brought about by the wretched time-keeping of one's partner. Many precious seconds that seem like minutes are spent in counting up bars for a fresh starting-place—the bar before the sf in the third line; 'But I haven't got a sf;' 'Go back six bars before the change of key;' 'I'm in the middle of several bars' rest there.' And so on, with the result that you may be reduced to counting back twenty bars from the end of the page (for it is an almost incredible fact that many duets are published with no sectional letters or figures).

Since writing the above, I have seen an article somewhere in which the writer, after saying that the pianoforte duet is on its last legs, gives the reason that such a method of making music is far more interesting to the players than to the hearers. Bless his innocent heart! Doesn't that objection apply to all kinds of music—above all (I speak with long experience of both) to organ playing and madrigal singing? Apparently he is misled by the rarity of such performances in public. Probably the reason for this is the fact that there is something a little ridiculous in a pair of players at one keyboard. In a work for two pianoforte one may cut a good—even dashing—figure on the concert platform, but hardly as a duettist. This may be mere fancy on my part; but I never see two grown-ups engaged in this way without being reminded of the two hen-like little old ladies whom I saw pecking their way through the 'Caliph' Overture. So, although I shall continue my secondo activities with vigour, it will always be in private where I can be heard and not seen.

Conductors and Conducting

By William Wallace

(Continued from November number, page 987.)

VI.—The Musical Aspect of the Beat

Apart from muscular control, yet intimately associated with it, the musical aspect of the beat has to be considered.

As for the conductor, his musical intelligence should be so sensitive, and of balance so subtle, that unconsciously he should respond to the minutest gradations of light and shade and give them their due. To feel the progress of a movement, even though there may be none of the conventional indications, is to re-live and throw light upon passages whose stringent rendering would produce a steady but pedestrian result. This is not to extenuate the over-use of tempo rubato, but to suggest the almost imperceptible impulses which the conductor feels with the rhythm of his mind, and is able to obtain without over-emphasis.

Rhythm is essentially a human endowment, present in all in varying intensity. It may be simple, as in movements which have become automatic, such as walking, but even the word 'simple' needs qualification. In the musician, however, rhythm is highly organized and complex, involving the perception of time, pitch, movement; inducing imagination, emotion. In his case there comes into play that which, for lack of a better term, we call instinct, about which there are endless controversies. Without dogmatizing, we may offer the suggestion that musical instinct is the emotional response to the effect of an auditory stimulus upon a mind that is inherently disposed towards music.

Objectively the beat concerns the orchestra: subjectively it is personal to the conductor; by it he conveys visibly and with authority his sense of the impression which the music has made upon him. It is, in fact, a projection of his own personality: it should never become an intrusion.

There are, of course, works which demand a treatment which suggests detachment, almost, it might be said, sub- or under-conducting, following after careful preparation at rehearsal. These works are architectural in construction, like a 'Brandenburg' Suite, in which the play of contrapuntal devices does not afford an opportunity for intolerable interruptions in rhythm. The flow must be steady and serene. A fugue or fugal movement can no more be 'sentimentalized' than can the Parthenon. Each has its module, its law, sacrosanct beyond a peradventure. Each has its lines of precision, the one, with the amazing concession to the eye; the other, formal in structure yet yielding gratefully to the ear. In such music, then, it is well to remember that Bach is Bach, and is not to be conducted à la corybantic Bakst.

We are now confronted by the prickly question of interpretation, and the equally complicated question of personality and leadership. It would be idle to attempt to define the second, except under the word 'discipline,' which does not mean blind obedience, but instruction in its widest sense. To discipline others a man must discipline himself, and here we find one of the paradoxes in music. The greater the personality the less in evidence should it be. The conductor has to express himself under cover of the composer.

No two works in a programme can be conducted in the same way, unless they are by the same composer and even then there are divergencies. Therefore, while suppression of personality cannot at all times be absolute, for it is bound to break away from control, the conductor resolves himself, as it were, into an air with variations, in which the theme is concealed by the variety of treatment. Then it is that his conception illuminates the score, not in attempting what no one else has done in seeking high lights that throw the rest out of value, but in preserving an even balance with tempered brightness and shadow.

In much modern music it is at times impossible to say what part of the orchestral fabric is meant to predominate. It might even be that it is difficult to say where the composer left off and the conductor begins. So it may happen that without definite instructions from the composer, two renderings of the same work may be so utterly unlike each other that it is only in patches that
any comparison can be made. Even then we are left in doubt as to which is the true one. This applies to those first performances of unpublished and complicated works of which no one but the composer can say whether the rendering adequately conveys his ideas; quite likely he may have a feeling, not of satisfaction, but of surprise on hearing things that he did not altogether expect or intend. Considered reflection and comparison with other performances are therefore impossible. The business is too serious for flash-in-the-pan affairs, when adroitness and nerve can pull through to its close a work which never was heard before, and of which consequently nobody can tell if the composition is superb or the performance deplorable.

But in music there are other efforts of the mind upon which Time in his wisdom has bestowed his benediction. With much of the older music the conductor is faced with tradition. It is not as in earlier times when only at rare intervals one conductor threw down the glove to another, and when men were few who could remember and compare methods and interpretation of this or that conductor. To-day there is a procession of conductors; of standards there are many—but can the impression of a reading heard twenty years ago be so crystalised in the memory that it cannot be eradicated or replaced by a reading of yesterday? The opportunities for listening to orchestral music are many, even for hearing the same work twice in the same week under different conductors. The listener's mood is no more constant than the conductor's: it can be decidedly more capricious, and while one reading may dazzle him to bewilderment, another may rouse him to fury. He is not possessed of some infallible means of testing and recording his impressions, to be called up later in vastly different circumstances. In this respect he is at a disadvantage. On the other hand, just as the 'Duets-Art' pianoforte enables the pianist to study at leisure and compare the methods of great performers, so in the future conductors, thanks to phonography, will have at their disposal—approximately—the various readings of their predecessors. But no verbal description can convey with any degree of precision the insight, the disciplined and matured experience, of conductors who were great two generations ago. The tradition of conductors in the past must fade: for the future the 'records' will speak.

It will scarcely be questioned, when we listen to work written before or during Beethoven's lifetime, that we are hearing something very different from what he or Haydn or Mozart heard. The orchestra has changed; mechanical improvements have not only affected the tone of the wind instruments, but also have enlarged their scope. In order to observe to the letter the traditions of one of these composers we should have to provide wind instruments of the pre-Gordon-Boehm period, and fiddles whose short, thick necks were still without the tilt that they now have.

These remarks obviously do not apply to instruments of the keyboard type, specimens of which, still in playing condition, reproduce as far as we can know the sounds that Bach heard. With the organ we cannot be so sure, for there are accounts of instruments unaltered since the 17th century and inclined to be frantical, with little idiosyncrasies much in need of coaxing.

Obviously orchestral music of an earlier period must be handled in a fashion appropriate to, and in the idiom and style of, that period. The handling therefore must be discreet, for music that looks simple and lightly scored, is just the music in which flaws of exaggeration or points missed call for censure.

Up to the death of Beethoven, and later, whatever orchestral music was as to the written notes it was not, as to sound, what these written notes convey to us now. The scoring tells us something about this. Passages for wood-wind, horns, and trumpets were written according to the capacity of these instruments, but we do not know what their dynamic power was. Was the flute weak, the oboe coarse? Had the clarinet a rough trumpet-tone, was the bassoon always grotesque? Before valves gave the horns and trumpets a widened sphere of activity, they were condemned to a passive and monotonous existence, except when some player complained that he had nothing particular to do, and then Beethoven gave him something to think about. Were Mozart to enter our concert-room to-day, would he recognise his 'Jupiter' Symphony, played with a finish which he could rarely have enjoyed? Would Beethoven, with hearing miraculously restored, be pleased with a modern account of his C minor, or would he demand from the oboe in the little cadenza the coarse tone of the contemporary instrument?

No composer that ever lived heard in sound exactly what he had written in silence. This may be an extreme statement, but it is true. The composer has in his mind an orchestra technically perfect in sound and expression. He writes for a superhuman body of men, no two of whom are so accurately balanced as to be counterparts of one another. He has his mental conception apart from what he hears, and may be so absorbed by it that he overlooks or disregards the literal meaning.

It is common enough to listen to discussions about the interpretation by this conductor or that of, let us say, a Beethoven Symphony. Who shall assert which is right? Or take Bach. We are told that though he condemned one early pianoforte and approved of another, he never owned an instrument of the kind. But suppose that he had heard his first Prelude on a modern grand, with the Gounod perversions and the extra bar, what would his criticism have been? We are too much disposed to regard the works of the Old Masters according to a modern standard, without considering the conditions that have varied and progressed since their period.

We must rid ourselves of the obsession that written or printed music, with all our present
amplitude of artistic and mechanical technique, sounds just what it sounded a century ago. We have the score as Beethoven wrote it, with his indications, but it was at the mercy of the artistic ability of his performers and was determined also by the mechanical limitations of his instruments.

This brings us to the question how far the conductor is justified in modifying—by which is meant strengthening—a score so as to obtain balance of tone in a large orchestra. With the means at their disposal it is just this balance of tone of which the earlier masters were so acutely conscious, and of which our present-day would-be masters are not, for it is quite possible to write \textit{ff} for every instrument at once, and never obtain more than a half-hearted \textit{mezzo-forte}. If, as we have good reason to know, a composer had abruptly to pull up his horns and trumpets because they had no notes, or only one when a modulation was outside their range, is the conductor within his province in rounding-off the sharp edge that was left? Is he to be condemned by those who have not viewed the work in the light of his experience, but have taken him to task for doubling wind passages, adding octaves, and completing horn cadences? 

But the purist will exclaim, 'This is modernising!' It is nothing of the sort. It is merely supplying a crutch to a lame leg. If we let the wind blow where it listeth, we must consistently reduce in stature the section of strings in our large orchestras. Still we should be far from obtaining an exact reconstruction. We should need to reproduce also the dimensions of the room.

When metronome marks are not indicated, the conductor is free to put his own interpretation upon \textit{adagios} and \textit{prestos}, and the intervening varieties of \textit{tempo}. In works in the répertoire he may have to run the gauntlet of criticism for any departure from the fluctuating currency of tradition, and we may yet meet with a conductor who, with the courage of his convictions, boldly states his procedure—and his metronome marks—in the concert-book, as Weingartner did in his comprehensive work.

Personality, it cannot be repeated too often, is a determining element in interpretation—indeed, it may be said to be interpretation itself. It will be allowed that when a composer asks for \textit{allegro molto} and marks the minim at \(8_{4}\), he means \(8_{4}\); but when he omits the mark, the conductor must interpret the movement according to his own idea of \textit{allegro molto}, which may be below or above that beat, and at variance with the ideas of others, who fortunately are not in a position to express their views during the performance. Besides, account must be taken of the effect of the beat upon instrumental passages, phrasings, points for breathing, so as not to distress the orchestra by too rapid a \textit{tempo}, or to hurry to such an extent that the sound becomes a confused scramble.

Recently, when a conductor was taken to task for altering some of Beethoven's metronome marks, the question was asked if Beethoven's metronome was synchronized. The inquiry was well-timed, and was amazingly justified by a quotation from a letter of Beethoven himself in which he said that his instrument was 'sick and must first have its regular and steady pulse restored by the clockmaker.' Moreover, there is Beethoven's well-known outburst against metronome marks, and his declaration that the character of the music indicated the \textit{tempo}. This need not be taken too literally, for, apart from metronome marks, there are infinite gradations of expression too minute and delicate in themselves to come within the designation of \textit{tempo rubato}.

To speak then of tradition is to mean something suspiciously akin to superstition. Much has been built upon Habeneck's performances of Beethoven's Symphonies, but he did not hesitate to suppress or simplify the double-bass parts when they were too difficult for such players as he had at hand. Was this 'tradition' recognised by Lamoureux? I fancy not. Account must always be taken of human fallibility in the description of a sound-impression which, till recent years, could not be recorded and reproduced. Without phonography we cannot eliminate the 'personal equation'—that equation which had its origin in the minute calculations of astronomy. It is not necessary to go to Greenwich: the Law Courts provide examples of its existence every day.

In older music the evidence of tradition, entitled as it is to our respect, is not to be disallowed without close scrutiny. But is it to be rigidly adhered to because it has filtered through the brains of men who are no longer with us to bear witness? We cannot tell how much was shed or added in the process.

Let us consider one material point. This is not the place to inquire whether music is a universal language; but there are works which we regard, and after due study have the right to regard, as part of our musical heritage. They belong to us as much as, let us say, a great piece of sculpture, a great poem, a great picture. They have so permeated our musical intelligence that we know 'instinctively' (here the word used at the beginning asserts itself) that the character of the music determines its treatment. This is not any far-fetched theory, but commonsense. Furthermore, the character of the music determines the beat.

Nowadays we have young people at our music schools conducting with a freedom and technical resource which seventy years ago would have been looked upon with misgivings. Their performances would have seemed to be a form of musical outrage.

To cope with the anarchistic tendencies of youth, anarchistic conductors and interpreters are called for, and whether these tendencies are the outcome of the basic nature of music as hewn by Bach, or a throw forward, a projection well ahead of accepted views, anticipating a newer
and apparently unrelated type, we cannot close ear and mind to a phase which has come among us. The lessons of all art-movements in the past are before us to put us on our guard against a hasty opinion, for we do not know, and cannot tell, how far our appreciation of the music that we like is due to the education which we have received when listening to works somewhat beyond our grasp.

This is not the occasion to weigh in the balance one school against another. We may imagine that we have outgrown the clear-cut rhythm and attitude of mind of Mozart and Beethoven—styles which were not without their disconcerting results to their contemporary audiences. Even Wagner with his excursions, inevitable as they seemed to him, and inevitable, almost commonplace, as they seem in places to us, was musically speaking a renegade. To-day any audience will accept a performance of 'Lohengrin,' and 'Tannhäuser,' and 'Tristan,' for in the depth of their musical experience they have found the ideal. This idealism, too, may produce in the mind of a conductor during the performance of a familiar work a feeling of sufficiency and completeness, no matter how far the performance may fall short of results that he has obtained at other times. He has so schooled himself that he is hearing mentally that which is for the moment physically unobtainable. This would account for performances of a character so bewildering that the impression is not one of indignation but of surprise.

The heaviest burden laid upon the conductor is the preservation of unity. Music is difficult to 'see' whole. In the concert-room the page cannot be turned back. The conductor must wait for the next performance (if ever he obtains it) to bring out that after-thought which struck him just a second too late as the music was being unfolded. He may have a flash of insight into a passage which baffled him, blazing across his mind just at the right moment. It was said above that it is often impossible to discover at a glance what effect, if any, a composer was aiming at in the midst of an orchestral fracas. The deciphering, the dissecting, of a modern score, with apparently contradictory dynamic marks, requires of the conductor a musical endowment which could not have been gained by a study of works written two generations ago. But there is a cumulative energy in music, gradually and unconsciously stored up till the opportunity arrives for its release.

Unquestionably the conducting of music of the ultra-modern school involves a strain which the conductor is called upon to undergo without, perhaps (for the present at least), any definite compensation beyond what can be derived from the accomplishment of a tour de force. It is no small task to reduce to just proportion ponderous loquacity or irresponsible garrulity. In earlier music, when all was serene and not at cross-purposes, there was an intuitive responsiveness to the mood of the music. It is this responsiveness that consolidates and sustains the fabric of sound at places where others would leave all frayed and ragged.

There may be a dozen different ways of rendering a passage: a symphony does not 'run' for so many consecutive nights, so we are not in a position to say whether the conductor, or we, were in the same frame of mind on each occasion that the symphony was given, possibly at considerable intervals of time.

Apart from the technical side of music, there are aspects which the conductor will view in the true perspective. The days of the band-sergeant, as Costa appears to have been, are over. Modern music has demobilised him. A plastic and sensitive mind, as anxious to learn as it is ready to forget: adjusted to tolerate on the one hand, to welcome on the other: a mind sincere in recognising and encouraging the genuine though often ill-expressed effort—these finer, less mundane qualities would the conductor cultivate in his progress.

Lastly we come to that which is most difficult to define—namely, mental poise, which is not to be mistaken for 'pose,' in spite of its 'proud letter I.'

While in the study the balance of the conductor's mind is swaying, with technique now preponderating, to be in turn outweighed by expression, the moment arrives when equilibrium is established. It is clear that this desirable condition is not always within reach, especially in the case of works which have to be performed in far from ideal circumstances. Still, it is not impossible to attain it in some measure.

There is no need for cold austerity: there can be warmth without embroidery and the tinsel of the mountebank: let the conductor's mind choose for habitation a goodly mansion rather than the clamouring market-place.

NEW LIGHT ON LATE TUDOR COMPOSERS
BY W. H. GRATTON FLOOD

V.—ROBERT PARSONS

In my notice of William Parsons, I pointed out that there was previously much confusion between him and Robert Parsons, but that the former, apart from the difference in Christian name, was of a slightly earlier period, and was the contributor of eighty-one tunes to Day's four-part setting of the Psalms, in 1563.

Morley, in his 'Introduction' (1597), includes Robert Parsons in his list of eminent English musicians, styling him 'Mr. Parsons.' Yet, as in the case of many others, very scant particulars have come down to us of his biography. It is, however, fairly certain that he was born at Exeter, c. 1535, and we find a rather pretty 'In Nomine' of his, dating from before the year 1560. He joined the Chapel Royal in 1563, being sworn a Gentleman of that body on October 17, 1563, and from this period may

Drops prone and void as any thoughtless dash.'
—George Meredith, in the Sonnet, 'The State of Age.'