trio and Shakespeare songs, 'Hark, hark, the lark' and 'Who is Silvia?' in 1826.

It is more than likely that the popular fancies about Schubert's exceptional ill-luck in love have something to do with his two song-cycles about heartbroken lovers; but great artists have the imagination to understand many things they may not have actually experienced at their best or worst. As if to prove that, between the composition of the two parts of the tragic *Winter Journey*, Schubert made a very happy summer trip in 1827, visiting the Pachler family at Graz, where he was made much of and found the sincerest friendship. He was to go again the following summer, but found he could not afford it, though a change would have done him good, as he was feeling far from well. Publishers now began to ask for his music, but made very shabby offers, and such works as the great C major Symphony and the E flat major Mass of 1828 could not even be offered to them with any chance of acceptance. Towards the end of October 1828 he suffered from fatigue and attacks of giddiness.

One day in November he tasted some fish at an inn, but pushed the plate back in disgust declaring that the food was poison to him. On the 14th he took to his bed, greatly depressed. Soon afterwards he developed typhus and died on November 19th. In January 1829, had he lived, he would have been only thirty-two years of age. He had never heard his two greatest symphonic masterpieces, nor any of the last songs, which were later published under the collective and appropriate title of *Swan Song*.

BERLIOZ

WE now come to France. We might have gone there before to meet a great composer, Rameau for preference, but it is Hector Berlioz who goes on, not only to figure in history, but to live in concert-rooms, as a French classic. The Revolution was over when he was born, at La Côte-Saint-André in the southern department of Isère, on December 11th 1803; but in many ways he was very much a child of that curious phase. One has only to study its music a little to find in it that love of using those monstrous musical resources the invention of which is generally attributed to Berlioz, merely because his are the only works of the kind that have managed to survive. The use of enormous open-air orchestras, choruses of thousands and brass bands at the four points of the compass was habitual with such composers of the 1790s as Lesueur, Cherubini, Méhul and Catel, and what are thought typically Berliozian experiments in orchestration date back to another of them, Gossec, who was by far the oldest in this group.

Louis-Joseph Berlioz, the composer's father, was a doctor. He was musical, but by no means anxious to make a musician of his son, in whom he saw no very striking gifts until he was about thirteen. One can never think of Berlioz as a musician who found his art easy; indeed hardly as a musician at all, particularly, but rather as a great imaginative artist who might have become anything—a poet, a sculptor, a painter, especially perhaps a theatrical scene-painter. He picked up some theoretical books in his father's library when he was fifteen and learnt enough from them to write a selection of Italian airs the following year, which he rashly offered to an unwilling Paris publisher. It is characteristic that he did not learn such an obvious instrument as the piano or the violin, but instead took up the flute and the guitar. He never played the piano more than sketchily, and it is noteworthy that the piano arrangement of none of his works (except Liszt's transcription of the *Fantastic Symphony*) is at all satisfactory to play. His music was never, so to speak, thought of in the black-and-white of the keyboard,

but always in the actual instrumental colours intended for it from the first, and it is this which accounts largely for its originality. And very strikingly original it is, so much so that it still seems quite modern even to-day, though actually it was not particularly so in its own time. It is simply different from any other music, old or new, and will always remain a thing apart, greatly liked by some and heartily detested by others, but leaving nobody uninterested.

When he was seventeen his father, who wished him to take up his own profession, began to teach him medicine, and in 1821 he was sent to the Medical School in Paris. But when he first entered the mortuary where bodies were dissected at the lectures on anatomy, he was seized with such disgust that he decided then and there to make music, not doctoring, his calling. He met with violent opposition at home and was threatened with being cut off with a shilling, but decided to risk all to become a composer and began to study the music of the masters with enthusiasm. Gluck and Beethoven were his chief idols, but he also greatly admired Mozart, Weber and Spontini, the last no doubt because of the pomp and splendour of his orchestral scoring. Before he was twenty he showed two attempts at composition to old Lesueur, who accepted him as a pupil. He was put through his paces severely, but found musical theory uphill work; yet, although his skill was shaky, nothing would do for him but to try his hand at works on the largest scale, including an oratorio and a Mass. In 1826 he failed in the preliminary examination for the Prix de Rome, a scholarship which enabled the winner to study in Rome for three years. But, nothing daunted, he entered the Conservatoire for closer study and embarked on a lurid romantic opera, *The Judges of the Secret Court*.

His parents remained hard-hearted. At twenty-three he was obliged to join the chorus at one of the minor theatres to earn a little money. He doggedly went on trying for the Rome prize with cantatas on the death of Orpheus in 1827 and of Cleopatra in 1829, failing both times. At the same time he cultivated his fine taste in literature by adding great foreign works to his experience. Virgil he could read in Latin, but knowing no other modern language than his own, he read Shakespeare, Scott

and Goethe's *Faust* in French translations. *The Death of Cleopatra*, the *Waverley* overture and the *Eight Scenes from 'Faust'*, all dating from 1828–9, show that he had the kind of musical imagination most easily fired by great literary themes. One work, though, was due to a personal experience: the *Fantastic Symphony*, written early in 1830, a crazy, nightmarish impression of his love for Henrietta (or Harriet) Smithson, an attractive Irish actress three years older than himself, with whom he became infatuated at sight on seeing her act in Kemble's company in 1827, when an English season, mainly of Shakespeare, was given at the Théâtre de l'Odéon. She seems to have disappointed him in some way: the symphony extravagantly but with astonishingly telling and original music describes a lovelorn young artist who takes opium and dreams that he has murdered his beloved, is beheaded and has a vision of her taking part in a witches' sabbath. Harriet is musically represented by a recurring theme, a 'fixed idea', as he called it, which undergoes various transformations until it presents her in the repulsive guise of a witch. This, of course, is an early example of the 'leading theme' used chiefly by Wagner, but not invented by him, or indeed even by Berlioz, for we find it in Mozart, Weber and other earlier masters.

At last, in 1830, another cantata, *Sardanapalus*, gained him the Rome prize. Just before he left for Italy he fell in love with a girl of the more suitable age of nineteen, the promising pianist Marie Moke, to whom he became engaged to be married on his return. But with an eye to better business she married the pianoforte manufacturer Camille Pleyel the following year. The impulsive young man rushed back with nothing less than murder in his heart, but came to his senses by the time he had got as far as Nice and quietly returned to Rome. There he wrote three 'literary' overtures, on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Scott's *Rob Roy* and Byron's *The Corsair*; also a sequel to the symphony, more far-fetched than ever and indeed almost unperformable, for it required a stage and a reciting actor, yet was not properly a dramatic work. It was entitled *Lélio, or The Return to Life.*

Berlioz himself returned to life in Paris in May 1832 and managed to give a concert of his own at the Conservatoire.

Harriet Smithson was there, and although she was now thirty-two, he still saw her in the glamour of Shakespeare's poetry and persuaded himself that he loved her even more than before. She in turn at last began to show interest in the young man whose importance in the world of art she could no longer overlook. She became engaged to him, and when she broke her leg and lost her engagement in April 1833, he loyally helped her, arranging a concert for her benefit in which he induced two other young musicians of growing fame, Chopin and Liszt, to take part. An older musical friend he made was Paganini, then nearly fifty. The great violinist wished to have a work from him to perform. Berlioz, not being the man to write a concerto, again chose a literary subject, Byron's *Childe Harold*, and wrote *Harold in Italy*, a kind of story-telling symphony with a very important principal part, not for a violin but a viola.

This was performed in November 1834, not by Paganini. Berlioz had married Harriet the preceding year, on October 3rd, and a son, Louis, was born to them the following August. About that time Berlioz began his first opera, *Benvenuto Cellini*, which once again owed its existence to a book, for he had read the great Florentine craftsman's account of his life with much pleasure. There is little doubt that the memoirs of his own romantic career he was to write later on owed something to the Italian's book, for they are full of the same kind of exaggeration and distortion of the truth. But they are very good reading. Berlioz had a real gift for writing, as his books of essays on music show, and for many years he made his living with musical journalism, for composition never yielded him enough.

However, he did occasionally receive a commission. In 1836 an official one came his way, for a Mass for the Dead to be performed at the seventh anniversary the following year of the second Revolution that had taken place in France, in 1830. This *Requiem* was scored for the kind of 'revolutionary' body of performers already described: a huge choir, solo singer, extra brass bands and an enormous orchestra including, for instance, twelve each of horns and trumpets and sixteen each of trombones and kettledrums. It is this sort of thing that has led people to call Berlioz a noisy composer. Nothing could be farther from the truth: he handles even the largest forces with

surprising tact, though he can, of course, suggest great power when he chooses. Another striking fact about his music is that, in spite of its riotous romanticism, it is always beautifully cool and clear in sound.

When he was thirty-five, in 1838, he managed to get *Benvenuto Cellini* produced at the Opéra; but it was not a success. On the other hand he had a stroke of luck when Paganini, on hearing *Harold* for the first time, made him a present of 20,000 francs which enabled him to give up his newspaper work—only for a time, as it turned out.

By this time his marriage had proved to be far from happy. He was still enthralled by Shakespeare, and in 1839 he wrote his descriptive symphony on *Romeo and Juliet*; but Harriet, whose Ophelia or Cordelia had turned his heart over, was not a poetic creature off the stage. He was deeply disillusioned by her commonplace mind, which failed to rise to his artistic aspirations. He finally separated from her in 1842, only to be saddled with a new companion who turned out before long to be just as unsuited to him and even more exasperating. Harriet had been merely dull, but Marie Recio, a singer of Spanish descent eleven years younger than himself, had a bad temper, not to mention a disagreeable mother.

Dissatisfied with his lack of success in Paris, a city he never ceased to attack in the press as musically backward, and which retaliated by ignoring him as far as so striking a musical personality could be ignored, he began to travel in 1842. He did very well in many German centres that year and the next and got on friendly terms with many distinguished musicians there, including Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner. Having after his return written the *Roman Carnival* overture on themes from his opera and published his *Treatise on Orchestration*, still a standard work on the subject, he went to the Beethoven Festival at Bonn in the summer of 1845 and then visited Vienna, Prague and Budapest among other places. In the Hungarian capital he made a tremendous hit with his brilliant orchestral arrangement of one of the national tunes, the Rákóczy March, which in 1846 he incorporated in his large new vocal and orchestral work, *The Damnation of Faust*, based partly on the earlier *Eight Scenes from Goethe's 'Faust'*. This was quite a simple matter for him,

since he had no particular scruples about altering literary works to suit his purpose. He had already, in *Romeo and Juliet*, written a whole symphonic movement on Queen Mab, a mere descriptive incident of forty-two lines in Shakespeare; and now he thought nothing of sending Faust to Hungary for the sake of using his march and to Hell in order to write an exciting Ride to the Abyss. And who among those capable of enjoying these things shall say that he was wrong?

In 1847 he visited Russia and Prussia with equal success, and in November of that year it was London's turn to welcome him, which it did very warmly. He conducted opera at Drury Lane Theatre and had a concert of his works there which made a sensation, as indeed such music was bound to do. Back in Paris in 1848, where musical life had been brought almost to a standstill by yet another Revolution, he found that he must resume his critical work, which he did for the *Journal des Débats* and the *Gazette musicale*.

The 1851 Exhibition in London brought him back to England as the musical representative of France, and he was there engaged to conduct the New Philharmonic Society. This prevented him from hearing Liszt's performance of *Benvenuto Cellini* at Weimar in March 1852; but it was repeated during his visit there the following November. In June 1853 it was given in London, at Covent Garden. It failed, but he was very successsful once again with concerts. Further visits to Germany as well as Harriet's death and the composition of the exquisite oratorio, *The Childhood of Christ*, intervened before he once more conducted the New Philharmonic Society in London, in opposition to the old-established Philharmonic Society, which was that year (1855) under the direction of Wagner. The two rivals liked each other personally, but Wagner was not inclined to take Berlioz's music seriously. (There was very little music he did take seriously apart from his own.)

Visits abroad continued almost to the end of Berlioz's life. Between 1855 and 1858 he wrote the libretto and music of one of his largest and finest works, the huge opera of *The Trojans*, which is divided into two parts, each occupying an evening, and contains the wonderful scene in dumb-show often heard at concerts, the Royal Hunt and Thunderstorm. The smaller

Shakespearean opera, *Beatrice and Benedick*, based of course on *Much Ado about Nothing*, followed this and was finished in the spring of 1862, shortly before the death of Marie, his second wife.

He was now getting old, having nearly reached his sixtieth year when *The Trojans* at last came out at the Opéra after endless and vexing delays, produced half-heartedly and without much success. He suffered much from what the doctors called intestinal neuralgia and ceased to compose. But his romantic heart was still young. In 1863 he fell in love with a youthful girl who, however, died shortly afterwards, and the next year he went to his birthplace to see Estelle Dubœuf, with whom he had fallen in love when he was twelve and who was now Mme Fornier, a widow of sixty-seven. He is said to have been greatly affected by this meeting.

There is little more to tell. His son Louis died at the age of thirty-three in 1867, a blow that aggravated his own illness. A visit to Russia, where he met Balakirev and Tchaikovsky, did not cheer him, nor did one to Monaco and Nice restore his health, for he had a bad fall there that made him worse. Loss of memory began to trouble him in addition to his other sufferings. He died in Paris on March 8th 1869, after a life of little happiness save that of his extraordinary artistic adventures.

CHOPIN

ALTHOUGH Frederic (or Fryderyk) Chopin is the Polish national hero among composers, the principal scene of his life is France. His name is French, and his father, Nicolas Chopin, was a native of Nancy. His mother was a Polish lady, however, and he was born in Poland, at Zelazowa Wola, on February 22nd 1810. Nicolas was a tutor and became professor of French at the Lyceum of Warsaw, moving to the capital in October of that year.

Frederic soon promised to turn into an infant prodigy at the pianoforte. He played at a musical evening in a private house when he was seven and at a public charity concert two days after his eighth birthday. After that he was much in demand at aristocratic houses. When he was ten he wrote a march for the Russian Grand Duke Constantine. It is odd that he should have begun his career as a composer with a work not intended for the piano, the only medium with which he was afterwards to make his success; but then the march was not scored for military band by himself.

In 1822 he became a pupil of Joseph Elsner, a Polish composer of some distinction who had been appointed director of the Conservatory that had been newly opened at Warsaw the preceding year. A brilliant pianist already, at the age of thirteen or so, Chopin now made rapid progress in composition and improvisation, the latter an important accomplishment in those days, when all pianists were expected to play on the spur of the moment cadenzas in concertos and fantasies on the operatic airs of the day. When the Russian Tsar Alexander I visited Warsaw in 1825, he heard the boy with astonishment and presented him with a diamond ring. This was the year in which a Chopin pianoforte work was first published: the Rondo in C minor labelled Op. 1, though it was not the first he had written, by any means.

When he was sixteen he produced one of the few works in which he employed the orchestra as a background for his own instrument—he never used it more independently than that.

This was a set of Variations, Op. 2, on the duet 'Là ci darem la mano' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Chopin had entered the Conservatory some time after his introduction to Elsner, but left it in 1827, when he wrote the first piano Sonata and the *Rondo à la Mazur*, Op. 5, which began to develop his special gift of writing in the manner of the national dances, though he had already turned out some mazurkas earlier and possibly a polonaise in his thirteenth year. Two even larger works of the kind, both with orchestral accompaniment, followed in 1828: a *Fantasy on Polish Airs*, Op. 13, and the *Rondo à la Krakowiak* based on a dance-measure associated particularly with the former Polish capital, Cracow.

That year he began to widen his experience of the musical world. He visited Berlin, and in August 1829 he gave two concerts in Vienna. About this time, too, he met the famous pianist-composer Hummel and the amazing violin virtuoso Paganini. Soon after his twentieth birthday, on March 17th 1830, he gave the first public concert on his own account at Warsaw, for which he had specially written the F minor Concerto, Op. 21 (published as No. 2, but the first he composed). The second, in E minor, Op. 11, followed at a third concert that year, at which the young singer Konstancja Gladkowska appeared. She had been a fellow-student at the Conservatory, and he seems to have fallen in love with her about 1829.

It was perhaps because Konstancja had no use for him that he decided to leave home, and he did so—for ever, as it turned out—on November 1st 1830. The chief reason, however, was doubtless that he felt his life there to be too narrow and not likely to procure him anything more than local fame. He was accompanied some way by a group of friends, who at the stage where they parted with him sang a cantata specially written by Elsner and presented him with a goblet filled with Polish earth. One of those friends, Titus Woyciechowski, however, went with him to Breslau, Dresden, Prague and Vienna, where he appeared with much success, though the Austrian capital, where he was no longer the latest sensation, made less of him this time. He stayed there until July 1831, when he went on to Munich and Stuttgart. At the latter place he heard of the taking of Warsaw by the Russians and, in despair, wrote the agitated

Study in C minor, now No. 12 in the set of Op. 10 and known as the 'Revolutionary Study'.

Early in October 1831 he was in Paris, his headquarters for the rest of his short life. He soon made friends with Liszt there and a little later with Berlioz. He also attended the pianoforte classes of Kalkbrenner, another of those virtuoso pianists who composed almost exclusively for their own instrument, a species of musician that had, of course, been produced by the growing vogue of the keyboard instrument that was then undergoing such extraordinary developments. Clementi and Dussek had been early pioneers in that direction, and others of whom one thinks readily were Steibelt, Hummel, Moscheles and John Field. Chopin was to some extent influenced by Hummel in his early days and certainly very much by Field, Clementi's Irish pupil and apprentice, who in later years settled in Russia but had an international reputation. It was Field, not Chopin, who first wrote nocturnes and made them the poetic kind of piece in which keyboard composers have since specialized.

It has sometimes been said that Chopin was completely original, that he never imitated an older composer or was indebted to anyone for his style. The fact is that he was as easily influenced as any great composer—and great composers nearly always are—but that his music did not happen to derive from the masters whom everybody knows. We do not find traces of Mozart and Beethoven and Schubert in him, but rather traces of Mozart and Beethoven and Schubert in him, but rather of Dussek, Hummel and Field. And there was another influence—an operatic one. It was just at the time Chopin arrived in Paris that Bellini's charming, gentle opera, *La Sonnambula* (*The Sleep-walker*), was given there, very soon after its production at Milan, and no doubt Chopin was enchanted by it, particularly by those slow, lyrical tunes which are so astonishingly like his own. If we play these tunes from Bellini's operas with a more elaborate and pianistic accompaniment, we produce something exactly like a Chopin nocturne, but it was Bellini, nine years older than Chopin, who got in first. What is much more truly original in Chopin's music is its national Polish element: the mazurkas and polonaises are on the whole his most strikingly personal contribution to music (though other classes of his work, such as the waltzes, also contain this Polish streak). We are

bound, of course, to look for influence even here: that of folk-songs and national dances. But there is no need to worry about that. No great composer ever fell out of the blue.

Fashionable Paris welcomed the young artist readily. The Russian domination of their country had driven many Polish aristocrats to seek refuge in the French capital, and Chopin, whose mother was a lady of breeding and had taught him how to behave in high circles, was soon admitted to their houses. They introduced him to their French friends, and before long he moved freely in the best society and had many of its ladies and young girls for pupils.

In the early autumn of 1835, during a visit to Dresden, he fell in love with a Polish girl of nineteen whom he had already known at home: Marya Wodzinska. He seems to have met her again at Marienbad the next year and to have in some way considered himself engaged to her. But she was very uncertain of her father's consent to a marriage with a mere musician, and before long her letters showed that she did not regard herself as in any way tied to him.

It may have been disappointment in what perhaps he regarded as an ideal love that made him turn to a woman six years older than he, the notorious Mme Aurore Dudevant, better known as George Sand, under which name she wrote extravagantly romantic and sentimental novels. She saw to it that she knew everybody who had any success in the arts and attracted attention less by her work, perhaps, than by her love affairs and a masculine assertion of liberty which she made the more noticeable by wearing trousers and smoking cigars. Chopin was introduced to her by Liszt in 1837, and by the summer of the following year, when he joined a house-party at her country seat at Nohant, she had taken him under her wing. She was genuinely concerned about his delicate health, and in November 1838 took him to the Mediterranean island of Majorca to escape the Parisian winter. The holiday was a dismal failure, for while at home he might at least have been comfortable indoors, he suffered from the primitive living conditions and the almost endless rain in the island, whose inhabitants knew nothing but Spanish and, afraid of catching some infection from the ailing Chopin, kept away from him, his friend and her two children,

who had to fend for themselves without even a reliable servant. Moreover, a piano sent over from France for Chopin did not arrive for weeks, the food was poor, and he felt miserably ill and cold all the time. Nevertheless, he managed to get several compositions down on paper, including many of the twenty-four Preludes, Op. 28.

They returned to France at last in February 1839, spending the summer at Nohant. Except in 1840 Chopin went there every summer until 1847, when a grand quarrel in the Dudevant family, in which he rashly sided with the daughter, Solange, of whose marriage with a sculptor George Sand and her son Maurice disapproved, made an end to a friendship that had often been strained to breaking-point before. The eccentric novelist, it must be said, had mothered Chopin, looked after his health and saved him many small cares and vexations, but her possessiveness and her domineering personality must often have made him long for freedom and a more peaceful life.

He had, of course, many other friends, including such artists as the great painter Eugène Delacroix, the violoncellist Auguste Franchomme and the famous singer Pauline Viardot-Garcia, as well as many of his Polish compatriots. His Scottish pupil Jane Stirling did much to make his last years easier for him. When he visited London in April 1848 and was so unwell that, in spite of his great success, he could not accept all the invitations he received, she induced her brother-in-law, Lord Torphichen, to ask him to stay at his residence, Calder House, not far from Edinburgh. Chopin felt better after a summer holiday there and played at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester; but when he returned to London, about November, he felt worse than ever. On the 16th, however, he was present at a Polish ball and concert held at the Guildhall, not knowing, though perhaps feeling, that this was to be his last public appearance.

He returned to Paris the following January, feeling extremely ill with a consumptive throat. Being no longer able to teach and to play in public, he was threatened with poverty. This greatly distressed him, for he had always been rather pampered and, though never wealthy, on the whole comfortably off. The greater part of his works, sixty-four of them, containing some 170 separate numbers and movements, had been published in his

lifetime, but they did not bring him in anything once they had been sold. By the summer he was in dreadful straits. Fortunately a Russian friend, Countess Obreskov, paid half his rent and Miss Stirling assisted him with a large sum without telling him where it came from, to save him from feeling embarrassed. But nothing could restore his health, which grew so bad that his sister, Ludwika Jedrzejewicz, was summoned from Poland to come and nurse him. He died on October 17th 1849, aged only thirty-nine, but completely exhausted. Not as a musician, though, for it is a mistake to regard his music as being always languid: it could often be very vigorous, and his invention was always alert and energetic. He was buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery and the cup of Polish soil he had taken from home with him was interred with his remains.

SCHUMANN

WHENEVER musical romanticism is mentioned the first composer most people think of is Schumann. But he is not the earliest musical romantic. In Germany that distinction belongs to Weber, and we have met the arch-romantic of music, Berlioz, in France. The roots of the romantic movement, which go back to the eighteenth century and to Britain, are literary, not musical. They must be sought in the revival of old ballads and legends such as we find in Percy's *Reliques*, in Macpherson's alleged translations from the Gaelic poetry of Ossian (if he ever existed) and in Walpole's romance of terror, *The Castle of Otranto*. We have seen that Berlioz's romanticism was to a great extent literary; in another way that is true also of Schumann's, who was influenced mainly by the later German romanticism of the extravagant novels by Jean Paul and the fantastic tales by E. T. A. Hoffmann.

The very environment in which Robert Schumann was born, in the dull little Saxon town of Zwickau on June 8th 1810, was one in which he could not fail to become steeped in literature. For his father was a bookseller and publisher. But the bookshop also had a musical department, so that, like Elgar at Worcester later on, Schumann could spend his boyhood browsing among the great musical works of the past. He was given some rather casual pianoforte lessons when he was eight and soon after began to make some attempts at composition. At eleven he played at sight well enough to try over anything he could lay hands on in the shop. Before long he appeared at school concerts and could take part in the chamber music played at the house of friends. In 1825 Weber was approached to teach him, Dresden not being so very far away; but Weber, perhaps because he was busy writing *Oberon* for London and preparing to go there, gave no definite answer, though it is possible that, had he not died in London the next year, he might have taken on the boy as a pupil.

Schumann's mind, which was in many ways peculiar, seems to have been both formed and unsettled during his teens. He

read a vast amount of literature, not only German, but also foreign works in translation, having the best possible library always at his disposal, and he formed a literary society at his school, the Lyceum. But when he was sixteen a very distressing tragedy occurred: his sister Emilie, three years older than he, who had been unwell and mentally unbalanced, killed herself, and his father died soon afterwards from an illness that had been aggravated by the shock. In view of later events one must conclude that there was a streak of insanity in the family.

For the moment music and literature absorbed the lad to such an extent that they helped him to forget whatever fears he may have had for the future. That future had now to be assured somehow, and he was not sufficiently promising as a musician or as a writer to be sure of a career in either direction. So, to please his mother, he entered the University of Leipzig as a law student. But he began to make literary and musical acquaintances. In the summer of 1828, during a holiday in Bavaria, he met Heine, of many of whose poems he was to make lovely songs later on; and on his return to Leipzig he came into touch with Friedrich Wieck, a very successful pianoforte teacher whose daughter Clara was then already a remarkable pianist at the age of nine. He took lessons from Wieck and neglected his legal studies. Though he tried to continue them at the University of Heidelberg in 1829, he only came into closer touch with music there, because his professor, Thibaut, wrote on the art in his spare time. Schumann himself always found time to spare for music, and he began to compose that delightful forerunner of the *Carnival*, the suite entitled *Papillons*, there. His return from picturesque Heidelberg to drab Leipzig did not sober him, and at last, in 1830, his mother allowed him to try for six months whether he could properly fit himself for a musical career. He went back to Wieck for lessons, began to play very well indeed, and composed for his own instrument the Variations on the name of friends called Abegg (and on the notes A.B.E.G.G.), Op. 1, as well as the formidably difficult *Toccata*, Op. 7. Wieck did not teach composition and advised his pupil to go to Weinlig, who was cantor at St. Thomas's church—the post once occupied by Bach. But Weinlig was thirty years older than Schumann, who may have been afraid of being taught too academically; at

any rate he preferred to go to the young operatic conductor Heinrich Dorn. In the spring of 1832, however, Dorn left Leipzig, and Schumann, at the age of not quite twenty-two, decided to continue studying without a master. One of the first things he did in his anxiety to pursue a musician's career was to unfit himself for the most promising part of it by injuring his hand with a mechanism intended to speed up his development as a pianist, with the result that he could never again play properly. For all that, he gave no further thought to the law, having by this time found his feet as a composer and also as a writer on music. He had several works ready by 1833 and had begun the piano Sonatas in F sharp minor and G minor; also, with a circle of young intellectuals he had formed, he founded a musical paper, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which has survived into the twentieth century. Mendelssohn and Wagner were among the contributors, who all wrote under high-sounding pen-names, Schumann himself taking on two different ones, according to his mood, 'Florestan' serving him when he felt cheerful and aggressive, and 'Eusebius' when he was gentle and dreamy; and the two often appeared in opposition for the sake of making the paper as lively as possible.

The association was called the 'Davidsbund' (League of David). The name appears in the *Dances of David's Leaguers* (*Davidsbündlertänze*) composed in 1837, and some of the members' fancy names, including 'Florestan' and 'Eusebius', serve as titles for several pieces in the *Carnival*. 'Chiarina' (Italian for 'Little Clara') is, of course, Wieck's young daughter, while 'Estrella' stands for a young lady who came from Asch in Bohemia, Ernestine von Fricken, with whom Schumann fell violently in love in 1834, when that suite of exquisite ballroom and fancy-dress pieces was written. It is, like Op. 1, based on a musical cryptogram, the thematic material being formed from the notes, A, E flat, C, B (in German A, S = Es, C, H), which not only spell Ernestine's home-town, but also represent the only musical letters in Schumann's name. No doubt he regarded this as a good omen at the age of twenty-four, when he composed the work. But his engagement was soon broken off. He now dedicated the F sharp minor Sonata to Clara Wieck, and the following year, when she was seventeen, her father became

aware that his daughter and his pupil had fallen in love. He was furiously opposed to the idea of their marrying and forbade all communication between them, with the usual result that the separation made them the more determined to be united as soon as possible. A long and bitter fight ensued, which came to a head in a lawsuit in 1840, when Wieck tried to prove that Schumann was a drunkard and unfit to make a good husband. But though it was true that the young man was fond of conviviality and had sown some wild oats, Wieck lost the case, and the two were married on September 12th.

In the meantime Schumann had established his fame more and more firmly in the musical world, until shortly before his marriage he received an honorary doctor's degree from the University of Jena. He met many famous musicians, including Chopin and Mendelssohn in 1835. About the former he had written with generous enthusiasm in his paper ('Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!') and for the latter he had an almost passionate admiration, which the slightly older and much more mature composer returned somewhat coldly. In 1837 he dedicated two important piano works to English musicians with whom he had made friends, for it was just about then that the long-standing superstition arose in England that music could be studied nowhere else than at Leipzig. The *Fantastic Pieces*, Op. 12, are inscribed to the pianist Robena Laidlaw, who was of an age with Clara, and the *Symphonic Studies*, Op. 13, to William Sterndale Bennett, who, aged twenty-one, was studying composition with Mendelssohn.

All biographers seem to have taken it for granted that Robert and Clara Schumann's marriage was an ideally happy one until near the composer's end. It certainly looks so on the face of it, for artistically they were well matched. She was as profoundly musical as he and could play what remains the most important section of his output, his pianoforte music, supremely well. But one can hardly fail to gather, if one does not wilfully overlook their little failings, that they must often have found each other rather trying. He was by turns over-excited and grumpy, while she, as good a woman as ever there was, could be not a little priggish and was obstinately narrow-minded in her musical likes and dislikes. Even her unfailing admiration for all her

husband did—though not all was by any means equally good—must have become a little tiresome at times; indeed it was eventually to prove anything but helpful to him, as we shall see in a moment.

Up to his marriage Schumann had written exclusively for the piano (Opp. 1–23), and only one of the sixteen sets of songs he composed in rapid succession that year was finished before the wedding. Then, in 1841, came a greater variety of works. With the Symphony in B flat major he for the first time tackled the orchestra, which he never learnt to handle with any particular skill, and he also used it, of course, for the Fantasy in A minor that later (1845) became the first movement of the piano Concerto. Next he decided to try his hand at a work for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, which turned out to be the best of the kind he was ever to write, the charming *Paradise and the Per*, based on an episode from Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. In 1842 followed his first chamber music, the three string Quartets, Op. 41, written after a close study he had made with Clara of Haydn's and Mozart's quartets. The piano Quintet and piano Quartet, both in E flat major, came close behind.

By 1843 it became clear that he was doing too much. He suffered severely from some kind of mental tiredness and had to give up composition for a time. But he could not resist quite all the temptations to go on working, and even when, having accompanied Clara on a concert tour in Russia the following year, he had a very serious breakdown, he wrote the final chorus of the work which, after six years of labouring at it off and on, became the *Scenes from Goethe's 'Faust'*.

At the end of 1844 the Schumanns removed to Dresden, where Robert seems to have felt better, as indeed he might, for the beautiful Saxon capital, with its gay life, its graceful baroque architecture and its pretty river, was indeed a change from dreary, flat, commercial Leipzig; and although at the latter place Mendelssohn had opened a Conservatory of Music, and it had its famous Gewandhaus concerts as well as an opera of sorts, Dresden's artistic life was much more enticing. This was perhaps the reason why Schumann became anxious to compose for the stage. He wrote his own libretto for an opera, *Genoveva*, which he finished in 1848. It has never been a success; but the

finest orchestral score he ever produced is the incidental music (with by far the best overture he wrote) to a German translation of Byron's *Manfred*, composed in 1848–9.

It was in 1850 that his tragedy began, though it had been foreshadowed once or twice already. He was appointed conductor at Düsseldorf, where he was to direct the orchestral subscription concerts, the practices of the choral society and occasionally performances of church music. Unfortunately it soon became perfectly plain to all except himself and Clara that he was a bad conductor—in fact no conductor at all. And that is where his wife made her dreadful mistake. She must have seen that he was incapable of coping with his new duties, or at any rate that they embarrassed him and made him profoundly unhappy; but instead of gently persuading him to give them up, she persisted in upholding him as a misjudged genius whom envious rivals tried to displace, with the result that he obstinately stuck to his post, to his own and everybody else's growing distress.

Things went from bad to worse. He began to suffer from delusions and found it difficult to put his ideas into words. He became more and more melancholy and silent. After a tour in Holland (where the king, having complimented Clara on her playing, asked whether her husband was a musician too), he showed alarming signs of mental derangement in February 1854. On the 27th he suddenly left the house and threw himself into the Rhine. On being rescued and brought home by strangers, he himself asked to be placed in an asylum. On March 4th he was taken to a private establishment for mental sufferers at Endenich near Bonn. At first the doctors hoped that he would recover, but eventually they gave him up. He was never raving mad, but his brain was utterly exhausted and, though he seemed quite normal at intervals, incapable of concentrating on anything. He lingered on until July 29th 1856, when he died quietly in his sleep.

WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER'S youth was spent in the two chief cities of Saxony. He was born in its great commercial centre, Leipzig, on May 22nd 1813, his father being a clerk of the city police. But when he was six months old to the very day the father died, and before long his mother moved to the capital, Dresden, where in 1815 she married the actor and painter Ludwig Geyer. The boy thus had connexions with the stage earlier than he had with music, although the Geyers were acquainted with Weber, who conducted the Court Opera and whom he enthusiastically admired. His elder sisters, Clara and Rosalie, both made their first appearance in opera by the time he was eleven. At school he was much attracted by Greek drama, and he wrote a huge tragedy in the manner of Shakespeare, more or less, in which so many characters died a violent death that he had to bring some of them back as ghosts. He learnt the pianoforte after a fashion, but even there his dramatic leanings showed themselves, for instead of practising he played scraps and selections from operas all the time. Like Berlioz, he never became a good pianist.

In 1827 the family was back at Leipzig again. Beethoven had just died, and Richard, hearing that master's symphonies and other works at the Gewandhaus concerts, decided to become a composer, mainly in order to set his bloodthirsty drama to music. He picked up what theoretical knowledge he could, but had little patience with it. The compositions at which he tried his hand showed natural gifts but no technical ease. An overture he managed to get performed when he was seventeen was so clumsily scored that the public laughed at it. But though he would not learn the composer's craft in the usual way, by exercises and examinations, he had a singular gift of picking up experience by studying the work of the masters for himself. He eagerly made himself familiar with every Beethoven score he could lay hands on and went to as many operas as he could, learning a great deal from such works as that master's *Fidelio*, Weber's *Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, and many others. The

influence of operatic composers like Spontini and Marschner may be traced in his earlier stage works.

Three months before his eighteenth birthday Wagner entered Leipzig University, and about that time he went to the master for whom Schumann was just then finding so little use, Weinlig of St. Thomas's. But he was also in touch with Schumann's chosen teacher, Heinrich Dorn, who showed a keen interest in him. When he was nineteen Weinlig may have realized that strictly academic teaching would not do for him, and he may even have had the sense to know that it was not necessary in his particular case: at any rate he informed his young pupil that he had nothing more to teach him. As a church musician he was certainly not the man to instruct an opera composer. Oddly enough, however, it was not opera which Wagner attempted at that time. He tried all kinds of instrumental music instead, including concert overtures and a Symphony in C major.

When he visited Vienna and Prague in the summer of 1832 he was lucky enough to hear the symphony performed by the Conservatory students in the latter city; but it was there that he definitely turned to the only kind of work for which his peculiar genius really fitted him. He wrote the libretto for an opera, *The Wedding*, the first scene of which he set after his return home. But when his sister Rosalie, who knew all about the stage, declared the piece unperformable, he gave it up, only to get to work on another opera-book immediately. This was *The Fairies*, the composition of which occupied him during 1833, when for a time he was chorus-master at the Opera of Würzburg, an indifferent small-town establishment. He gained slightly better experience as conductor of a summer theatre the following year; but this was valuable mainly because for the winter the company removed to its headquarters at Magdeburg, where the operatic performances kept up a fairly high standard and at any rate gave him the opportunity of studying several classical and some fashionable works. Drama as well as opera was given at the theatre, and it was there that he met the actress Minna Planer, to whom he was married on November 24th 1836. Exactly like Berlioz he was to be saddled with an actress-wife a few years older than himself—she did not tell him how many—and soon to find her an uncongenial companion. She

had indeed kept some rather more discreditable secrets than that of her age from him, but as his own youth had been far from blameless, perhaps that would not have greatly mattered. What did matter was that, fundamentally respectable, she was very conventional and unimaginative, and also rather stupid, so that she could not be expected to understand the hot-headed and erratic genius to whom she was united, though there is no doubt that she did her best for him according to her lights.

On March 29th 1836 Wagner succeeded in producing his third opera on the Magdeburg stage. It was *The Love Prohibition*, set once again to his own words, the plot being based on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. There was no reason why the work should not have pleased, for it contained elements of all that was best, in the public's views as well as in Wagner's own at that time, in the successful operas of the day. It had romantic streaks that came from Weber and Marschner, orchestral brilliance akin to that of Spontini and Meyerbeer, the melodiousness of Auber and Bellini, and so on. But it was ill-fated from the start. The second performance already was badly attended, and what was worse, it broke down because of a violent squabble among the artists. The company was disbanded soon afterwards, and Minna accepted an engagement at Königsberg, where she succeeded with some difficulty in obtaining the post of operatic conductor for her husband in the spring of 1837. But the theatre went bankrupt, and for some reason Minna suddenly left Wagner in the summer. He went to stay with his sister Ottilie at Dresden, where she had married the orientalist Hermann Brockhaus, and there he conceived the idea of a grand spectacular opera, *Rienzi*, based on two English literary works, Bulwer Lytton's novel and, farther back, a play by Mary Russell Mitford. By October he was appointed conductor at the theatre of Riga (then in Russia and now the capital of Latvia), at that time a city in the Hanseatic League and predominantly German in language and population. There Minna quietly rejoined him in October. Whatever time he could spare from his duties all through 1838 was spent on the composition of *Rienzi*.

The following January the Riga conductorship was withdrawn from Wagner and offered to Dorn. The Wagners therefore

resolved to try their luck in Paris, more especially as they were pursued by tradespeople of Magdeburg and Königsberg, whom they owed a great deal of money. With their huge Newfoundland dog—Wagner always loved animals—they escaped rather like thieves in the night and sailed across the Baltic intending to go to France by sea. The voyage, very long and trying in any case, took them instead to the coast of Norway first of all and then to England, for they ran into terrible tempests and had to take refuge where they could.

After a week in London and a stay at Boulogne, they arrived at last in Paris, in a state of alarming poverty, in September 1839. Months of misery followed during which nothing succeeded. To make a little money Wagner wrote some French songs, sent articles to musical papers and arranged vocal scores of new operas by French composers; but even so he and Minna lived only from hand to mouth. Still, he found time for more serious work. Inspired by the fine performances of Beethoven at the Conservatoire, he wrote the *Faust* overture, his only important concert work apart from the *Siegfried Idyll* of 1870 and the first composition in which he showed a distinctive personality, for *Rienzi*, a bombastic and excessively long and loud work, is still very much in the manner of Spontini and Meyerbeer —only not so good. In 1840 he also wrote a one-act libretto on the subject of *The Flying Dutchman*, in the hope that the Opéra would accept such a work. It did, but would have none of his music, the composition of the book being entrusted to another and quite inferior composer. However, the 500 francs he received for the libretto enabled him to move into the country and there, at Meudon, to expand it into three acts, to be set by himself as a German romantic opera. Berlin vaguely promised to perform it, while Dresden had accepted *Rienzi* for production sooner or later; so, having greater hopes of Germany by this time and giving up all expectations of France, he and Minna left Paris in April 1842, to settle down at Dresden, where *Rienzi* came out on October 20th and its composer was appointed second conductor at the Court Opera. *The Flying Dutchman* was also produced there, on January 2nd 1843, Berlin having been forestalled by the Saxon capital.

In April 1845 the next opera, *Tannhäuser*, was finished, after

simmering since the summer of 1842, when Wagner had drafted the libretto and begun to sketch the music. His works were always slow to develop, and the greater they became the slower was their progress; also he matured very gradually, his style being still uncertain even in *Tannhäuser*, though he was nearly thirty-two when he finished it—as old as Schubert was at his death. While on holiday in the summer of 1845 he sketched the poem of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, but it was to be twenty-two years before that work was completed.

For the moment he gave it up for *Lohengrin*, which he began to set to music soon after the Dresden production of *Tannhäuser*, which took place on October 19th 1845. He was not lucky with that latest work at the theatre to which he was attached. In fact things at Dresden were by no means all he could have wished. The Court Opera was managed by starchy officials who knew more about etiquette and legal procedure than about art, and when Wagner submitted suggestions for the improvement of the operatic management, which included sensible reforms in the orchestra, they were ignored as being uncalled for, coming from a man in a subordinate position. The fact that he was also a man of superior creative gifts carried no weight.

Unfortunately Wagner was looked upon even more unfavourably when, after the 1848 Revolution in France, he showed sympathy with that movement. Disfavour grew into suspicion and suspicion into persecution when the trouble spread across Europe and, on its reaching Saxony, he sided with the people against what was called 'law and order' but happened to be simply the established government, which was in many ways outmoded or corrupt. When the revolt failed at Dresden in 1849, Wagner was obliged to fly the country. He first took refuge with Liszt at Weimar, who had generously produced *Tannhäuser* there; but Liszt was himself a courtier, and in order not to embarrass him Wagner moved on to Switzerland. There he heard from Minna that a warrant for his arrest had been issued, to be enforced if he should set foot anywhere in Saxony, and as he feared that the other German states would be sure to side with that kingdom he decided, after another fruitless visit to Paris, to stay in Switzerland. Minna joined him at Zürich in the autumn of 1849. He nearly left her soon after when he

once more went to France and met an Englishwoman who was married to a Frenchman of Bordeaux, Jessie Laussot, and who, with another lady, Julie Ritter, had made him an allowance to help him with his work. He fell in love with Jessie and nearly induced her to run away with him; but she was persuaded by her mother to stay with her husband, and he returned defeated to Switzerland and to Minna, who agreed to forgive and forget.

He too forgot the affair when he became fired with the idea of a new opera in 1851, at which he was enabled to work by a regular annual allowance made him by Frau Ritter. The subject was to be, not one of the old operatic stock plots from classical Greek mythology or Roman or Eastern history, but the ancient Teutonic Nibelungs' Saga, and it was to be called *Siegfried's Death*. But when he had drafted a drama on that incident, he found that he ought to account for his hero's life by another, entitled *The Young Siegfried*. By the time these forerunners of the last two parts of his great cycle, *Siegfried* and *The Dusk of the Gods*, were ready in their main literary outlines, he discovered that he still had to show Siegfried's origin in *The Valkyrie*, and this in turn he felt it necessary to introduce by means of a prologue which was in itself to take up a whole evening, *The Rhinegold*. Thus the poem of *The Nibelungs' Ring* was written backwards, so to speak, though it was afterwards composed in the right order, with a long interruption. It was in this work that Wagner first systematically employed 'leading motives', those themes which he used throughout a work to underline the dramatic interplay of the various characters, things or ideas they represent, and which he learnt to change, develop and interweave with the skill of a great symphonic writer.

The interruption came in 1857, by which time he had composed the *Ring* up to some way into the second act of *Siegfried*. The cause was partly human and partly artistic. He had for some time been greatly attracted by a woman fifteen years younger than he and—which is perhaps more to the point—about twenty younger than Minna. She was Mathilde Wesendonk, the wife of a wealthy German friend also settled at Zürich, who had done much for Wagner and had in the end offered him a little house in the extensive grounds attached to his own. Mathilde was one of those people who, fond of the

arts but not greatly gifted themselves—though she did write poems some of which Wagner set to music—like to be seen dancing attendance on artists and are given to gushing over their work. At first Wagner was merely flattered, no doubt, but it was only too easy for him to imagine that Mathilde was the only woman who had ever understood him and eventually that she was the only one he had ever loved, which of course flattered her in turn, whether she did or did not really lose her heart to him, which is a question that has never been clearly answered.

It was Mathilde, or at any rate his yearning for her, which suggested to him the idea of writing a music-drama (he no longer wanted his works to be called operas, as he explained at great length in his many writings on the subject) on the story of Tristram and Iseult. He wrote the poem of *Tristan and Isolde* in August 1857, and the composition was finished in the same month two years later. But in the meantime, more or less exactly half-way between, poor Minna, wildly jealous of Mathilde, created a dreadful scene which resulted in her departure for Germany and in an upheaval in the Wesendonk household that ended with Mathilde's decision to stay where she was, whereupon Wagner, who could always see himself in a favourable light, heroically renounced her and went off to Venice. It was there, and later on in Switzerland again, at Lucerne, that he completed *Tristan*.

Wagner still hankered after a success in Paris. He was back there by September 1859, and Minna, forgiving as ever and always fond of the French capital, in spite of her sufferings there, rejoined him in November. He had now the admiration of the advanced artistic circles, particularly the poet Baudelaire, and Napoleon III actually commanded a production of *Tannhäuser* at the Opéra. The management could not refuse, but made things as difficult as possible. A grand opera for Paris had to contain a ballet, and there was none in *Tannhäuser*. No doubt a more worldly and less conscientious composer would have agreed to insert a dance interlude into the singers' tourney in the second act; but Wagner refused point-blank to do any such thing. He relented so far as to revise the overture and opening scene, so that there was plenty of scope for a dance

display in the abode of Venus, and this indeed was both effective and in keeping with the plot. Unfortunately, however, the fashionable gentlemen and sportsmen who patronized the Opéra solely for the sake of the ballet were in the habit of never turning up until it was due in the second act or thereabouts, with the result that when the new version of the opera was produced on March 13th 1861, they missed the dancing and took their revenge on Wagner by creating a fearful disturbance at the second and third performances. Thereupon he withdrew the work and turned his back on Paris for ever. Later that year he heard *Lohengrin* in Vienna for the first time, for although it had been given at a dozen German theatres and he had at last obtained permission to enter Germany again, he had missed it so far. On the other hand the ideal production of *Tristan* he planned for Vienna was to be put off again and again, owing to various accidents and intrigues, and most of all because the management and the singers feared that it was so difficult to perform and to understand as to be doomed to failure.

In January 1862 he finished the poem of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* and in March he began its composition at the quiet little town of Biebrich on the Rhine. That year and the next, in order to make some money to enable him to go on composing, he gave orchestral concerts of extracts from his works at Leipzig, Vienna, Prague, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Budapest. But as soon as he had some cash in hand he began to live more extravagantly, so much so that he was constantly in debt, whether he happened to be poor or comparatively well off. He also had one or two love affairs at Biebrich and at least one in Vienna, where he went in 1863 to live at Penzing, on the outskirts of the city. There things became desperate, for he was hunted by his creditors and threatened with imprisonment, so that he had to leave secretly, first for Zürich and thence for Stuttgart. Not that he regarded himself as a criminal: he merely thought that the whole structure of society was wrong from top to bottom. His view was that as a great artist, who gave the world masterpieces it ought to cherish, he was entitled to a luxurious existence and should be provided for by a grateful public. Eventually, in the last few years of his life, all this was to come true, and it is amusing to reflect that the work that chiefly

made him rich was the *Ring*, the subject of which is the curse of wealth.

In 1864 the world at large was still callous enough to give him nothing. Yet there was one person who did perform the miracle he expected: the young King Ludwig II of Bavaria, a mentally unbalanced lad of nineteen who dreamt of some ideal state in which the ruler had nothing to do but to cultivate the arts. When Wagner was on the point of despair at Stuttgart, Ludwig sent his secretary to him with the offer, or rather the request, that he should attach himself to the Bavarian court, not as an official but as the king's personal friend and artistic adviser. Nothing could have better suited the former democrat, if not revolutionary, who foresaw an artistic paradise in Munich where the chief blessings would be great productions of his own works and, for the rest, splendid artistic activities strictly supervised by him and banning everything for which he personally had no use, such as for example the operas of Meyerbeer, which he heartily detested, or the music of Mendelssohn and Schumann, upon which he looked with contempt. He particularly abhorred the Jews and all their works, and it was this which lately endeared him to the Nazis quite as much as his work did, although it has never been conclusively proved that he had himself no Jewish blood in him.

One of the first things he did at Munich was to summon the admirable young conductor Hans von Bülow, a great admirer of his work, to the Bavarian Court Opera. Bülow's wife, Cosima, a striking and highly intelligent if not particularly attractive woman of twenty-seven, was Liszt's daughter. Wagner had met her as a girl of sixteen in Paris, and curiously enough she had visited him with her husband at Zürich when she was twenty, in the very midst of his Tristram-and-Iseult tragedy with Mathilde Wesendonk. She may have impressed him before, in a way, although he was twenty-four years older and only two years younger than her father; but it was now, at Munich, that she became the next and the most fateful woman to cross his path.

Tristan and Isolde was produced, after some delay, on June 10th 1865. But by that time Munich was seething with discontent. The courtiers and civil servants, jealous of Wagner's influence on the king, intrigued against him by making a scandal

of his and Cosima's attachment and of his extravagance, which they represented as being indulged in at the country's expense. Ludwig refused to believe that his favourite was taking advantage of royal patronage for his own ends, or at any rate persuaded himself that these ends were artistically so important as to justify anything Wagner did; but such pressure was brought to bear on him that in the end he was obliged to ask Wagner to leave him for a time. The opponents had won: Wagner never returned.

He took refuge in Switzerland once more and eventually found a pleasant country house at Triebschen, on the lake of Lucerne. Cosima finally left her husband and followed Wagner there early in 1866. Bülow resigned himself to the loss, some say from mere weakness or because secretly he was not sorry to be rid of his wife, while others maintain that he nobly sacrificed his own happiness in order to serve one he felt to be infinitely greater than himself. He certainly prepared a performance of *Lohengrin* at Munich with the utmost devotion, as well as the production of *The Mastersingers*, which took place there on June 21st 1868. Later that year Wagner resumed the composition of *Siegfried* where he had left it off eleven years before, and on August 25th 1870 he and Cosima were married, Bülow having obtained a divorce and Minna having died at Dresden in 1866, after a final separation.

In 1871 Wagner found, at the small town of Bayreuth in Bavaria, the ideal site for the festival theatre he was planning for the production of the *Ring*, which he did not want to offer piecemeal to various opera houses, to be produced as they might think fit. It was to be given only as a complete cycle under his personal supervision. He had to do a great deal of scheming and to collect money by conducting in many towns concerts of selections from his works in order to secure adquate funds for such a gigantic undertaking; but he succeeded in the end and went to live at Bayreuth, where the foundation-stone of the theatre was laid on his fifty-ninth birthday, May 22nd 1872. Once or twice the scheme nearly collapsed, but clever advertising and a large loan from King Ludwig saved it. Active preparations for the *Ring* production began in 1874, even before *The Dusk of the Gods* was fully scored, and went on for two years. Even-

tually, after the most painstaking and devoted labours on the part of all concerned, the first cycle was staged on August 13th–17th 1876, and repeated twice that year, Bayreuth swarming with distinguished musicians and other celebrities from all over Europe.

In January 1877 Wagner began his last work, *Parsifal*, intended for performance at Bayreuth only as a kind of sacred ritual too solemn and serious to be given up to the common traffic of the everyday theatrical world. The *Ring*, having lost him enormous sums at Bayreuth, was now to be had by any opera-house that could pay a handsome fee, Leipzig being the first to secure the whole cycle in 1878. An impresario proposed to bring it out in London, St. Petersburg and the U.S.A., and it was done in Berlin in 1881, when Wagner, who was present, had a heart seizure during one of the performances.

All his life he had suffered from various illnesses at times, but by 1879 his state of health had grown more alarming. He went to Italy the next year, staying by turns at Naples, Perugia, Siena and Venice, and to Sicily at the end of 1881, where he finished *Parsifal* in January 1882, at Palermo. There was a private performance of it, for patrons of the Bayreuth festival theatre only, on July 26th of that year, followed by the first public one on July 30th.

In September Wagner, much exhausted and subject to more and more frequent heart attacks, left for Venice with Cosima. It was there, in one of the old palaces on the Grand Canal, that heart failure put an end to his full and adventurous life on February 13th 1883: a dramatic death in a theatrical setting.

VERDI

IN 1813, the year which saw the birth of Wagner, who insisted on turning opera into music-drama in his own way, the greatest Italian composer of opera also came into the world, a little later—on October 10th to be exact. It was a very different musical world in the south. Verdi never said he was going to 'reform' opera; what he did all his long life was just to turn out one opera after another. If he wrote finer operas than any Italian had ever done, or for that matter has ever done since, it was not because he deliberately set out to improve that kind of work, but simply because he was the most powerful and most inventive musician who has ever written for the stage in Italy. Nor should it be forgotten, though it is often overlooked even by professional critics of music, that he had technical gifts which entitle him to rank with the greatest composers of any music, though as it happens he did not often attempt anything but opera. These gifts were to a great extent natural, for he never received any very thorough training in musical craftsmanship. His chances were small in his youth, for like Haydn before him and like Brahms after him, he was the child of poor parents.

It was at the ugly and ordinary little village of Le Roncole, near Busseto in the duchy of Parma, that Giuseppe Verdi was born, in the midst of flat and stony country. His father kept an inn and a small grocer's shop in a roughly built and rather squalid house. He heard a good deal of music in his boyhood, but there was no musical culture in the village. Barrel-organs played tunes from the more old-fashioned operas in the streets, and travelling musicians of sorts, often not much better than beggars, sometimes came to the inn, while at the village church the music can have reached no high standard. But the boy became a chorister there at the age of seven and was taught the simpler rules of music by the organist. A priest made him a present of an old spinet, on which he made quick progress. At ten, having taken his master's place at a service, he was appointed organist and paid a little pocket-money. Before long he had to

walk to the village twice a week for the services, his father having sent him to Busseto, to attend school there.

He lodged with a cobbler at first, a friend of his father's, but in 1826 another friend, the merchant Antonio Barezzi, took him into his business and into his house. There was a Philharmonic Society at Busseto of which Barezzi was president, and rehearsals under the cathedral organist Provesi were held at the house. Provesi offered to give lessons to the boy, who was allowed to practise on the piano of his host's daughter, Margherita, a child of nine with whom he made great friends. At fourteen he wrote an overture, which the Philharmonic performed, and he also composed military marches. In 1829, when Provesi was sixty-three and felt he needed an assistant, the lad of sixteen began to conduct some of the rehearsals and concerts, for which he wrote a symphony.

When he was seventeen Barezzi obtained him a scholarship, which he supplemented with an allowance of his own, and sent him to Milan to study at the Conservatorio. But that august institution earned for itself the scorn of future generations by rejecting Verdi, for no better reason than that he was too old for admittance. He then went to Lavigna, a musician attached to the famous Scala Theatre, where he was thus enabled to hear the repertory operas. He composed all kinds of music or practice, but still no opera, although the Milan Philharmonic Society, whose performance of Haydn's *Creation* he had conducted, asked him to write one. However, he returned to Busseto in 1832, having heard that Provesi had died, in the hope of obtaining the organist's post at the cathedral. But it was given to an inferior musician, whereupon the Busseto Philharmonic made him an allowance of 300 lire for three years, by way of protest. His sacred music was performed at other churches, with the result that people began to forsake the cathedral. Living at Barezzi's house again, he now set to work on the opera for Milan and became engaged to Margherita, whom he married when he was in his twenty-third year and she in her eighteenth.

When the three years' contract was completed in 1838 he decided to return to Milan. A literary friend, Temistocle Solera, helped him to put into shape the libretto of an opera,

Oberto, Count of San Bonifacio, and he was advised to submit it to the Scala when it was found that the Milan Philharmonic could not perform it. The great opera-house accepted it and produced it on November 17th 1839. What was more, Ricordi made him an offer for the publication of the vocal score; and the director of the Scala, who also managed the Imperial Opera in Vienna, made an agreement for the production of three further operas with him. Thus, almost before he knew what was happening, Verdi was launched upon the career in which he was to win immortality.

An appalling tragedy intervened, however. His two little children, a boy and a girl, died one after the other, and on June 19th 1840, he lost his young wife as well. It was as though life had come to an end before he was twenty-seven; at any rate he had to make a wholly new life for himself. What made matters worse was that the Scala suddenly decided that it must have a comic opera from him at once. Perhaps the distraction was good for him, but he was in no mood for that kind of work, and it is not surprising that when *The Reign of a Day* was produced on September 5th it was a complete failure. He was never to write another comic opera until he came to his very last work. Indeed just then he was so discouraged that he resolved to give up composition altogether. He asked Merelli, the Scala's manager, to release him from his contract. Merelli, who seems to have known the ways of genius, wisely said neither yes nor no; but one day he showed Verdi Solera's libretto for a new opera, *Nebuchadnezzar*, pretending to leave it with him merely because he wanted expert advice about it. As he had expected, it fired Verdi's enthusiasm and was soon set to music. It had an immense success at its production on March 9th 1842. Among the singers was Giuseppina Strepponi, a nice, sensible woman of twenty-seven who became a faithful friend of the composer's and later his second wife. It was she who advised him to ask the same fee as Bellini had received for *Norma* when the management handed him a contract for the next opera with a blank space left for him to insert his own amount—an incident which testified not only to Verdi's growing reputation as a composer but also to his uprightness as a man, a quality of character which indeed he retained to the end of his life.

That next opera was *The Lombards at the First Crusade*, and it was the first to bring Verdi into conflict with the authorities, as so many of his later operas did, for political reasons of the pettiest kind as a rule. This time, though, the objection was a religious one and it came from the Archbishop of Milan on account of the staging of church ceremonies. After some small alterations the police, who had the last word, allowed the work to appear, and it was found too late that it did in fact stir up a political disturbance, for the rousing chorus 'O mia patria' ('O my country') provoked a demonstration against the Austrian control of northern Italy.

The first of Verdi's operas that was to become more generally known was *Ernani*, composed for Venice, where it was produced at the Fenice (Phoenix) Theatre on March 9th 1844. Its libretto, by Francesco Piave, was based on Victor Hugo's drama, *Hernani*, which had provoked something like a literary revolution in Paris. Its fiery music was in itself conservative, so far as style and expression was concerned, but it was of the kind that so often in this composer's case roused audiences to a frenzy of enthusiasm that was as much patriotic as artistic. For Italy at that time passionately desired political freedom and the liberation from the foreign domination which both France and Austria had exercised over it all too long.

Not all Verdi's operas can be named here, for he wrote as many as twenty-six, not counting various revised versions which sometimes almost amounted to new works. Four appeared before the next one that has maintained itself in the repertory, though in a later version. This was the first of Verdi's three Shakespearean works. Piave's libretto was based on *Macbeth*. Verdi had in the meantime gained access to the stages of Rome and Naples as well as Milan and Venice, but this latest work came out at Florence, on March 14th 1847. It was a pity that he could not take to it England with him when he visited London that summer; but another opera, on Schiller's lurid schoolboy drama of *The Robbers*, had been commissioned from him by Lumley, the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket, still devoted to Italian opera, as its forerunner had been in the days of Handel. The work, whose Italian title is *I Masnadieri*, appeared on July 22nd, with Jenny Lind, 'the

Swedish Nightingale', and the great bass Luigi Lablache in the cast. Paris also began to take notice of Verdi, who on November 26th produced a French adaptation of *The Lombards*, now called *Jérusalem*, at the Opéra.

Verdi was rather unsettled at that time, going to France again and staying at Milan, Trieste, Rome and Naples in between. But at the end of 1849 he returned to Busseto, where he had bought the villa and estate of Sant' Agata that was to remain his headquarters for the rest of his life, a place to which he became much attached and where he delighted in spending some of his time in the occupations of a landowner. He took a keen interest in gardening and agriculture as well as in his tenants and servants.

For his next outstanding opera he returned to Victor Hugo—and to Piave, who wrote for him the libretto of *La Maledizione* (*The Curse*); which, like the original, *Le Roi s'amuse*, showed the sufferings of a court jester whose master thinks of nothing but his own pleasures. The Austrian authorities considered this too revolutionary and forbade its performance; but after some changes in the plot it was allowed to be produced under the title of *Rigoletto, the Court Buffoon*, at Venice on March 11th 1851. The next year was taken up with the composition of two enormously popular works: *The Minstrel* (*Il Trovatore*) and *The Lady Gone Astray* (*La Traviata*). The former was founded by Salvatore Cammarano on a melodramatic Spanish play by Gutiérrez, the latter by Piave on the younger Dumas's *Lady with the Camellias*. They were produced, respectively, in Rome on January 19th and at Venice on March 6th 1853. The first was immediately successful, more so than any of Verdi's works so far, but the second did not at once go down well. The reason given is that it was odd for an opera to be staged in modern dress; yet this had by no means interfered with the success of Mozart's *Figaro*. The real cause of the failure was that the opera was badly done and that the buxom lady who sang the heroine's part looked more like bursting with health than expiring from consumption, which made the Venetian audience roar with laughter instead of dissolving in tears at the tragic ending.

Verdi was now at the height of his power. It seems probable that he thought, or at any rate vaguely felt, he had not done

justice to himself by dealing with literary subjects that fell short of the very greatest, with the exception of *Macbeth*, which on the other hand may not have pleased him musically any longer, as indeed his later revision indicates. Although he could not read English, he was a keen admirer and student of Shakespeare, and in 1853 he asked the librettist Antonio Somma for an operatic version of *King Lear*, a subject he had already suggested to Cammarano. Unfortunately, though he worked at this with exceptional care over a long period of years, he was never satisfied with his sketches, which he ordered to be destroyed after his death.

Next he was asked to write a French opera for the Paris Exhibition to be held in 1855, and this, *The Sicilian Vespers*, was produced there on June 13th of that year. It was done in Italy later, and on March 12th 1857, *Simon Boccanegra* came out at Venice, a particularly beautiful work so far as the music goes, and one of those he carefully revised later, but never a success on account of its confused and very gloomy libretto. *A Masked Ball*, on the other hand, is not only one of the best of his middle-period works, but has always been greatly enjoyed wherever it has been done, although there is not such a popular demand for it as there is for *Rigoletto*, *Trovatore* and *Traviata*. It was produced in Rome on February 17th 1859, in spite of the fact that the San Carlo Theatre at Naples had commissioned it. Verdi in this case was subjected to particularly absurd chicanery by the censorship. The libretto was based on an older one set by Auber, *Gustavus III*, and the plot was laid in Sweden. But the censor felt that the assassination of a reigning king at a fancy-dress ball in the last act was a direct encouragement of lawlessness and objected to the subject. The scene was then changed to Florence, where there never had been a king; but this was felt to be too near home. In the end the setting became seventeenth-century Boston and the victim an English governor. But even before that Verdi had angrily withdrawn the work from Naples, and such was his fame by this time that, when the San Carlo management threatened an action for breach of contract, there was almost a revolution in the town, and he had to be released; whereupon he offered the work to Rome. Another sign of his celebrity was Cavour's invitation to him to join the Chamber of

Deputies in 1860, when the duchy of Parma had joined the newly formed kingdom of Italy. He accepted, but never became a good politician and resigned his seat in 1865.

By 1861 his reputation spread to Russia. The Imperial Opera at St. Petersburg was anxious to have a new opera from him—of course an Italian one. Another Spanish melodramatic play served Piave for the libretto here, and the work was called *The Force of Destiny*. While Verdi was engaged on its composition he paid a visit to London, having been invited to represent Italy at the International Exhibition of 1862, Auber and Meyerbeer being there on behalf of France and Germany, and Sterndale Bennett acting as host for Great Britain. Verdi wrote a *Hymn to the Nations* for chorus and orchestra for the occasion, in which national anthems appeared in combination. St. Petersburg produced *La forza del destino* on November 19th 1862, in the composer's presence. It contains much splendid material and some very original musical character-drawing, especially that of a comic friar which not only foreshadows his own last Shakespearean works but also seems to have influenced Mussorgsky, who has similar realistic characters in his *Boris Godunov* and must almost certainly have heard the work then and there.

During 1865–7 Verdi had a good deal to do with Paris, first revising *The Sicilian Vespers* there, then bringing out the revised *Macbeth* (with a French libretto), and finally producing his second and much greater French opera, *Don Carlos*, set to a libretto based on Schiller's drama by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle. The production took place at the Opéra on March 11th 1867, in the presence of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie, who were so soon to disappear from the scene.

When Rossini died in 1868 Verdi suggested that a number of Italian composers should get together and write a Mass for the Dead in his memory. He himself wrote the 'Libera me' section the following year, but the scheme was never completed. Meanwhile he was approached by the Khedive of Egypt to take in hand a new work for the opening of the Italian opera house that was being built at Cairo, and a suitable subject invented by the great French Egyptologist, Auguste Mariotte, was suggested. Camille du Locle made a draft for a libretto in French, and this was worked up in Italian by Antonio Ghislanzoni. The

opera was named *Aida*. Verdi was invited to Cairo to supervise the rehearsals and to be present at the first performance, but did not feel like going. It was just as well, for the production was delayed by the Franco-Prussian war. The scenery and dresses, which had been ordered from Paris, were locked up there during the siege. *Aida* came out at last on December 24th 1871, but the composer did not hear it until it was due at the Scala in Milan on February 7th the following year. When rehearsals for the performance at Naples were delayed and Verdi had to wait there, he whiled away the time with the composition of his charming, serenade-like string Quartet in E minor, his only preserved chamber work.

This was in 1873, the year in which the great Italian writer Alessandro Manzoni died. Verdi at once thought of a Mass for the Dead in his honour, as he had done in Rossini's case, and his offer to write one was eagerly accepted by the city council of Milan. He set to work at once and incorporated the 'Libera me' from the collective work in the new *Requiem*, the greatest ever written by any composer except Mozart—and certainly the greatest complete one, the older master's having remained unfinished. It was first heard on the anniversary of Manzoni's death, May 22nd 1874, at the church of San Marco in Milan. Three performances at the Scala followed, and in 1875 Verdi visited Paris, London and Vienna to perform it. King Victor Emanuel II made him a senator that year, but although the master took his oath, he never availed himself of his seat, for he disliked politics as much as ever, though he was a very ardent patriot.

Verging now on his seventieth year he began to be less productive, being occupied only with the revision of *Simon Boccanegra* and with two small sacred pieces, an *Ave Maria* for soprano and strings and a *Pater Noster* for five voices (1880). He lived in retirement at Sant' Agata, managed his estate and charitably dispensed some of the great wealth he had accumulated by this time. But by 1885 the desire to create at least one more great work—the greatest, if possible—stirred in him, spurred on by his friendship with Arrigo Boito, a man of forty-three, with a fine literary gift, a poet and no mean composer, though not a great master of music. It was Boito who fired Verdi's

love for Shakespeare anew. He may at first have reawakened a wish to complete *King Lear*, but what eventually drew from Verdi the finest and most subtle and lovely operatic music he had yet produced was the libretto on *Othello* Boito wrote for him—and a very good libretto it was. The music was finished the next year, but the artists engaged to sing it were pledged to secrecy, so that when the masterpiece was produced at the Scala on February 5th 1887, it took the public completely by surprise, the more so because the ageing master, now seventy-three, had brought out no important new work for thirteen years. He was given a welcome such as even he had never received before—and the public had done its best to spoil him, though no success ever turned his head: he was quite aware of his worth and not without pride, but he never showed the vanity and arrogance that often makes Wagner seem so disagreeable to those who never came under his personal spell.

Verdi himself admired Wagner up to a point, but never imitated him, as has sometimes been foolishly asserted merely because he occasionally used something like a 'leading motive' and because he had learnt—by his own experience, not by the example of Wagner, who scored quite differently—to handle the orchestra with as much expressiveness and variety as the German master. Nothing could have been more utterly different from Wagner, except that it equals *The Mastersingers* in greatness and humanity, than Verdi's last opera, again on a Shakespearean libretto by Boito—and a comic one this time, the only work of the kind he ever wrote except the ill-fated early example reluctantly composed after the family disaster. It was *Falstaff*, based chiefly, of course, on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* but also to some extent on the more finely drawn character of Falstaff in the Henry IV plays. There is an incomparable swiftness and dramatic truth about the music as well as an exquisite loveliness and nimble wit; but what is perhaps most remarkable in a composer who went through so rough a schooling in his youth, and even some of whose mature work still sometimes betrays his early familiarity with brass bands and barrel-organs, is the extraordinary refinement shown in every page of *Falstaff*, which is as faultless in taste as *Figaro*.

Its composition proceeded slowly: every bar was shaped

lovingly and painstakingly, every orchestral touch pondered with the utmost care. At last the production took place at the Scala on February 9th 1893, when the master was nearly eighty. A great demonstration of affection and respect moved him deeply, but he felt that the time had come for him to retire finally. He lived quietly at Sant' Agata with Giuseppina, but she died at the age of eighty-two in 1897. The following year he once more took up composition: some beautiful sacred pieces for voices. He lived to hear three of them performed by a young conductor who appears to belong to a later age altogether—Arturo Toscanini. Indeed it seems strange that Verdi lived into the twentieth century, so much is he a typical child of the nineteenth. But he was in his eighty-eighth year when he died from the effects of a stroke at a Milan hotel on January 27th 1901.

BRAHMS

IN northern Germany, as in Italy, a child of poor parents grew into a great composer. Twenty years after Verdi, on May 7th 1833, Johannes Brahms was born in a tenement in the slums of Hamburg. His father was a humble double-bass player, a good artist in his way, but without the ability or the ambition to earn a comfortable livelihood. During the winter he played in the orchestra at the municipal theatre, but was without even that poorly paid engagement for the rest of the year, when he made what he could in dance bands and the like. As a man he was not humble at all: it was from him that his son inherited the blunt, outspoken manner which was long remembered as typically Brahmsian. Rebuked by a conductor once for playing out of tune, father Brahms retorted: 'This is my instrument, and I may play as much out of tune on it as I like.' He was twenty-seven when Johannes was born, but the child's mother was then forty-four. She was a gentle and sensitive person, not without a certain literary culture that extended at any rate to the Bible and the current German classics. There were few distractions and no entertainments for the respectable poor in those days, so that they were driven either to sheer unrelieved toil or, in such spare time as they had, to reading good books, then the only literature to be had in cheap editions. Fortunately for Brahms his family was one to appreciate good books.

Whether Johannes was intended from the first for a musical career or whether his parents hoped that he would take up some more profitable occupation, he could not help picking up a knowledge of music, both as an art and as a craft, even before he could read or write, and as he was born with exceptional gifts his genius began to show itself very early. His father, who also played the horn in the city militia, taught him a variety of things long before he was eight; but, not being a pianist, he sent him to a pianoforte teacher of his acquaintance, Otto Cossel, in 1841. The boy made such astonishing progress that two years later Cossel passed him on to a more distinguished professor, Eduard Marxsen, who was also a composer. When he was eleven his

father toyed with the idea of making a fortune out of him as a wonder-child, but Cossel had the good sense to oppose this and to insist on a solid training. Marxsen soon discovered a gift for composition in the lad and put him through a stiff theoretical course.

The children of the poor were early expected to help their families by earning something. From the age of thirteen, therefore, Johannes was made to play at cheap places of entertainment, such as dance saloons and sailors' taverns. As he was good at improvising at the piano—in other words composing music without writing it down—he could go on for hours obliging his very mixed audiences; and he did, so that his health was seriously endangered. Not so his character, luckily, for all that he was thrown together with the roughest and lowest populace of the great harbour town. He said later on, when people took offence at his gruffness and bad manners, that he had no chance to learn any refinements of behaviour in his youth, which was a poor excuse, since he had plenty of chances later on; but it might have been justly pointed out how fortunate it was that he came out of these squalid early experiences without damage to an upright and scrupulously honest character.

His health may have been saved by a generous music-lover who invited him to spend the summers of 1847–8 at his house in the country. In the latter year and 1849 he gave public concerts at Hamburg, but as they made him little money he had to give cheap lessons and arrange popular music for the piano, as well as continuing to play at those low haunts. But he soon began to take to serious composition. Serious, indeed, was even the Scherzo in E flat minor, Op. 4, which he wrote at the age of eighteen. The next year followed the piano Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 2, and in 1853 that in C major, Op. 1.

In May of that year he went on a concert tour with the brilliant, rather flashy Hungarian violinist Reményi, who introduced to him the Hungarian gypsy dances which continued to influence him off and on for the rest of his life. He not only wrote the familiar *Hungarian Dances* and two sets of *Gypsy Songs* for four voices later on, but there is a streak of gypsy music in many other works, such as the G minor and A major piano Quartets, the finale of the violin Concerto, and even the late clarinet

Quintet. At Göttingen Reményi introduced him to Joseph Joachim, who was going to grow into one of the greatest violinists of the century and even then, at twenty-two, held an appointment at the court of Hanover, where he engaged Brahms and his partner to play. He also sent him to Weimar with an introduction to Liszt, with whom he was then on friendly terms, but against whom he and Brahms were to turn later because they judged his influence on German music and his new tendencies to be highly undesirable. There was some truth in this, from their own point of view a good deal of truth; but they were narrowly prejudiced, and in any case it was not for them, who were themselves composers intent on going their own way, to object to another creative artist's writing as he chose. The trouble was, as with all composer-critics, that, although they happened to be perfectly sincere, they could not fail to be suspected of jealousy.

But this is to anticipate. Returning to 1853, we find Brahms on his way from Weimar to Cologne and Düsseldorf. At the latter place he called on Schumann, another composer-critic, who had in fact cultivated musical journalism since his youth. He immediately took to the young man just turned twenty and wrote an enthusiastic article about the works shown to him by Brahms, an article marred by excessive partisanship and by the praise of a number of quite unimportant composer-friends of his whom he dragged in quite unnecessarily, but one which truly predicted the coming of a new genius.

After a visit to Leipzig, where he met Berlioz and wrote the first version of the piano Trio in B major, Op. 8, Brahms hastened back to Düsseldorf in March 1854 on hearing of Schumann's disastrous mental breakdown and attempt at suicide; and all the time until Schumann's death two years later, as indeed after, he faithfully supported Clara to the best of his ability by taking the burdens of all sorts of tiresome business off her shoulders.

Brahms toured a good deal as a pianist at this time, and during the next few years he lived in various towns for short periods. Two concerts given with the fine singer Julius Stockhausen increased his interest in song composition, in which he particularly excelled all his life. But the work that chiefly occupied him, and seems to have given him much trouble,

between 1854 and 1858, was the piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 15. He had begun it as a symphony and afterwards tried to turn it into a sonata for two pianos before he realized that it must inevitably take its present form. He rehearsed it with Joachim and gave the first performances at Hanover and Leipzig on January 22nd and 27th 1859. He played the solo part himself, but had no success with it until he repeated it at Hamburg on March 24th.

Not that his native city had much use for him as a practising musician, although it was proud enough of him as a composer. He was offered no official appointment there, but had instead spent three seasons in 1857–9 at the small court of Lippe-Detmold, where he taught one of the princesses and conducted the choral society, for which he arranged folksongs and wrote the *Ave Maria* for female voices, Op. 12. Only a ladies' choir at Hamburg engaged him as conductor in 1859, and for that he wrote the *Songs of Mary*, Op. 22, and the *13th Psalm*, Op. 27. For the small orchestra at Detmold he had that year composed the two Serenades, Opp. 11 and 16.

Up to 1861 Brahms, well known by that time as a concert pianist, had written much for his own instrument; but a big work, the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, was to be the last for piano alone—with the exception of the enormously difficult studies in the form of *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* (1866)—until he resumed that kind of composition seventeen years later, with an entirely different, more intimate and poetical type of work—single-movement pieces with such titles as *Capriccio*, *Intermezzo* and *Rhapsody*.

At last, in 1862, he was offered the conductorship of the Philharmonic Concerts and the Vocal Academy at Hamburg. But he had just visited Vienna for the first time, and the Austrian capital drew him back irresistibly the following January, when he gave a concert of his songs, to which the Viennese public immediately took a great liking. He stayed until May, and on his return to Hamburg the Viennese Vocal Academy offered him its conductorship. He accepted gladly and was settled in Vienna by August 1863; and although he soon resigned a post for which he may not have felt himself ideally fitted and where perhaps his taste was thought to be a little too austere, that

most musical of cities remained his home to the end of his life, except that, a keen traveller and fond of spending the summer in the country, he was often away from it.

In February 1865 he heard that his mother had died at the age of seventy-six. She had been estranged from her husband for some time and lived apart from him, and the following year his father, at sixty, married again, this time a younger woman with whom the composer, not inclined to nurse any resentment on his mother's behalf and human enough to understand his parents' difficulties, remained on terms of excellent friendship even after his father's death in 1872. But he keenly felt the loss of his mother and in 1866 wrote in her memory the work he called *A German Requiem*. What he meant by this was not that the music was particularly German—and indeed the beautiful if somewhat sentimental work has won an honoured place in the choral repertories all over the world—but that it was a Requiem in the German language instead of in Latin. The passages he set to music, on the whole not very different from those in the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead, were chosen by him from Luther's translation of the Bible. What the work might therefore be very aptly called, in all but German-speaking countries where it is sung in translations, is *A Protestant Requiem*.

The same year Brahms, who had already written a good deal of chamber music, mainly with piano parts, tried his hand at two such works for instrumental combinations new to him: he wrote his first string Quartet, in C minor, and his first Sonata for cello and piano, in E minor. A more unusually scored chamber work, written in 1865, was published about the same time: the Trio for violin, horn and piano. Perhaps in a sense chamber music is the most important branch of Brahms's output. It is possible to compile quite a large number of representative programmes of orchestral music, songs or pianoforte music without including examples from his work; it would not occur to any but greatly prejudiced organizers of chamber concerts, unless they specialized in some particular school or composer, to give more than two or three performances without a Brahms work.

We have seen that there was a great gap in his production of piano music. As for the orchestra, he did not seriously tackle

it, apart from the early serenades and the D minor piano Concerto, until his fortieth year, when he wrote the admirable *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, of which there is also a version of his own for two pianos. This endearing work was first performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Society later in the year, on November 2nd 1873. Then at last, when he was over forty-two, he trusted himself with a symphony again, and this time he was sure of himself. He not only worked hard at the stern first Symphony, in C minor, during 1875, but also made sketches for the very different, more songful No. 2, in D major, during his summer holidays. The latter was finished in the autumn of 1877. No. 1 has sometimes been foolishly called the 'Cambridge' Symphony, but it is the merest coincidence that a theme in the finale is based on the four notes of the 'Cambridge quarters', now better known as the Westminster chimes. Brahms certainly had no intention to flatter the university whose offer of an honorary Musical Doctor's degree he refused early in 1877 merely because it had to be received in person and he had no wish to sail for England, a country which nothing could persuade him to regard as anything but musically barbarous. There is more than a suspicion that it was Joachim and Clara Schumann who made him believe that all musical enterprise in England was undertaken purely for the sake of money, although they had both again and again made enormous successes there with performances that could not but be taken seriously—and which, incidentally, they did not give for nothing.

It may have been the great mastery he won over the orchestra —never an altogether easy mastery, one sometimes feels—which induced him next to write his one and only violin Concerto, which he finished in the summer of 1878, after one of those spring visits to Italy in which he so much delighted. Joachim gave its first performance on New Year's Day 1879, at Leipzig, and soon afterwards Brahms began the first of his three violin and piano sonatas. Later that year he accepted an honorary doctor's degree from a much less distinguished university than Cambridge—had he only known it—but a German one, which was what mattered to him. It was Breslau which honoured him thus, and as Germany had never had a special musical degree, he was made a Doctor of Philosophy. (It is odd to reflect that

in 'unmusical' England he could actually have been a Doctor of Music.) To return thanks he wrote the jolly and finely wrought *Academic Festival Overture*, the material of which consists of traditional German students' songs. This was done during the 1880 summer holiday at the watering-place of Ischl. As a counterpart, and for the sake of a wholly different experience, he next composed the *Tragic Overture*, a rather cold but noble work which makes one feel that its inspiration came from Greek tragedy.

The second piano Concerto, in B flat major, which is as big and important as a symphony, was finished in 1881 and played by Brahms himself at Stuttgart on November 22nd. The curious thing is that it is very hard to imagine how this thick-set man, with his stumpy fingers, could possibly tackle a piano part that is one of the most difficult ever written, for it not only contains heartbreaking technical problems but piles them up so close together, one after another and in endless variety, as to make the soloist's task most exhausting, both physically and mentally. It may well be that Brahms, like Beethoven before him, did not play very neatly and cleanly, but the mere fact that he could face this concerto at all and did not shrink from presenting it to the public in person goes a long way towards explaining the great success he had as a pianist in his younger days.

The third Symphony, in F major, was finished and performed in 1883, the fourth, in E minor, composed during 1884–5 and produced by Hans von Bülow at the ducal court of Meiningen in 1885. Bülow was now as great an admirer of Brahms as he had been of Wagner, and he had certainly no reason for any personal enmity in this case. Indeed he and Brahms became excellent friends, and the composer had cause only for gratitude for the fine performances Bülow gave of his works. He may, however, have privately disagreed with the conductor's talking of the C minor Symphony as though it were Beethoven's tenth, for among his more admirable qualities was modesty. He never allowed the extravagant admiration of some of his friends, including the anti-Wagnerian critic Eduard Hanslick, to turn his head, and he often very bluntly put them into their place. As for Wagner, who had no use whatever for his work, if only because it was utterly unlike his own, Brahms had a high regard

for his later music-dramas, which he said he knew far more thoroughly and understood much better than the most ardent members of the Wagnerian party, who were hero-worshippers at least as absurdly one-sided as the Brahmsians.

The last ten years were rather uneventful, except for some important compositions that had still to appear. The three summers of 1886–8 were spent at Thun, in Switzerland, in an old riverside house near the lake. The second Sonatas for cello, Op. 99, and for violin, Op. 100, as well as the piano Trio in C minor were composed there the first year, and the next two the Double Concerto for violin and cello and the third Violin Sonata respectively. In 1891, again at Meiningen, he heard the clarinet player Richard Mühlfeld, a fine artist who became for him what Stadler had been for Mozart near the end of his life. It was for Mühlfeld that he wrote the Trio for clarinet, cello and piano and the magnificent Quintet for clarinet and strings, perhaps, taken all round, the finest thing he ever did. Two clarinet sonatas followed in 1894.

Brahms's last two works were written when he was feeling gravely ill from a liver complaint in 1896: the biblical *Four Serious Songs* and a set of Chorale Preludes for organ on the model of Bach. They reflected a rather gloomy outlook which may easily have been due to a feeling that, although not very old—he was only sixty-three—he was nearing his end. And so it turned out, for in spite of doctoring and a visit to Carlsbad to take the waters, his sturdy figure lost weight and he began to look alarmingly unwell. It was found that he suffered from cirrhosis of the liver, and he died from this disease on April 3rd 1897.

Two sad deaths had helped to undermine his health: in 1892 that of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, the wife of a friend who was a minor composer, a gracious, well-bred and intelligent woman of forty-four, whom he had liked as much for her fine personal qualities as she admired him for his work; and that of Clara Schumann in 1896, for whom he had always had a soft spot in his heart, even after a temporary estrangement, and with whom it has even been said he was seriously in love after her husband's death, although she was fourteen years older than he. It is hard to know the truth about the matter, but it is unimpor-

tant now. He fell in love a good many times, always with young women of superior qualities, each of whom could in some way or other have made an excellent wife for him. But something always restrained him from making a proposal, perhaps some falling short of an impossible ideal he may have cherished or just the fear of seeing any woman tied to him to whom he felt his work would not in the end allow him to do justice. That there was some sort of disappointment in his life may be gathered not only from what we know of his biography, but also from much of his music. There is often a curious kind of constraint about it. His melodies can sing gloriously, but they rarely do so quite freely, as Schubert's do, for instance. A severe strain in him compelled him to dissect them and develop them in sections, or to work them up in a scientific way that seems to clip their wings. However, that is by no means the whole story. He was undoubtedly a great composer, and if his music shows that he was also what is called a 'character', with disagreeable as well as pleasant sides to it, that is precisely what makes it so interesting, engaging and immediately recognizable.

TCHAIKOVSKY

THE choice of a single Russian master for inclusion in this series was difficult. The greatest representative of Russian music, considered as a national art, would have been Mussorgsky, and good claims might have been advanced for two or three others. But this is a book devoted to composers who have won unquestioned pre-eminence in the world at large. It is even intended to give preference—and the unsympathetic reader may choose to call it a snobbish preference—to those who are sure of the greatest international fame. This sort of fame Tchaikovsky reached long before the other and often more interesting Russian composers of his time, if only because he excelled them in professional accomplishment. He had a technical equipment or composition such as neither Borodin nor Mussorgsky commanded and both Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov acquired only with a severe struggle. Even Russians, after all, regard him as their chief musical classic, and his choice here is determined by much the same considerations as that of Berlioz, who, if distinctive Frenchness had been the determining quality, would certainly have been displaced by a master such as Rameau among those of an earlier time, or Fauré or Debussy among more modern representatives.

To the outside world, and even to the Russia of his period, Tchaikovsky seemed Russian enough, of course; and indeed he is thoroughly so if one does not look for traces of folk music as the only hall-mark of a composer's nationality. Tchaikovsky's work is not without that hall-mark, which is strongly enough impressed on, for instance, his Little-Russian second Symphony, the finale of the fourth, the *Slavonic March*, or the Trepak in the *Nutcracker* Ballet, though much less so than on the music of four out of the 'Five'; the fifth, Cui, being only a sort of spare wheel and far less Russian than Tchaikovsky, who was as much so as Lermontov or Turgeniev or Tolstoy, if not Gogol, Dostoievsky or Tchekhov—and no man can represent his country all round. His alternate elations and depressions, his self-doubts and self-questionings, his changes from abject gloom by

way of frivolity to moods of fate-defying triumph, as in the fifth Symphony, his plunges from deep into deeper despair, as in the sixth, his extremely understanding operatic treatment of the intimate domestic tragedy of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*—all this is Russian and nothing else, even if we cannot point at this or that musical passage and say that it is, or that it descends from, a genuine national song or dance.

Piotr (Peter) Ilyitch Tchaikovsky was born on May 7th[1] 1840, at Kamsko-Votkinsk, in the government of Viatka. His father, whose Christian name, as the son's patronymic indicates, was Ilia, was a mining engineer and at that time held the post of manager of an important mine, which enabled him to live in the style of the Russian landed gentry. Peter and his sister and two brothers had the home education from governesses and tutors that was usual in such families. At the age of four he began to have piano lessons from a German governess, and the following year a special music mistress was engaged, his progress on the instrument having struck his parents as justifying such an extravagance. By the time he was six he played the piano well.

In 1848 the family went to live in St. Petersburg, where Peter was sent to a boarding-school and continued his piano studies with a professional teacher named Filipov. But he overworked and at the age of nine for the first time showed signs of those serious nervous troubles that were to distress him at times in later life and once or twice brought him alarmingly near madness. A return to the country, where his father had secured a new post as manager of a mine at Alapiev, may have helped to restore him. In 1850 he was sent back to St. Petersburg to enter the School of Jurisprudence; for like so many composers before and since he was intended to become a lawyer, and like all the others—among whom were Handel, Arne, Schumann and Sibelius—he took to the subject very unwillingly. Has the law some connexion with music (and indeed one has known some lawyers to be profoundly musical) or it is merely that its dryness sets up a reaction in some of its intended practitioners and sends them to the other extreme, to the most unreal and fanciful of the arts?

[1] April 25th according to the old-style Russian calendar; but as this has now been abandoned in Soviet Russia, the Gregorian style may reasonably be adopted for all Russian dates.

The boy lived with various friends of the family, who, however, returned in 1852, only to suffer the mother's death two years later, when Peter was fourteen. He had been greatly attached to her, and those who still believe the rumour, about which the real truth will never be known, that he caused his own death nearly forty years later, might be tempted to imagine that he deliberately chose to die as his mother had died. The fact is, at any rate, that they both succumbed to cholera—not an uncommon disease, it is true, in Russia even as late as the nineteenth century, where civil engineering was so inadequate that even in the large cities all water had to be boiled before it was safe to drink.

At the age of nineteen Tchaikovsky left the School of Jurisprudence, apparently satisfied that the humdrum career of an official would have to do for him. He entered the Ministry of Justice and worked there for four years. Musically he was at that time merely a gifted amateur, and remained that even when he began to study theory with Nicholas Ivanovitch Zaremba, who became a professor at the new Conservatory opened in 1861. So far, then, he had no professional advantage over Borodin and Mussorgsky; but while the former went on following a scientist's career and the latter was content to drift where his untutored genius would lead him, Tchaikovsky realized that dilettantism would get him nowhere, wherever it might lead others perhaps more strongly gifted by nature or at any rate possessing more robust creative personalities. When he failed to succeed to a vacant post he had desired at the Ministry, he decided to enter the Conservatory as a student, though he was past twenty-two by that time. Before long he felt safe enough looking forward to a musical future to resign from the Ministry. He now worked hard, fought desperately against poverty and gave some lessons at which he must have passed on what he had just learnt himself, for he was still under Zaremba and had begun to study orchestration with Anton Rubinstein, the founder and first director of the Conservatory.

In 1865, after a hard struggle, Tchaikovsky was invited by Rubinstein's younger brother Nicholas, who was just then about to open a similar teaching institution at Moscow, to become professor of harmony there. He accepted, no doubt with diffidence,

but backed by Anton's recommendation, and set to work so hard, not only with his pupils but by himself too, that nervous disorders again began to trouble him. He had wrestled frantically with his first Symphony and found it far from easy to keep ahead of his pupils. But a summer holiday at the country house of his sister's mother-in-law set him up again, and after a visit to Finland early in 1867 he returned to Moscow, ready to face teaching and composition with more confidence. It was justified, for even the first Symphony, after all, had a good technical finish, whatever it may have cost him and however undistinguished some of its actual musical content may be. But he was often unsure of himself to the very last. He would complain of enormous difficulties, lament the shapelessness of this or that work, and wonder over and over again whether he was getting stale or drying up altogether; yet even while he was thus venting his misgivings in his diary or letters, he would turn out some work that showed remarkable technical ease, unity of form and original freshness of invention.

On a visit to St. Petersburg in 1868 he met Balakirev with two of his followers, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov; also the critic Vladimir Stassov, who became so great a champion of the nationalist group, and Dargomizhsky, who like Glinka, only more amateurishly, had started the national movement, but who was to die the next year, when Tchaikovsky again met Balakirev at Moscow, this time with Borodin. It was Balakirev who suggested what probably remains Tchaikovsky's finest work, the fantasy-overture on the subject of *Romeo and Juliet*. Not that this turned out to be a particularly Russian composition of the kind Balakirev must have desired—and indeed there is no reason why it should have done, since the subject was Italian and the immediate source English; but had Tchaikovsky remained in the new capital, St. Petersburg, instead of going to live in the old one, Moscow, it is by no means impossible that he might have come more permanently under the spell of Balakirev's compelling personality and of Stassov's persuasive advocacy of Russian art. Not that it matters. He could not have done the nationalists' work better than they did it, and what we value in him is not that he represents this or that tendency, but that he is a musical personality apart from all other composers, whether

Russian or Western European. His work has a very distinct flavour of its own, and whether we happen to like it or not, it has added something to the art of music which nobody else could have produced.

In 1868 the first of three curious incidents happened. They were all connected with women and yet showed that Tchaikovsky's attitude towards women was not normal. He became engaged to the Belgian opera singer Désirée Artôt and, although she was four or five years older than he, gained his father's rather reluctant consent to marry her. But while she was away singing at Warsaw, she suddenly married the Spanish baritone Padilla there, without so much as offering Tchaikovsky an explanation. She may have been merely embarrassed by her sudden change of heart, but her behaviour is so strange that one is inclined to seek for an explanation in some equally odd circumstances. Had she felt that there was something strained and unsatisfactory about her Russian lover? Did she fear that he had asked her to marry him merely because he hoped to cure himself of an unnatural coldness towards the opposite sex? We shall never know, but it seems reasonable to guess something of the kind, and it would certainly explain a very curious situation.

The two later incidents may as well be told at once, since we have come to the subject of what can be called Tchaikovsky's love stories only for want of a better term. Strangely enough the woman he came nearest to loving was the one he never met face to face. In 1876, when he was thirty-six and had made a name with such works as the first two operas, the first three symphonies, the B flat minor piano Concerto and the *Swan Lake* ballet, he received a letter from the wealthy widow of an engineer, Nadezhda von Meck, who greatly admired his work and wished to make it possible for him to devote all his time to composition. She offered him an allowance and entered into a busy correspondence with him about his work, but would never see him, a wish he respected scrupulously and possibly with some relief, since he may have known how possessive patrons and patronesses of art may become. Nadezhda was forty-five at the time and can hardly have feared that a man nine years younger would fall in love with her; but she probably wished tactfully to save him the embarrassment of dependence and

personal gratitude, or may just possibly have feared some kind of profitless emotional complications in herself and wished at all costs to keep a purely artistic friendship free of them. It lasted, unclouded, until 1890, when misunderstandings on both sides about money matters brought it down to earth and to a rather unedifying end. For all that, it had been Tchaikovsky's greatest attachment to any woman outside his own family.

The third case was utterly disastrous. Not long after his first correspondence with Nadezhda he received a strange, overwrought declaration by letter from one Antonina Ivanovna Miliukov, who told him she had fallen in love with him when she was a student at the Conservatory, had been unable to forget him and now found that life without him was impossible. He did not remember her, but was touched by a story so like that of Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, the work which just then occupied his mind and his heart. For Tatiana too writes that kind of letter, with the result that she is treated with harsh contempt by Onegin; and Tchaikovsky may have felt that he must avoid causing a similar tragedy. He met Antonina, liked her and, without being in the least in love with her, married her in the summer of 1877. The result was that he merely brought about a tragedy of another kind, not only for his wife, but for himself as well. He found with despair in his heart that love cannot be commanded by a wish to spare another person, and he soon saw that the kindest thing he could do, and the only thing that would save him from a terrible nervous collapse, was to leave Antonina, which he did less than a month after the wedding. He did his best to patch things up once he had collected his wits, but found that by returning to her he only made matters worse, and in October he forsook her for ever. He was in a state of frenzy that seriously threatened permanent insanity and was ordered abroad by his doctor. Fortunately, thanks to Nadezhda von Meck's annuity, he was able to settle down quietly to composition in Switzerland and Italy. The fourth Symphony, which he dedicated to his benefactress, and *Eugene Onegin* were finished early in 1878, and soon afterwards the violin Concerto was begun.

In spite of his periodical misgivings about the quality of his inspiration and workmanship, he now composed with the assurance of the perfect craftsman. It had not always been so. *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, had been submitted to Balakirev for criticism and given plenty of it, and the famous B flat minor piano Concerto came very painfully into the world. It was to be dedicated to Nicholas Rubinstein, who, however, overwhelmed the composer with such a torrent of abuse, inveighing particularly against what he called bad keyboard writing, that Tchaikovsky dedicated it instead to Hans von Bülow, who liked it and played it abroad before it was heard in Russia. However, both Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein changed their minds later on, for the former revised it extensively and the latter became one of its finest interpreters. No doubt the objections were that the solo part was awkwardly difficult without being correspondingly telling. It is still awkwardly difficult after its revision, but whatever else may be said against the work—its lopsided form and its occasional blatancies—it does now repay the performer's pains by unfailing effectiveness. Also, it is unlike any other piano concerto in flavour and character.

Tchaikovsky did not bear malice. When Rubinstein died in 1881, he wrote his enormous and very difficult Trio in A minor for piano, violin and cello and dedicated it to his former director's memory. It is his most impressive chamber-music work, too elaborate and showy to be good chamber music as such, but a grandly conceived and magnificently executed composition. He was, by the way, invited to follow Rubinstein in the directorship of the Moscow Conservatory, but declined.

There is little more to tell, unless one chooses to enumerate a long list of works of many kinds and of journeys and successes abroad, including visits to the U.S.A. and England in 1891 and 1893. This latter was his last to a foreign country. He received the honorary Musical Doctor's degree at Cambridge and conducted a Philharmonic Society concert in London. On his return to Russia he gave the first performance of the sixth, the so-called 'Pathetic' Symphony at St. Petersburg on October 28th. As so often before, he felt that terrible depression which this work so agonizingly reflects. A few days later, to the horror of his friends, he drank that fatal glass of water at lunch. His death, purposely sought or not, followed in four days, on November 6th 1893.

DVOŘÁK

DVOŘÁK is the Czech classic, in the sense that he is the first and the greatest composer to put Bohemia—as his country was still called in his time—on the map of musical Europe. He was not the outstanding national figure among musicians, for Smetana was a much more exclusively Bohemian composer than he; but he was, and still is, by far the most universal master among the Czechs. Others have written more characteristic or more refined music; but they have spoken either a local dialect or an artists' jargon only imperfectly understood away from their homes or outside the cosmopolitan musicians' studios. Dvořák's art is for all the world, and all the world's wife and child—especially the child, very often, for he is a naïve, simple and lovable sort of composer.

Born on September 8th 1841, at the village of Nelahozeves, he was christened Antonín.[1] This is important, for he was too long known as Anton, the German form of the name, foisted on him, together with German instead of Czech titles for his works, by ill-mannered Teutonic publishers who refused to acknowledge Bohemia as a separate country, until they were at last compelled to do so when it reasserted its ancient national independence under the name of Czechoslovakia.

Dvořák's home, like Verdi's and Brahms's, was a very humble one. His father was a country butcher who, since slaughtering did not fully occupy or adequately repay him, also kept an inn. His son might quite easily have succeeded him in these modest and uncongenial callings had he not turned out to be exceptionally musical, and even that would have made no difference if Bohemia had not been a country in which natural musicianship among the people found a ready response. There was always plenty of singing of folksongs and dancing to national tunes going on at the inn, and the boy listened eagerly whenever he was allowed—possibly sometimes when he was not and everybody was too busy to notice what he was doing. At the age of seven he induced the village schoolmaster to teach him singing and the violin, and at eight he was a choirboy in the local church. His early education in music was thus, exactly like Verdi's, based on Catholic church music of the simplest kind and popular tunes heard from rough-and-ready singers and players, with the difference—a difference that was to be seen quite clearly in their work later on—that in Bohemia folk tunes flourished while in Italy operatic airs and military band music took their place.

[1] The surname is pronounced Dvorzhak (zh like s in pleasure), with the accent on the first syllable, the 'á' not being a stress but merely a broadening of the vowel, which is pronounced as in 'art', not as in 'man'.

Quite ordinary people were often very musical. Dvořák's father himself was an amateur and conducted a little band, in which his son was able to play by the time he was nine. At the age of twelve, in 1853, he was sent to live with an uncle at the neighbouring small town of Zlonice, where he had better opportunities for schooling and began to learn the piano and organ as well as the mysteries of thorough-bass. The following year, at Kamenice, he was made to learn German, which his later publishers would doubtless have been shocked to hear he did not know as a child; but he was called home to Zlonice, where his parents had by that time settled, and was expected to begin butchering before he was fourteen. It took two years and a devoted and tenacious teacher to persuade his father that the lad was not cut out for such a trade.

At last, in 1857, Antonín was allowed to go to Prague and enter the Organ School established by a society for the promotion of church music. There, at the age of sixteen, he received a thorough training, played the violin in an amateur orchestra of good standing and became familiar with the standard classical and romantic works. In 1859, however, his father was obliged to discontinue the small allowance he had so far made him, and he had to leave the school. Fortunately he was able by this time to go his own way, though he had a hard struggle to make a modest living. He became a viola player in a professional orchestra and made up his small salary by teaching. His spare time was now occupied with composition, and after much writing of small pieces and sketching of larger ones, he finished at the age of twenty a string Quintet he intended to publish as his Op. 1, though later on he decided to keep it in manuscript.

In 1862 an event occurred which was soon to assume an

enormous importance in the musical life of Dvořák's country. The Czech National Theatre was opened for the performance of plays and operas in the native language. Prague, which had so far been given these things only in German—and for some of the population at least this meant listening to something like foreign translations—thus began to assert the country's ancient national rights in matters of art, as it had long done, more or less secretly, in politics. The orchestra in which Dvořák played was sometimes employed there, and later in the year some of its members, himself included, were drawn into the theatre's permanent orchestra. He remained there for the next eleven years, and when he was twenty-five he came under the influence of Smetana, who was appointed conductor of the Czech Theatre in 1866. Meanwhile he had made friends with Bendl, the conductor of the Hlahol choral society, who discussed the world's great music with him, lent him scores and allowed him the use of his piano, Dvořák being too poor to have one of his own.

As a composer Dvořák thus matured in an environment where Czech national music flourished, but where there was no lack of appreciation of at least the great standard works of the past. No doubt Prague was too much engrossed with these two interests to care much about what was going on among contemporary composers in other countries, as England, for instance, did care, having no vigorous native school to cultivate at that time. And it was this environment which made him what he is: neither a purely national nor a merely academic composer, but a kind of mediator between classicism and nationalism.

The classic in him rather predominated at the beginning. For his first opera in 1870 he misguidedly chose a German tragedy on the subject of King Alfred, which turned out a failure; and although he was nearly thirty, he wrote chamber music he did not later on deem worthy of publication. Indeed this went on even longer. Not till 1874 did he arrive at the last of four unpublished symphonies, and there are other discarded works, including a 'cello Concerto in A major (1865) and a piano Quintet in the same key (1872—not the endearing one that has become perhaps his most favoured chamber work). He seems to have had more confidence in himself as a vocal composer,

and perhaps he was more successful in that domain just then because his choice of words brought him nearer to the heart of his compatriots. The Serbian and Bohemian songs were found attractive, and he made his first great public success with the choral hymn on a patriotic subject, *The Heirs of the White Mountain*, in 1873.

When he left the Czech Theatre that year he took with him Anna Cermaková, who had been a contralto in the chorus there, and who now became his wife. A post as church organist yielded him enough of a living and sufficient leisure to make it possible to settle down seriously to composition. In 1874 he was ready with two comic operas, *The Pigheaded Peasants* and *King and Collier*, written in the vein of Smetana's folk operas, and he was lucky enough to get the latter produced at the Czech Theatre. Some of his orchestral works also came before the public.

In 1875 his fame began to spread abroad as far as Vienna, to start with—though 'abroad' was not the strictly correct term then, since Bohemia was politically part of Austria. A commission was appointed in Vienna for the purpose of awarding gratuities to Austrian composers of merit who needed financial assistance. Brahms, who was a member of the committee, became aware of Dvořák, who was technically an Austrian and therefore eligible; and the older master very seriously pressed the younger one's claim, with the result that in 1876 Dvořák was awarded the grant by the Ministry of Culture. It may be said at once that a little later Brahms also recommended him to his publisher, Simrock, inducing that firm to bring out the *Moravian Duets* (of course with German words) and afterwards to commission the *Slavonic Dances*, which first made a widespread popular success for Dvořák exactly as the *Hungarian Dances* had once done for Brahms—the only difference being that the *Slavonic Dances* are much more genuine, varied and instinctive.

Good fortune did not come unclouded in 1876, for the Dvořáks' eldest child died that year. Soon afterwards, no doubt still under the impression of this blow, the composer began his first large choral work, the sincerely expressive and restrainedly sorrowful *Stabat Mater*, which was to bring him to England for the first time in 1884, when it was performed at the Albert

Hall in London, where several orchestral works were also given in his presence at the Philharmonic's Society's concerts and at the Crystal Palace. He was to visit England nine times altogether.

Three more operas of his were completed before 1884, but only one, *The Peasant, a Rogue*, was very successful—so much so that German versions were given at Dresden and Hamburg soon after its appearance. The others, *Wanda* and *Dimitri*, on Polish and Russian subjects respectively, were not sufficiently congenial to Dvořák to bring out the best of him; but the latter is interesting because it deals with incidents in Russian history which end at the point where Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* begins. However, Dvořák was no Mussorgsky: he was not a Russian and not primarily a dramatic composer. He could write a symphony or a string quartet as the Russian master could not, or would not have cared to do even if he had been able, but was not born for the stage, though he sometimes wrote delightfully picturesque music for it.

The London performance of the *Stabat Mater* induced Worcester to include it in the programme of the Three Choirs Festival later in the year, and so Dvořák became one of the leading composers for the English festivals for some time to come. This meant choral compositions on a large scale. Birmingham commissioned a special work, and he wrote a grisly and gruesome cantata which was translated (very badly) as *The Spectre's Bride*, given at Birmingham in August 1885 and published by Novello & Co. The oratorio *St. Ludmilla* followed at Leeds in 1886 and in 1891 Birmingham produced the *Requiem*. The fourth Symphony, in G major, also received its first performance in England, at a Philharmonic concert in London in 1890, and was one of his English publisher's issues.

That year he received several honours he may or may not have particularly valued. He always remained a man of great simplicity of mind and plain goodness of heart to whom it would never have occurred to conceal or deny his peasant origin. His pleasure may well have been tempered with some amusement, therefore, when the University of Prague conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Philisophy on him. Nor did the

membership of the Czech Academy of Art and Science or the Austrian Order of the Iron Cross (of the third class!) sit lightly upon him, one may imagine, or for that matter the honorary Cambridge Mus.Doc. he received in 1891, though at least that had something to do directly with his profession. He was never a doctorial musician, for his craftsmanship greatly exceeded his learning; but then it was so superb and natural a craftsmanship that it could well take the place of cold erudition.

Learned or not, he was, as a distinguished and thoroughly practical musician, appointed professor of composition and orchestration by the Prague Conservatory in the spring of 1891, and the following year the founder of the National Conservatory of Music in New York tempted him, with some difficulty, to become the director of that institution, at any rate for a short time. Reluctantly he sailed for the U.S.A., only to find that he enjoyed himself while he was there, even though he longed at intervals to be back home and to work quietly at the pleasant country property he had been able to acquire, where he devoted himself to composition and to agreeable rural pursuits, especially the breeding of pigeons. However, he found a place after his own heart in America where he could spend the long summer vacations, at Spilville (Iowa), which was a Czech colony, in fact almost a real Czech village.

He became greatly interested in Negro tunes during this American period, and there is no doubt that they exercised their influence on some of the works he wrote there, particularly the so-called 'Nigger' Quartet in F major, the Sonatina for violin and piano and, of course, the 'New World' Symphony. He made it quite clear, however, that all the themes he used were essentially his own, just as those in any of his other works were, however aboriginally Bohemian they may sound; and the greatest work he wrote in America—indeed one of his greatest altogether—the cello Concerto in B minor, shows no 'Negro' influence whatever.

In 1895 he returned to Prague and resumed his duties at the Conservatory, of which he was appointed director in 1901. The post was a purely nominal one, the duties being carried out by a deputy, for it was felt that although as the most eminent of the Czech musicians he ought to occupy such a position, it would not

do to ask him to spend his time in administrative work when it should be given to musical creation.

It was so given to the last. He not only wrote his two best operas, *The Devil and Kate* and *Russalka*, during these last years, but another unsuccessful one, *Armida*, on a classical subject that did not suit him. He even made a new departure by trying his hand at programme music in the shape of five symphonic poems based on national legends—and by no means as unsuccessfully as some critics pretend. He was fifty-five when he wrote them. At the age of sixty-two he was still active. But in the spring of 1904 he felt unwell and had to stay in bed. On May 1st, however, he wished to rise for lunch and joined his family at the table in good spirits. But in the course of the meal he felt ill and returned to bed, and by the evening all Prague knew that he had died quite suddenly. All Prague was aware too, and soon all Bohemia and the world at large, of the end of a great nineteenth-century master of music.


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