

ERNEST NEWMAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC CRITICISM

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OF
MUSIC CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Ernest Newman's philosophy of music criticism. Although all of the critic's writings in regard to this topic are examined, particular emphasis is placed on previously undocumented articles from "The World of Music" (Sunday Times, London - 1920-1958). Preliminary chapters provide a biography and a brief history of music criticism. Newman's enunciation of the problems associated with music criticism and his attempts to solve those problems are then examined in detail. Conclusions are drawn in regard to the value of Newman's thoughts about his profession.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the profession of music criticism is held in low esteem, in particular, by those who are involved in the creative arts of composition and performance. The negative connotation of the profession certainly has no bearing on the origins of the term "criticism." This word is derived from the Greek "krínein" (to judge or discern). The evaluative aspect of music criticism is present to some degree in all of its branches, which range from press notices and reviews to scholarly writings and aesthetic treatises on music.

It is in the field of journalistic criticism, however, that the reliance upon judgment or discernment is most apparent and often most controversial. In this branch of the profession, the critic finds himself in a precarious position as an arbiter of public taste. His audience, in terms of opinion, is at best a many-headed beast. No person whose opinion-making is subject to public scrutiny can hope to appease everybody. Moreover, the critic is handicapped by a lack of criteria which might serve as a reliable framework on which to construct his judgments. He has no guide-lines which might indicate what training is essential

for the practice of his craft; no firm idea as to what his responsibilities are to his public, to his subjects of criticism or to himself; or no universal goals to which he should aspire. The journalistic critic carries a heavy responsibility to remain objective in the public arena of judgment, yet the lack of a code of critical procedure forces him to retreat, time and time again, into the realm of subjective opinion-making.

In the profession of music criticism, Ernest Newman has perhaps done the hardest thinking about the fundamental, fatal flaws in his craft. His book, A Musical Critic's Holiday, marks, in a sense, the beginning of his search for critical verities. Towards this goal, he proposed a method which was partly musicological, and partly based on an understanding of the physiology of the composer's mind (in relation to the mental processes involved in composition). A later book, The Unconscious Beethoven, is a partial exemplification of this method.

These books, however, represent only part of Newman's thoughts regarding his profession. Many of his writings about criticism are scattered throughout innumerable essays and articles, which were written for various newspapers and journals with which Newman was associated during his long and productive career. The bulk of these writings stems from his tenure (1920-58) with the Sunday Times (London). He wrote two articles per week for

this paper. In "The Week's Music," Newman dealt with the routine task of reviewing day-by-day musical events. In "The World of Music," a longer and generally more reflective article, he incorporated his views on new trends in composition and performance, reviews of literary works concerning music, discussions regarding recognised repertoire and composers, and thoughts on the nature and function of music criticism. Some of these articles are presented in two collections, Essays from "The World of Music" and More Essays from "The World of Music," edited by Felix Aprahamian. There are, however, numerous undocumented writings from Newman's weekly column which provide a wealth of supplementary information regarding his philosophy of music criticism.

It would seem, therefore, that a study of these articles, with reference to Newman's published works, would lead to a more complete representation of his philosophy. Long quotations from Newman's articles are a deliberate attempt to allow the critic to report for himself. It should be noted that some of Newman's thoughts may appear outmoded to the reader. He was, after all, a product of his time. Reference shall be made to Newman's background, and to his training as a critic, in order to determine whether his qualifications met the practical requirements of his profession as discussed in his writings. On a broader level, conclusions will be made in regard to the viability

of Newman's scientific, objective code of procedure for music criticism.

CHAPTER 2

NEWMAN, CRITIC AND MAN

Before Newman's philosophy of music criticism is examined in detail, it would be helpful to delve into the critic's past. As Newman himself expressed it, "ought not the reader, if he wishes to understand why a critic thinks this or that, to know in particular what the influences were that have helped to give his mind its special cast?"¹ We must also determine how Newman was viewed by his contemporaries, for their opinion of his prestige as a critic determines, in part, the credibility of his thoughts in regard to his profession.

Ernest Newman was born William Roberts on November 30th, 1868, in Everton, Lancaster. His early years were spent at St. Saviour's School in Everton. From this school, he won a scholarship to Liverpool College.

England was rich and powerful [as Peter Heyworth wrote in a memorial essay on Newman] and Liverpool was her greatest seaport, but musically the country was an obscure German colony, dominated by the memory of Mendelssohn and dedicated to polite drawing-room songs and bowdlerized oratorios. The musical climate was provincial, genteel, and pious.²

Newman's formal music education was quite insubstantial. He only had one music lesson in his life,

and it lasted no more than half an hour. He was about seventeen at the time, and was enrolled as a scholarship student at Liverpool College. His prodigious store of musical knowledge was acquired through unsystematic, solitary pursuit. Newman's ability to read music at an early age hastened his progress in an era when recording technology was practically non-existent. He declared, in his Confessions of a Musical Critic:

I cannot remember the time when I could not read music as one reads a book. I suppose it was natural to me, for I had no lessons of any kind, and I cannot trace any stages in the process of learning.³

This ability, coupled with a moderate piano technique, enabled him to assimilate dozens of scores while still in his teens.

When I was about twenty I had, in my simplicity, the idea that it would be possible, in another year or two, to have learned virtually all the music that really mattered. I rarely went to concerts at that time. I never saw a musical journal, and I do not suppose I knew that there was such a thing as musical criticism in the newspapers - in any case, newspapers hardly ever came my way in my schoolboy days.⁴

Newman also studied music theory on an individual basis. His way of study was to get as many books as possible on the topic of investigation, and to "make each of them supplement the deficiencies, or show up the fallacies of the others."⁵ Desmond Shawe-Taylor commented on Newman's analytical cast of mind:

Among the elements that went to the making of Newman's powerful intellect two are of primary

importance: a deep scepticism (he was a staunch agnostic of the old school) and a passion for accuracy. He was never prepared to accept something as true merely because it had not been questioned before, and he was never content with second-hand information where primary sources were available. His cast of mind was forensic, and there is little doubt that he would have made a formidable barrister or judge.⁶

Newman's quest for accuracy was a passion, as is obvious in this observation made about him by his second wife, Vera: "I have known him spend months of research and checking and cross-checking to verify a doubtful point."⁷ Also as a result of his musical self-education, Newman "never formed any strong ties, either personal or clannish."⁸ This mode of conduct worked to his advantage, later in life, as a music critic. Gerald Abraham noted, in an obituary on Newman, that "unlike some of his colleagues, he wisely avoided personal contact with leading composers and kept his judgment free from embarrassing friendships. He was never a partisan or propagandist."⁹

It has often been stated that music critics turn to their profession after failure to succeed in composition or performance. It is worth noting, in this respect, that Newman had no pretensions regarding either pursuit. As a pianist, he "never had any ambition to play before others."¹⁰ He flirted with composition in his late teens, but nipped the affair in the bud on his own accord.

Like all ardent young men with music in them, I had an itch for composition. . . . At the age I was then, sixteen or seventeen, I naturally was

quite convinced that my own ideas were excellent. All I had to do, then, was to put the thoughts on paper.

And that is where the trouble began. Then I realised that the understanding of an art was one thing, and the practice of it another.¹¹

Thereafter, he persevered with the study of theory solely for critical purposes.

As a young man, Newman described himself as an "ardent humanitarian."¹² His earliest tastes in music were fundamentally romantic.

I suppose I liked Gluck and Wagner and Schumann better than Mozart or Schubert because the former seemed to me to be dealing with a bigger order of humanity. . . . I liked Mozart and Schubert well enough in a way, but I put them with Rossini and Auber and Bellini and the other pretty tune-makers, though of course, somewhat in front of these.¹³

After leaving Liverpool College, Newman enrolled at Liverpool University. At this time, he intended to enter the Indian Civil Service. He studied electricity, physics, art and English literature, but his enthusiasm was reserved for the latter two subjects. Newman's health broke down shortly before the Indian Civil Service examination. He abandoned his future career with some relief, and secured a job as a bank clerk in Liverpool. Although neither career had any connection with music, the latter position was much more agreeable, because Newman's schedule and the nature of his work duties afforded him time in which to continue his reading.

Newman's taste for literature was not limited solely to music. He also acquired an impressive knowledge of philosophy and classical literature, and achieved complete or partial command of nine foreign languages. Indeed, books became his favourite companions for the rest of his life. Neville Cardus, a colleague some twenty years Newman's junior, made this observation about the critic in an article commemorating his eighty-seventh birthday:

I have never seen him mentally unoccupied; always, if merely waiting in a crowded vestibule of a club or hotel for a taxi, he reads a book. . . . The range of his interests is extremely wide, his reading vast. He is as likely to be found engrossed in P.G. Wodehouse as in Goethe. . . . I doubt if there is a subject on which he cannot talk pertinently and amusingly. He could have achieved distinction in many vocations. As a young man he contributed to an International dictionary of banking.¹⁴

Newman spent fourteen years as a bank clerk, during which time he spread his wings as a fledgling writer. He was able, due to his secure position and salary, to write on subjects of his own choosing. By 1889, he was contributing articles to the National Reformer on philosophy and literature. He later wrote for other periodicals on these subjects as well as music. His mentors in these early years were Hennequin and John M. Robertson, both rationalists. They were proponents of the "scientific method" of criticism, the method that seeks to relate a genius to his environment, physical and mental. It was at this time that young William Roberts adopted the pseudonym Ernest Newman.

The name appealed to his conception of himself as a "new man in earnest."

In 1895, Newman published a full-scale study entitled Gluck and the Opera, which had actually been written four or five years earlier. Newman, who was in his early twenties at the time, described himself as being "very young, very ardent, and Gluck-drunk."¹⁵ It is apparent, however, that he was already harvesting the fruits of his literary labours. Sir Thomas Beecham, in an article commemorating Newman's retirement as a music critic, drew attention to the fact that in a city such as Liverpool, Newman would not have had ready access to the research materials for his book.

Yet the book reveals a close study of musical conditions in Italy, France and Germany, with constant references to the writings of well-known experts in these three countries, most of them untranslated. The preparatory research involved in this undertaking must have been highly laborious, yet we find Mr. Newman traversing his Europe as Nietzsche said of Stendhal, "with a Napoleonic tread," as if he had passed some time in each of the countries he was writing about.¹⁶

The kernel of Newman's early beliefs and convictions about music criticism is contained in the Introduction to this book.

Due to the success of Gluck and the Opera, Newman's publisher, Bertram Dobell, commissioned a book on Wagner. Thenceforth began the critic's life-long preoccupation with

this composer. In an article on Newman and English Wagnerism, William Blissett wrote:

During the half-century covered by his books on Wagner, culminating in the monumental 'Life' in four volumes, Newman, by force of intellect, command of facts, and clarity of writing, took charge of English Wagnerism and directed its course.¹⁷

A Study of Wagner was published in 1899. Although Newman later repudiated this book, it attracted considerable attention at the time for its "combination of solid learning, keen critical insight and admirable prose."¹⁸

Due to the success of his first two books, Newman decided to leave banking and to devote himself entirely to music. In 1903, Granville Bantock, who was head of the Midland Institute of Music at Birmingham, invited him to join the staff. Newman taught singing and theory. In order to supplement his income, he wrote articles for various newspapers, as well as programme notes for the Halle Orchestra.

In 1905, a collection of Newman's articles was published in a volume called Musical Studies.

The style is extraordinarily trenchant and vigorous [as Peter Heyworth wrote]; the subjects proclaim the author's sympathies - Berlioz, Strauss, "Faust in Music," an essay on program music, all this declares an absorption in high romanticism and in particular in the music of Wagner and his successors.¹⁹

That same year, Newman was invited by the Manchester Guardian to succeed Arthur Johnstone. He gave up teaching

and writing programme notes, but continued to write for magazines such as The Speaker and The Nation. Although Newman was about thirty-seven by this time, he was only in his baptismal year as a music critic.

- In those days I used to feel . . . that there certainly was one right way among the hundred wrong ways of criticism, and that I, by the special grace of heaven, had been put upon it the first moment my tiny feet could toddle.²⁰

It must be remembered, however, that by virtue of his age, Newman's self-confidence was bolstered by his years of reading and by his successful, already-published, literary efforts. He soon demonstrated his self-assurance. Within the year, he scandalised Manchester by writing a scathing article on a performance of Berlioz's Romeo and Juliet, which was conducted by the illustrious Hans Richter. Cardus had this to say about the review: "To question the musical equipment of Richter needed courage; also it needed the confidence of knowing what you are writing about."²¹

Cardus first met Newman in 1917, but, as a youth, he was an avid reader of the critic's writings. He offered an historical perspective on Newman's writing in his autobiography:

During his heyday, Newman was not by any means objective and dispassionate in his reactions to music and in his chastisements of performers. . . . In my youth Newman was outrageously prejudiced; he applied pet theories right and left; he was impudently a priori.²²

We must remember that Newman was only at the beginning of his lengthy career as a journalistic critic. Like any word-craftsman, his writing matured with age. Nevertheless, it is apparent that even Newman found his early articles repugnant.

Precisely to what extent I may have made an ass of myself I cannot now say, for that would mean re-reading my articles of that time, and I have always been curiously shy of my own older work.²³

Newman left Manchester a year later in order to become critic for the Birmingham Daily Post. He remained with this paper until 1919. His extra-journalistic writings from this period are numerous, and they showed his skill, as was observed in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, for "combining close analysis with complete independence of outlook and vividness of expression."²⁴ Newman's choice of topics for his books from these years showed his strong affinity for programme music and for the Gluck-Wagnerian precepts of music-drama. They include: Wagner: Music of the Masters (1904), Elgar (1906), Richard Strauss (1908), and Hugo Wolf (1907). The latter study constitutes the first English attempt to analyse Wolf's qualities as a song-writer.

The critic's personal life was quite turbulent during these years. In 1913 his wife of nineteen years, Kate Woollett, became ill and bedridden. She died five years later. Disconsolate, Newman divided his time between

Birmingham and London, where he began to write occasional articles for The Observer. In 1919 he married Vera Hands, whom he had met while she was a music student at the Midland Institute. That same year, he was called to London in order to write weekly articles for The Observer.

Newman remained with this paper for only one year. In 1920 he was offered a five-year engagement as music critic with the Sunday Times. Prior to the appearance of his first article, the Sunday Times heralded him as "the leading musical critic of the day" whose literary endeavours had "aroused the interest of the musical world by their brilliant insight and acumen and by their fine literary quality."²⁵ Newman, who was fifty-two by this time, was a seasoned critic. His critical skills were honed by fifteen years of journalistic experience, and his reading was vast. Indeed, his library was quite enormous, as Vera recalled when they first rented a flat in London: "Bookshelves were put into every room and even on the landings."²⁶

Under the terms of his contract, Newman was permitted to write in a musical capacity for the Manchester Guardian or for one other provincial newspaper. From 1923 he contributed articles to the Glasgow Herald. He also wrote programme notes for the Hallé Concerts, adjudicated at music festivals and, from 1930, made regular broadcasts for B.B.C. radio.

Newman covered a wide array of topics in the Sunday Times. Because he only wrote on a weekly basis, he was able to pick and choose at leisure the concerts and operas which he attended. His position appealed to him for other reasons, as Vera observed:

He hoped that working on a weekly paper would leave him more time to write books, for, it must be confessed, he regarded journalism merely as a means to an end and his real work getting into book form all his ideas about music.²⁷

Books from this period include: A Musical Motley (1919), a further collection of essays; The Piano Player and its Music (1920); Solo Singing (1923); and Wagner as Man and Artist (1914, 2nd ed. 1924).

In 1924 Newman was invited by the New York Evening Post to become guest critic for five months. After this stint, his association with the Sunday Times remained uninterrupted until his retirement two weeks before his ninetieth birthday. While in America, Newman completed A Musical Critic's Holiday, which was published in 1925. In this book, the critic presents a thought-provoking analysis of problems associated with music criticism, but he offers no satisfying solutions. Indeed, the book only represents the beginning of its author's search for an infallible critical credo.

Newman's sojourn in America interrupted his progress on two other books, which were published several years after his return to England. It had always been the critic's

greatest ambition to write a History of Music, a history in which, as he told his wife, he would lay waste to the spurious second-hand information which was construed as fact in countless historical writings. Towards this end, he had begun work in 1921, beginning with Beethoven. Newman never completed his project, but the outcome of his initial effort was a small book entitled The Unconscious Beethoven (1927). In it, Newman attempted to elucidate Beethoven's thought behind his mental processes involved in the act of composition. Henry Raynor, in an article on Newman and criticism, emphasised the importance of the book. He stated that Newman "can possibly be held to have laid the foundation stone of textual analysis in England."²⁸ This book was followed a year later by a volume entitled What to Read on the Evolution of Music.

In 1927 Newman fulfilled a long-awaited desire when he bought a house at Tadworth, about twenty miles south of London. The country solitude, as Vera observed, gave the critic the peace and quiet which he needed in order to write: "People were always calling unexpectedly when we lived in London, and E.N. found this a great waste of time."²⁹ At this point in his life, however, Newman was by no means a recluse. As Desmond Shawe-Taylor observed, he possessed "a marked relish for the amenities of life -- conversation and laughter, cigars and champagne."³⁰ For years after their move to Tadworth, the Newmans made an

annual foray to Monte Carlo in order to pursue a favourite diversion, gambling.

Newman was devoted to sports, boxing in particular. After his move to Tadworth, he became vice-president of the local football and cricket clubs. Although he lent his support to such organisations, he refused to sit on committees or to promote causes which might indicate his partisanship in musical matters. Newman also scrupulously avoided friendships with composers, conductors and performers. However, his self-restraint in this regard sometimes broke down when the quality of the company proved too irresistible. For instance, Beecham and Toscanini were included in his circle of acquaintances. His avoidance of musical colleagues did not extend to music critics. As his wife remarked, he always had time for young hopefuls who wished to talk to him about a career in music criticism.

However busy he was E.N. would let these young people come and talk to him for hours. I have often heard it said that he was cynical and somewhat arrogant, but never by anyone who really knew him.³¹

Newman was indeed busy at this time. After moving to Tadworth, he began work on his mammoth Life of Richard Wagner. As Desmond Shawe-Taylor noted, this four-volume biography is still considered to be "a masterpiece, a work which ranks among the dozen or so finest biographies in the language, not only because of its monumental thoroughness and accuracy, but because of its narrative power, its firm

grasp of a whole epoch of European culture and its vigorous, racy prose."³² This major work consumed almost twenty years of the critic's life (1928-47). During this period, Newman had occasion to write another book, Fact and Fiction about Wagner (1931), which was intended to refute the findings of The Truth About Wagner, a book written by Philip D. Hurn and Waverly L. Root. He also interrupted the writing of his life of Wagner in order to write The Man Liszt, which was published in 1934. Newman's literary love-affair with Wagner concluded in 1950 with Wagner Nights, a commentary and analysis of Wagnerian music-dramas. He also wrote a series of English texts for Breitkopf's & Hartel's editions of Wagner's late music dramas.

Despite the public admiration that Newman commanded, he was sometimes regarded as a scholar who seemed to be interested only in one composer; namely, Wagner. This preoccupation was particularly evident in his later years. In his obituary on Newman, Deryck Cooke quoted an amusing clerihew which was written in regard to the critic's articles in the Sunday Times:

Next week, said Ernest Newman,
I shall write about Schumann;
But when next week came,
It was Wagner, just the same..³³

As both a journalistic critic and a writer, Newman's musical sympathies obviously lay with the music of his youth and middle years, that of Wagner, Strauss, Elgar, Berlioz

and Delius. He also developed a deep appreciation for the music of Mozart and Beethoven. The post-World War I generation, including Schoenberg, Berg, Stravinsky and Bartók, left him largely unimpressed. Some works, such as Wozzeck and Bartók's String Quartets, received Newman's commendation. He was, however, most contemptuous of Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's later music. Of Pierrot Lunaire, he wrote:

I cannot imagine anyone who has heard the work ("Pierrot Lunaire") two or three times ever wanting to hear it again; I certainly do not. . . . The earlier Schoenberg really could write music. . . . This is not a case of our being bowled over by a startlingly new style.

Schoenberg's scores have been published long enough for us to know them as well as we know Franck's or Strauss's. I myself have read through "Pierrot Lunaire" many times; indeed, to be able to submit it to the great test of music - running it through one's mind on one's walks - I went to the extent of committing a couple of the songs to memory. After all this trouble the music seems to me as ugly and as empty as it did at first.³⁴

And of Bartók:

We must leave it to the future to decide whether Bartók's discords are only a new and higher form of concord, his ear being a couple of generations in advance of that of his time, or whether he was a visionary and solitary so preoccupied at times in pursuing a tonal abstracton to its logical theoretical end that he forgot that for the rest of us music has a physical as well as a geometrical side to it.³⁵

Although it is true that Newman was passionately interested in Wagner, it is unfair to regard him as a Wagner fanatic. This composer appealed to Newman the philosopher as well as Newman the music critic. Indeed, we must agree

with Deryck Cooke, that Newman's "persistent concern with Wagner was primarily due to his abiding interest in the deepest problems of the nature of music, of which Wagner was for him an inexhaustible mine of research."³⁶

It was to the composer's benefit that Newman's efforts to delve into this mine continued unabatedly throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century, when anti-Wagnerian feelings ran high. After the Second World War, when interest was renewed in the great Romantic composers, Newman's major contributions to an understanding of Wagner were recognised. Wieland Wagner offered this tribute on the occasion of the critic's retirement from the Sunday Times:

I owe to Ernest Newman what one may perhaps describe as the "scientific" basis of the new Bayreuth. Newman's deep understanding of the personality and work of Richard Wagner has, in its relentless objectivity, guided the intellectual and artistic course of the Bayreuth Festival since 1951. Newman's incorruptible common sense, his incomparable accuracy and his genius for saying precisely what he meant liberated the "real" Wagner from the distorting overlay added by Wagner's literary admirers and so enabled us to find our way back to the "original."³⁷

On his ninetieth birthday, Newman was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic by President Heuss of West Germany.

It is ironic that the Life of Richard Wagner has never been translated into German. It is ironic, too, that it was never a financial success, even though it could surely be considered as a major literary achievement. In fact, the

only best-seller among Newman's books was a work which he particularly detested, Stories of the Great Operas and their Composers (3 volumes, 1929-31). Despite the popularity of this series, Newman refused his publisher's request to reissue it in 1942; however, he did write two new books in the same vein, which were also quite successful: Opera Nights (1943; U.S. edition as More Stories of Famous Operas) and More Opera Nights (1954; U.S. edition as 17 Famous Operas).

Although Newman was stricken by diabetes and failing eyesight in his last years, his desire to write never waned. He planned, but never wrote, books on Berlioz's music and on Beethoven's late quartets. His ill health also forced him to withdraw almost entirely from musical life in London. The critic, in his eighties, still welcomed visitors to Tadworth; however, only a significant performance, such as a Wagner revival, could lure him away from the fireside and from his beloved gramophone.

Various people, including Newman's wife, have remarked on the critic's unusual horror of death. Perhaps that is why he put it off for so long. Newman died on July 7th, 1959, in his ninety-first year. At the times of both his retirement and his death, a flood of tributes from all over the world poured into the Sunday Times and various other newspapers and periodicals. Newman was hailed as "an institution in the eyes of the English musical public [Basil

Maine],"³⁸ "the greatest music critic this country has ever produced [Geoffrey Sharp],"³⁹ "one of the best writers of English [George Moore],"⁴⁰ and the "most celebrated British music critic in the first half of the 20th century [William S. Mann]."⁴¹

We have already taken note of Newman's vast knowledge, his self assurance and his penchant for accuracy. During his thirty-eight years with the Sunday Times, however, he cultivated additional qualities which assured his position as doyen of English music critics. After reading Newman's articles from The World of Music, we are impressed by the deliberate pace and clarity of his prose, and by his forensic style of argument. According to Neville Cardus, Newman's personal demeanour was reflected in his writing.

The poise and orderliness of his physical appearance and presence are signs of the poise and orderliness of his mind. . . . He dresses neatly and talks with precise modulations of voice and chooses his words with care. A verbatim report of his conversation would reveal no imperfections of diction and redundancies. It is impossible to imagine Newman off his balance or guard.^{42a}

The critic's ability to remain unruffled in the midst of an argument was demonstrated, for example, in the series of Open Letters which he exchanged with Fritz Kreisler in March 1935. Newman questioned Kreisler's musical ethics after it was revealed that the violinist himself had composed works which he had originally

attributed to Porpora, Vivaldi, Pugnani, Couperin, Martini, Cartier, Dittersdorf, Francoeur and Stamitz. Kreisler evaded the real points at issue by attributing Newman's initial accusations to wounded self-esteem, which was brought on by the critic's failure to detect the impersonations. This point, which constituted the crux of Kreisler's rebuttal, was shown as insubstantial by Newman. The critic used the books containing the cuttings of his articles from 1905-1935 to prove that he rarely reviewed the pieces in question. When Kreisler finally resorted to abuse of Newman's critical conduct, the critic remained unperturbed. Indeed, his forensic style of argument is quite apparent in this exchange.^{42b}

Many writers have remarked on Newman's wit, which could be most caustic when he was engaged in a conflict of musical opinion or when his review of a performance was unfavourable. For example, in an essay entitled Genius and the Classics, he quipped:

The last time I heard a notorious virtuoso conduct a Beethoven symphony without a baton (it was not Sir Thomas Beecham, by the way), I was moved to the mournful comment that I should have enjoyed the work much more if he had conducted it without an orchestra.⁴³

It was Newman who coined the witticism, "the higher the voice, the smaller the intellect."⁴⁴ Sarcasm was for him a natural method of expression, as was apparent in this incident, which was related by Peter Heyworth: "On another occasion, after a long and taxing evening, he passed a group

of wilting colleagues and saluted them with, 'What, still alive?'⁴⁵ Newman's sense of humour was also playful in an intellectual sort of way. For instance, he once mystified the readers of The Sunday Times with a series of solemn articles in reference to the composer Krszmaly, who was entirely fictitious.

We might assert that Newman had no right to hoax his readers after he himself reprimanded Kreisler for having deceived the public. However, we could argue that Newman's hoax was obviously tongue-in-cheek, while Kreisler's was not. It would not take the reader long to realise that Newman merely jested. His flippant attitude is manifest throughout the articles on Krszmaly, as this sample paragraph indicates:

I must admit that I was on the look-out for a composer whom I could be the first to introduce to the British public, for only in that way can a critic hope to achieve fame. It is so difficult nowadays to say anything notable about a classical composer; besides, that could hardly be done without an exhaustive study of him off one's own bat, so to speak; and this sort of thing takes time. It is much easier to find a composer of whom no one else has heard and be his John the Baptist.⁴⁶

Kreisler's intent, in contrast, was more serious. Had his hoax not been discovered, the public would have continued to believe that his compositions were the work of established composers.

Newman's concern for his beloved "plain musical man" also constituted a source of appeal to his readers and to

his personal acquaintances. In a commemorative essay written for Newman's eighty-seventh birthday, St. John Vincent wrote:

Like most great men, he never thrusts his opinion forward. . . . Newman never makes one feel 'small'; he listens and then explains and gives one the reassuring impression that you must know as much about the subject as he does; albeit he may have spent the best part of his life in investigating the matter.⁴⁷

Newman avoided highly technical analyses of music in his articles. The musical journalist, after all, does not have much room for elaborate examination of the music which he is discussing in his column. Many of his musical discussions were illuminated by analogies, which were used time and time again over the years. One of his favourites constituted a twist to a famous dogma which Schoenberg used to expound to his pupils in Vienna. The composer used to illustrate thematic modification, specifically the principle in art of variety in unity and unity in variety, with the aid of a soft felt hat. Schoenberg argued that the hat might be pummelled, stretched and twirled, but it still remained the same hat. In a like manner, a theme in a musical composition retains the same identity no matter how it is transformed. Newman had this to say about the matter:

No doubt: but what Schoenberg left out of consideration was the question of the value of the hat, qua hat, at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the manipulation of it. Suppose that the general effect of all that manipulation has been simply to produce a bit of headgear that no self-respecting citizen would care

to be seen in on Acacia Road or Laburnum Avenue, let alone in Piccadilly or at Ascot. If he were to take it into that sort of environment and, in response to the anguished protests of his friends, try to justify the dreadful thing by arguing that whatever he or you or anyone else might do to the hat it was still no other than the hat as it had left the manufacturer's hands, he might have reason to congratulate himself on narrowly escaping certification.⁴⁸

Newman owed much of his success as a critic to the paradoxical union of his encyclopediac knowledge and the humanity of his writing. Despite his search for a scientific approach to music criticism, his own writing was unequivocally human. According to Basil Maine: "The real value of the column ["The World of Music"] lies in the fact that it is most happily personal, and coloured by those exciting and humanising prejudices which we all share, although not necessarily over the same ideas and people."⁴⁹

During the course of his long career Newman frequently changed his mind about the quality of music. Beecham found no fault with this behaviour.

Critics, like politicians, are frequently accused of inconsistency when they change their opinions, but why they must be denied a privilege enjoyed by everyone else I have never understood. Ernest Newman has changed his about as much as any other man, for which approbation and not disapproval should be accorded him. It is too much to ask of anyone that he should admire or understand every school or composer at one given time, or to expect that a profound study of or affection for one of them should not beget a temporary disdain of or impatience with another.⁵⁰

Indeed, Newman's writing career covered a very restless period in the history of music. He witnessed the rise of atonalism, the growth of the recording industry, the

birth of radio and television, and both World Wars. "But [as Beecham wrote] none has comprehended more profoundly or interpreted more sympathetically in his critical writings the music of the particular composer or period with which he was for the moment concerned than Ernest Newman."⁵¹ His judgments were considered, his research thorough, before he put pen to paper.

Newman never perfected his scientific code for criticism. Nonetheless, his contribution to musical knowledge and criticism and his influence on musical culture in England were substantial. Cardus remarked:

Only those who began to read and study Newman as young men can understand how much is owed to him in this country [England] for his work in enriching and fructifying an atmosphere and soil during an acrid time of provincial stuffiness and narrowness of vision. He was perhaps the first writer truly to Europeanise our music and our humane responses to music. He quickened our antennae, opened doors for us.⁵²

Beecham attributed the rise in critical standards in England to Newman. "That we have with us today a group of musical journalists and musicologists who are in every way more talented and better informed than nearly all their predecessors is owing to his constant and unwavering standard."⁵³

Various writers have remarked on the fact that Newman was never awarded any titles or honours by his own country. According to his wife, however, the critic always refused any special distinctions which were offered to him.

Therefore, even though he may have been privy to such honours, we have no official record of them. Perhaps his unwillingness to accept such honours was indicative of his avoidance of clannishness or partisanship. Newman, however, did accept one token of recognition. On March 17th, 1959, the degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred on him, in absentia, by Exeter University. Newman was too ill to attend the convocation.

He also received some other honours which were not titular. On his eighty-seventh birthday, a collection of essays entitled Fanfare for Ernest Newman was published in his honour. Elgar dedicated his Piano Quintet to the critic. We must also remember the flood of telegrams, letters and articles which Newman received following the announcement of his retirement from the Sunday Times. As his wife observed in her memoir, these tributes were both from friends and from strangers all over Europe and America. Outside of England, Newman was recognised by the Finnish President for his work on Sibelius. Wieland Wagner's tribute to the critic for his contribution to an understanding of Richard Wagner has already been mentioned.

Thus we have constructed a picture of Newman as music critic and man: thoroughly self-educated, scholarly, out-spoken and independent, trenchant, a writer of sparkling prose, witty, sarcastic, Romantic, self-assured and opinionated. Let Beecham have the last word: "Sibelius

once declared that no statue had ever been erected to a musical critic. Of Ernest Newman it may be said with both truth and pride that he is his own monument."⁵⁴

CHAPTER 3

NEWMAN'S CRITIQUE OF MUSIC CRITICISM

Before any structure is re-built, it must first be demolished. As Newman stated:

Our present critical practice is a mass of incoherencies, and we shall make no progress till we frankly recognise that fact. Construction is difficult: our first job must be to destroy wholesale, to examine critically all the bases upon which our normal instinctive critical reactions rest and scrap them ruthlessly if they can be shown to be inadequate.⁵⁵

Newman attacked music criticism's very foundations, which he regarded as resting on quicksand.

Many people object to criticism because they doubt whether it has any value and necessity. Before we examine these problems, we must first assume that criticism has a raison d'être. Our task is to discover its function. Newman defined criticism as "not merely professional criticism but instructed musical opinion in general."⁵⁶ His definition could be regarded as too exclusive. We might argue, with Oscar Thompson, that "virtually every expression of opinion concerning music or its performance, spoken as well as written, is a form of music criticism and that whosoever talks or writes about music is, in a sense, a music critic."⁵⁷ In this light, music criticism becomes an

integral part of our existence, for man is by nature an opinion-making creature.

Unfortunately, people may hold a wide variety of opinions in regard to a single topic. In Newman's opinion, part of the problem in criticism consists in trying to understand how people come to take the opposite view to our own in matters of artistic opinion.

Our judgments of aesthetic values are the product, to a greater extent than we generally recognise, not so much of the actual impressions of the moment as of the relation which these impressions bear to the background of our subconscious. And not only is this background markedly different in different individuals but it is different in the same individual at various periods of his life or in different stages of his musical culture, or even according to the musical company he happens to have been keeping for some time.⁵⁸

In the field of journalistic criticism, however, views are aired publicly. The critic, consequently, dons an air of authority, when in reality, his opinion is one of many. A danger exists that less well-informed members of the public will believe that his views are absolute.

It is generally assumed that music criticism has a basic aim: the evaluation of music. The critic appraises a composition or a performance in terms of criteria which he considers valid. He then makes his judgments, summarises them in written form, and presents them to his readers. The critic, in this light, may be seen as a sort of aesthetic law-giver, a grudging dispenser of certificates of artistic good conduct. Newman, however, tempered this definition,

his rationale being that the evaluation of music as "good" or "bad," is too crude. He offered a modified definition: "The composer virtually says in his music, 'This is what I feel or think about the matter': the critic says, 'I agree' or 'I disagree,' in the latter case giving his reasons."⁵⁹ The critic, in this light, may be seen as a participant in an ongoing artistic dialogue rather than as an imperious judge.

The entire process, however, is not as simple as it appears. The critic is obliged to wage a battle with the composer (if he is still alive), with the performer(s), and with the public in order to seduce them to his point of view. He may only win them to his side if he can prove that he is right. Thus, he must appeal to objective criteria, a set of universal standards which might be applied to the work or to the performance which is being evaluated. Unfortunately for music criticism, no such set of principles has yet been devised in order to remedy the problem. Is music criticism, as Newman suggested, merely "a vain and thoroughly tiresome bellowing and counter-bellowing of dogmatic affirmations and negations across a void?"⁶⁰

The problems of criticism are exacerbated by the very nature of music. Newman argued that music is a much more elusive art than literature, because neither the substance nor the medium of the former has the latter's contacts with outer reality. "A dramatic critic has, in the

ordinary observation of life, criteria roughly sufficient to enable him to say whether a play is good or bad, true to life or false. But music criticism is a very different matter."⁶¹ In Newman's opinion, a play deals not only with reality in terms of its imitation of life, but also in terms of its medium, the very definite one of language.

Neither notes nor combinations of notes have definite meanings, in the way that d-o-g always means one animal and c-a-t another, . . . the justification of the particular notes can only reside in their appropriateness to the particular idea they purport to express, while, exasperatingly enough, what this idea is we can only arrive at through the notes.⁶²

The music critic must, however, rely on words to communicate his idea of the meaning of the music to his readers; he cannot use notes. His only refuge is in the inefficient and ineffective use of metaphor. Newman glumly concluded that there is "no foothold for the musical critic in reality."⁶³

This discussion ties in with the controversy over what constitutes musical meaning and by what processes it is communicated. Leonard B. Meyer, in Emotion and Meaning in Music, separated the two camps into the "absolutists" and the "referentialists."

The first main difference of opinion exists between those [the "absolutists"] who insist that musical meaning lies exclusively within the context of the work itself, in the perception of the relationships set forth within the musical work of art, and those [the "referentialists"] who contend that, in addition to these abstract, intellectual meanings, music also communicates meanings which in some way refer to the extramusical world of concepts, actions, emotional states, and character.⁶⁴

It would seem, therefore, that Newman primarily aligned himself with the "absolutists."

Another controversy exists in regard to the identity of the musical work. Is a work's true identity as an entity in the mind of its creator? Or is music composed of ephemeral sounds which require live performance in order to be fully perceived? Although Newman tended towards the first view, he seemed to attribute to the work an existence independent of the mind of its creator. "It has, for musicians, an objective life of its own, independent of, and superior to, any or all performances."⁶⁵

It is obvious then, that music is plagued by some very basic aesthetic problems that compound the difficulties which the critic faces. We will now devote some attention to the history of music criticism, in order to examine what attempts practitioners of the profession made in order to remedy these problems.

A Brief History of Music Criticism

Although unorganised criticism of a sort has been co-existent with the art of music itself, it may be said to have gained its first foothold as a profession with the establishment of the daily and periodical press in the middle and late eighteenth century. Music criticism is a derivative art. Its maxims are largely contingent upon the existing aesthetic of a particular era. Thus it was during

this period, the Age of Enlightenment, that writers began to approach music from a literary, speculative angle. At this point in history, the social climate of music-making was undergoing a profound change. Increased music publication and a growing international exchange of composers, performers and compositions swelled public interest in music. The public itself was changing, as a burgeoning middle class replaced the aristocracy as patrons.

The nature of performances was also changing. As score-writing became more detailed and as the specialist conductor came into prominence, less improvisation and overall musicianship was required of performers. Thus, a performer still required a level of technical proficiency, but his level of musical knowledge declined to some degree. This made possible a growth in the fraternity of musical amateurs. Performances were also being attended by a group of passive listeners, the audience, whereas formerly music-making was more often a total group effort. These relatively uninformed listeners were eager for knowledge and guidance in matters of music. Thus, journalistic criticism was born of sociological demand. Although the early eighteenth century was a fertile time for music criticism's growth, critics tended to be governed by an obsession with the rules of music. Their judgments were often based on text-book theory.

The Hamburg theorist Johann Mattheson has a good claim for the distinction of having been the world's first music critic. In 1722, he founded the first periodical devoted wholly to music criticism, Critica Musica. Mattheson and his successors, notably Scheibe, Mizler and Marpurg, contributed greatly to Germany's prominence in the developing field of music criticism. One of the earliest music periodicals which catered to the general public rather than to learned professionals, the Wochentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen, was founded by Johann Hiller in 1766. Prominent critics outside Germany at this time included Jean-Jacques Rousseau in France, and Charles Avison and Charles Burney in England. In the closing years of the century, musical journals multiplied, especially in Germany. The most prominent of these was the influential Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, founded in 1798 by J.F. Rochlitz.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the dawn of the Romantic era, it was apparent that the preoccupation with rationalism was on the wane. Criticism turned from the academic to the descriptive. Although the bonds of eighteenth-century rationalism were broken, it is doubtful whether the resulting criticism was any more effective. As Winton Dean wrote: "Nature and manners were replaced by the vapours of emotionalism and subjective irrelevance."⁶⁶

E.T.A. Hoffmann's reviews, written for the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung after 1809, embodied idealistic notions linking all the arts with sociology and politics, as did the writings of J.F. Rochlitz, and J.F.K. Rellstab, and his son, Ludwig. The latter two may be credited with the introduction of music criticism to the daily press. Both critics wrote for the Berlin Vossische Zeitung in the early nineteenth century. The elder Rellstab was one of the first critics who signed his articles with his initials. His son set a less enviable precedent when he was imprisoned for libelling a diplomat in a pamphlet on Henriette Sontag, "thus early calling attention to the invidious position of the critic with regard to the laws of libel."⁶⁷

The nineteenth century was the age of the romantic composer-critics: Carl Maria von Weber, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Schumann, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner and Hugo Wolf. The most famous from this group were Robert Schumann in Germany and Hector Berlioz in France. Schumann was owner, editor and critic of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik for ten years, beginning in 1834. Although he may have been guilty of over-generosity in some of his estimates, many of his judgments proved their validity in the test of time. He aided composers such as Chopin, Berlioz and Brahms in their struggles for recognition. Berlioz was perhaps more erratic in his judgments as a critic, but he is widely regarded as

one of the few composer-critics whose prose is readable for its style alone. Indeed, had he abandoned composition, he could have been equally successful as a writer.

Contemporary with the composer-critics were the non-composing musicians and writers who worked as critics. This group was dominated, in the second half of the nineteenth century, by the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, leading critic for the Neue Freie Presse for fifty years (1855-1904). In his writing, he fulminated against the extravagances of romantic criticism and he cleft the connection between art and emotion. His criticism, which was founded on aesthetic principles, philosophy and analysis, stressed the autonomy of music. Although Hanslick is often hailed as the father of modern music criticism, he also has the dubious distinction of being regarded as responsible for introducing elements of personal prejudice into the profession. His stance as an anti-Wagnerian earned him this reputation, whether justified or not. Another outstanding critic during this era was François Joseph Fétis, a lexicographer and historian who founded the early Revue musicale. He was one of the most popular French critics of his day.

English music criticism during the nineteenth century was generally narrow and conservative in outlook. Winton Dean offered an explanation for this attitude:

Non-musical elements have been strong in English music criticism, owing perhaps to the deep hold obtained by the Puritan and evangelical movements of the 17th and 18th centuries, which were basically hostile to art unless adulterated by the spirit of edification.⁶⁸

The Victorian zeal for strict moral conduct also extended into the realm of music during this era. Victorian audiences favoured oratorio and cantata performances, as they were firmly convinced of the cathartic and purifying influence of the religiously inspired music. E.D. Mackerness, in A Social History of English Music, described a typical concert:

Nothing less ambitious than the throng of 3,625 performers packed into the Crystal Palace for the Sacred Harmonic Society's monster festival of 1862 seemed worthy of composers such as Handel and Mendelssohn. Among the rank-and-file performers who took part in the mammoth choral events which became a common feature of English musical life after 1850, there arose a decided feeling that such occasions were the means best suited to the best and noblest music.⁶⁹

Public music-making in the nineteenth century was made more accessible to the lower classes by organisations such as the Sacred Harmonic Society (est. 1832) and the Philharmonic Society (est. 1813). These societies offered low admission prices and, in some cases, encouraged amateurs' participation in performances. During the 1830's and 1840's, increasing attention was also devoted to the establishment of an effective system of music education in England's schools. Organisations such as the Tonic Sol-fa Association (est. 1853) and educators such as John Hullah, proponent of the fixed-doh method of sight-singing, created

a great enthusiasm for music amongst the middle and lower classes. As a result, the musical public in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century England was better informed than in previous eras, and had developed an appetite for musical enlightenment.

Scholarly discourse and investigation in the field of music was evident in serious music journals such as The Music World and The Musical Standard. This practice was quite well-established in England by 1846. London's music criticism in the daily and weekly journals was dominated by H.F. Chorley (The Athenaeum, 1830-1868) and J.W. Davison (The Times, 1846-79). Their idols included Rossini and Mendelssohn, while they opposed Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner. Their attitude towards Verdi, whom they damned for social rather than musical reasons, is indicative of the tone of English music criticism during the mid-Victorian era.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, England experienced a re-awakening of a fruitful creative tradition which had not been equalled since Purcell's time. George Bernard Shaw, who wrote music criticism in an official capacity from 1888 to 1894, was an outstanding critic from this era. His witty and adamantly subjective articles, written in fine literary style, were a breath of fresh air in an atmosphere of stuffiness and pedantry. Although his articles were penetrating and

engaging, there was little discussion in them regarding the fundamentals of music criticism. That task fell to critics such as M.D. Calvocoressi and Ernest Newman, who were representative of the growing dissatisfaction with the condition of music criticism in the early twentieth century.

In general, twentieth-century critics in all countries were much more scientific than were their predecessors. Their emphasis was on analysis rather than on description. There were, however, exceptions to this trend. Debussy, who three times (1901, 1903, 1912-14) held the post of music critic on a paper, was strongly opposed to analytical discussion of music. His approach was subjective and impressionistic, as Oscar Thompson noted:

As far as possible, his endeavour was to keep those "parasitic aesthetics" out of his criticisms and he sought to escape the game which consists in taking impressions to pieces "as though they were watches of curious construction."⁷⁰

Anatole France - a late nineteenth-century novelist, critic and man of letters - was equally sceptical in regard to objective standards. He defined criticism as "the adventures of the soul among masterpieces."⁷¹ Newman took great issue with this concept, as we shall soon find out.

Sociological trends in the twentieth century generated a variety of new difficulties for the critic, as noted by Winton Dean in his article on music criticism from the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Political and national affairs, such as the two World Wars, were felt

more and more in the realm of art. The expansion of the popular press increased the sphere of the critic's influence, for better or for worse. However, the law of libel in some countries increased his vulnerability in regard to his evaluation of artists. Artists' desire for publicity spurred them to view the critic as a source of advertisement in a musically competitive global village.

Above all, however, radical developments in twentieth-century music caused a breakdown in communication between the critic and the public. When the critic attempted to follow the composer's complex intellectual lines, he often left a bewildered public behind. Thus, the serious critic often resorted to writing for scholarly journals, where he addressed a more musically enlightened audience. Journalistic criticism, in an attempt to keep in touch with the public, often fell into a routine:

"obligatory notices of debuts, endless repetition of judgments on the standard pieces, descriptive panegyrics of famous personalities."⁷² Confusion evidently exists, then, as to the role of the critic in twentieth-century society.

It is thus apparent that the history of music criticism has been coloured by the struggle to function without a set of valid criteria with which to judge music. In each era, concomitant sociological developments have determined, in part, the principles and methods of music criticism which have evolved: speculative theory in the Age

of Enlightenment, literary descriptiveness in the Age of Romanticism, and a preoccupation with analysis and scientific certainty in the twentieth century.

Newman's Attitude Towards the Criticism of his Time

Let us now examine Newman's attitude towards the types of criticism which prevailed during his lifetime.

The trouble is that we only have one word - "criticism" - to signify many and very different things. It is generally taken to mean describing your own reaction to an artist or a work of art as a guide to other people. This is only a form of naive literary egoism, that sometimes takes the most ludicrous shapes.⁷³

In Newman's opinion, attempts which were made to compensate for the lack of absolute standards most often resulted in failure. Some attempts, for instance, were made to establish a type of criticism in which the critic was seen as an interpreter rather than as a judge.

Some well-meaning aestheticians assure us that the duty of the critic is "to see the work as its creator saw it." Brave words; but do they really mean anything? Do not we end, in our practice, just where we began, each critic seeing the work not as its creator did - for in that case all works would be masterpieces! - but only his own reactions to the impact of the work on him?⁷⁴

Newman challenged the concept of critic as interpreter with the following argument: if he had attended the same performance as the critic, the music would have already communicated itself to him. Thus the critic's words would be redundant. He illustrated this point quite vividly when he stated, "I would as soon think of asking him to digest my food for me; I am fully capable of digesting my

own musical food, and have no need of anyone else's assistance over it."⁷⁵ If Newman had not attended the performance, then the review would hold no interest for him. With the absence of universal criteria, the credibility of the critic's interpretation would be nil.

Newman was particularly contemptuous of those writers who had no real understanding of the composer about whom they were writing. "Who wants to hear the giants talked about by the pygmies whose minim stature bars them from seeing as high as the giant's head, where the brains are?"⁷⁶ He felt that these critics often succeeded in making the composer's music more obscure rather than more understandable for music-lovers. Literary men who poetised or philosophised about a composer or a work were also included in this category.

It is an eternal mystery to me why men of letters whose minds do not apprehend music as just what it is should imagine that all they have to do is to describe their own reactions to it in verbal purple patchery.⁷⁷

In one article, Newman cited an example of "purple patchery" criticism:

In a recent Promenade Concerts programme book I find that this is how Schubert's Unfinished Symphony affects a distinguished French writer: "The funeral shadow which overspreads the initial theme is in striking contrast to the second subject, from which emanates a sense of suavity and exquisite bliss. This melody is so luscious that it tempts us to bite deep into the fruit of life, . . . But the spectre of death rises before us! Mortal joys are fleeting; the roses of earthly happiness are soon faded, and Nature has put into man's heart a craving for a bliss which knows no satiety."⁷⁸

Newman was convinced that although this type of criticism was the easiest to write, it had a minimum of connection with the music. "It is a mere transcription into words of the literary and pictorial and philosophical images set up in the writer's mind after a hearing of the symphony."⁷⁹ He felt that a knowledge of music was not necessary in order to write this kind of criticism, for its influence was more literary than musical. In fact, he asserted that skilled literary men often practised it better than musicians-turned-critics, because they were more adept at crafting pretty phrases.

Criticism in this form, however, could hold some interest for its readers if the writer was prodigiously clever or witty. In Newman's opinion, Shaw was an example of this type of critic. He regarded him as a "cultivated dilettante" who nonetheless "knew his own little world of music inside out." Newman felt that Shaw's music criticism was readable because of its "lively intellect" and for its "pace, for directness, for point, for wit and humour, for variety of colour."⁸⁰ Therefore, he implied that Shaw's criticism was, and still is, read for its own sake, independent of its subject.

Indeed if criticism were merely a matter of the expression of personal likes and dislikes, it would be mostly unreadable - qua criticism, that is, for it could, of course, still be interesting as a personal performance in certain cases, the reader being in complete disagreement with the writer on points of fact (or shall we say opinion?), but being captivated by the

art of his presentment of the case, just as he might admire a great violinist's performance of a piece of music that of itself had no appeal for him.⁸¹

Anatole France was another writer whom Newman considered to be in this category. In his opinion, France's writings "may be worth reading not because they throw much light on the country he has professed to explore, but simply because he is Anatole France, a writer of great charm and style."⁸² Newman took issue with France's bon mot that criticism is "'the adventures of the soul among masterpieces.'"⁸³ His chief complaint in this regard was that the centre of interest would be shifted from the work of art to the writer who was writing about it.

It was by some such process of half bluff half self-delusion on his part that Anatole France arrived at his famous dictum that what the honest critic ought to say is merely this: "Today I am going to speak about myself apropos of Shakespeare, or Racine, or Pascal, or Goethe." This may be well enough in its way when the talker is of the calibre of a France. But is a man's good talk about himself necessarily good criticism of a work? Assuredly not.⁸⁴

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman mentioned another interesting point in regard to France's bon mot. He questioned why the soul should adventure only among masterpieces. In the absence of objective criteria, how is the soul to decide what is a masterpiece and what is a mediocrity?

The term "sensitised-plate" criticism, which Newman created, appears again and again in his articles. The plate to which Newman referred was part of an old-fashioned

camera. Sensitised-plate criticism is descriptive of any type of criticism where the focus of the reader's attention is shifted from the work/performance to the writer. Thus, it is applicable to all of the aforementioned types of criticism. The critic, like a camera, records an impression of an object, in this case a work of art. In Newman's opinion, however, the critic's sensitised plate "may be no more in a condition to receive a true impression of the object than a dinner plate is to take a photograph."⁸⁵ He was particularly contemptuous of upholders of sensitised-plate criticism who clung to the fallacy that they were merely expressing personal opinions.

They may be positive enough that when someone else speaks of music he is only expressing a personal opinion; but at the root of everything they themselves write lies the conviction that they are judging in terms of absolute values.⁸⁶

Newman also felt that this type of criticism was too easy to write and that it was irrelevant.

It is apparent that without critical standards, the onus of judgment-making naturally falls upon the shoulders of the critic. So long as our attention is centered on him, we should examine the influences which shape his faculty of judgment, and the problems which he might encounter in the performance of his task.

An Examination of the Critic

Newman was well aware that he was not immune from the inadequacies which plague the critic.

There is not a sin against criticism of which I myself have not been as guilty as the most gifted of my colleagues; and to say what I have to say about these colleagues hurts me even more than it hurts them, for I am performing a painful operation, without an anaesthetic, on my own tender flesh.⁸⁷

However, he also drew attention to the fact that the critic is confronted with problems other than the lack of universal standards which hinder him in his profession.

Newman felt that we must subject the critic to a searching physiological and psychological study. In fact, he was convinced that it is the responsibility of each critic to "operate critically on himself"⁸⁸ in order to discover, if he can, what constitutes his judicial faculty. The critic, in his opinion, is like a steel rule which normally measures twelve inches, but which expands and contracts in different situations. The critic is not a constant; he is a variable in the fullest sense of the word.

He is not a regal, unassailable, one-man universal, as he himself is inclined to imagine, for thousands disagree with him; nor is he even a stable constant, for his judgment of the same phenomenon in art may vary considerably in the course of the years.⁸⁹

One of the biggest problems for the critic consists in trying to understand how people whose knowledge and opinion he in general respects come to take the opposite

view to his own in matters of art. How can Wolf and Stravinsky be regarded as both second-rate artists and first-rate artists? What is the explanation for the difference of opinion? Newman suggested a solution.

What we need to investigate first of all is not this or that individual but the type-minds, the quite well-defined categories into which both artists and their readers and listeners fall. "Place" a critic, on these lines, and you will have the key to most of his judgments; indeed, you will often be able to anticipate his judgment.⁹⁰

This investigation will lead us no further towards establishing a parity of absolute values, but it will help us to understand the judicial faculties of critics and opinion-makers in general.

Newman suggested that what the critic calls his critical judgment on a particular occasion is a balance struck by a complex of elements within him, which include:

the degree of his intimacy with the work, of the composers's mind in its totality, of musical history; his temperament; his whole previous intellectual and emotional experience; his inborn inclination towards certain species of musical thought and relative recoil from others; the casual inflections of youth or age, time and place; and so on.⁹¹

In other words, the critic's judicial faculty is governed by his likes as well as by his dislikes. Newman's view of humanity was rather pessimistic in this regard: "Man indeed, when we come right down to it, is primarily a hating animal, who hates, and acts of his hatreds, less by reason than by constitution."⁹² Many of these hatreds, as Newman pointed out, are quite fantastic in origin. He cited one

example of an antipathy which was rooted in the experience of an individual, yet which affected the sensitisation of the plate in matters of art.

Wagner could not understand for a long time why a certain German poet had such an unconquerable aversion to "Lohengrin." At last the poet himself supplied the explanation: a favourite dog of his had been killed by a swan, and from that day forth he had been unable to endure the sight or the thought of a swan in life or in art.⁹³

In addition, Newman mentioned that the sensitisation of the plate might be affected by racial or cultural influences.

That is to say, a certain number of people agree as to a kind of tribal standard of value in a particular case, but there is no means by which they can convince a tribe outside the pale that the standard is valid either for their tribal god or for an alien diety.⁹⁴

It is apparent, for instance, that there are temperamental disparities between the Latin people and the Germanic people in their attitudes toward music. As Oscar Thompson wrote:

Play of colour, tingle of atmosphere, a glint of sunlight, a wisp of sea air, may mean more to a Spaniard or a Frenchman than a homily in song. Those who lean toward the Germanic may pronounce "superficial" the very work which meets the temperamental requirements of the Latin; those who respond to "plein-air" impressionism may find nothing but boredom in music which cumbers itself with the extra-musical in the quest of a "deeper" human message.⁹⁵

Newman cited examples of racial and cultural influences upon the sensitised plate in many of his articles. For example:

I think I have already told my readers of the German singer who contended that Schubert's "Hark, hark, the lark" should always be sung to German words, not to

Shakespeare's; how harsh she said, is "Hark, hark, the lark," and how smoothly melodious is "Horch, horch, die Lerch" - and this, if you please, delivered in gutturals you could have cut with a knife!⁹⁶

Another element which affects the critic's musical sensibility is the influence of association. People generally have a greater affinity towards music with which they are familiar. In Newman's opinion, complexes of cultural heredity give the general mind of each nation its individual substance and bouquet. Thus, fellow countrymen of a particular composer may have a greater sympathy towards his work than foreigners, because the music sparks associations which are predominantly of the composer's country. Newman cited Elgar and Bruckner as composers who are best understood by their fellow countrymen.

Personal reactions are much more difficult to track down to their cultural sources; but a moment's reflection will bring it home to even the most casual listener that disapproval of a seemingly good performance may spring from the subconscious revolt of his own cultural complex against the obvious lack of anything corresponding to that in the performer.⁹⁷

It is evident then, that sensitised plates are composed of many different substances and are sensitised in various ways. A wide divergence of opinion results in any judgment about a work of art. As Newman stated, "the man who can be equally sensitive to every type of music during, say the last 200 years, equally percipient of what constitutes the essence of each type, has never yet been born and never will be born."⁹⁸ It is the critic's

responsibility to try to account for his insusceptibilities. Newman held some doubts, however, in regard to the critic's ability to place himself at the point of view of those who differ from him. "No man can 'like' what he is not fundamentally constituted to like. He may bring himself to take an objective interest in things he does not like, but that is another matter."⁹⁹

Our examination of the critic has led us to the conclusion that he is not unassailable; he is subject to the same variances of musical taste as any music-lover. Let us now examine some of the difficulties of concert-going which make his human frailties even more apparent.

In an article entitled "When the Sheep Bleats," Newman brought up a point which stems from our discussion on the factors which govern a critic's musical taste. The title of the article is derived from a proverb which concerns the fact that every time a sheep bleats he loses a mouthful of grass. Newman drew a parallel with the critic, who is compelled to deliver a newsworthy article on a new work or on a new performance of an old one.

He hears or sees something against which the whole complex of forces within him to which I have referred reacts instinctively in a hostile way. This counter-action he regards as vital, as indeed it is for him; and if he has to do an article on the subject . . . he not only fastens this unfavourable reaction of the moment firmly in his memory but, as likely as not, searches for the ideal verbal expression of it; unconscious of the fact that while he is thus bleating he is losing, perhaps not merely one but several mouthfuls of grass in the immediate neighbourhood; while

his colleague in the next seat, not having been moved to bleat just then, is getting the greatest delight out of some first-rate nibbling in the vicinity.¹⁰⁰

Thus, Newman concluded that it is the critic's intermittent attention span, combined with inborn prejudices of musical taste, which contribute to the fact that various reviews of one performance tend to differ so widely.

If we acknowledge the fact that critics do not possess Papal infallibility, then it is apparent that factors other than purely musical considerations play a part in shaping their judgments. One major consideration is whether the verdict of a critic upon a work or a performance may have been influenced by his health of the moment. Newman felt that while we make this allowance for performers, we are not as solicitous towards the critics.

If a critic goes to the first performance of, say "Tristan" after six months of exhausting labour in opera houses and concert rooms, and he is, although he may not know it himself, too tired for his brain to keep pace with Wagner's driving energy and to stay the course, and in consequence he accuses the work, in his next day's notice, of being obscure, no one, fifty years afterwards, will try to find out whether his errors of judgment were not due to something more prosaic than a fundamental lack of musical imagination or intelligence. His little lapse from ideal sense will be cited by all kinds of solemn people, half a century later, as just another link in the long chain of evidence that "criticism" is invariably blind to the merits of the great music of its own day.¹⁰¹

Newman proceeded to point out that Chorley's and Hanslick's attitudes toward Wagner may have been affected to a large extent by their health. "Hanslick, in one significant passage [which Newman does not cite], very pointedly hints

at the influence that health and occupational fatigue may have upon a critic's faculty of judgment."¹⁰² In a later article from the same year, however, Newman expressed his confidence in the critic's ability to cope with the handicaps of his human condition. "The experienced critic has his bodily and mental machines well under control, and can always apply a compensating action to them when it is needed."¹⁰³

Newman also drew attention to the fact that frustrations in the relentless routine of concert-going may cloud the critic's faculty of judgment. The critic's profession is not "a blissful succession of free seats for concerts and operas."¹⁰⁴ In the duration of his career, he may have to listen to a well-known work such as Beethoven's Symphony No.5 countless times, and yet he is expected to offer a fresh, perceptive review each time it is performed. Moreover, he is expected to be consistent in his views.

The same work or the same composer can be very good, or less good, from our point of view, at different times of life, of the year, or even of the day. May not the so-variable reactions of the critic to the same work at different times be due, in large part, simply to the fact that the exigencies of professional concert-going often give him no choice but to listen to some work or other which happens to be the very last work, or the last kind of work, that he would have chosen for himself that evening?¹⁰⁵

It is apparent that innumerable performances of a well-known work might spoil the critic's musical appetite. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the average

critic's career does not consist of a round of the major concert-houses and opera-houses of the world. He may hear the same work performed at various times by a host of differing calibres of performers. Thus, he encounters the dilemma of whether to apply the same expectations to the great performances as to the mediocre ones. His task, therefore, is much more frustrating than the art critic's, as Newman pointed out:

He has to submit day after day, to hearing masterpieces murdered or degraded; how would the lover of painting feel if, in his daily walk through a great gallery, this or that favourite picture in turn was found out to have been partly painted over by some modern bungler or other? He has to hear a great deal of music that he despises, and to listen to it with his faculties on the stretch, for he has to write about it: how would an art critic feel if he had to spend a portion of each day viewing and criticising comic coloured supplements?¹⁰⁶

It is also generally assumed that journalistic critics are given free tickets to a concert in order to write about the concert, not about the music given at the concert. The critic therefore, must write about the performance rather than questions of a universal nature in regard to the work. In Newman's opinion, the critic should devote himself to "matters much more important than a fiddler's fingers or a tenor's vocal chords."¹⁰⁷

So far then, we have discovered that the critic's effectiveness might be diminished because of attention-span disruptions caused by the effort of simultaneous listening and evaluating, because of poor health, because of the

frequent humdrum routine of his job, and because of confusion as to the role which he is expected to perform.

One more matter to which we must now turn our attention is the problem of specialisation in music criticism. As we have already recognised, the critic is only human. When he listens to a work, he subconsciously refers it to a norm derived from all of the music from the last fifteen centuries. However, the breadth of his knowledge could never encompass the vast territory of music history which extends back into the distant past.

The intensive study of a single great composer and his environment is a life work for the most diligent student; and, of course, no single composer can be fully understood except in the light of the development of music as a whole, so that the borders of the necessary specialism spread out in ever-widening circles.¹⁰⁸

Newman felt that this state of affairs is not the case in matters of dramatic criticism. "When he is watching a new play by Mr. Smith or Miss Brown he has no thought whatever of Aeschylus, Calderon, Goethe, Shakespeare, Moliere, Racine, and so on."¹⁰⁹ He asserted that the dramatic critic (in English language literature) needs a knowledge of English literature, a fair knowledge of books of one foreign country, and an inkling of the literature of some others. The music critic has no such obstacle of language; therefore, his knowledge must necessarily be more extensive. In Newman's opinion, the aspiring music critic should know the music of at least half a dozen countries. In

the light of this burden of knowledge, it would seem apparent that the critic would be wise to specialise. Unfortunately, as Newman pointed out, this route is not available to the critic.

Specialisation seems to have extended by now to most things except music: the musical critic, for instance, is expected to be an authority on everything, - to see another and yet another point in Bach's soul unseized by the Germans yet, to know the difference between a trumpet and a tromba marina, and to be able to criticise performances of all sorts of music that he has never studied, on all sorts of instruments that he cannot play.¹¹⁰

Yet, Newman held some hope for the future:

I can foresee the time when there will be no scope for such dangerous omniscience, when the musical critic will be as severely specialised as the machine hands in a factory. The day will yet come when the critic of the Times will be recognised as the authority on the G. string, and when, for a reasoned estimate of the middle notes of a new tenor, we shall turn instinctively to the musical column of the Daily News.¹¹¹

There are also other practical difficulties associated with the profession, such as pressure to meet a newspaper deadline, the necessity of writing for a cross-section of the public in regard to musical knowledge, and conditions of concert-going which blunt the fine edge of the critic's musical sensibility. These conditions range from the comfort of the concert-hall to the arrangement and nature of works on the programme. As Newman pointed out, a new or unfamiliar work should be listened to under conditions which help the critic instead of hindering him. For instance, a new work placed at the end of an evening of

arduous listening might not receive the critic's full attention.

The foregoing discussion is largely a litany of woes. We have discovered that the basic problem of music criticism concerns its lack of absolute standards. Its problems are unique, because of the ephemeral nature of music, and because as an art, the substance and medium of music differs from the other arts. A glance at the relatively brief history of music criticism has shown us that attempts to solve the basic problems of the profession have led to the developments of insubstantial "methods" in which the problems are usually circumvented. The general flaw in these approaches lies in the fact that the focus of attention is on the critic rather than on the work/performance under scrutiny. Furthermore, our examination of the critic has shown us that his judicial faculty is subject to influences which make consistent, "scientific" judgments of music impossible. His task is made even more difficult by the exigencies of concert-going.

Newman perhaps painted a bleak outlook for music criticism in many of his foregoing remarks. However, there were some faint rays of hope for the profession in many of his articles, as we shall discover in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4
NEWMAN'S SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CRITIC
AND HIS PROFESSION

Faced with the problems which hinder the profession of music criticism, we have good reason to wonder why any person in his right mind would pursue such a career. A common assumption is that the critic is merely a disgruntled performer or composer who, unable to succeed in his chosen profession, vents his frustration upon his former colleagues. As Newman wrote about the critic:

He could not write even a First symphony; but he can tell you what is wrong with the Ninth. He would not know a vocal cord if he saw it, and if you gave him one would probably show his ignorance by trying to tie up a parcel with it; but he can tell Caruso what is wrong with his "production." Pachmann, Kreisler, Cortot, Casals, Wood - he can put them all in their places.¹¹²

Nonetheless, it is true that conscientious critics do exist who have no aspirations to becoming composers or performers. Their sole delight is in putting into words what their understanding is of music. It is apparent then, that to some critics their profession is an obsession, or a "vocation," as described by Winton Dean.¹¹³ This fact is proven by their perserverance in spite of the obstacles which hound them at every turn.

The Critic's Qualifications

If we assume that the aspiring critic will not be deterred from his course, then what training should he undergo in order to prepare himself for the exercise of his profession? Most professions require a degree of careful preparation and study. For instance, the public would have little confidence in a doctor who had no medical training. In Newman's opinion, the critic should receive training in the techniques of his craft just as the composer does. He must be more than a trained musician. Newman suggested that the critic ought to be educated in certain fundamentals of judgment. Nonetheless, he was convinced that the higher art of criticism cannot be taught. "There are no schools in which he [the critic] can study, no masters at whose feet he can sit. He learns - if he ever learns at all - by practising at other people's expense an art he has never been taught."¹¹⁴ The critic, like the performer and the composer, must have some innate ability in the first place, or else he is lost. "Vision, imagination, sympathy, understanding, discrimination, these things cannot be 'taught.'¹¹⁵

The first prerequisite for the critic, according to Newman, should be the development of a wide and deep background for his reactions and impressions. In Confessions of a Musical Critic, he debated whether this development should occur through schooling or through

self-education. The latter method has its advantages, as he pointed out. First, the student is not compelled to study works of art or to learn pieces which are assigned to him by a teacher; thus, his enthusiasm is not dulled by work which he dislikes. He is also free to avoid the technical exercises and study pieces which add so much drudgery to the study of an instrument.

It is surely better for him to learn to love music by approaching it from the wrong road than to hate it by approaching it from the right one. It is surely better for him to play Tristan abominably before he has learned to finger a scale properly, but yet to get at the heart of the opera in his own way, than to spend hours at the piano over a trifling Mozart sonata that he sees through in a couple of days, and so to conceive a prejudice against Mozart that may endure for years.¹¹⁶

In addition, he suggested that the student is able to avoid the clannishness and partisanship which often results from being associated with a particular school or teacher.

However, Newman also pointed out the advantages of a systematic education. The student not only learns discipline from his mentors; he also is exposed to the cumulative experience of generations.

A system sums up, however imperfectly, the combined experiences of many others who have travelled the same road before us, who have looked back after they have arrived, and have seen what, after all, was the shortest way, all things considered, from the starting point to the goal, deceptively easy as one or two alternative routes seemed at the moment.¹¹⁷

Fourteen years later, Newman did express definite favour for self-education.

On the whole, perhaps the best way of learning to swim in music is to be thrown into the bath each day and left to discover for yourself what to do with your arms and legs. For my part, I would shrink appalled from the task of "educating" any boy's taste in music: the only education worth having, in this as in everything else, is self-education. And that is a long and painful process, involving the risk that the master may have a fool for his pupil and the pupil a fool for his master.¹¹⁸

Whatever the method of education, it is imperative that the critic be thoroughly knowledgeable about his field.

Musical criticism, in fact, is a whole time job in every sense of the term; and a general enthusiasm for life and art no more qualifies a man to understand the ultimate mysteries of music than a general enthusiasm for motoring qualifies him to understand the final mysteries of engineering.¹¹⁹

We should determine what areas of knowledge a critic should become acquainted with in order to prepare himself for his profession. Newman suggested that the critic's first task should be a study of the criticism of the past, "of its repetition, in one generation after another, of the same elementary mistakes with regard to the same elementary problems."¹²⁰ In addition, the critic should devote himself to the study of his own mental processes in the act of criticism. "The critic who wants to understand himself must try to trace his own complexes, if only to rescue himself from them when they are likely to bar the way to his sympathetic understanding of every kind of music."¹²¹ He should investigate the various types of artistic constitution in order to reach an understanding of the complex foundations of musical judgment. "What seems on the

surface to be a simple liking or disliking of the dish set before us is in reality an affair of baffling psychological complexity."¹²²

In his articles, Newman did not offer a great deal of other advice in regard to the qualifications needed by an aspiring critic. However, he invited us to infer some qualifications from his description of his own background, as detailed in "Confessions of a Musical Critic." Indeed, he expressed a reluctance to talk about himself, "except in the interests of science."¹²³ It might be instructive to compare what qualifications we extract from Newman's background with a list of qualifications suggested by Winton Dean. Dean's qualifications for the critic are listed as follows:

1. A knowledge of the technical and theoretical principles of music.
2. A knowledge of musical history and scholarship.
3. A wide general education, covering as many as possible of the subjects with which music can be shown to have a point of contact.
4. The ability to think straight and to write in a clear and stimulating manner.
5. An insight into the workings of the creative imagination. . . . The executant's point of view must also be understood.
6. An integrated philosophy of life of his own.
7. An enduring inquisitiveness and willingness to learn.
8. An acceptance of his own limitations, individual and generic.¹²⁴

Newman was intimately acquainted with music history and theory, as we have already ascertained in Chapter Two. Thus, he qualified in regard to the first two points. It is

worth noting, however, that Newman grew up in the practice of music before he went to the theory of it. "My first studies in theoretical harmony taught me virtually nothing that I had not already learned practically at first hand from the great composers."¹²⁵ In addition, Newman suggested that his method of education gave him a more realistic perspective in regard to text-book theory. He stated that "nearly half of what I read in the harmony text-books seemed to me to be disputed by the practice of the great masters."¹²⁶ He also stressed the necessity of having musical ability.

Musical minds think in music as other minds do in prose or verse - music, to them, is a natural language. It has always been a difficulty to me to understand how people need to be taught music - it has always seemed to me as natural as speech.¹²⁷

Let us deal next with the fifth point: an insight into the workings of the creative imagination. Winton Dean further suggested, in reference to this point, that the critic should have some creative ability himself, but he stated that the experience of performing is not necessarily a prerequisite. As we have seen, Newman toyed with composition; thus, he demonstrated a degree of creative ability. Dean did not suggest whether the ability to play an instrument, even in private, is essential to the critic. Newman, however, was definite in his opinion about piano-playing, which he "never regarded as indispensable to a musician."¹²⁸ Thus, the time which he would have devoted

to practising could be more advantageously directed towards learning music.

Newman was obviously well-qualified in regard to the third and sixth points: a wide general education and an integrated philosophy of life. He expressed an interest in sculpture - especially Greek sculpture - and in architecture, English literature, art and philosophy. All of these subjects have a point of contact with music. Indeed, he even wrote on subjects other than music, especially in his youth, as Herbert van Thal noted:

He was interested in philosophy and he wrote upon Weissman and at some considerable length on the then recently published Journals of Amiel. As a free-thinker, his earliest regular contributions were to Bradlaugh's National Reformer, while his papers on Ibsen and Turgenev are highly illuminating. . . . A few years later he championed Conrad and Meredith, which proved that his critical perceptions were seldom in error.¹²⁹

In regard to point four, the ability to think straight and to write in a clear and stimulating manner, Newman's qualifications are substantiated by the testimonies of his many admirers. For instance, as we have already noted in Chapter Two, the eminent writer George Moore was of the opinion that Newman was one of the best writers of English. Also note Neville Cardus' comments (page 22).

For point seven (an enduring inquisitiveness and willingness to learn), two proofs of qualification may be cited. In his last years, Newman was planning to write books on Berlioz's music and on Beethoven's late quartets.

His efforts to appreciate the music of the post-World War I generation are indicative of his willingness to learn, even though he remained largely contemptuous of atonal music. This conclusion is somewhat related to Dean's final qualification for the critic: the acceptance of his own limitations, individual or generic. Newman's judgments were formed only after careful consideration of the music, as Herbert van Thal indicated.

Despite his appreciation of the remarkable changes that were continually taking place in the musical world, his judgments were always very considered, and he never proclaimed that this or that unknown composer was the genius of the future.¹³⁰

Newman's acceptance of his own limitations is apparent in the fact that he campaigned so rigorously for a more scientific method of music criticism. After all, if he had not been aware that his judgments were influenced by his personal predilections, then he would not have sought to eradicate those predilections from the evaluation process.

Dean suggested a possible ninth qualification, that "criticism should not be a profession casually chosen or embraced with a view to easy subsistence, but a vocation."¹³¹ It is difficult to say whether Newman qualified in this instance. As we have discovered, he regarded criticism as a means of subsistence, but his real labour of love consisted in writing books. Nevertheless, his deep concern for the profession throughout his lengthy career might indicate his dedication, despite the many

sarcastic remarks which he directed towards critics and their occupation.

We should perhaps let Newman have the last word in regard to our consideration of the critic's qualifications. If he had ever written a book of advice for the critic, he almost certainly would have mentioned that composers should not consider ancillary careers as critics. His main complaint in this regard was that the composer's own particular ideal of music stands in the way of his own self-development and self-realisation as a critic.

Except in the rarest of instances, the worst possible critic of music is a composer. He may be an admirable historian and analyst, like Parry; he may be, like Berlioz, a feuilletonist of inexhaustible vivacity and wit; but all this is not criticism in the sense in which we usually understand the term. The composers fail, in the main, as critics not only because they have never concerned themselves with the psychological problems that underlie the practice of criticism, but because their own musical outlook and musical culture are as a rule too narrow.¹³²

There is, however, one instance in which Newman felt that the composer excelled as a critic; that is, when he was writing about music which was similar in nature to his own.

It is indeed a rare delight to see the expert running his sensitive fingers over the surface of the work of art, vibrating passionately to it, and communicating the vibration and the passion to us who watch him. But how little of the music of other men evokes this affectionate sensitiveness in any composer of marked individuality!¹³³

In Newman's opinion, the genuine critic is able to admire the significant works of all schools and good artists of all types because he is disinterested. "The critic's more

varied musical life develops in him in time, a tolerant, amused patience with every point of view, including that of the man with an incurable squint."¹³⁴

Other than stressing the need for an extensive musical background, Newman offered few suggestions for the critic's training. Nevertheless, as he invited us to discover in "Confessions of a Musical Critic," an insight into his own background enabled us to ascertain his unspoken recommendations. It is apparent that Newman admirably fulfilled the qualifications which Dean listed as prerequisites for the critic.

Evolving Standards of Value

In this section, we shall search, with Newman, for some sort of a critical yardstick by which we might determine the value of a work or of a performance. If the critic's standard of values is merely the unconscious expression of his own background and personality, and if that proposition holds true for the rest of mankind, then we should hold little hope for establishing any objective criteria. Newman, however, was convinced that they existed.

Though the sense of music cannot be tested, as that of poetry can, by reference to something external to itself, we all know that music has a sense of its own, and a set of laws of sense of its own. . . . We know this, I say, without being able or needing to prove it.¹³⁵

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman posed a rather convincing argument in support of the existence of absolute standards. The fact that acknowledged masterpieces are held in the general opinion to be masterpieces implies that some kind of objective criteria exist. We do not dispute with the generally held opinion that the Nôtre Dame cathedral or the Mona Lisa are masterpieces.

How did Pater come to be writing on the "Mona Lisa" instead of on one of the many second-rate pictures in which the Louvre abounds? Surely by a process of selection and rejection that implies a canon of objective judgment - for we all agree that he could have found nothing finer in the "Mona Lisa" room than the "Mona Lisa."¹³⁶

In the same sense, he stated that we should find it amusing that a person should prefer Cavalleria Rusticana to Tristan und Isolde.

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman also challenged the popular belief that the world's greatest composers were generally misunderstood and vilified by critics in their own time. "There has never been a period yet in which the plain musical sense of the day has not been able to assess living composers pretty well as accurately as dead ones."¹³⁷ Newman implied in many of his essays that it was the average music-lovers rather than the critics who see something in the work of a new composer. In A Musical Critic's Holiday, he defined the average music-lover as a person who is relatively knowledgeable about music, who is sensible, and whose tastes are fairly catholic. His

reactions are most often purely aesthetic. He is not troubled over theoretical questions because of his limited acquaintance with music theory.

My thesis is that if the public has opportunities enough of hearing the work of a musical genius, it does not take long to pick him out of a crowd. Many people, of course, will always be against him, because they are temperamentally alien to a nature like his; and for this there is no cure. The others, again, will make plenty of mistakes about him, and will of course need time to fathom his profoundest depths. But in the average audience of ordinary intelligent music lovers there will be, from the first, a number of people who feel that though there is a good deal in this new music that is for the moment beyond them, there is also something in it that impresses them and makes them want to hear it again. Given the necessary opportunities to hear it again, these people's understanding of the music will increase, and their numbers, by the same process, will be added to slightly; till in time the new man has a public of his own.¹³⁸

It is evident that the plain musical man, or the "P.M.M.," as Newman called him in many of his articles, figures prominently in the process of discovering a masterpiece or a composer of genius. However, Newman did not withhold credit from the critics. "Strange as it may sound, critics are sometimes right in saying that a contemporary composer has missed the mark in this work or that."¹³⁹ Indeed, he assured us that the percentage of works which are accurately assessed by contemporary critics is quite high.

In the case of ninety-nine new works out of a hundred it is possible both to see what the composer is driving at and to say in general terms, from our experience of music of every period and every kind, whether he has made a good job of it or not.¹⁴⁰

Newman added, however, that we will not be able to see the whole greatness of the work. Its full greatness is apparent only when the critic knows it thoroughly. Any open-minded musician should know, however, that a work is great even if he does not know how great it is.

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman suggested two reasons why proponents of the myth of the misunderstood genius clung to their view. First, they hoped to make the contemporary critic more cautious about his views on modern composers. Second, they felt that if a past genius was misunderstood in his own day, then their fight for whom they feel to be an unappreciated genius of the present is justified. In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman systematically examined the criticism of those composers who were apparently so misunderstood in their own day. In general, his defence of the critics was this: sentimental historians only quote uncomplimentary criticisms or they attribute unnecessary importance to one critic's adverse remarks. In regard to Wagner, for instance, Newman stated, "No one is entitled to say that most of the critics were against Wagner until the whole Press of Europe from, say, 1840 to 1883, has been ransacked."¹⁴¹ He concluded that historians continue to perpetuate the same myth time and time again because of "a lazy copying from one's predecessors, a lazy echoing and re-echoing of sanctified traditions."¹⁴² They make their assumptions without delving

into the real facts of the case. Newman, however, was guilty of the same sin himself. He often asserted that the critic was frequently the first to recognise a composer as a genius. Nevertheless, in an article entitled "The Discovery of Genius," he replied thus when asked if he could point out specific cases of this phenomenon:

I reply that I cannot, for the simple reason that the remarks of these critics are buried in journals that I have never seen. I have not the faintest idea even what the professional English critics said about the earliest works of Elgar, nor have I the least inclination to spend the next few weeks in trying to find out.¹⁴³

In one article, Newman proposed an axiom as follows: if a composer is a genius, he will have done something before he is thirty-five to put him in a class by himself. However, he then immediately makes two exceptions for Gluck and Rameau. Although this axiom is valid for composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Debussy and Chopin, it should be applicable in all cases in order to be considered reliable. As a point of interest, Newman used the rule as a whip to flog Stravinsky. "I shall be glad of the reminder, as Stravinsky helps to prove my case. I think he is hardly even a talent now; but he has certainly been a genius."¹⁴⁴

Despite his adverse opinion of music criticism, it is apparent that Newman employed some sort of unstated criteria in his evaluation of music. In fact, he occasionally discussed the possible existence of specific criteria in his writings. An examination of his articles

leads us to consider these standards and his opinion of them. First, we should consider whether it is imperative to have only one standard of values. Purely personal views, as we have discovered, vary from individual to individual. In 1923, Newman insisted on one standard of values. "Genre, idiom, subject, these may differentiate work from work, but they do not imply different standards of excellence."¹⁴⁵ More than a decade later, however, he declared that no one measure will do for the measuring of all artists.

There is no such thing, strictly speaking, as "music." There are merely different varieties of music, springing from and appealing to, different types of mind; and half of the absurdity of our musical criticism comes from the critic's application to one type of music of criteria wholly derived from, and solely applicable to, another type.¹⁴⁶

We could perhaps derive a standard of values based on the performers' fulfillment of the composer's intentions, as Newman suggested.

How can you be sure, I will be asked, that your notion of the work is the right one? To that I reply, it is the right notion if it is the composer's notion. . . . There is really only one right way of playing a work - that is to say, just as the composer has set it down on paper.¹⁴⁷

However, as Newman later added, this notion really only applies to the great orchestral and operatic works of the modern period. He excluded smaller works for a single instrument and works from an epoch when the composer marked the score sparingly. Thus, we have a standard which is of no use, because it is too exclusive. Moreover, Newman

suggested that the mediums through which the composer must realise his artistic expression are imperfect.

In the first place no system of notation can be devised that will correspond to the refinements of which pure sound is theoretically capable, and in the second place no method of delivery of these sounds can ever compass the subtleties of nuance of which the imagination is capable.¹⁴⁸

An orchestra may perform the same piece a number of times. Even though the performers pay scrupulous attention to the markings in their part, the performance will differ each time, "for the mood, the mental and animal spirits of the players, unconsciously affect their tone."¹⁴⁹ In fact, as Newman noted, even at one performance of a work there are several different performances going on simultaneously. The auditory experience differs depending on where the listener is sitting. "A 'live' performance means, in sober fact, nothing more than a performance in which the listener is in the same room as the performers."¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, as Newman observed, even the composer's conception of his work is not stable.

What if the work of art, instead of being a solid something, fixed for all time, is a fluid something that changes with the years, even for the creator of it? Can we be said to "know" the work when we have taken the most conscientious pains to discover what the composer has said in it, if the composer himself finds later that even for him it does not now mean quite what it meant when he wrote it?¹⁵¹

Our hopes would have been dashed even prior to this revelation. If we derived a standard of values based on the performers' fulfillment of the composer's intentions, our

critical yardstick would be limited to the music of live composers. A dead composer could not reveal his musical intentions, unless he left an explicit written record of them. Moreover, this standard would be of no use in evaluating the worth of the work itself.

Nevertheless, Newman insisted that the true identity of a composition resides in its composer's mental conception, even though the composer himself only hears a broad generalisation of his work. As an illustration of this notion, Newman cited Wagner's concept of the opening phrase of the quintet in Die Meistersinger for soprano and solo oboe.

The truth is that Wagner, with his scoring-paper before him, heard inwardly just a soprano voice and an oboe that were a broad generalisation of all conceivable soprano voices and all conceivable oboes; and when we, in our turn, read the passage and hear it inwardly, we in turn get a broad generalisation corresponding to his.¹⁵²

Newman's conclusion in this matter appears to be the most sensible approach for the critic to adopt in light of the apparent unattainable nature of an ideal performance. He suggested that the critic work diligently in order to perfect the faculty of the silent or inward hearing of works.

In that way he will in the end come nearer than by any number of casual experiences in the concert hall or the opera house to a performance approximating somewhat to the ideal performance the composer must have heard inwardly when he was giving silent birth to his work.¹⁵³

Indeed, Newman went so far as to advise the critic "not to base his opinion of any work on the performances he might hear of it".¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, he differentiated between listening to a performance as a performance and listening to a performance in order to think about the work. The critic, in his opinion, should listen with the "outer ear" to the performance and the "inner ear" to the work.

When I am listening, then, with the sole desire to trace the workings of the composer's mind in his music, I am largely indifferent to the defects of the performance - unless, of course, it is so thoroughly bad as completely to bar my approach to the music, which does not happen very often.¹⁵⁵

Let us examine Newman's thoughts about the possible defects in a performance. Although he stated that a composition is rarely completely misrepresented, he was also convinced that "not one performance in a hundred does complete justice to a work."¹⁵⁶ He was particularly emphatic in this opinion regarding works planned on a large scale, such as orchestral, choral and operatic compositions. "The more factors that are involved, the more scope there is for aberrations in them individually and for variations in the ensemble of them."¹⁵⁷

Newman's reasons for deciding whether a performance is a weak or distorting one do not shed a great deal of light on specific criteria to be used in its evaluation. Physical flaws, such as faulty tuning and wrong notes, are determinative considerations, but they do not occur very

frequently in performances of professional calibre. Other factors of evaluation are as dependent upon the critic's taste as the performer's: "errors of taste in performance, false conceptions of the work on the part of its supposed 'interpreters,' the egoisms and vulgarities of the performer or conductor too conscious of his audience."¹⁵⁸

In another article, Newman suggested matters which he felt were not of opinion but of fact: "phrasing, accent, quality and scale of dynamics, the psychological suitability or unsuitability of this or that singer's timbre to his or her part, the general conception of the composer's meaning, and so on."¹⁵⁹ As we have discovered, the composer may have a variety of vocal or instrumental timbres in mind when he is conceiving his work. Is the critic to decide which is right? Phrasing, accent and dynamics are fairly reliable considerations, provided that the composer put sufficient markings in the score. Pre-nineteenth century music is not very detailed in these respects. In addition, the passage of time plays havoc with such considerations, as we shall soon discover.

Newman suggested that one of the prime factors in any performance is the correct tempo. A wrong one, in his opinion, can completely misrepresent a whole work or a movement. However, he expressed some doubts as to who is to decide between rival tempi. If the composer is dead, he is of no use. Indeed, the composer may sometimes add to the

confusion, as Newman pointed out in regard to Mozart. In The Tempi in "Don Giovanni" - I, he suggested that Mozart made little differentiation between allegro assai, allegro molto and presto. Newman drew attention to discrepancies between Mozart's catalogue and his scores for Don Giovanni, Figaro and Schauspieldirektor, which indicate that the three terms meant the same thing to the composer. Thus, he concluded that "attempts to derive a canon of performance from such external data as tempi, dynamics, and so on, must end in futility."¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, his remarks from various articles indicate his confidence in the critic's ability to judge the performer.

A performer of genius can make a poor work seem better than it really is: a performer who is himself superficial can make a great work seem more superficial than it really is.¹⁶¹

Where we are entitled to criticise is when we feel that, with the best intentions, the performer is adding something to the work that the composer never intended.¹⁶²

We could perhaps add that the critic is only entitled to do so if he is fully acquainted with the composer's intentions.

The performer is a sort of lantern through which the music has to shine, and it makes all the difference in the world what material the lantern is made of - alabaster, bottle glass, or just plain turnip.¹⁶³

It is equally true that we should question what material the critic is made of.

Our attention so far has been centered on possible criteria to be used in the evaluation of a performance. There are other possible criteria, however, which should be examined in regard to the evaluation of the work itself. We shall first consider the operation of the creative imagination within form as a determining factor in musical excellence. In Newman's opinion, the analysis of form explains little that really matters about the work of art, and supplies us with no information for an aesthetic evaluation of it. The critic who attributes too much importance to form is subject to the danger of condemning a work because it does not fit into the text-book mould.

It is high time that the pedagogic "analysis" of music cured itself of the bad habit of treating things as the same merely because they are carelessly called by the same name, time it turned its attention from the bones and skin of a great imaginative work to the heart and brain of it.¹⁶⁴

Newman felt that the critic should realise that there is more than one type of musical imagination and therefore more than one method of procedure in musical creation. The form, in his opinion, is not a determinant in musical excellence; it is merely a concomitant of beauty and creative imagination. "How does it happen that of two symphonic movements absolutely identical in form in every bar one can be a masterpiece and the other a complete nullity?"¹⁶⁵ In an attempt to attribute more importance to

the operation of the creative imagination within a form, Newman suggested his own definition for the term.

The "form" of a musical work is good when the work is neither too short nor too long for its subject, and when each bar of the music follows logically on the bar before it, and leads logically into the bar that comes after it.¹⁶⁶

This definition is quite logical, but its weakness is apparent. We do not know who is to determine whether a work's length is appropriate to its subject, or who is to determine whether the bars follow logically one after another. We can only attribute our conclusion to a feeling of "rightness" after listening to the work, a feeling which has no objective basis. Newman's bias, for instance, is apparent in a comparison between Wagner and Brahms which he drew in one article. He argued that Wagner was a superior composer to Brahms simply because of the scale on which he worked, and because of the number of problems which he had to solve.

A bungalow may be as perfect in its own way as a cathedral is in its way, but it takes a bigger brain, a bigger grasp, to design and co-ordinate a cathedral than to design and co-ordinate a bungalow.¹⁶⁷

Newman's implicit assumption is that "bigger is better."

It is apparent that a composer's fidelity to a form in no way determines the source and nature of its appeal to our musical sensitivity. "No form whatever has any life of its own; the life is in the music that this or that composer pours into the form."¹⁶⁸ Although Newman proposed

that the real "life" of the work existed somewhere else in the notes, he was at a loss to define it.

We decide then, each in his own way, that a musical work is great or not great, not in virtue of the abstract elements into which post-facto cold analysis can resolve it, but in virtue of what we can only call vaguely the "music" in it.¹⁶⁹

In an article from 1928, he suggested that a good work of art has an inherent principle of vitality, "the discovery of which principle should be the true business and the true glory of contemporary criticism."¹⁷⁰ This principle was also suggested as a basis of musical judgment by Henry Hadow in Music and Music Criticism: a Discourse on Method. Both writers agreed that vitality is an organic part of a good work of art. They differed, however, in regard to the nature of the inspiration. In Hadow's view, the vitality is sparked by the original creative impulse, but the subsequent labour which is needed to develop the idea "is but the nurture and training of the living thing, not the birth-pang that gives it life."¹⁷¹ Newman, in comparison, placed little importance on the original inspiration.

Any man of ordinary artistic feeling, in the course of an hour's walk, may get "ideas" enough for half-a-dozen sonnets or symphonies or novels or pictures or articles. . . . But many amateurs are visited by ideas that are excellent in themselves, but that come to nothing, like a rare bird's egg laid in a dustbin; while an idea that may seem at first sight to be utterly insignificant like that of the first theme of the "Eroica" symphony, may become the foundation-stone of an edifice that is one of the world's wonders. "Vitality," in regard to musical ideas, is a very complex concept.¹⁷²

In Hadow's opinion, Beethoven's phrasings of ideas in the Eroica "were simply successive embodiments of an idea that was true and vital from the beginning."¹⁷³ He regarded the skill and trouble which is needed for the fashioning of a work as subordinate to the original intuition. In contrast, Newman placed more importance on the composer's shaping of the original inspiration. "The primal 'commotion' is a relatively small thing in the total work of art, the main thing being the steady functioning of the musical faculty along purely musical lines."¹⁷⁴ In fact, as he added, inspiration in the sense of spiritual travail does not even occur in regard to some compositions. For instance, he argued that Bach was "cool as a cucumber"¹⁷⁵ when he sat down to write a fugue.

This assertion is contradictory to the popular belief that every composer is touched with the wand of inspiration before he takes up his pen. Newman argued that in Bach's case, the process was generally the precise opposite. Bach did not set to work because he was inspired; he became inspired because he was working. As Newman stated, "once the wheels begin to revolve - as a mere matter of sitting down to work - the machine generates its own divine heat."¹⁷⁶ Newman, however, has no right to claim an intimate knowledge of Bach's mental state during composition. He has no basis for making assumptions about a composer who was dead one hundred and eighteen years before

he was born. We could as well assume that Bach was in a perpetual state of spiritual travail when he composed.

It is apparent that for Newman, there was a very fine dividing line between vitality and what we would call technique, or style. In fact, he valued style above ideas. "'Ideas' in themselves are next to nothing. . . . What really matters is the indefinable thing we call 'treatment,' 'handling,' 'style.'"¹⁷⁷ Newman defined style as "a constant action and interaction of imagination and technique."¹⁷⁸ He also stated that it is "a felicity in the manner of saying a thing that imposes itself on our attention as something distinguishable from the thing said, though of course, in the last resort, it is part and parcel of it."¹⁷⁹

According to Newman, one of the primary signs of a composer's style is his ability to get a desired result, or to make a desired impression, in a seemingly effortless way. In 1921, he suggested that it is possible to detect an amateur composer, for in his music there is invariably an impression of helplessness somewhere or other.

One sign of the born amateur is that he cannot sustain his thinking at its best for very long. He can write a fine page; but he cannot write a fine work - at least, not of any length. Nor can he write many really fine works in the smallest forms.¹⁸⁰

We would have to assume, however, that the critic would have to have some idea in regard to what the composer's best thinking is. In the end, we can only conclude that he might

have an intuitive feeling that there is a feeling of helplessness somewhere in the work.

Twenty-four years later, Newman opined that the presence of style could not be regarded as an infallible criterion of greatness in art, because it is not a compositional trait of every composer.

When we look around us in music we see that the most admired stylists are often not in the front rank as creators, while conversely the last thing we could expatiate upon in connection with some of the greatest is their style.¹⁸¹

In 1936, he compared Delius and Mendelssohn in this respect. Although he suggested that Mendelssohn had more style than Delius, he was of the opinion that Delius put more effort into his music. "Yet some of us prefer Delius because he has the bigger and richer mind. 'Style' is obviously not everything."¹⁸²

As we discovered previously, Newman stated that an impression of helplessness in a composer's music might indicate that composer's amateurish capabilities. In 1942, however, Newman suggested that a momentary impression of helplessness somewhere or other in a composer's music may on occasion be a sign not of weakness but of strength of artistic fibre. He created a label for these musical lapses: "cramps."

We have to recognise that "cramp," as a term of easy disparagement is not a valid critical criterion at all, because it fails to take account of the totality of artistic endeavour that in some cases makes cramp inevitable, because the artist, having plunged into

unexplored territory, prefers to face a difficulty squarely instead of taking the easier course of evading it.¹⁸³

For instance, Newman cited Wolf's and Brahms's settings of Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen. Newman asserted that Wolf generally ventured further psychologically than Brahms. While Brahms treated the poem with the ready-made formula which he used in most of his songs, Wolf let the poem express itself in music in accordance with the laws of its own being.

I am merely contending that it is not criticism to fill the slate with bad marks for him [Wolf] for having now and then failed to reduce a tough fortress, and not to take something off Brahms' score for not having even attempted to reduce the fortress but merely walked around it.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, Newman suggested that works of genius which do have moments of "cramp" seem to possess an elusive quality which ensures their success. "While there can be no doubt whatever about the faults of certain works, they possess, in spite of the faults, an odd something that may be called, for want of a more scientific term, survival value."¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately, he added that no critic exists who, on his first acquaintance with a new work, can be sure whether it possesses or lacks this quality.

On a brighter note, Newman placed a great deal of faith in both the critic's and the musical layman's intuitive ability to determine the aesthetic quality of harmony.

When nonsense or inferior sense is being talked in music, our trained musical processes can be trusted as implicitly to make us aware of it as our trained verbal processes can be to tell us when nonsense or inferior sense is being talked in prose or verse.¹⁸⁶

In his opinion, the sounds in themselves are nothing. The degree of physical consonance or dissonance between this note and that note is insignificant. It is the musical idea which is important. "The human ear will accept the ugliest crash or grind of sounds if only the mind can see it as a necessary factor in a train of musical thought."¹⁸⁷ It is for this reason that the musically uneducated listener can assimilate harmonies which are an infringement of existing theoretical rules.

The plain man, who has never opened a book on harmony and does not know a tritone from a tripod, laps up this new harmony like a new cocktail, caring not a brass farthing about the ingredients or the school in which the mixer acquired his skill, but knowing only that the stuff runs pleasantly over the tongue and warms the cockles of the heart.¹⁸⁸

We must admit, however, that these thoughts lead us nowhere in our search for an absolute standard regarding harmony. Although we may attribute our approval of a work to the musical idea which is embodied in the harmonies, the musical idea still eludes ensnarement in the trap of rationality. Theory and aesthetics live in different worlds, as Newman concluded in his discussion regarding the introduction to Mozart's Quartet in C Major.

While there is no objection to a demonstration that a piece of good aesthetic is also good theory, there is not, and never will be, any warrant for the assumption

that what is good theory is also necessarily good aesthetic.¹⁸⁹

This notion becomes quite apparent when we consider a statement made by Newman in A Musical Critic's Holiday.

A new man can talk new sense or new nonsense. My own feeling is that if he talks sense he will get a respectful hearing at once, no matter how novel his method of expression may be: while if he talks nonsense it is more reasonable to put the rejection of his message down to this fact than to the fact that his grammar and his vocabulary are new.¹⁹⁰

It is apparent, however, that our basis for distinguishing between sense and nonsense in music is grounded in emotion rather than intellect. As Newman stated in one of his early articles, "the music itself rubs some people the wrong way."¹⁹¹

Judgment of New Music

The foregoing thoughts are particularly relevant in regard to music written in the first few decades of the twentieth century, when composers effected the emancipation of dissonance. The glaring inadequacy of music criticism was never more apparent.

When, as is often the case today [1946], the composer seems not to inhabit the same mental world or breathe the same atmosphere as "the classics," does not employ their vocabulary, and flouts their conjugations, declensions and syntax, criticism, in the old self-assured acceptance of the term, becomes impossible. We are simply left with naive reactions of being interested or not.¹⁹²

Yet, after reading a variety of Newman's articles on twentieth-century music, it is apparent that his confident

judgments were based on principles which he regarded as rational, not opinionative. These principles were used to support his negative evaluations of such composers as Schoenberg, Messiaen, the later Stravinsky; as well as various works by Bartók, such as the Mikrokosmos. To a large extent, Newman's opinions of these composers were based on a central proposition which he advanced in A Musical Critic's Holiday: "There has never yet been a composer so greatly in advance of his time that only an initiate here and there - one or two out of a vast population of cultivated musicians and music lovers - could understand him."¹⁹³ It is obvious that Newman was irritated by the coteries which proclaimed their particular composer-idol as the genius of the future. His observation, however, could be subject to dispute. It is dangerous to assume that just because something has never happened, it never will happen. Great composers have always been recognised in their own day, but this may not always be the case.

The obverse of Newman's foregoing proposition appeared in one of his early articles: "The greatest artists are always the most universally comprehensible."¹⁹⁴ In this form, it is apparent that we could consider its viability as a criterion. However, even after a moment's consideration, we can only admit that this principle is a posteriori rather than a priori. No critic could determine

whether a new composer is universally comprehensible without a complete knowledge of public opinion. To gain this knowledge, he virtually would have to conduct a survey of the audiences who attended performances of the new composer's works. Even then, his sampling of public opinion would probably be too limited to provide reliable data.

Nevertheless, Newman suggested that the critic, in his individual study of a composer's music, could evaluate that music to a reasonable degree. "I make bold to say that any new idiom over which an ordinarily intelligent musical man has to spend a considerable time is a bad and infertile idiom."¹⁹⁵ It is equally true that one man's meat is another man's poison. Two ordinarily musical men might differ in their artistic constitutions to such a degree that one man's labour in understanding the music would be considerably less than the other's.

Newman suggested other criteria, in relation to twentieth-century music, which were based on negations rather than on affirmations. For instance, he claimed that individuality of itself is not a virtue. "It is no more claim to the world's admiration to see things from an angle entirely one's own than it is to be born with six fingers on each hand."¹⁹⁶ Nonetheless, he stated that it is equally untrue that a composer should be lauded because he expresses the spirit of his time.

All one is justified in doing is to point out that the fact that a composer is the very voice of his time is no guarantee whatever that his music will endure, - nay, that the very perfection of his identity with his epoch may be his undoing for an epoch with another mental and social orientation.¹⁹⁷

He also did not consider technical command to be any criterion whatever of excellence in a new work. Newman described this type of music as "cerebral" - "a manipulation of notes for manipulation's sake."¹⁹⁸ Indeed, he maintained that a composer's technical innovations had little to do with his value as an artist. "'Cerebral' music is neither good nor bad music in terms of the cerebration that has gone to the making of it, but in terms solely of the value of the imaginative result of all this cog-fitting and wheel-revolving."¹⁹⁹ The imaginative result plays a more vital role in the settlement of aesthetic values. "If it is traceable at all in a work of art it should be only a posteriori; it must emerge of itself from an aesthetic result triumphantly achieved."²⁰⁰

Newman's opinion of twentieth-century music could be summed up in his following reflection: "I sometimes wonder whether what is wrong with modern music may be just this - that composers are putting more brains into their job than it really needs: too much brains and too little music."²⁰¹ We have yet to determine, however, what the "imaginative result," or the "aesthetic result," or the "music" really is in music. We can only admit that Newman's reasons for

liking or disliking a modern work were simply based on the aesthetic pleasure or displeasure which he experienced while hearing it. His opinion of Wozzeck, for example, is illustrative.

"Wozzeck" is aesthetically neither better nor worse for its "forms"; all that matters in the end is the quality of the music. At home one goes through the intellectual exercise of tracing all the threads of the various patterns; but when listening to "Wozzeck" one forgets or puts aside most of what one has learnt in this way and simply surrenders oneself to the broad musical impression.²⁰²

As we have already discovered, Newman's strongest musical affinity was with the romantic composers of the nineteenth century. In view of the fact that Berg was never an orthodox atonalist, it is no surprise that Newman liked his music, and that he disapproved of composers such as Schoenberg. In 1931, he stated:

Of one thing we may be sure, that aesthetic theories matter no more now than they have ever done. Only men matter; and the best of theories will die, for the time being, if the right man is not there to realise it in the right way, as, I fancy, the case of Schoenberg will prove some day.²⁰³

Twenty-four years later, it appears that Newman found all the proof he needed in the reaction of the public to "cerebral" music: "To most of this music, and to the new values implied in it, the public has long put up, and still puts up, a stubborn resistance. I make no comment on that fact; I simply record it as fact."²⁰⁴

Perhaps, as he suggested, the ultimate test of a work's greatness is its entering into the repertory. "For a work to go into the repertory means that it appeals, after a fair number of hearings, to the majority of people who love music - people of all classes, all varieties of taste, all degrees of experience."²⁰⁵ As a conclusion to this statement, he asserted that a great work that is considered great only by a few people is a contradiction in terms. Newman mentioned Pierrot Lunaire and Five Orchestral Pieces as examples in order to support this view.

It is apparent, however, that a work may not figure very often in the repertory because of difficulties, financial or otherwise, which would preclude its frequent performance. As Newman stated, "no one would deny the greatness of, say, the B Minor Mass on that account."²⁰⁶ A problem, however, is raised in view of this consideration. How are we to distinguish between a work of this type and a work which is infrequently performed simply because it is not great? We would have to presuppose that the public at large has had full opportunities of testing the work. For instance, let us examine several thoughts in regard to Wolf and Schoenberg. Newman, as we have already discovered, was highly appreciative of Wolf's music. We also know that he was not as appreciative of Schoenberg's.

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman maintained that Wolf was not misunderstood by the critics in his own era. In support of this argument, he cited several appreciative articles which were written during the composer's lifetime. Coincidentally, these articles were mostly written by members of Wolf's circle. Newman attempted to gloss over this fact by stating that these people had become members of Wolf's circle through their appreciation of his music. Nevertheless, Newman rejected the positive views of Schoenberg's coterie, even though they, like Wolf's admirers, were drawn to the composer because they liked his music.

He also attempted to refute a colleague's assertion that Wolf was an example of a genius who was so far ahead of his time that his contemporaries could not understand him. He cited two reasons why Wolf's music made little headway during his lifetime. First, few people could make any acquaintance with it.

Few of the German singers who knew anything about the songs cared to sing them; we all know what singers are. The songs were difficult, and the average singer, not seeing sufficient opportunities for applause in them, could hardly be induced to sing them. The accompaniments are often so difficult that even to-day the ordinary amateur can make little of them.²⁰⁷

Newman never considered whether Schoenberg's music might be infrequently performed because of its difficulty. Yet, when we consider a work such as Pierrot Lunaire, this possibility becomes apparent. Newman found no evidence in Wolf's

letters that the general musical public was against the composer, or that they were incapable of understanding him. This discovery is hardly surprising, when we consider, as Newman stated, that "comparatively few people could, in the circumstances of the case, have any acquaintance with it [Wolf's music]."208

We are not, in this discussion, arguing about the merits of either composer. We simply want to draw attention to the fact that, depending on one's view of a composer, details of his life are malleable. Newman, for example, perhaps championed Wolf and rejected Schoenberg because he derived his greatest aesthetic pleasure from melodic music.

The greatest music can never be anything else than melodic. . . . You may bluff as you will in all other respects; there can be no bluffing here. The melody is the soul of the music because it is the soul of the composer; it reveals or betrays what he is as surely as the voice or the eyes or the mouth do.²⁰⁹

It is evident that a preoccupation with one aspect of music can exist on a universal as well as on an individual level. In fact, Newman was convinced that each epoch has a musical mentality which does not easily transfer from age to age, just as it does not transfer from individual to individual. As he explained, each epoch neglects one or several factors of expression in order to pursue the development of one factor to its logical end. When that end is reached, the next epoch goes back to one of the previously rejected factors.

Melody, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint cannot all develop at the same pace at the same time: and each epoch concentrates on one of them to the relative neglect of the others. Then it goes back, and at first can make only a hobbledehoy effort to graft a new development on the old tree.²¹⁰

Newman coined an apt term for this type of musical development: spiral evolution. We could form a visual image if we imagined an old-fashioned barber's pole. The white part of the pole represents the perpetual development of music. Musical eras have their places on the red band which winds around the pole. Because of the spiral path of the band, the musical eras are affected in two ways. First, eras which are closest together in time are on opposite sides of the pole. Thus, as Newman explained, there is something in the mentality of each age that merely falls, so to speak, on the blind spot of the next age. "Everyone knows that each epoch feels less kindly towards the art of its immediate predecessor than towards that of any earlier period, if only because the recent stands more in our own way and annoys us more than the remote."²¹¹ Second, although various musical eras are aligned vertically on the pole, no two eras are aligned horizontally. Therefore, no two eras are exactly alike, even though they may possess similar musical preferences.

In Newman's view, talk alone has never yet determined the course of music. Musical development occurs because of the conflict between the forces of tradition and

innovation. This situation is not undesirable, in his opinion. It is through conflict that new modes of musical conception are given substance and shape. If artists did not turn their backs on outmoded forms of expression and plunge into the unknown, then art would become stagnant.

It is to him, the egoist, the rebel, the criminal, that most "progress" is basically due. In the evolution of musical harmony it is not from the law-abiding consonances that progress has come, but from the disruptive, police-inviting activities of the dissonances; just as it is to the anti-social burglar, not the law abiding locksmith content with a Style, that we owe the marvellous improvements in safe-making of which we are so proud and which we find so reassuring.²¹²

Thus, it does not matter whether the revolutionary does better or worse than his predecessors. It is only necessary that he should instigate something that may result in something better. "This is the real meaning and justification of the 'isms' that alternately anger or amuse the crowd; they are a symptom not of decay but of indestructible life, be the immediate forms that the new life takes as absurd as they may."²¹³ It is apparent that Newman viewed revolutionary composers as stepping-stones between composers of the first-rank in musical history. In his opinion, the genuine first-rank composer grafts the revolutionary's new musical developments upon the old, and progress thus occurs.

Newman was a product of his time in regard to this concept of musical history. The idea that music progresses

as it develops is partly a result of the influence of the theory of evolution on the arts in the nineteenth century. During this era, as Sir Jack Westrup noted in An Introduction to Musical History, writers tended to view the history of music as a progression from one great artist to another. As a result of the influence of the evolutionary theory on the arts, musical scholars tended to regard this progress, or at any rate a substantial part of it, as a continuous development from a lower to a higher level, from simple to complex. The major flaw in this theory thus becomes apparent. Eighteenth-century music, for instance, would by implication be better than sixteenth-century music. Wagner would be a better composer than Beethoven. As Cecil Gray speculated in his book entitled Predicaments, we might therefore presume that composers of 2030 will be as far beyond Schoenberg and Stravinsky as the latter are, presumably, beyond Gluck.

Gray disagreed with the notion that art advances towards maturity through the work of successive composers, each adding something that was beyond the imagination of the preceding generation. A composer such as Beethoven is both a product of his time and a unique phenomenon. He profits from the work of his predecessors, but they do not merely facilitate his task. As Westrup stated in An Introduction to Musical History, we must be wary of the notion that composition is an ineffectual struggle to do what later men

do better. On the whole, it is probably true to say that the evolutionary theory of musical history no longer mirrors contemporary opinion.

In Predicaments, Gray discussed other concepts of musical history which have arisen in the twentieth century. The direct opposite to the theory of evolution is, as he stated, the theory of devolution. This theory is the aesthetic equivalent of the modern scientific doctrine of entropy -- the Second Law of Thermodynamics. According to this view, everything in the universe is running down like a clock that has been wound up. We are receding from a golden age in the past rather than progressing towards one in the future. In this case, then, sixteenth-century music would be regarded more highly than music of the eighteenth century. Beethoven and Schubert would be perceived as greater than Wagner and Brahms. Devolutionary theorists, therefore, would have a grim view of the musical future. Gray, however, posed a challenge to both of the aforementioned theories regarding musical history. He opined that the masterpieces of one age or school are in no way superior or inferior to those of another age or school; they are simply different. Excellence is not relative but absolute. Therefore, notions of progress or decline are inapplicable to musical history.

The third theory regarding musical history unites the principles of evolution and devolution. In this view, as Gray explained, all developments occur as part of a curve -- a steady ascent up to a point and a subsequent steady fall. Three main phases are involved, which include the primitive or archaic, the mature or classic, and the romantic or decadent. All music before Palestrina's time is in the first category; the period between Palestrina and Beethoven is in the second; and the phase initiated by Weber and Berlioz and still continuing, or just ended, is in the third. The nadir of the third period has passed, in the opinion of many, and we are at the start of a fresh primitive or archaic period. Gray expressed more enthusiasm about this third theory than the previous two, because it mirrors the rhythm and curve of nature itself. Thus, he argued that it is reasonable to assume that this law might be operative in some aspect or other in the world of art.

In Westrup's opinion, however, musical history should not be viewed simply as a series of cycles or periods. The history of music is not simply a record of composers; nor a mere account of musical activities or organisations; nor a series of movements, such as the rise of opera, romanticism or impressionism. As Westrup maintained, if we view musical history in this manner, then the continuous development of art is obscured. He admitted that some division according to period is essential, if only

for the purpose of organising material into manageable sections in order to clarify it in our own minds. He argued, however, that there is no absolute unanimity regarding the predominant musical characteristics of specific periods, nor can we determine exactly where those periods begin or end. If it is apparent that different aspects of music were concentrated on in different periods, as Newman implied in regard to his spiral-pole model of musical evolution, then it might be possible to predict what cycle would occur in the future. So far, we have not succeeded in predicting the future course of music.

Perhaps we should look to the past in order to solve the problems of music criticism. Newman expressed confidence in our ability to agree upon the "meaning" of music from past eras. In fact, he was convinced that "a truly scientific study of the relations between the forces of tradition and innovation in music of the past ought to be the basis for a judgment upon what is likely to happen ten years hence."²¹⁴ We are thus confronted with the historical equation in music criticism.

The Historical Equation

The easiest music to write about is that of the future, for there the critic's imagination can soar with unclipped wings, and there are no awkward facts to bring him to earth; more than one simpleton, indeed, has in our own day won quite a reputation as a dashing pioneer into all sorts of Promised Lands. The next easiest music to write about is that of the present: contemporary aesthetic values still being largely in a

state of flux, the critic can indulge his personal preferences to his heart's content and persuade himself that they have the validity of cosmic law. The hardest music to write about is that of the past. There the tale is complete; aesthetic values are pretty well agreed upon; it is now a matter of discovering how this or that composer's mind worked, and of tracing the operation of forces throughout the ages; and anyone who wants to be listened to on these matters . . . must know his job: he cannot get away just with mere confident speculation and bright phrase-making.²¹⁵

It is true that of all music, the aesthetic value of the music of the past is most generally agreed upon. We need to discover, however, whether the critic should be able to judge on the basis of the past. Newman appeared to be convinced that this approach was a partial answer to the problem of new music. Many statements to this effect appear in A Musical Critic's Holiday:

The critic should look backward rather than forward. He cannot deduce the future from the present; but he can read the present in the light of the past.²¹⁶

It is only from the past that our aesthetic standards can come, and these are valid for any new form of art.²¹⁷

Music, indeed, no matter how new it may be, can be good or bad only in virtue of the qualities that are already familiar to the ordinary instructed musician in the works of his own and preceding epochs.²¹⁸

Twenty seven years later, it is apparent that his views had not changed a whit.

All intelligent criticism resolves itself ultimately into seeing a work of art in the round against its proper background and estimating it in terms of values generally accepted as valid.²¹⁹

However, his confidence in the validity of past aesthetic standards for any new form of art seemed to be shaken.

Confronted with the newest events in music, "criticism" has obviously lost its course: the works cannot be seen against their background, for that will not define itself beyond doubt for another generation or two, when the "music of today" will have become the music of the past; while the critical yard-tapes by which we have been accustomed to measure aesthetic values until now will obviously not apply to much of the latest music.²²⁰

However, Newman failed to enunciate what standards or "critical yard-sticks" are even valid for the music of the past. Criticism of music of the past is perhaps more plausible than criticism of new music, because we can see the former music at a perspective which is more complete. Nevertheless, it is equally apparent that our perspective on a work can be obscured by time. As Newman noted, music is the expression of an ethos, not simply so many notes going this way or that.

To tell us, as some people do, that all that a conductor has to do is to play the notes just as they are set forth in the score, is to miss the essentials of the problem. With an old work, at any rate, he must, by his own genius, reconstruct it in spirit so that the notes yield the same intoxicating essence they had for the composer and for the men of his own day and his own way of thinking. To play a "classical" work in such a way that it appears to be only a museum piece, a survival, a respectable bit of antiquity, is to misrepresent it radically.²²¹

Perhaps we could derive some standards, at least in regard to the performance of an old work, if we evaluated the performance in terms of how it corresponds with a performance from the era in which the work was composed. This notion is, of course, related to the concept of performance practice and its influence on music criticism.

In the past few decades, a great deal of attention has been devoted to performance practice: the study which enables us to execute performances that might approximate those given in the period when the music was composed. The need for the study of performance practice arises when a work's musical notation is insufficient for our understanding of its performance, and/or when we have lost touch with the manner of playing (in terms of style, technique or instrumentation) required for a truly authentic performance.

Consequently, the music of fairly distant eras is more likely to benefit from a study of performance practice: the music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (in regard to accidentals, tempo, dynamics and instrumentation); and the music of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (specifically in regard to ornamentation). The music of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, has also received its share of attention as of late. This phenomenon has occurred because of dispute regarding the assumption that musical notation is unambiguous, and because of the realisation that our present-day standards of performance might not conform with the standards of the past. As Newman noted:

It is perfectly futile to go on discussing the aesthetic of music in abstracto, without reference to the historical conditions under which the art has lived and by which it has been moulded from century to century.²²²

We might gather from the foregoing statement that Newman was a strong advocate of performance practice. However, he expressed some doubts regarding our ability to reproduce the mentality of past eras by even the most conscientious efforts in the cultivation of historical understanding. As he suggested, much of the psychological life of the work, as well as its mere physical sound, has already been lost because of its transference to instruments with improved mechanisms and different timbres. Therefore, the degree of authenticity which could be attributed to the performance of an ancient work could never be one hundred percent.

If, then, we cannot possibly go the whole hog in the matter of fidelity of reproduction of ancient masterpieces, it is surely just a matter of agreeing as to the extent of the carving that the animal must undergo for modern purposes.²²³

Newman maintained that we should appreciate a work in accordance with our own aesthetic rather than that we should struggle to assimilate a past aesthetic. Even if a work was performed under conditions identical to its own era, we would still be hearing it with different ears. For instance, he questioned the necessity of adherence to conventions associated with the performance of an older work, when the states of mind associated with the origin and justification of those conventions have vanished, perhaps forever. In an article from 1935, for example, he discussed the da capo and coloratura embellishments in regard to

Handelian arias. Newman maintained that the da capo is essential to a performance only if its omission damages the dramatic idea as well as the musical tissue of the work. He argued that there are hundreds of examples in Bach's and Handel's music, for instance, where the da capo is nothing more than a convention. In his opinion, a twentieth-century listener should not feel obliged to listen to the music a second time if the work is not first-rate. Although Newman admitted that the omission of the da capo alters the proportion of the aria and upsets the balance of keys, he asserted that such an omission would be preferable to the experience of enduring the same passage of music over again. In his article, however, Newman offered us no examples of arias which were either worthy or unworthy of retaining the da capo. Regardless of whether or not we agree with Newman about the necessity of the repeat, there is little likelihood that a consensus might be reached in regard to determining whether an aria is first-rate or second-rate.

Newman was against the reproduction of coloratura embellishments because, as he argued, we are simply unable to appreciate that this vocal technique was employed in order to highlight the emotional expressivity of the music.

Are we to restore the mere externals of this old manner for pure antiquarianism's sake, and so drive people away from the Handel oratorios, or ignore them and let people have a Handel they can understand and admire?²²⁴

He also suggested that it should be permissible to present a work in a different setting, even to those who do not know the work in its original form. For instance, in regard to Graeser's orchestral version of Bach's The Art of Fugue, he stated:

Since the ordinary man to-day has lost the faculty of apprehending a work like "The Art of Fugue" as a Bach or a Marpurg apprehended it, is it not better that he should still come into some sort of communion with it, even if in a way that those others [Bach's contemporaries] would have found it frankly impossible to understand? . . . Is it not better for him to be drawn to the work by romantic interest in it as a whole, though its essence is completely anti-romantic, than to remain for ever shut out from it? These are questions that each man must answer for himself.²²⁵

The Urtext, or composer's original text, is considered a valuable resource in regard to performance practice. However, its use as a definitive indicator of the composer's intentions was a source of concern for Newman. As we have already discovered, Newman observed that the composer may have taken different views of the same work at different periods of his life. For instance, Beethoven changed his mind in the early and late stages of his life in regard to the interpretation of tempi in his works. Newman also suggested that the reliability of the Urtext, issued under the composer's own supervision, is even doubtful at times. In an article from 1932, for example, he drew attention to note errors which occur in the Schott edition of Tristan und Isolde, the definitive text of that work. He concluded:

When we consider . . . how easily all sorts of errors may creep into the original manuscript of a work, it becomes clear that the preparation of a definitive text of any composer is an affair bristling with difficulties.²²⁶

In view of the fact that our concept of a work most often differs from that of the era in which it was composed, we must admit that it is now impossible to hear much of the older music with the same ears as its contemporaries heard it. As Newman suggested, a performance which is musically satisfying to our ears perhaps should take precedence over the faithful reproduction of the techniques and timbres known to be appropriate to a given period. However, as was observed in The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments:

The means and style of performance imagined by a composer are so indissolubly bound up with the whole musical fabric that he has set down, that the communication and impact of the composition are seriously impaired if the sounds he imagined are not at least kept in mind when preparing modern performances.²²⁷

It is apparent that consideration of performance practice in the evaluation of a performance will not enable the critic to assess the work with scientific certainty. However, as Newman mentioned, our inability to hear an old work with the ears of its contemporary listeners should be no cause for lamentation.

There is no standard accepted concept of any great artist; the last thing about him has not yet been said and never will be said; his work takes on new aspects for each generation and for each thoughtful and imaginative observer.²²⁸

This notion prompts us to consider the aesthetic value of a well-established work. A classic becomes a classic because it has been recognised as a supreme artistic achievement after many years of performance. If, however, it is considered as a masterpiece in its own day and a piece of commonplace in the next century, how are we to determine which standard is correct? Newman noted that we should question the worth of our own opinions upon our own music in light of the ephemeral nature of each era's ethos.

The work of criticism is never finished: in this sense it is true that values are unfixable. We can no more anticipate what the next century will see in our music than the man of 1824 could anticipate what we now see in the Ninth symphony.²²⁹

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman examined the cases of some composers, such as Meyerbeer, Gade and Telemann, who were regarded as geniuses in their day but who are not so highly regarded nowadays. We could argue that these composers were more accurately evaluated by their own contemporaries, to whom the music conveyed greater levels of significance than our blunt psychological instruments can detect. As Newman noted, "look where we will, we find an invariable correlation between the music and the general culture-conditions of each epoch."²³⁰ We may like a functional couch of simple design because for us, it is compatible with our work-oriented, purposeful lifestyle. A hundred year's hence, the couch may be considered ugly and

stark because society has become leisure-oriented and hedonistic. The furniture has not changed, but the standards have.

If the standards, which we have never determined but which we know exist, change from century to century, then perhaps criticism in the traditional sense of the term is not possible. Perhaps the critic should abandon his position as a refiner and developer of taste, and seek new paths.

Towards a Physiology of the Composer

In this respect then, we move with Newman towards a new order of criticism: a criticism based on close and expert stylistic analysis of a composer's work. In 1929, Newman wrote a series of articles in which he discussed the possibility of a "physiology" of criticism. The term "physiology" is confusing in regard to music. The word is usually used in reference to the study of the functions and activities of an organism, of the parts of the organism, or of a bodily process. Indeed, Newman was obliged to clarify his original suggestion in a series of articles, because his readers thought that he intended to study the composer in light of his nerves and arteries. Newman referred to a physiology of the composer's mind, "an analysis of the life-processes, peculiar to himself - for the differences

between composers in these respects are infinite - by which his music, unknown to him, becomes what it is."²³¹

He further explained that he was not referring to analysis of the text-book kind, in which the themes are pointed out and balance of design is determined. He aspired towards "a discovery of the special constitution of the particular composer's mind as a musical instrument, and the special methods by which his mind goes about its engrossing business of music-making."²³² In other words, Newman meant to analyse the composer's mind not so much in respect of what it has done, but of how it works. The focus of his method of stylistic analysis was what he called the "finger-prints" of the composer. These are basic compositional mannerisms which are peculiar to one composer, which are an unconscious part of his creative process, and which appear abundantly throughout all of his works. Newman distinguished between two types of finger-prints. The first type is a formulaic expression which appears in a man's work, regardless of his intentions. In other words, the finger-print appears in almost all situations and all moods in the composer's works. As Newman stated, "it is a sort of general peculiarity of speech."²³³ He cited Puccini, Weber, and Offenbach as composers whose works are full of finger-prints of this kind.

For anyone acquainted with Offenbach's work as a whole the score is peppered with his characteristic tics - certain idiosyncracies in the turn of his melodies,

especially their cadences, a predilection for certain harmonic sequences, for certain progressions in the bass, certain little subtleties in the way of varying a regular rhythm, and so on.²³⁴

The second type of finger-print is a particular formula which appears only when the composer is set on a particular course of thought. Beethoven was cited by Newman as a composer who unconsciously employed finger-prints of this type. For instance, he cited an ascending figure of three adjacent notes as being one of Beethoven's compositional mannerisms. Newman explained that such a common succession of notes only constitutes a finger-print when it recurs persistently, and always at the same point and with the same purpose. Thus, he justified the existence of the Beethoven sequence by stating that it consistently recurs at virtually the same point in the phrase in dozens of Beethoven's compositions. Moreover, Newman claimed that the mood in each instance was fundamentally the same.

For the most part he used it unconsciously as the culminating point in the expression of a musical idea that had associations of uplift, of tension, of yearning towards a height, of soaring resolution. . . .
. . . The persistence of this three-notes figure through the whole of Beethoven's enormous output seems to indicate that almost every one of his slow movements came from much the same fundamental mood; it is hardly too much to say, indeed, that they are just so many attempts to fix in sound one haunting vision.²³⁵

The finger-print, as Newman explained, may be subtly modified throughout the whole of a composer's works. The analyst must peel off the subtilisations in order to get back to the original germ-figure. In fact, Newman felt that

the existence of the germ-figure is often missed by the average listener and even by the composer himself, because of all the superficial modifications it undergoes in this work or that.

If we find a composer doing virtually the same thing again and again in different works - though the variants of the germ-figure are so many and so subtle that it is only after prolonged study of the man's work that we can isolate and define the germ - we are justified in assuming that in each case the determining "mental image" has been fundamentally the same.²³⁶

He also proposed other factors besides melodic or rhythmic finger-prints which might give us an idea of the composer's mentality -- "his method of alternating expression, for example, his long dwelling upon or rapid quitting of certain moods, his way of building up his masses, the nature of his texture, and so on."²³⁷

Newman stressed that his method of analysis had nothing to do with aesthetic judgments upon the appeal or value of a man's music. In The Unconscious Beethoven, he maintained that the aesthetic enjoyment of a work is not at all dependent on a knowledge of the obscure mental processes that are involved in its composition; but that the knowledge may be worth having for its own sake. Indeed, he questioned the extent to which the aesthetic appeal of a work depends on a chart of its form or on its thematic analysis. The critic challenged methods such as those put forth by Rudolph Reti (The Thematic Process in Music, N.Y., 1951) and Heinrich Schenker. He maintained that while

methods such as these facilitated a better understanding of the structure of music, they had little or nothing to do with our pure aesthetic joy in a composer's work. These methods of analysis, including the study of finger-prints, simply enable us to discover more facts about the complicated machinery of the composer's mind.

The science of musical finger-prints is just a science, to be pursued in moments when we are not paying the least attention to the quality of the work as music, in the same way that when we are studying the laws of botany we are not concerned with the beauty of the rose, or when we examine the mathematical laws upon which the bee has unconsciously constructed its comb we stop to savour the sweetness of the honey.²³⁸

It is evident that Newman's ultimate goal was to create a new concept of music criticism: an objective observation of music rather than its subjective evaluation. Indeed, he preferred to call this type of writing "musicography" rather than "music criticism." He did not suggest that the critic and the man in the street should give up expressing their opinions on music and musicians. He did maintain, however, that the bulk of writing which stems from this opinion-making is not worthy of the name of criticism, because it often consists of pedantic definitions of taste, or literary rhapsodies which have no bearing on the music.

No sensible student is now interested in egoistic fatuities of that sort; what he wants is, I think, embodied in the demand I have persistently put to the "critic" - Tell me something, not about yourself and your reactions to the composer, in which I am not in the least interested, but about the mind of the composer;

something that is true of the composer's mind whether that mind particularly appeals to me or not.²³⁹

We thus encounter what aestheticians call "the objective fallacy." Any observation we make, no matter how objective we believe it to be, is modified by our whole previous intellectual and emotional experience. Even scientific data is affected to some degree by the subjective inclinations of the scientist.

There is another issue to be raised in regard to Newman's study of finger-prints. He claimed that his scientific method would enable the analyst to disregard erroneous assumptions about music written by people who are misled by this or that story from a composer's life. For instance, he suggested the case of the Eroica:

Think of all the rhapsodical nonsense, for example, that has been written about the Eroica - simply because circumstances put the idea of a Hero into the writers' heads; yet a physiology of Beethoven's style would show that in the Eroica Beethoven is merely obeying certain musical impulses that are so fundamental in him as to be equally apparent, on analysis, in most of the other works of his middle and early periods.²⁴⁰

In an article entitled "Ernest Newman and the Science of Criticism," Henry Raynor disagreed with Newman's views in regard to the Eroica. He asserted that Beethoven directed our attention to the idea of the heroic in various instances. Although Newman was quick to destroy legends which were perpetuated about a composer, he did not, for example, discount the story of the cancelled dedication to the Eroica in The Unconscious Beethoven. Raynor concluded

that it is "as critically negligent to disregard the 'circumstances' as it would be to disregard the crotchets, quavers, sharps and flats which are the actual work on paper."²⁴¹

However, it is apparent that Newman did not intend to disregard totally the circumstances in which a work was composed. His statement about the Eroica was made in 1929. Three years earlier, he emphasised the importance of external data in regard to our knowledge of a composer's music.

There can be no doubt that, since it is invariably the whole man who thinks, an intimate knowledge and understanding of the composer as a man should throw considerable light on his practice as a composer, his tendencies of thought, his ways of working, his technical and other difficulties.²⁴²

In 1937 he was still of this opinion.

A composer is not merely an arranger of notes: he is also a man: and surely the complex of ideas and emotions, and the episodes of his inner and outer life, that made a Wagner or a Beethoven or a Mozart what he was, are, or should be, matters of the profoundest interest to any student of human nature. . . . No composer's music gives us the whole fact as to the structure of his mind.²⁴³

As we have already discovered, Newman was vehemently opposed to critics who indulged in rhapsody at the expense of veracity. In the statement to which Raynor referred, it is apparent that Newman was disenchanted with writers who saw the Eroica not in terms of music, but in terms of morality. He was quite willing to concern himself with a composer's biographical details, as he demonstrated in The

Unconscious Beethoven. A considerable portion of the book is devoted to a study of Beethoven as man. However, Newman was only interested in those details in so far as they were non-fictional, and provided that they shed some light on the man as a musician. Moreover, he felt that writers often become so preoccupied with the aesthetic and intellectual differences between the phases of a composer's artistic growth that they fail to take note of the basic formal and technical unity of those phases. Schindler and Lenz, as he observed in The Unconscious Beethoven, were such writers:

Their strong sense, indeed of the mental and moral growth of Beethoven as an artist from his first period to his second, and from his second to his third, actually stood in the way of their perceiving how like, in a great many respects, the final Beethoven was to the earliest.²⁴⁴

Raynor perhaps misinterpreted the meaning of Newman's statement about the Eroica. If, in Newman's opinion, a writer does not have an intimate understanding of the composer's mind as a mind, then the writing "is bound to be ill-informed, bound either to read into the music things that are not really there, or, if they are really there, to explain them in terms of literature rather than in terms of music."²⁴⁵ For instance, he condemned Paul Bekker's Beethoven because he felt that the procedures in the music upon which the author based his poetic fancies could have been more simply explained along purely musical lines. Newman did not deny the existence of the circumstances

surrounding the composition of the Eroica. However, he was of the opinion that Beethoven wrote the music in the way he did not because of the "hero" concept but because of certain sub-conscious laws in his purely musical faculty.

Although the study of finger-prints has nothing to do with the aesthetic evaluation of a work, Newman did suggest ancillary uses for his method in regard to music criticism. For instance, it could be used in order to detect a forgery or a wrong attribution.

The application of them may be compared to the blood test that is taken, in a paternity case, to determine the father or fathers of a child. These finger-print tests cannot lie, for the prints are never the same in any two composers, while each composer's work shows them as abundantly as if they had been sprinkled upon it out of a pepper-pot.²⁴⁶

However, he added that the success of such a test would only be possible if the work was on a large enough scale (presumably in order to ensure the presence of plenty of finger-prints) and if the data were substantial enough to provide a proper test.

Newman, however, stated that his method had a practical aesthetic value above and beyond scientific-analytic application. In his view, the study of finger-prints would enable the analyst to solve problems of style, of intention, and consequently of interpretation in regard to music which is inaccessible in this regard. Newman's assertion was based on this premise: if we discover that a certain mood is always realised through a

certain finger-print, then we could assume that whenever we encounter the finger-print we are entitled to infer the mood. In other words, if an analyst discovered a composer's finger-print, and if he found the same finger-print in a work that is subject to various interpretations because of the composer's lack of precise directions, then he would be justified in using that finger-print to determine that the work should be taken at a certain tempo and in a certain mood, and no other. It is possible, therefore, that Newman's method could be put to use in the evaluation of performances, which constitutes a large portion of the music critic's work.

An article from Essays from the World of Music (see Appendix) has been selected in order that we might investigate Newman's proposition. In "The Composer as Self-'Thief,'" the critic discussed the use of fourths as finger-prints on Wagner's part. In the final paragraph of the article, he used this new-found knowledge in order to solve a problem of plagiarism of which Wagner had been accused. Newman cited various passages by Wagner in which the composer used figures of fourths in order, as the critic claimed, to signify "a mood of resolution, of energy, of a decision taken, of emphatic insistence upon a point, of dignified or heavy movement."²⁴⁷

We must raise a few questions in regard to this argument. In the first place, Newman mentioned that in Wagner's works, intervals of the fourth may be found in thousands of other places where their use, in his evaluation, does not signify any of the above-mentioned moods (see Appendix, p. 154). How is the critic to distinguish between those intervals which are used to signify "resolution" and those which are not? If the intervals of the fourth are not all used for the same intent, then is the study worthwhile? In the second place, the moods which Newman described are varied, even though he asserted that they have something in common. Therefore, we could argue that the figures of fourths which purportedly convey these moods can only be said to convey them in a general sense. In fact, Newman's statements support this argument. He mentioned that a passage from Siegfried expresses "a sort of stamping energy."²⁴⁸ He also suggested that various intervals of the fourth which are found within a dozen bars or so of Parsifal convey "all moods expressive of a great decision taken."²⁴⁹ This terminology is hardly definitive enough to be considered as "scientific" data about the work.

If, with these thoughts in mind, we consider Newman's assertion that the study of finger-prints should solve questions of interpretation, problems become apparent. How is the interpreter to decide which intervals might be

classified in regard to a related category of moods? The interpreter could only reach a general conclusion in regard to the type of interpretation which should be executed. The listeners could only infer in a general way that the orchestra's interpretation is "correct." Moreover, it seems unlikely that an orchestra could, for instance, convey the "mood of a decision taken," and that we could know for certain that that was what they were conveying. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the study of finger-prints could in any way lead to the evolution of criteria for critics in regard to the evaluation of the interpretation of a work.

It seems quite probable that this type of analysis could provide us with an understanding of the stylistic traits of a composer. That knowledge, however, could only be gained with a great deal of labour. As Newman stated, "a lifetime's study is hardly enough to enable any man to persuade himself that he has attained to even the rudiments of a thorough understanding of the minds of more than two or three composers."²⁵⁰ Moreover, it is apparent that while the study of finger-prints would be an arduous but a self-rewarding task for the analyst, the results of such an undertaking would be largely incomprehensible to the general public, or even to the general body of musicians. As the following statement indicates, Newman himself was aware of this fact: "The mere reading of it [finger-print analysis] presupposes a deep and wide acquaintance with the

work of the composer who is being discussed, and an intellectual application from which most people will shrink."²⁵¹ In fact, he compared his method to Schenkerian analysis in this respect.

There is a crucial point in this discussion which must not be overlooked. Newman, in his study of finger-prints, is simply evading an issue which needs a solution, but which appears insoluble: the discovery of absolute standards by which a critic might offer an aesthetic evaluation of a work or of a performance. Finger-print analysis could certainly be an interesting and rewarding diversion for the critic, but its role in music criticism is limited unless the traditional definition of the occupation is discarded in favour of Newman's "musicography."

The Critic's Duties

Throughout the sixty-odd years of his career, Newman lived a sort of double existence. Although he devoted his life to a search for absolute standards and a revised concept of music criticism, he still had to deal with the state of the profession as it existed in his own day. He himself had to function as a critic even though he regarded the profession with a jaundiced eye. In view of this state of affairs, Newman devoted many of his articles to a discussion of the duties of the music critic. He offered

practical advice as well as ideals which the critic should attempt to attain. Although these ideals are perhaps utopian, Newman felt that they should at any rate be kept in view. He stated, for instance, that "the critic's ideal should be that of the composer - only the best is good enough."²⁵² The composer's quest, however, takes place on an individual plane, within his own field of expression. His concept of "the best" has to do with himself. The critic's concept of "the best" has to do with others. Nevertheless, if the critic is convinced that he is right in his opinions, he must be able to convince his readers that he is right. As Newman stated in A Musical Critic's Holiday, we still expect, even in the absence of absolute standards, that ideal critical judgments should not be haphazard but should be in accordance with universal law. We also expect that the critic's views should be consistent.

As well ask us to trust the judge who on Monday acquits the prisoner and on Wednesday recalls him and sentences him to death as to ask us to have any faith in the critic for whom a certain work is a masterpiece on the third of January and a piece of commonplace by the middle of April.²⁵³

The ideal critic's views should not only be consistent; they should also be accurate. As Newman stated, the critic's goal should be to evaluate a composer in such a way that he will not be proven wrong in ten or twenty years. Nevertheless, he recognised that the critic has his limitations.

The truth is that no critic and no epoch can see more than a fragment of the great unity that is music. What the critic says may be the truth, but it can never be the whole truth; indeed, it may come to be regarded as the reverse of the truth.²⁵⁴

In fact, Newman suggested that we could test the critic's ability by observing how accurately he evaluates a work when it first comes his way. Nevertheless, he disagreed with the notion that the critic's duty to the public is to pronounce definite opinions shortly after a first performance. "What the critic ought to do - I speak from many saddening experiences of my own - is to write about a new masterpiece not after the first performance of it but after, let us say, the twenty-first."²⁵⁵

It is evident that Newman's views in this regard were mellowed by his experience as a critic. In an article from 1923, he stated that "the critic who defers judgments of new works to posterity is shirking his duties."²⁵⁶ We could argue that if a critic delays his judgment, then the public would have opportunities of itself for reaching a verdict. Thus, the critic's views would be either irrelevant or redundant. Moreover, the critic often has an obligation to deliver a judgment before his newspaper's editorial deadline, which is usually not long after the concert. There is no time for sober deliberation. Newman, however, learned through experience that a critic should possess sufficient knowledge before he even considers reviewing a work. The critic must be sure of his facts in

order to produce an article on which the soundness of his critical reputation may depend. Newman stressed that the critic's first duty is to himself.

His business is to be as right as possible about as many things as possible; and if he has not the data at a first performance for a judgment that he will be prepared to stick to, he should wait till he can study the work more closely.²⁵⁷

The criticism of music, however, presents special difficulties in regard to new works. We can become acquainted with the main features of a play or novel after one or two readings. In comparison, closer study and/or extensive listening is required in order to speak with authority on a complex piece of music. In many cases, the critic must pass judgment with only an imperfect acquaintance with the work. Newman was highly critical of this type of conduct:

The reporter of a daily paper hears, for example, Tchaikovsky's second symphony for the first time, or the Pathetic symphony for the fiftieth time; and he straightway delivers himself in the most authoritative manner, of a column of criticism of Tchaikovsky's general virtues and defects. No literary critic who had half a conscience would attempt to write an article, say, on Zola, without having read Zola through at least once, and perhaps two or three times.²⁵⁸

Newman was convinced that a thorough knowledge of the work is essential because of the type of listening which is required in order to appreciate the performance fully.

Just as the eye sees a picture as a whole the while it is concentrating on details, the whole of the musical work should be in the brain at very moment of the performance of it - not actually heard, of course, even

with the inner ear, but present sub-consciously, giving significance to what else would be only fleeting detail.²⁵⁹

However, he was aware of the difficulties which the critic encounters in his pursuit of musical knowledge. The expense of stocking a library, whether with scores or recordings, would be enough to discourage any critic who wished to possess all of the music of even two or three major composers. In addition, many new works are not even published, and it is difficult or impossible to obtain the manuscript scores. Recordings of new works are often as scarce. It is not likely that a new work will be recorded until a considerable time after its first performance, when it has been deemed worthy of the honour. It may be suggested that a critic could acquaint himself with a new work through public performances. Newman, however, stated that the critic may never hear many new works in performance, while others he may only hear infrequently. In regard to the latter case, he added that "to hear Liszt's Faust Symphony, for example, at a concert once every ten years is not to know it, in the critical sense."²⁶⁰

Our discussion so far has centered on the critic's responsibilities in regard to his evaluation of compositions. We should question, however, whether the critic's first duty is towards the composer and his work, or towards the performers. In Newman's opinion, the performers are a secondary consideration.

The journalists fall into the error of supposing that the slating or praising of mere performers is the be-all and end-all of music criticism, that they themselves are such models of constancy and equilibration that their verdicts upon performers and performances amount to very much, and that the really musical public cares two straws about the matter. . . . Artists and singers are no doubt a necessary evil, and we need to be kept abreast of what is going on in the world of music, but to cultivate mere reporting at the expense of genuine criticism is to transpose the real values of things.²⁶¹

Newman envisioned what might occur if the critic simply printed the concert programme at the top of his article, but devoted his column to a discussion of the works which were listed. The performer would get his advertisement "without any of those drops of gall in the cup that make him doubt whether it was worth while going to all that expense."²⁶² The critic could give free rein to his thoughts about the music without an interpretation put on it by the performer who, "like a filter with a perverted idea of its proper function, brings impurities into the music that were not originally there."²⁶³

However, Newman also suggested that the concert notice is of some use. It may be a pretext for talking about the work that would not otherwise come the critic's way. If the critic feels strongly about a work, then it is possible that its performance could give rise to more subjects for discussion than the critic might think of on his own. Newman likened the performer to the opening speaker in a debate. "He is the falling apple that may lead to the discovery of the law of gravitation."²⁶⁴

In addition, he suggested that the critic be allowed to make a distinction between his work as a critic and his work as a reporter, particularly as he gets older. The older critic, he maintained, wants to study and reflect more before he writes. Thus, it would be more to the older critic's benefit to dwell on subjects of his own choosing. After all, the critic, like the composer, will probably be most illuminating when he is discussing subjects in which he is sincerely interested. As Newman suggested, "criticism is an art in itself, and the artist in it must be allowed to choose his own themes and materials."²⁶⁵

It may be true that music criticism aspires to its subject matter in the same way that literary criticism aspires to literature. The critic, however, must not only recognise his responsibility to himself as an artist; he must also recognise his responsibility to the artists about whom he is writing. As we have discovered, Newman urged the critic to make sure that his judgments are not based on insufficient knowledge. He was also aware that the critic could be affected by his own particular prejudices and blind spots in regard to music. Newman felt that the critic must avoid elevating these repugnancies into laws of critical judgment.

Every artist has his own special defect, that revolts each of us in a different degree in proportion to our tolerance, natural or acquired, of that quality in the artist's mind and work. . . . The critic has to learn to keep an eye on his negative tolerances as well as on

his more positive reactions, to isolate and weigh carefully the quality in the artist which he himself cannot tolerate, without making the erroneous assumption that his idiosyncrasy in the matter of tolerance of an objectionable quality justifies him in wiping the artist off the slate altogether.²⁶⁶

In A Musical Critic's Holiday, Newman envisioned the history of music as an organic whole, a connecting line of force which links one great creative artist with another. This view may appear outmoded to readers. As we discovered previously, Newman's perspective regarding musical history was influenced by nineteenth-century thought. He noted that the activities of minor artists of the past are worth cursory study, because the critic consequently becomes better equipped to understand the geniuses and the world in which they lived. However, Newman added that the critic should not take too much notice of the mediocrities. If he does so, then he risks perverting his standards and his sense of proportion. In addition, he may develop a false perspective of the organic whole of musical history.

However, he insisted that it is the business of the critic to sample all sorts of music, even those works that give him little or no pleasure. The critic's business should not be merely a contemplation of what he feels is excellent. "In art, as in life, the sinner is sometimes more interesting than the saint, or the saint more interesting in his lapses from grace than in his righteousness."²⁶⁷ In regard to the latter point, Newman

suggested that the critic must realise that the mannerisms, crudities and weaknesses, to which the composer is sometimes susceptible, are often an organic part of what is best and most individual in his thinking. "The critic who cannot pierce through the 'Teutonic gawkiness' of a work like Siegfried to the essential beauty and wide humanity of the thing as a whole is the merest tyro at his job."²⁶⁸

Newman recognised the fact that no composer, even a great one, is perfect. Like any creative artist, he is subject to lapses of inspiration, although maybe not as often as lesser composers. Newman urged the critic to remain skeptical about everything musical, even the acknowledged masters. As he mentioned in one article, "a thinking sceptic is always to be preferred to an unthinking believer: one good Mephistopheles is more seminal than half a dozen bad Fausts."²⁶⁹ In his view, a great man's general greatness is an aura which blinds us to weaknesses which we would notice immediately in the case of a smaller composer. He criticised music-lovers and critics who fall under this spell.

Is criticism at its soundest when it estimates the aesthetic value of a statue's toe not by purely artistic considerations of what a toe ought to be, but by the smoothness conferred on it by the kisses of generations of faithful?²⁷⁰

Therefore, the critic must balance himself on a tightrope. He must retain a degree of scepticism even though it is his duty to quell his own prejudices in the interests of his

subject matter. The critic, moreover, is only human. At some point in his career, it is inevitable that he will be subject to fatigue when he is required to pass judgment. In fact, Newman suggested that the critic should practise some sort of exercises in order to hone his faculty of judgment.

If critics were trained as they should be, they would practise a certain daily hygiene both of body and of mind, and especially in mind - a few exercises for the discipline of judgment, say, corresponding to the exercises the athlete goes through each day to keep him ideally fit for his particular work.²⁷¹

The critic, of course, is not only susceptible to his own weaknesses in regard to making evaluations. He is also under pressure from composers and performers, who often feel that their fate is decided by a stroke of the critic's pen. The critic's views are often disputed by the composer or the performer who is subject to an unfavourable review. In their anger at what they feel to be an unfair assessment of their work, creative artists sometimes invite the critic to do better himself. Newman, however, felt that the critic need not feel required to do so. "The invitation is a compliment, but a misplaced one. I may not know how to get the spire of Chesterfield church straight, but that does not disqualify me from asserting that it is at present twisted."²⁷²

Newman devoted many of his articles to an ongoing battle with correspondents who accused critics of being destructive rather than constructive. In his opinion, most

construction depends for its start on a certain amount of destruction. "We must clear away the rubbish from a site before we can build on it; we must break a prisoner's bonds before he can walk free."²⁷³ In fact, Newman felt that there is little difference between being constructive and being destructive. The two processes are simply the opposing sides of the same mental act in criticism. "To destroy does not necessarily mean to slay a truth and put nothing in its place. It may mean slaying an error, and putting truth in its place."²⁷⁴ He suggested, for instance, that it is not being destructive to say that two and two do not make five. "You maintain the negative proposition because you have worked out for yourself the positive proposition that two and two make four."²⁷⁵ We could argue, however, that the case differs in music. If a critic decides to remedy a musical "error," he does not have rules akin to the cold, hard facts of mathematics as a recourse.

Newman was particularly opposed to the major argument posed by proponents of "constructive" criticism: that an unfavourable review damages the reputation of the artist under scrutiny. He apparently did not feel that the critic could possibly be a "king-maker" in the realm of music.

Professional criticism is powerless either to make or mar a reputation; if people like a man's music, not all the unfavourable criticism in the world will keep them away from it; if they do not like it, not all the favourable criticism in the world will send them to it

after one or two unrefreshing experiences of it. Indeed, the plain man reads very little musical criticism; and as the critics invariably disagree with each other, "criticism" cannot claim either the credit of making an audience for a new composer or the discredit of keeping audiences away from him.²⁷⁶

In regard to performers, Newman was particularly confident of the harmlessness of criticism, especially in major centres.

In a capital not only is the range of a critic's experience wider but the subjects of his criticism are for the most part birds of passage with whom he comes into no sort of personal relation, so that on the one hand he is uninfluenced by any personal considerations, and on the other he does not feel that any frankness of his over the affair of the moment can do any real harm to a reputation that is probably international.²⁷⁷

However, Newman made more allowances for critics in less heavily urbanised areas, where internationally-known performers are less likely to be featured than local talent. In this instance, he felt that unfavourable criticism is likely to damage the commercial interests of the person criticised.

Because Newman was largely convinced that artists are not affected by criticism, he urged the critic to be as honest as possible in his views. In his opinion, it is not part of the critic's duty to encourage the artist when his work, in the critic's honest view, deserves no praise.

"Encouragement" on these lines would merely be, so far as I am concerned, telling lies. If it be replied that my judgment is not infallible, I agree. I am not claiming that if I say Smith has written a poor symphony it is a poor symphony, but only that, believing it to be poor, I cannot honestly call it anything else.²⁷⁸

In his opinion, the critic plays no part in the making of a genius or a talent. An artist must do his own work in his own way. If he has the capacity to produce a first-rate work, then he will produce it, regardless of whether or not the critic views him as a second-rate artist. If his musical instincts are naturally weak, no amount of encouragement will make them strong.

In my opinion there is no sense in helping a constitutionally lame dog over a stile; it surely stands to reason that he will be no more use on the other side of it than he was on this. . . .

. . . In the world of art the animals are born either lame or sound, and no amount of help will transmute one of the former category into a member of the latter.²⁷⁹

An artist may begin with an imperfect musical faculty, and then may gradually perfect its operation. Newman stated, however, that the artist's ability to develop is part of his original musical endowment; it is not as a result of assistance on the part of the critic. First-rate composers are simply born first-rate composers. As Newman stated, "it is as if we were to imagine that by breeding a sufficiently large flock of geese we should some day get from them a swan. The swans do not come in that way; they are another species altogether."²⁸⁰ Although he saw no sense in flattering the second-rate composer, he did encourage him to write, if only as a means of catharsis. "But," as Newman added, "the fact that he must be delivered or die is not, I venture to maintain, a good reason why

I should adopt the ill-favoured infant, still less why I should flatter Caliban by calling him Prince Charming.²⁸¹

In light of radical developments in music in the early twentieth century, many critics were unwilling to condemn new and innovative composers for fear of becoming a modern-day Hanslick. Winton Dean, in his New Grove Dictionary article on criticism, appropriately titled this fear the "Beckmesser complex." Newman was particularly wary of this type of behaviour, which he called "boosterism."

Once a critic gets it into his head that it is his mission to discover and foster new genius he is lost - as a critic. He will very soon be discovering a genius in every talent, and a talent in many a mediocrity.²⁸²

Newman felt that it is the critic's own prerogative to become the mouthpiece of an individual or a school or a movement. However, he maintained that the critic, by doing so, loses the ability to remain detached. Consequently, his capabilities as a judge are diminished.

It is apparent that the problem of whether or not to encourage a composer/performer only arises when the subject is living; many of the people about whom the critic writes died many years ago. Ideally, the critic should be able to treat the living with the same amount of detachment as he treats the dead. This ideal of criticism is, however, almost impossible to attain, as Newman noted.

Do what he will, his mere humanity is bound to come out occasionally. He will now and then be less frank with a living artist than he would be with the same artist

dead, for the reason that he knows the dead cannot be hurt and the living can.²⁸³

Newman felt that the critic should exercise some tolerance, for instance, in regard to the performer. Some imperfections, such as flaws in technique or unéven tone, could be tolerated if other desirable qualities are present in the performance. Newman added that there are limits, of course, to the critic's capacity for compromise.

It is no use asking us to accept So-and-so as a wonderful interpreter if he plays or sings hopelessly out of tune; the physical ear is willing to abdicate some of its rights, but it will not be forcibly deprived of them all.²⁸⁴

He also noted that the critic's capacity for compromise is limited in regard to his consideration of the difficulties of the performing artist. In fact, he questioned why the critic should even be expected to take all of the artist's difficulties into consideration before he passes an unfavourable judgment. In his opinion, no one in any other profession is asked to do so.

It is impossible for the critic to take into consideration the difficulties of the artist, in the first place, because in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he cannot possibly know anything about them, and in the second place, because under these conditions criticism would become impossible, for all the daily work of the world, - of the man of letters, the politician, the soldier, the manual labourer, no less than of the performing artist - is done under difficulties.²⁸⁵

A few years earlier, he was equally as stern in regard to the composer.

Criticism is concerned only with the results, not the means by which the results have been obtained, or the difficulties that have had to be overcome in the obtaining of them. No one would think of making earnestness of purpose and difficulty of achievement the criterion in anything else but music. No man would be satisfied with a dry and tasteless apple because it was the best that that apple could do under the circumstances, it having been grown under unfavourable conditions of soil and light and weather.²⁸⁶

It is apparent, however, that this dictum could only be considered as an ideal to which the critic should aspire. As Newman stated, "even the critic, of course, cannot help now and then learning the truth, and being indulgent to human frailty in consequence."²⁸⁷ Therefore, he recommended that the critic ought not to attempt to know all, because it might lead to his pardoning too much. In fact, even Newman listened to the promptings of his own better nature at times. He once stated, for instance, that the critic should always be indulgent towards the singer, because of the latter's physical limitations and arbitrariness of health for a performance. Newman felt that "for this and other reasons we should always be indulgent towards him."²⁸⁸ It should be pointed out, however, that instrumentalists suffer difficulties which may not be the same as a singer's, but which may be just as debilitating. An instrument is often as unreliable as the human voice. Newman did seem aware of the odds against instrumentalists. In his opinion, their difficulties multiply as the number of participants increase in a performance.

In the case of a new or unfamiliar orchestral work, the wise old hand will never expect anything more than a moderately good performance; he will be thankful, indeed, if he gets one that does not actually spoil the work. He knows, for instance, how difficult it is to get adequate rehearsal these days. . . . His criticism, therefore, is always tempered by knowledge of the odds against the performer.²⁸⁹

Newman stated previously that the critic should only be concerned with the results, not the means by which those results have been obtained, or the difficulties that have been overcome in the obtaining of them. His position appears to be inconsistent in regard to the critic's consideration of the artist's difficulties. This confusion is perhaps symptomatic of his continued efforts to eradicate extra-musical considerations in music criticism. As he himself admitted, his efforts could never be totally successful in this regard.

We have so far considered the critic's conduct as it relates to his role as a determiner of aesthetic values. Newman also suggested that the critic could act in another, albeit related capacity: as an educator to his reading public, to composers and to performers. His confidence was based on the fact that he felt the critic to be more knowledgeable than the creative artist or the listener. We would have to assume, however, that the critic is as well-informed about his subject matter as Newman desired. As we discovered previously, Newman felt that the artist's ability to develop is part of his own musical endowment; it

is not as a result of any assistance on the part of the critic. Therefore, it seems incongruous that he could regard the critic as the composer's educator. Nevertheless, he made a rather vague exception for some instances:

"Criticism may help an artist, if it is the right sort of criticism and he is the right sort of artist to realise himself more fully."²⁹⁰

For instance, Newman mentioned that the critic is often a much older man than the composer. Consequently, the former has an advantage over the latter by virtue of the greater depth of his musical education and experience. As Newman stated in 1923, the critic's "outlook is wider than that of the young composer: he can see the latter making mistakes that dozens of his like have made before him, following will-o'-the-wisps that have led dozens of his like astray."²⁹¹ Nonetheless, there are instances in which Newman felt that the critic is an ineffectual educator in regard to the composer. In 1955, he stated that "to the genuine composer, the critic can of course be of no 'use' whatever, nor does he claim to be."²⁹² Newman perhaps realised over the years that a critic's knowledge is sometimes overshadowed by the brilliance of a truly talented composer. However, his attitude towards the performer was a little less reverent.

He is not a creator; he is only a reader in public of a work that exists quite independently of him. Plenty of other people are just as capable as he of reading and

studying it; and if their view of it happens to differ from his they are justified in saying so.²⁹³

In fact, Newman even asserted that the critic often rivals the conductor in matters of knowledge, especially in regard to fairly distant epochs.

Give the average conductor a Mozart symphony or opera to conduct, and he can do nothing better with it than use it simply as a medium for exploiting his own standardised formulae for "expression." The critic, on the other hand, having put in a good deal of hard work trying to think himself into the eighteenth century musical mentality, to see the language of the music of that day as the composer and his contemporary listeners saw it, knows that the conductor is misrepresenting the composer at one point after another.²⁹⁴

However, Newman makes two assumptions in this case: a) that the average conductor does little or no preparation for a concert, and b) that the average critic is invariably more knowledgeable about the music than the average conductor. Sir Thomas Beecham's views are pertinent in this instance, even though he was certainly not an average conductor. In a Sunday Times article on criticism, Beecham expressed his outrage in regard to critics who view themselves as authorities on style regarding every composer from Tallis to Stravinsky.

I was asked to forget all those many and laborious hours when I discussed with half the composers of Europe and most of my fellow interpreters the different aspects of playing and interpretation on the morrow of the night before.²⁹⁵

It is probable that there are average conductors who do their homework just as there are average critics who do not do their homework.

Thus, we have discovered that Newman had some very definite ideas regarding the responsibilities of the critic. He felt that the critic should strive for the best in everything musical, and that he should be responsible, honest, deliberate, well-informed and as consistent as possible in his judgment making. He also noted that the critic should recognise his responsibility to himself as well as his responsibility to those about whom he is writing. The critic should not abuse that responsibility by boosting those people whom he does not truly admire, or by indulging his own personal prejudices. The critic should strive to be eclectic in his tastes, yet he should remain skeptical about everything musical. He should remain as detached as possible from his subjects of criticism, yet he should retain compassion for his fellow man.

The critic who fulfills these demanding responsibilities still has a formidable task before him. As Newman stated in A Musical Critic's Holiday, the critic is obliged to distinguish the small art from the great, "to distinguish between the works that are masterpieces and those that are not, and to make it clear that a given work is to be put in the one or the other class."²⁹⁶

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

De gustibus non disputandum: you cannot argue about matters of taste. In retrospect, this adage simply is not true. If we did not argue about matters of taste, then art would become stagnant. Arguments occur because choices must be made. Choices involve standards. Standards need elucidation. This is the critic's primary obligation. However, our examination of Newman's thoughts and our brief glance at the history of music criticism indicates that matters of taste have been disputed without the certainty of recognised standards. The critic's essential musical tastes have inevitably been predetermined by the sort of man he is, by the background of thoughts and experiences which constitute his musical personality. On a larger scale, the tone of each era's music criticism has largely been determined by concomitant sociological developments, which affect the prevailing aesthetic of each era.

In England, Victorian era music criticism was generally narrow, conservative and didactic in outlook. George Bernard Shaw's witty and effervescent writing heralded a reaction against this stodgy criticism of the nineteenth century. It was Newman, however, who deserves

to be recognised as the father of twentieth-century English music criticism. He not only prompted the critic to give serious consideration to his qualifications and responsibilities, he also challenged our concept of the purpose of music criticism itself.

Our recognition of the critic's reputation and qualifications is important if we are to attribute value to what he says. Newman's thoughts are worth serious consideration because of the stature which he attained in both regards. As we discovered, he commanded a great deal of respect and admiration from his contemporaries. Newman not only received adulation from fellow critics; he was also held in high regard by conductors, composers and performers. He was obviously a figure to be reckoned with in a profession which is generally held in low esteem by members of the performing arts. Analysis of Newman's qualifications was achieved by examining his background and training in light of Winton Dean's qualifications for the music critic as listed in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. We decided that he was impressively qualified for his profession. In view of the elevated stature which Newman achieved both in regard to his reputation and to his qualifications, we should give due consideration to his philosophy of music criticism.

Newman never completely expounded his philosophy of music criticism in book form. Therefore, our examination of articles from "The World of Music" gives us more insight into his thoughts regarding his profession. Because of the newspaper's space restrictions, he naturally had less time in which to luxuriate upon his topics. However, he often challenged this problem by dwelling, in a series of two or more articles, on the various issues raised by one subject. Newman also tackled the same problems time and time again during the course of his journalistic career. Therefore, we are able to perceive the progression of his thoughts regarding music criticism as he gained experience and wisdom over the years. In particular, we can determine whether his thoughts in regard to his profession were consistent or not.

It is apparent that Newman was as dissatisfied with the state of music criticism in the 1920's as he was in the 1950's. Throughout the years, his oft-repeated complaint was that music criticism gives us more information about the critic than about the work or performance under scrutiny. Newman's thoughts were consistent in this regard. It was during his search for standards of value, however, that his views show some inconsistency. In 1923, for instance, he stated his belief in one standard of value for the evaluation of music. In 1936, he asserted that no one standard exists. He proposed that we consider style as a

criterion in 1921. However, statements made in 1936 and 1945 indicate that he was less confident in this matter. In 1921, he determined that a composer's inability to deal with his subject matter could be regarded as a sign of amateurishness. Yet, in 1942, he vindicated such composers when he stated that these musical lapses could indicate a composer's courage in plunging into unexplored territory.

Although Newman did demonstrate some inconsistency in terms of his efforts to define standards for the evaluation of music, his inconsistency does not lower his status as a critic. Here we have a highly cultivated, rational and methodical mind which attempted to create harmony between an idealised vision of music criticism and the brutal reality of the situation. Newman attempted to discover scientific criteria for the evaluation of music. He failed. This does not mean that his views are worthless, and that no attention should be paid to them as a result. In the pursuit of knowledge, the pronouncements of a sage are still preferable to the babbling of an idiot.

It is also apparent that Newman's views in regard to music were sometimes inconsistent. As was noted by Sir Thomas Beecham, the critic occasionally changed his mind about the quality of music over the years. Moreover, as Neville Cardus observed, Newman was by no means objective in his evaluation of music during the early years of his career. His personal inclinations, in fact, affected his

thoughts to some degree about possible standards of value. For instance, his preference for nineteenth-century composers and his apparent aversion towards atonal music influenced his thoughts in regard to determining the aesthetic quality of harmony. However, Newman himself admitted that he was as prone to subjectivity as any other critic. He at least possessed the modesty to admit his fallibility, and the diligence to search for a more reliable means of musical evaluation.

The biggest problem which Newman confronted, and which all critics confront, is the unattainability of standards which are universal: standards which are all-encompassing in regard to time, genre and individual definitions of taste. Many people feel that the problems of music criticism have not been solved for the very reason that they are insoluble. If we come face-to-face with an insurmountable obstacle, then two courses of action become apparent. We could take an alternate route, and thus avoid the obstacle altogether; or we could seek out some means of compromise, such as incorporating the obstacle into our existence while attempting to function to the best of our abilities. It is apparent that Newman explored both alternatives in his attempts to overcome the obstacle of subjective criticism.

He explored the first course of action in his study of "finger-prints." Although the study of a composer's physiology has potential as a method of stylistic analysis, it simply constitutes an evasion of the problems inherent in music criticism. Newman himself admitted that his method had nothing to do with the aesthetic evaluation of music, even though he proposed a tentative plan to use stylistic analysis as a means of determining the correct interpretation of works. The feasibility of this plan, as we discovered, is questionable.

We previously determined that music criticism serves a primary purpose: the evaluation of music. The evaluative aspect of the profession is present to some degree in all of its branches. As we discovered, however, evaluation perhaps plays its largest role in journalistic criticism. There are essentially three levels in musical journalism: reporting, which is mainly concerned with the transmission of facts; reviewing, which requires more preparation and imagination, which caters to its readers, and in which performance evaluation plays a prominent part; and criticism, the highest form of musical journalism, which serves the function of education and development of taste. The latter is often more concerned with the evaluation of works rather than performances. Newman's articles from "The World of Music" are demonstrative in this regard. At this level, therefore, the critic has the most freedom in choosing his

topics of discussion. However, the critic is not totally absolved of his obligation to his readers at any level of journalistic criticism. Even at the highest level, his primary duties are to evaluate music and to educate his readers in matters of taste.

Readers, in turn, are motivated to read journalistic criticism for various reasons. Some seek to bolster their egos by reading the critic's agreement with their views about a work or a performance. Others revel in a critic's glorious slaughter of a performance, whether they have attended that performance or not. Some simply desire factual information. The remainder perhaps idealistically seek enlightenment and guidance in regard to matters of taste. The critic's readership, in general, is comprised of musical laymen. As Newman himself observed, readers of journalistic criticism are relatively knowledgeable about music and have fairly catholic tastes. However, their aesthetic reactions are most often based on intuition rather than on rationalisation in view of musical knowledge.

Even if we disregard the fact that Newman's method of finger-print analysis serves no useful function in the evaluation of music, it is apparent that it has limited applicability in regard to journalistic music criticism. The labour which the critic would be required to undertake would be time-consuming and intensive, and the consequent rewards would be few. This type of analysis simply has no

place in a profession where editorial deadlines loom and where space restrictions determine that detailed technical analysis is superfluous. In his New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians article on criticism, Winton Dean noted that elaborate musical analyses, whether they are explained verbally or simply by means of musical extracts (such as Hans Keller's Functional Analysis), would only serve to mystify the musical layman. For instance, it is illustrative to note that Newman most often had to clarify his intentions in a series of articles whenever he discussed his physiology of the composer.

We are not asserting that stylistic analysis has no place in music criticism. For instance, its possibilities could be explored to a greater extent by means of scholarly writing in periodicals and books, where considerations of time and space are not so much an issue. Writings by authors such as Hans Keller, Gerald Abraham, Sir Donald Tovey and Deryck Cooke are demonstrative of this fact. However, as Henry Raynor stated in his article entitled "Ernest Newman and the Science of Criticism," these writings can be regarded only in a very limited sense as critical. The critic may use them in order to facilitate an understanding of the way in which music functions, but they will not shed any light on the reasons for which music functions. Scholarly analysis has its place in music criticism, but not in the newspapers.

At some point in his career, Newman obviously realised that the discovery of infallible criteria was not to become a reality, at least in his lifetime. It is only natural that the cynicism and wisdom of advancing age should impinge upon the idealistic notions about music criticism which he cherished in his early years with the Sunday Times. Frustrating though it may have been for him, he became reconciled to the existence of subjective elements in music criticism, and he learned to function as effectively as he could despite them. As a result, Newman expressed some pertinent views in regard to the critic's task of coping with his biggest adversary: himself.

The critic's ability to function as effectively as possible is determined by various factors. Before he even attempts to write music criticism, he should devote years of study towards the attainment of musical knowledge. Knowledge in other fields which have some connection with music, such as philosophy and literature, would serve to maintain his perspective in the larger framework of human endeavour. He should also make a study of the criticism of the past in order that he might learn from the mistakes of his predecessors.

The critic should refine the ability to express his knowledge in a clear and stimulating manner. Moreover, before he embarks on his chosen career, he should also become fully aware of his responsibilities, such as honesty,

compassion for his subjects of criticism, avoidance of boosterism and other topics which were previously discussed. Most importantly, he should strive towards a complete understanding of the physiological and psychological aspects of his own personality: his temperament, his whole previous intellectual and emotional experience, his own particular prejudices and preferences and any other factors which would affect his judgment in matters of music. It is only through self-analysis that the critic can hope to account for the differences of opinion between himself and others, in terms of his and their original constitutions, training and environments.

Even if the critic has trained himself as thoroughly as possible, achieved a complete understanding of his own musical personality and learned to subordinate his prejudices in the interests of the music, his judgments will never be absolute. Criticism is opinion, not fact. The critic's judgments are merely the sum total of what he has heard, what he knows and what he believes. We cannot expect him to do our judging for us. If we place our blind faith in him, then we forsake our capacity to make our own choices in matters of taste. We can only expect that the critic, through his enthusiastic pursuit of musical knowledge, should stimulate us to think for ourselves and encourage us to expand our own boundaries of taste. If he provides us

with insight along the way, then so much the better. In the present state of music criticism, he can do no more.

Although the critic has been likened to an artist in his own right, it is apparent that his art is derivative. The critic only exists in order to comment on the work of others: the composers, conductors and performers who toil in order to present their art to the world. Say what the critic will, the work of art, in the end, is the only reality. Masterpieces survive; most criticism does not. It is to Newman's credit that so many of his newspaper articles were collected and published in books, where their survival is perpetuated beyond their ephemeral newspaper existence. By all indications, he should be regarded as one of the great masters of his own profession.

Because of Newman's assaults upon the impregnable fortress of music criticism, it is now impossible for the critic to air his views about music without being aware of the formidable obstacles which he faces. Although Newman thus made criticism a vastly more professional and responsible craft than it was even at the beginning of his own lifetime, that craft is still essentially irrational, essentially an individual's subjective response to what he hears. At his best, the critic must think as clearly as he can about music, and, without in the least claiming that he is always right, to put his views before others. His business is simply to criticise - to do what he can to

create an atmosphere in which things will be seen to be just what they are.

APPENDIX

THE COMPOSER AS SELF-'THIEF'

12th June 1932

To show the absurdity of the 'reminiscence'-hunting that looks merely at the pitches of the notes, without taking into consideration the really vital thing, the idea of which the notes are merely the outward symbol, let us examine the case of Nicolai and Wagner.

No. 1 A shows the passage in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' overture from which, it is alleged, Wagner derived a passage (B) in the third act of the 'Meistersinger'.

No. 1

The musical notation consists of four staves. Staff A (treble clef) shows a melody with a bracket above it labeled 'A'. Staff B (bass clef) shows an accompaniment with the lyrics 'My friend, in youth's en-char-m-ed days,' and a bracket below it labeled 'B'. Staff C (treble clef) shows a melody with a bracket above it labeled 'C'. Staff D (bass clef) shows an accompaniment with a bracket below it labeled 'D'. Brackets connect A to B and C to D, indicating the relationship between the two pieces.

The feature common to them both is the succession of intervals of the fourth. Now this interval happens to be characteristic of a good deal of the music in the scene in the 'Meistersinger' with which we are dealing; C and D show other phases of it. Before I go any further, however, I must forestall a certain type of criticism of the thesis I am about to put forward. When, some years ago, I cited an ascending figure of three adjacent notes as being a finger-print of Beethoven, learned reviewers all over the world pointed out that three ascending notes were to be found in many other composers! One well-informed gentleman discovered them in a song by Mozart; another, even more erudite, found them in the melody of 'Tipperary'! I did not know which to admire most, the profundity of musical knowledge that enabled these gifted publicists to quote examples

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from various composers in which the notes C,D,E, let us say, followed each other in that order, or the innocence that allowed them to suppose that I myself, when discussing this finger-print of Beethoven, was ignorant of the fact that these same notes appear some five hundred million times, at a moderate estimate, in the music of the last four hundred years.

As there are only twelve notes in the musical scale, it goes without saying that there is no succession of three or four of them that will not be found somewhere or other in the music of every composer who has ever lived. But the succession only constitutes a finger-print when it is unconsciously used again and again by a particular composer as the expression of what is fundamentally the same personal mood. The three-note sequence to which I drew attention is a Beethoven finger-print because it recurs time after time at virtually the same point in the phrase in dozens of his compositions, and always with the same intention, explicit or implicit.

Now intervals of the fourth are as common in melodies as any other intervals; and indeed they will be found in thousands of other places in the 'Meistersinger' than those to which I have directed the reader's attention. But examples such as those I have quoted constitute a special, though of course quite unconscious, use of fourths on Wagner's part. Used in this particular way, they are the symbol of a mood of resolution, of energy, of a decision taken, of emphatic insistence upon a point, of dignified or heavy movement. It is difficult to express a purely musical idea in a word or two, but the reader will see that basically all the moods I have mentioned have something in common; and the examples given on page 175 will perhaps make the matter clearer to him.

A is the figure of fourths used so largely in 'Parsifal' to express the stately tread of the Knights of the Grail. (In the guide-books it is called the 'Bells' motive, but this is an error. Wagner does indeed find it convenient to give the figure to the bells, but from evidence supplied by his works as a whole it becomes clear that primarily these fourths are motivated by the idea of a procession.) B is the melody to which Siegfried and Brynhilde sing the final words of their duet. 'She [he] is for ever, is for aye, my wealth and world'; here Wagner instinctively drops into

THE COMPOSER AS SELF-'THIEF'

No. 2



fourths to suggest the maximum of energy and joyous resolution. C is a particularly instructive example from the end of the *Kaisermarsch*; after a good deal of previous insistence on fourths, Wagner hammers away at them repeatedly at the finish in order to get the maximum of emphasis into his melody. The similarity between this and B is evident at first sight.

D is rather more subtle: it is sung by Kundry to the words 'Let me upon his breast lie weeping', and repeated in various forms during the following dozen bars or so; and the melody stamps itself out in fourths because Wagner, having to express here the despair and self-reproach of Kundry at their maximum, unconsciously reverts to the formula that, for him, is inextricably interwoven with all moods expressive of a great decision taken.

E is the figure used quasi-symphonically in the first act of 'Siegfried' to symbolise the young Siegfried's physical joy in life; once more the fourths come up in Wagner's mind when he has to express a sort of stamping energy. (The reader will remember also, in this connection, the stamping fourths in the motive of the Giants.) F is a motive which the commentators have never been able to label quite satisfactorily. I lack space to discuss it in full here, but I suggest that the clue to its psychic origin may perhaps be found in its fourths, and I leave the reader to work out the problem for himself.

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It will be seen, then, that there is not the slightest necessity to look to the 'Merry Wives' overture for the source of No. 1B: the governing interval of the fourth was virtually predestined for Wagner when he had to describe Sach's mood at this point. Moreover, in Nicolai the fourths suggest light-heartedness; whereas in Wagner a melodic sequence of that kind invariably carries quite another suggestion.

This kind of 'physiology of the composer' is not only curious and interesting in itself, but enables us to solve many a problem not only of 'plagiarism' but of style, of intention, and consequently of interpretation, especially in the case of Mozart and other old composers. In the present case it enables us to settle a little point in connection with the Siegfried Idyll. The books are wrong when they say that the motives of this are drawn from 'Siegfried'. The first main theme (bar 30 of the Idyll) was, as we now know, conceived first of all for a string quartet for Cosima, and then, years later, inserted, and that rather clumsily, in the third act of the opera. From internal evidence I suspect that the second main theme of the Idyll (bar 148, etc.) was also taken from this never-completed quartet, and adapted, still more awkwardly, to the words 'Saw'st thou thy face in the crystal brook?' But a later theme in the Idyll—that quoted as No. 2B above—was certainly written first for the opera and then transplanted to the Idyll; for with all the other evidence we have as to Wagner's fourths as a musical finger-print, we can say positively that *this* motive grew straight out of the situation and the words in the opera.

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