

THE STORY OF MUSIC

a lecture given by

MISS ROSE REICH

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NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM

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INTRODUCTION

When I was first asked to give a lecture on music, I was faced with the problem of just where to begin. This subject is so vast and as old as mankind itself. Finally, I decided to let my training as a singer guide me and begin at the very beginning. No doubt there will be much omitted due to time but I shall attempt to give you a clear picture of the history of music.

What is music? It can be defined as the art or science which portrays in melody, harmony, and rhythm the life forces in man and in the universe. The story of music is the history of man's attempt to describe with this instrument the life forces. The states of beauty, joy, grief, etc. are these life forces. At the summit of these forces is God.

The word, music, itself was handed down to us by the Greeks. It is derived from the word, muse. The Muses were the nine daughters, or goddesses of Zeus who presided over the arts and sciences.

PRIMITIVE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

Primitive man living in close communion with nature was surrounded with music. It would have been impossible for him not to have heard the songs of the birds, the sound of the wind rustling through the trees, and the beat of the rain. These are only a few examples of the natural, musical sounds which enveloped primitive man.

Primitive man gave expression to his feelings of joy and grief in grunts, shouts, and bodily motions. This formed the basis of the art of song and dance. But many centuries passed before music was anything but crude rhythms and melody. At first, a musical language had to be developed. This varied greatly among different people and different times. Men did not know they were creating an art. They were only expressing their feelings. Because they did not understand natural things; such as death, birth, rain, fire, etc., they believed that everyone had good and evil Gods in them. In order to gain favor from these Gods, they composed prayers to them in dance and song. When they wanted sun or rain, the tribe would gather together and dance a sun dance or a rain dance. This is how music and dancing were born.

A complete list of musical instruments from antiquity to today are much too numerous to mention, but it is natural to suppose that the first instruments were those which gave rhythm. Nature's own percussion instruments; the hands and feet were first. Next, would be the striking together

of pieces of wood or bone. A hollowed out tree trunk, with an animal skin stretched across it, served to make the first drum. Almost all of the instruments in use today can be traced back to primitive man. All of them fall into three categories; percussion, wind, and strings. Drums were used before any other; then, came the wind instruments; and finally, string instruments. This marked a higher stage of development. The drum was the instrument used in religious rituals. Song and dance, with drum accompaniment, were used for religious and secular ceremonies. It was a long road from primitive man's religious rituals to the church, but it was a direct road. Religion directed the art of music just as it influenced other arts. The Hebrew psalms, the masses, and the choruses are but a few examples.

EGYPTIAN MUSIC

From the writings on buildings and tombs, we know that music played a big part in the religious and secular life of the ancient Egyptians. They were very fond of buildings, and they decorated these structures with colored pictures called hieroglyphics. The story of their festivals and battles were carved on the walls and columns of their temples and tombs. These records were preserved through the ages and discovered by archeologists for us to learn from.

Just as all primitive people, the ancient Egyptians personified nature in the concept of their Gods. They had Osiris - God of Light, Hoorus - God of the Sun, Isis - Goddess of the Arts, to name but a few. They had music in all the religious ceremonies rendered to their Gods. This music had no musical law to conform to, but it was guided by the feelings of the people whose task was to create it. Due to state law, Egyptian music adhered to the same system for three thousand years. New music was forbidden because much of the old music was considered holy and used only in their temples. The profession of singer for the temple was handed down from father to son whether or not the offspring possessed good voices. The temples were quite huge in size, so that their music had to be on a grand scale. They had orchestras consisting of hundreds of harp, lute, and flute players; whereas today, an orchestra of one hundred men is considered to be quite a large group. Hebrew, Greek, and early Christian music were all influenced by the Egyptians due to the many wars, conquests, and migration of these people from place to place. On some of the recently-unearthed tombs, we find legends showing singers and instrumentalists dressed in the clothing of priests. Kings employed musicians of highest caste as well as slaves for entertainment. Few women took part in creating and providing music.

ASSYRIAN MUSIC

It is not too conclusive whether Assyria influenced Egyptian music or vice versa. The Egyptians excelled in making mechanical objects; such as, utensils, tools, and in building temples, while the Assyrians were sculptors, weavers, and potters. The Assyrians had basically the same family of instruments that we have today (percussion, wind, and strings). They used different combinations either in instrumental performances or as vocal accompaniment. They were greater noise makers than the Egyptians. Not

only did they use drums and trumpets, but they also marked rhythm by stamping their feet. The Assyrians were a warlike nation and made instruments that could be strapped to their bodies. So fond were they of music, that when they captured musicians as prisoners of war, the latter were not put to death.

HEBREW MUSIC

Unlike other nations, the ancient Hebrews were not exponents of the arts. Their music came not as an art but spring from the soul of a people whose daily life was religiously regulated. Much of the story of their music can be learned from the Old Testament which is corroborated by Egyptian, Assyrian, and Arab records. The latter describe the type of melody, structure and scope of Hebrew music. No doubt, the exile in Egypt had a great influence on their music. The Hebrews had great faith in the healing power of music. In the Old Testament, we see an example of this; David playing for King Saul as therapy for his depression state. David was called the great musician for he gave us many of the psalms. These have been an inspiration to all composers of religious music through the ages. Most of the Hebrew music was religious in origin. Rhythm, rather than melody, was the major factor in Hebrew music. Instruments merely supplemented the voice as an accompaniment. During the next few centuries, these people became scattered all over the world. Their love of song and their reverence for God accompanied them wherever they went. Most of their old music has disappeared. However, enough of its spirit remains in their religious services to give us an idea of ancient Hebrew music.

GREEK MUSIC

As I stated previously the word, music, was derived from the Greek word, muse. The Muses were the nine daughters of Zeus. They were the matron saints of the arts; namely,

Clio	- Muse of History and Epic Poetry
Thalia	- Muse of Joy and Comedy
Erato	- Muse of Lyric Poetry
Euterpe	- Muse of Lyric Song
Polyhymnia	- Muse of Sacred Song
Calliope	- Muse of Eloquence and Epic Poetry
Terpsichore	- Muse of Dance
Urania	- Muse of Astronomy
Melpomene	- Muse of Tragic Drama

The original Greek term incorporated such widely different arts and sciences as mathematics, astronomy, poetry, literature, and singing. Philosophers and teachers laid great stress on the educational value of music in the formation of character. Like the other ancient nations, they did not apply harmony to their music, being content with melody alone.

The Greeks had no bible to guide them in their religious life so they gave their Gods human attributes resulting in one of the richest mythologies in the world. To Pan they ascribed the pipes of Pan, also called the syrinx; to Apollo, the lyre. As with other young civilizations, Greece ascribed her music to deific sources.

The Greeks were a gay people taking pleasure in feasts and sporting events as well as in the arts. Greek musical instruments were divided into two classifications; string and wind, or lyre and aulos. This knowledge comes to us from the pictured instruments on monuments, vases, statues, and from the testimony of Greek authors. It describes a large variety of string and wind instruments. The lyre was the national instrument. The other group of instruments called the aulos corresponded to our oboes. These noise-loving, soldierly people also had percussion instruments; among them the tympanium similar to a tambourine.

The Greeks have given more inspiration to modern music than any other ancient people. In ancient Greece, for the first time music attained the dignity of an art with all its aesthetic, emotional, and moral significance; employed to give pleasure and to uplift the mind of man.

EARLY MUSIC OF THE CHURCH

Although a thousand years passed between the Greek musical era and Christian church music, much that happened is unknown. The nations were fighting for existence and were developing into the nations we know today. During the Dark Ages the world was not a happy place in which to live. There was constant warfare between peoples of the once powerful Roman Empire and the barbaric tribes. Into such a world Jesus was born. For several centuries after the birth of Christ, the world went through a period known as the Dark Ages. Music survived during this period because of a band of faithful followers of Jesus Christ who founded a church in His name. As many of these early Christians were Hebrews, they sang the psalms and parts of the services as had been their custom. The beautiful and traditional music of the synagogues found its way into the services of the early Christian church.

The early Christians could not have too much music as they worshipped in secret, and much music would have attracted the attention of their enemies. From what we know they chanted their psalms, as did the Hebrews, and had responses which sounded like soft and monotonous droning. Gradually, many Romans became Christians. As Greek was the language of culture, the converted Romans had a thorough Greek education and brought with them their Greek musical inheritance. Thus, the chants composed in Rome were the ancestors of our Christian hymns. These hymns were a bridge between the single melody line of the Orient, Greece, and Rome and the many melody lines called polyphonic of Europe. In 325 AD, Emperor Constantine made Christianity the national religion in Rome. He also founded the Christian church. All through the Dark Ages in many parts of Europe the cathedrals and church schools were the only glimmer of learning in a troubled world.

I have not even skimmed the surface in speaking of early church music, but time is rapidly drawing to a close; and before ending my little talk, I would like to move up the clock and speak of music during the sixteenth and seventeenth century in England.

MUSIC IN ENGLAND

In the sixteenth century, England was very far from Rome due to the lack of communications. It took a long time to reach the people of the Continent. Bearing this in mind, it would seem that England had little musical influence. However, just the opposite was true because England was forced to develop what it had at home. Around this time came the Reformation of the English church under Henry the Eighth of the eight wives. In 1535 he wanted to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry her lady-in-waiting, Ann Boleyn. As the Catholic church prohibits divorce, England cut herself off from the Pope and founded the English or Anglican church with the King as its head, breaking away from the church of Rome. This gave English music a great push forward. Up to this time, there was no English Bible. Only Latin and Greek versions were used. The church did not consider it proper for the common people to read the scriptures. The priests wanted to read and interpret it for them instead. Soon after 1538, William Tyndale made the first English translation of the New Testament. Soon the psalms were translated and set to the music of any air from a jig tune to a French dance tune; the gayer the air, the more popular the psalm.

Because the Protestants did not want anything retained that had been part of the old religion in England, many fine manuscripts of music and poetry were lost. As England changed its King at the death of each monarch the country swayed from Catholicism to Protestantism and back again. Many a poet and musician lost his head or was burnt at the stake because he wrote for the Protestant church. When the Reformation was complete, it was at the considerable expense of those musicians who were left. These poor souls had to change their musical style of writing as well as their faith. The mass became the "service" and motet was turned into the "anthem" which is still in use in churches today. One of the earliest church composers was Thomas Tallis (about 1520-1585) who was known as the father of English cathedral music. Through his career he followed the different religions of the rulers from Henry the Eighth to Elizabeth writing Catholic music or Protestant as was needed.

The madrigal became the great English contribution to music. For the first time secular music was held in great honor and prepared the way for arias, dramatic solos, and original melodies.

This brings to a close my little talk. I hope you have enjoyed it as much as I have enjoyed bringing it to you.