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# MUSIC IN THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION

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## II.

THERE existed for a long time a delusion concerning J. S. Bach, the great master musician. It was believed that Bach's religious creed embraced Pietism. But J. S. Bach was not a Pietist. Yet that heart-felt and ardent mysticism, which can be seen in his wonderful choral works, particularly those with Biblical texts, is surely something very closely related to that fervent devotion with which the Pietists studied the Bible. That metaphysical characteristic, which causes Bach to linger so easily upon the subjects of the annihilation of temporal life through death and the joy of eternal happiness (the Christian's life after death), is surely correlative, in some measure at least, to the religious thinking of the followers of Philip Jacob Spener (the father of Pietism). This was not, however, the fruit of a pietistic philosophy of life on the part of Bach. It was the emotions of a general tendency in German life that found an expression in musical art. It was a great influence upon Bach. But we find in the works of Bach elements which certainly possess no correlation with Pietism. There is to be found that strong restraint of a most ardent subjectivity by the strictest possible form and by the employment of the least subjective of all musical instruments, namely the pipe organ. Bach was a great organist. There is also that sound and definitely affirmative way of thinking, revealed in his acknowledgment of the full and free rights of musical art. Pietism had no use for musical art or any fine art. We must also note that Bach was a great lover of pure and wholesome social life.

But J. S. Bach (1685-1750) is not only a strong representative of a religious creed, he is also a noble example of a class of unadulterated German society. He reminds us very much of those illustrious men of the Middle Ages, in whom excellent corporate (consistent with the rules of a guild) and professional proficiency went hand in hand with remarkable artistic ingenuity. The social cir-

cle within which Bach moved belongs to the last remnants of that unbroken medieval middle class. Hence, the German, the pure and also the marrowy, the adamantine, in Bach's great musical works.

If we turn our attention from Germany, with its patriarchal petty tradesmen, to absolute monarchial France, we see in Jean Baptiste de Lully (1632-1687) the musical representative of the brilliant, though somewhat hollow pomp of the age of Louis XIV. Because of his personal character, Lully belongs to those who are very much at home in a despotic community. He was a combination of despot and buffoon. He did not consider it beneath his dignity to play the rôle of a simple jester in order to regain the vacillating favor of the king. Then again, he possessed nerve enough to drive Cambert, the creator of French opera, out of the country by means of low intrigue, and also to give to singers, who did not please him in the performances of his operas, the most unreasonable treatment. He was always ready to do anything, right or wrong. The musical art of Lully stands entirely within the form principles of contemporary tragedy. His opera texts, written mostly by Quinault, are mythological abstraction, colored by the most extravagant pomp in costumes, decorations, mechanism, etc. Lully's musical activities, both good and bad, determined the whole development and progress of so-called Grand Opera. His remarkable genius can hardly be misjudged, although the seed he sowed did not bear any fruit until the last part of the eighteenth century, in the work of Christoph Willibald Gluck.

Lully's operas were prepared in a peculiar way. It was necessary for Quinault to have a great deal of mythological material in readiness all the time, which Lully submitted to the king for approval. Thereafter Quinault made sketches of this selected and approved material, and Lully arranged the scenery, the acting, etc. After this work had again been submitted to the king for approval, the poem was written out in full, and Lully would omit or add according to his own judgment. At last Lully went to work and composed the music. He studied

the words carefully and committed them to memory. He usually composed the melodies by singing them to his best pupils, who would quickly jot them down on paper. His pupils also wrote out the parts for the orchestra. Thus Lully prepared and composed his operas, which were very popular for a long time in France.

If we see in J. S. Bach the modest, contented and religious German burgher, and in Lully the hired courtier under the powerful Louis XIV, then G. F. Handel (1685-1759) is a good example of Great Britain, with its individualistic independence and free form of government. Like Lully (Italian), Handel was not born in the country where he became nationalized. But the work of both these men is so thoroughly merged in their new homeland that they may be regarded as natives. In 1720 Handel entered upon the decisive period of his life. The way in which he now was permitted to utilize his remarkable abilities and influence the public, became something very different from before 1720, when he was the welcome guest in all palaces of patrons of art. He became a different man. Who could ever have thought that this man, who had always been such a peaceful friend of everybody and everything, should become a very unyielding and stubborn head of the musical work in England? Could a real musician also be a real man in those days? Could anyone expect that a phenomenon, such as was witnessed in the days of Milton, was to be seen in that field of fine art which was generally regarded as weak and inferior, and, at that, was to be brought about through the instrumentality of an imported musician? Such questions refer to some very significant facts, and in such questions rests a great deal of Handel's historical importance.

Handel gave to England its first national musical publicity, partly through his vigorous struggles in behalf of Italian opera in London, but mostly through his immortal oratorios (sacred music) which to this very day occupy the foremost place in the great annual music festivals, so popular throughout Great Britain. What Purcell, Blow and other noted English musicians started, but were unable to finish, that was thoroughly carried out by Handel,

the foreigner. Handel was born and brought up in Germany.

Handel's representative authority as an interpreter of the healthy substance in English life is not lessened because of the fact that in his independent and original manliness he was an exception at a time when corruption was so general that Sir Robert Walpole claimed that almost any Englishman could easily be bought.

With Handel England enters into real music history. His great and lasting influence was in the field of religious music. England's greatest contribution to musical art is in the field of religious music. She has given the world many very fine oratorios and cantatas. She has produced many very strong church organists.