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PREFACE.

WHILE in all art a loving investigation of ancient forms is an unending bourn whence flow the most fitting resources for the purification of taste, this applies most fully to music, which, eluding plastic realism, can readily derive from grand models whatever it may need for the improvement and development of its productions. This assertion appears like, and in fact is, a paraphrase of the well-known saying of our great modern melodramatist, the sense of which may perhaps be more directly and forcibly felt in the original general form. And since the new is now-a-days growing scarcer and scarcer, its place may fortunately be filled by the resurrection of the ancient; the more, because it has appeared for some time as if such a resurrection would interest patrons of art far more than current novelties. For these two reasons, then, the time seemed to be ripe for the present publication; and it cannot fail to be a source of real benefit to our beloved art of song, to point out a means for certain improvement both on the æsthetic and practical side. The songs which follow were gleaned from old manuscripts and ancient editions, where they lay in unmerited oblivion. In undertaking this work of exhumation, such an abundance of material was unearthed that the task of rejection, necessitated by the modest proportions of this volume, became difficult and grievous. [Since the above was penned, the very favorable reception accorded to this first volume has encouraged the preparation and publication of a second.] In transcribing the melodies the utmost care was taken to alter nothing in the originals, and often various manuscripts were consulted to ascertain the most elegant and correct form. Obsolete abbreviations were written out in full, and the melodies so selected that none overstep the range of an ordinary voice, thus making

them accessible to all. Further, in adding the accompaniments and harmonizing the *bassi continui*, care was taken to insert nothing out of keeping with the words or character of the compositions, or with the style of the author and his period; during this work constant reference was made to the models left by the greatest masters in this style of chamber-music, placed in centuries past at the lofty elevation which is theirs of right.

Having explained the scope of this publication, a few observations on the correct mode of interpreting the music will be offered. The main characteristics peculiar to the composers of the 17th and 18th centuries are clearness and simplicity of form, depth of feeling, and a suave serenity whose grateful influence permeates their entire style. The music of to-day, on the contrary, is neurotic, full of startling effects and violent contrasts. In the interpretation of these ancient songs, therefore, a prime requisite is the avoidance of any exaggeration of *coloris*, of all strained delivery. The singing must be simple, unaffected, tranquil, *legato*; the *tempi* quiet, without any precipitation whatever; the embellishments executed with studious attention, to insure clearness and accuracy; words and tones welded to form one indissoluble whole, so that the hearer cannot fail to comprehend their meaning. The whole delivery, in short, should show delicacy of intuition and a thorough understanding of the laws of the good Italian style; it should be at once calm, elegant, correct, and expressive, yet without coldness or heaviness. No unusual powers are required for singing these ancient songs, though they demand an exact observance of the notes and directions; a modicum of good taste, and a genuine love of study, will do the rest.

Rome, November, 1885.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS REPRESENTED IN THIS COLLECTION.

GIOVANNI MARIA BONONCINI.

1640-1678.

By exploring the libraries not a few of Bononcini's works, distinguished by elegance of form and exquisite taste, may be brought to light. Madrigals, symphonies, cantatas and sonatas form a rich and attractive repertory, well worthy of being recalled to life through the agency of the press. But matters are not yet ripe for taking this step, and we must be satisfied if a small portion of these delightful compositions meets with universal approval; albeit the style of Bononcini is clear, melodious, and unspeakably expressive. In each measure wells up the art of beautiful song; at every turn are effects surprising in their freshness and aptness.

The arietta printed here was found in an old manuscript of the 18th century, stowed away amidst other gems of the most illustrious Italian composers, in the great library of the Royal Academy of St. Cecilia at Rome. After this manuscript Gavaert edited, in the collection entitled *Gloires d'Italie*, a pleasing melody, "Pietà mio caro bene," which I should have been glad to add to the present series had space not been lacking. Unerringly correct in form, graceful in style, most truthful in the expression of feeling, Bononcini the Modenese, besides being a most eminent composer, was a famous teacher. This is plainly proved by his work, "Il musico pratico" (The practical musician), "a brief demonstration of the manner of attaining a complete knowledge of all those things which belong to the composition of songs and which concern the art of counterpoint," published in 1673.

He wrote theatrical works, instrumental pieces, secular sonatas, madrigals, and some cantatas.

He was born about 1640, and died November 19, 1678.

ANTONIO CALDARA.

1670-1736.

He was master of composition to Charles VI, at whose court in Vienna he bore the title of Capellmeister. Previously, he had occupied a similar position at the ducal court in Mantua. An extremely fruitful writer, he left to posterity a long list of sacred and secular works, in all of which the trained hand of the master in art is apparent. The simple and affecting melody, "Come raggio il sol," has lost nothing of its original delicacy and freshness after the lapse of two centuries. Among the numerous cantatas and serenatas from his pen, the pastoral drama entitled *La costanza in amor vince l'inganno* appears peculiarly worthy of mention. Its plot is simple and perfectly idyllic, but the graces of song are lavished throughout with a prodigal hand. He rarely mentions the instruments for the accompaniment, excepting where he writes an *obbligato* for theorbo, *corno da caccia*, the treble viol, etc. In most cases, there is a bare *basso continuo* set underneath the vocal part, with no indication whatever of the harmonization. From the above-mentioned drama we have selected the two ariettas, "Sebben crudele" and "Selve amiche," and should have taken more had space permitted.

Caldara was a pupil of Legrenzi, and enjoyed a higher reputation than his teacher.

He set to music libretti by Apostolo Zeno and Pietro Metastasio, among them being *Temistocle*. He was born at Venice in 1670, and died in the same city in 1763.

GIAN GIACOMO CARISSIMI.

1604(?)—1674.

A MORE fitting commencement for this Collection of Ancient Music could hardly be found than a work by a genius of such rare and original type as Carissimi, who, among the great masters of the 17th century, was famous both as a composer and as a teacher of singing. His *Sacrifice of Jephtha* and *Judgment of Solomon*, master-works of the sacred style, founded the grand Italian school continued and extended with such admirable success by his pupils Alessandro Scarlatti and Marco Antonio Cesti. It is much to be regretted that the majority of this fertile author's compositions lie neglected, as dusty and decaying manuscripts, in public libraries, which, possessed of treasures in the shape of scientific and literary works, regard musical writings as poor appendages of slight worth. Hence the difficulty of researches, which might reveal to lovers of art many a hidden treasure and gem of price.

Carissimi, in his life as an artist, was very retiring, and it is not known whether his appointment to the directorship of the choir in S. Appollinare at Rome brought him greater honor than that at Assisi. However this may be, to his eminent genius and unwearied study of music is due a great advance in musical art, more especially in the style of oratorio and songs.

From among these latter we have selected for publication the one set to the words, *Vittoria, vittoria*. A poor lover has liberated himself from love's bondage, which appears to have been very grievous, and expresses his delight with the most charming vivacity, and in the most elegant form. This song has a character of such marked

individuality, that it would be difficult to confound it with other similar compositions.

Carissimi was born at Marino, near Rome, about the year 1604, and died in Rome in 1674. Some biographers contend that he was born at Venice in 1582.

MARCO ANTONIO CESTI.

1620—1669 (?).

AMONG the followers of Carissimi was the monk Fra Marc'Antonio da Arezzo, who was born in that city about 1620, and died at Venice in 1669, or according to others at Rome in 1688. He was a pupil of Carissimi, and one of the foremost composers of the 17th century. His cowl did not hinder him from writing various dramas and amorous cantatas in the style originated by Carissimi, in which aria and recitative alternate, besides many madrigals and secular ariettas.

Not a few of this composer's manuscripts are left us, scattered everywhere through the libraries, and generally neglected. From among these I have been able to select, in the library of the Royal Academy of St. Cecilia and the Chigiana at Rome, a few little songs for three voices with romantic or mythological subjects, and of no mean value, which I hope to see published sooner or later. Cesti's style is wonderfully suave and melodious, and expressive to a degree that might be called sensuous. These features are strongly prominent in the melody "Intorno all' idol mio" belonging to the opera *Orondea*, which was performed in 1649; it may also be found in the fine collection of Carl Banck, entitled *Arien und Gesänge älterer Tonmeister* (Arias and Songs by Earlier Composers).

Numerous other melodies in this author's secular music, with *basso continuo*, deserve to be brought to light, both by reason of their interesting melodic turn and the elegance of their form; and I propose having them printed in case this first attempt

should meet with critical and popular approval.

Cesti was *maestro di cappella* at Florence under Ferdinando III de' Medici, and later assistant Capellmeister to Leopold I at Vienna. His most successful work was the opera *La Dori*; the titles of ten or twelve others are still extant.

CHRISTOPH WILIBALD GLUCK.

1714—1787.

It is with good reason that Gluck is called the reformer of the musical drama; for during the better part of his long career as an artist he devoted all the exceptional powers of his genius to the emancipation of the opera from the shackles of conventional form. In his efforts he met with a redoubtable rival in Piccinni, of whom we shall speak later; so hot was their struggle for supremacy at the French court, that two opposing parties were formed, the Gluckists and the Piccinnists—a striking proof of the interest then taken in art by the public. Piccinni was finally defeated by the immense success attending the performance of Gluck's opera *Iphigenia in Tauris*. The principle at issue in this artistic war was, whether natural dramatic expression in music, as advocated by Lully and Rameau and practically carried out by Gluck, should give way to the mere outward charm of lyrical melody as demanded by the Italian school of singers. Gluck's later operas are masterpieces of true dramatic effect, and the grander the situations, the more boldly does his genius assert itself. At the beginning, however, he was satisfied to follow in the footsteps of the early Italian composers; not until the fiasco of his operas in London (1746) did he seriously address himself to that reformation of his own style which was destined to work a revolution in dramatic music. As a French writer of the time happily put it, "the Italian opera was only a concert for which the drama furnished the

pretext." In Gluck's operas, on the other hand, his devotion to truth in dramatic art breathes from every page.

Gluck was born at Weidenwang in the Upper Palatinate on July 25, 1714, studied in Komotow, Prague, Vienna and Milan, in which last-named place his first operas, with Italian words and in the Italian style, were brought out; their success earned him an invitation to London, where the fiasco above alluded to led to the change in his views, which was confirmed by a visit to Paris, where he heard Rameau's operas. The operas, *Alceste* and *Paride ed Elena*, were performed at Vienna in 1767 and 1769 respectively; from the latter is taken the aria "O del mio dolce ardor," in which suave melody, elegance of form, and exquisite dramatic feeling unite to form a real gem of art. Despite the incontestable beauties of these works, they met with little favor in Vienna; their author consequently removed to Paris, where fame and fortune were the meed of his unwearied efforts. He died at Vienna November 15, 1787.

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL.

1685—1759.

HANDEL (properly Georg Friedrich Händel) was born at Halle in Germany on the 23d of February, 1685, not quite a month before Joh. Seb. Bach. His precocious genius attracted the attention of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels, who prevailed on his father to provide for his regular instruction in music. At the age of ten he had written a series of sonatas, and in the following year his father journeyed with the youthful composer to Berlin, where his talent for improvisation and playing from a figured bass aroused the admiration of the Italians Bononcini and Ariosti. In 1702 he was appointed organist of the cathedral at Halle, a position which he retained only a year, then going to Hamburg, where his first four operas (in German) were written, *Almira*

being especially successful. In 1787 he journeyed to Italy, the home of the opera, and spent over three years in Florence, Rome, and Venice, studying diligently and composing several operas and oratorios in Italian. Thoroughly at home in the Italian vocal style, and already noted as a composer, he came to London in 1710, where he was received with marked distinction; nearly thirty Italian operas written during the ensuing twenty-five years spread his fame far and wide. The opera *Ottone*, from which the arietta "Affanni del pensier" is taken, appeared in 1725; *Alcina*, containing "Ah mio cor, schernito sei," in 1736. Various oratorios, among them *Esther* and *Acis e Galathea*, had also been brought out in the meantime, and met with much favor; besides, Handel had his hands full as a conductor and opera-manager; yet he found time to compose a great number of valuable instrumental works, and made several trips to the continent in search of singers and orchestra-players. His first unquestioned success in oratorio was with the *Messiah*, written in 1741 in twenty-four days; thenceforward he occupied himself almost exclusively with this style of composition, and produced the masterworks which render his fame imperishable. He died at London in 1759, honored and revered in the country of his adoption as no musician before him.

NICCOLA JOMMELLI.

1714-1774.

A PROLIFIC composer in a style peculiarly his own, Nicola Jommelli, one of the foremost opera-writers of the Neapolitan school, was born at Aversa, near Caserta, the 10th of September, 1714, and died at Naples August 25th, 1774. In the last-named city he studied under Durante, Leo, and Mancini, and at Bologna under P. Martini. His

name is still a household word in Italy; indeed, on reading any of his compositions, one cannot fail to recognize the stamp of a great genius and of true originality. There is something out of the common in Jommelli's music, captivating the hearer by its breadth of conception and the careful working-out of details. At times excessively minutiose, he introduces the flourishes so admired at that period with a lavish hand, as in the celebrated motet *Victimæ paschali*, which, if not the greatest, is certainly one of the most perfect of his works. At all events, he always avoided crudities, and, by combining the charm of novelty with grace of form, has created real works of art. An experience of fourteen years (1754-1768) as Royal Music-Director at Stuttgart, wrought a marked change in his style, which won the applause of the Germans, but which was so little to the taste of the Italians that on his return to Naples his three last—and perhaps best—operas were totally unsuccessful. Jommelli took this cold reception so much to heart, that his death soon followed; his last work was the celebrated *Miserere* for two soprani and orchestra.

He wrote not only operas, but also oratorios, melodramas, masses, motets, requiems, psalms for double chorus, etc. His earlier successes were doubtless due in part to the coöperation of Metastasio, the renowned writer of opera-libretti, concerning whom the following interesting remarks are found in some of Jommelli's letters: "He is a round, fat man of pacific disposition and engaging mien, and with very quiet and elegant manners."—"He is the cleverest artist in adapting music to words of all that I have ever known. If you should ever happen to make his acquaintance, you will be sure to like him; he is certainly the most amiable glutton that ever lived."

GIOVANNI LEGRENZI.

1625-1690.

OF this composer, who was born at Clusone near Bergamo in 1625, and died at Venice, where he was *maestro di cappella* in San Marco, in 1690, seventeen theatrical works, and numerous masses, motets and psalms, concertos, sonatas, and cantatas are extant. He was one of the first to write trios for two violins and 'cello, and enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best composers of the 17th century. He was the director of the ducal musicians at Ferrara, and of the Conservatorio de'Mendicanti at Venice; he considerably enlarged the orchestra of St. Mark's, raising the number of players to thirty-four (eight violins, eleven small viols, two tenor viols, three viole da gamba and contrabass viols, four theorbos, two cornetti, one bassoon, and three trombones). The selected arietta "Che fiero costume," taken from the opera *Etoele*, and effeminate like nearly all the poetry of the period, lacks neither freshness nor boldness, qualities on which changes of fashion have no hold. Its effect is charming, and the style chaste throughout. It therefore appears to me not to be out of place in this collection. Pupils of Legrenzi were Antonio Caldera and Antonio Lotti. It is claimed by some that he wore priestly vestments.

ANTONIO LOTTI.

1667-1740.

A PUPIL of Giovanni Legrenzi, and his successor as music-director at San Marco in Venice, Lotti was an eminent composer of sacred music and operas; his first opera, *Giustino*, was brought out at Venice when he was but sixteen years of age. An expert in the art of handling the voice, which was his favorite department of music, he founded a celebrated school of singing at Venice. Among his pupils were Benedetto Marcello, Galuppi (Buranello), and other fine musicians. He outstripped his teacher not only

in fertility of invention, but in beauty of form and the expression of emotion, and ranks among the foremost original artists of the time. In the arietta "Pur dicesti, o bocca bella," simplicity, clearness, and infinite grace are so happily combined, as still to challenge our admiration.

His knowledge of the art of singing is apparent throughout this composition, and particularly in the effects of the portamento and syncopation, the elegant style, and a wise economy in the management of coloratura and embellishments. Some biographers assert that Lotti was born at Hanover in 1667, of Venetian parents, his father being music-director at the Electoral Court; others say that he was born at Venice in 1665; he died at Venice January 5, 1740.

BENEDETTO MARCELLO.

1686-1739.

THE work "Estro poetico-armonica," better known now-a-days under the title of *Psalms of Marcello*, rendered its author famous among his contemporaries, and secured the admiration of posterity. He was a *littérateur* and poet of considerable merit, and wrote a *Treatise on musical theory according to modern practice*, the *Teatro alla moda*, a poem, *Arato in Sparta*, and other literary works. In his capacity as a musician he composed oratorios, cantatas, serenatas, masses, motets, etc., written in a severe style, but filled with the inspiration of true genius. The arietta "Quella fiamma che m'accende" is characterized by its smooth and tasteful style; its harmony has a graceful and original turn, and the general effect is excellent. In Banck's Collection it is quoted several times.

Benedetto Marcello was a pupil of Lotti, a sketch of whom is given above, and of Francesco Gasparini of Lucca. He was born at Venice of noble family, on August the 1st, 1686; studied law, becoming a barrister, and for fourteen years was one of the