

**GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S  
EARLY MUSICAL CRITICISM:  
THE HORNSEY HORNET, 1876-77**

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THE HORNSEY HORNET, 1876-77

By

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## ABSTRACT

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), though primarily recognized today as one of the twentieth century's foremost dramatists, is also known as a music critic. It is only from the late 1880s and early 1890s that his musical criticism is generally remembered. Shaw's first writings, for the Hornsey Hornet, from 1876-77, have remained all but unknown over the past century. Their republication in Dan H. Laurence's Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw (1981), along with the first publication of many of Shaw's letters from this period, by Stanley Weintraub in Collected Letters 1874-1897 (1986), present much fresh material. I, myself, include in this thesis a number of hitherto unpublished reviews that Bernard Shaw wrote for the Hornsey Hornet, which did not find their way into Dan Lawrence's compendium.

Chapter One, Musical Roots: "Dublin 1856-76," deals with George Bernard ("Sonny") Shaw's musical environment in Ireland. The focus, though primarily on his immediate family, deviates slightly to capture the image of the enigmatic John Vandeleur Lee. Without this musical instigator it is doubtful whether any of the Shavian musical jottings would have emerged. The second chapter, "The Hornet's

Sting: London 1876-77," begins with a look at how Bernard Shaw stumbled into musical criticism. A survey of his critical columns from that year provides a rather comprehensive list of his musical beliefs. The topics range from orchestras to soloists to purple prose to composers and arrangers. The third chapter, "The Vocal Critic and his Demise," shows how Shaw continued with his self-education, with a little help from his friends. Shaw emerged, even in these early writings, as an extremely knowledgeable and capable vocal critic. By the fall of 1877 the complications of being a "ghost" critic caught up to Shaw and London lost, at least for a number of years, one of its most volatile journalists. In Chapter Four, "The Shavian Musico-Critical Legacy," Shaw's Hornsey Hornet contributions are weighed according to how Shaw viewed them, and how they compare with the efforts of other Victorian critics. As well, some possible reasons for the perpetuation of Shaw's musical criticisms in posterity are investigated. Finally, in the Appendix, information derived from Bernard Shaw's Hornsey Hornet reviews (the date of presentations, the major work reviewed, the performing group and venue, and the artists involved) are assembled in chart form.

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## INTRODUCTION

Corno di Bassetto is the name that is synonymous with George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), the music critic. His entertaining, outrageous, and remarkable "Bassetto" writings were not written until 1888, when he was already 32 years old. These columns from the Star were republished in 1937 by Constable and Company as part of the Standard Edition. Prior to this, the reviews covering Shaw's journalistic period after 1889 had been republished as Music in London (1932). Lost to general circulation were Shaw's earlier and equally captivating criticisms from his year with the Hornsey Hornet, 1876-77. Also absent were some of his periodic submissions to the Dramatic Review, the Magazine of Music, Our Corner, and the Pall Mall Gazette, made during the mid-1880s, and his non-professional submissions that appeared over the course of his last fifty-odd years. Just over a century had passed before the publishers Bodley Head agreed to republish these articles as edited by Dan H. Laurence.

My initial interest in Bernard Shaw, the critic, arose through the fortuitous acquisition of his three-volume set entitled London Music, in pristine condition. These

wise and witty volumes have continued to beguile me over the course of the past decade.

Shaw's earliest critiques show the young critic replete with virtually all of the characteristics that were to mark his now famous Bassetto columns of a decade later. Muddled are the waters from which the incipient critic emerged. Even if one has read a biography or two concerning Shaw [for instance Frank Harris's Bernard Shaw (1931), Hesketh Pearson's A Full Length Portrait (1942) or Colin Wilson's Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment (1981)], the picture of Shaw's musical upbringing is indistinct in the mists of time; it is also indecipherable from these contradictory sources. In various short pen sketches Shaw filled in the details. His Sixteen Sketches (1949) contains one such example. From reading these we discover that he was apt to alter his life story, either through embroidery or diminution. We enter this maze of biography in an attempt to unravel the tale. This was done in full knowledge of how easily one could be mired in the quagmire of contradictions presented. Nevertheless, this biographical "rubics cube" will be attended to in the opening chapter, since Shaw's environment affected his entire musico-critical career.

The Hornsey Hornet, in a surreptitious way, as we shall see, allowed Shaw to experiment with critical quandaries. He attempted to bulldoze his way to the heart of many musical problems that had long been plaguing London. Although rash at times and not as cunningly crafty as in his later criticism, his Hornet writings laid the



foundations for his musico-critical beliefs. The ideals that he upheld then were to undergo surprisingly little transformation throughout his lifetime.

Shaw's vocal background led him to be the most adept and astute critic of the singers of his day. With his first-hand aptitude for the vocal arts, he was able to attain a greater empathy for the singer than did even Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808-72), that formidable critic of the previous generation.<sup>1</sup> Shaw's knowledge and expectations covered all the requisite aspects that we now expect of our best artists.

That Shaw's criticism stands the test of time is a tribute to his insights. Known almost exclusively as a playwright, it is illuminating to compare Shaw's critical output with twentieth-century expectations. Whatever the outcome, one can at least be unconditionally guaranteed to be amused. That his buffoonery in critical matters is often cited, can be seen more as a tribute to his acclaim as one of the twentieth century's leading dramatists than to his output as a musical critic.

Shaw's incorrigible habit of telling the truth allows his musical beliefs to clearly shine through in his musical criticism. A recurring theme found throughout the various categories of music he analyzed is that of integrity. An artist who performed in a self-aggrandizing manner would be 'raked over the coals'. For Shaw art always came first, well before showmanship. This must not impinge upon the artistic conception. If the peripheral items worked, fine, but these remained secondary

concerns. Shaw did not allow the musical establishment or his newspaper's mandate to constrain him in any way. What Shaw thought, Shaw wrote. If Shaw believed a performer or composer deserved blunt, sharp or biting critical treatment, that was precisely what he wrote. His vision of musical art was an all-encompassing one. Through his eyes and ears the Hornsey Hornet readership was given the 'low-down' on mediocre composers, adequate and inadequate conductors, misbehaving audiences, misguided journalists, lethargic choirs, histrionic absurdities, orchestral malfunctions, and insidiously entrenched traditions. Solutions to many of the insipid problems he encountered, many of which still haunt our concert halls, are generously disseminated in Shaw's captivating prose.

Chapter One, Musical Roots: "Dublin 1856-76," deals with George Bernard ("Sonny") Shaw's musical environment in Ireland. The focus, though primarily on his immediate family, deviates slightly to capture the image of the enigmatic John Vandeleur Lee. Without this musical instigator it is doubtful whether any of the Shavian musical jottings would have emerged. The second chapter, "The Hornet's Sting: London 1876-77," begins with a look at how Bernard Shaw stumbled into musical criticism. A survey of his critical columns from that year provides a rather comprehensive list of his musical beliefs. The topics range from orchestras to soloists to purple prose to composers and arrangers. The third chapter, "The Vocal Critic and his Demise," shows how Shaw continued with his self-education, with a little help from his friends. Shaw emerged, even in these early writings, as an extremely

knowledgeable and capable vocal critic. By the fall of 1877 the complications of being a "ghost" critic caught up to Shaw and London lost, at least for a number of years, one of its most volatile journalists. In Chapter Four, "The Shavian Musico-Critical Legacy," Shaw's Hornsey Hornet contributions are weighed according to how Shaw viewed them, and how they compare with the efforts of other Victorian critics. As well, some possible reasons for the perpetuation of Shaw's musical criticisms in posterity are investigated. Finally, in the Appendix, information derived from Bernard Shaw's Hornsey Hornet reviews (the date of presentations, the major work reviewed, the performing group and venue, and the artists involved) are assembled in chart form.

## ENDNOTES

1. Chorley penned musical criticism for the Athenaeum from 1830-72. The best overview of Chorley's musical writings appeared in his Thirty Years' Musical Recollections (1862).

Henry F. Chorley, Thirty Year's Musical Recollections (New York: Vienna House, 1972).

## I. MUSICAL ROOTS:

### DUBLIN 1856-76

George Bernard Shaw's musical beginnings, from his birth in Dublin in 1856 to his departure to London in 1876, served to colour his entire career in musical journalism. The environment in which "Sonny" Shaw (George Bernard Shaw's youthful nickname) was raised helped to foster his deep and lasting love and understanding of music. The myth that Shaw, the critic, knew virtually nothing about music must be laid to rest, for he knew all about music.

Writing in his Preface to Immaturity, he stated that the entire Shaw clan was a "musical family." This we can clearly see when we look to Shaw's description of the multitudinous instruments on which the family performed:

My mother...sang very well; and the Shaws were naturally a musical family. All the women could "pick out tunes" on the piano, and support them with the chords of the tonic, subdominant, dominant, and tonic again. Even a Neapolitan sixth was not beyond them....My eldest uncle...played the ophicleide, a giant keyed brass bugle, now superseded by the tuba. Berlioz has described it as a chromatic bullock; but my uncle could make it moo and bellow very melodiously. My aunt Emily played the violoncello. Aunt Shah (Charlotte), having

beautiful hands, and refinements of person and character to match them, used the harp and tambourine to display them.<sup>1</sup>

While not being professional musicians, Sonny's relatives were fine amateur musicians. ("Amateur" in that period meant an accomplished practitioner of the art, and had nothing to do with the present denigrative context of the word, namely one who does not earn money thereby.)

Although Sonny's aunts and uncles were a musical lot, they were not the primary influence on his development. His immediate family provided the basis for his solid musical grounding. Shaw described his father, George Carr Shaw (1814-1885), as a "sort of musical genius" who could "play any instrument." Mr. Shaw "played the trombone, and could vamp a bass on it to any tune that did not modulate too distractingly"<sup>2</sup> and enjoyed joining a group of a dozen or so of his cronies to delight brass aficionados by regaling them at various locations around the city. He "not only played his trombone part, but actually composed it as he went along, being an indifferent reader-at-sight, but an expert at what used to be called 'vamping'."

Bernard's father was apparently ahead of his time in his attempt to promote music therapy. One episode in particular has been documented. His brother William had been placed in an asylum by his wife who feared that his strange, though harmless, behaviour might turn to violent actions. Bernard later wrote that his father believed:

...that a musical appeal might prevail with him, and went in search of the ophicleide. But it was nowhere to be found. He took a flute to the asylum instead; for every Shaw of that generation seemed able to play any wind instrument at sight. My uncle, still obstinately mute, contemplated the flute for a while, and then played Home Sweet Home on it. My father had to be content with this small success, as nothing more could be got out of his brother....<sup>3</sup>

Certainly Mr. Shaw possessed musical abilities, but he did not seriously pursue his musical gifts; they were treated simply as social accomplishments that any gentleman was expected to possess. As Bernard explained:

Modern readers will laugh at the picture of an evening at Bushy Park, with the bachelor Sir Robert and his clan seated round an ottoman on which my uncle Barney stood, solemnly playing Annie Laurie on the ophicleide. The present distinguished inheritor of the title may well find it incredible. But in those days it was the fashion for guests to provide their own music and gentlemen to play wind instruments as a social accomplishment...<sup>4</sup>

The women were by far a more musical force to be reckoned with than the male head of the family. Their musical studies were pursued in earnest since music was considered one of the acceptable female pastimes.

Sonny's mother, Lucinda Elizabeth Gurley (1830-1913), being of a well-to-do family (or perhaps more correctly, a family with pretensions), was raised a lady in the manner expected and proper in nineteenth-century Dublin society. Classics were, as a matter of course, taught along with French, high society manners, and many other

skills that would be of little use to her in her later domestic situation. The one element that did help her in later life was music. She had been instructed in pianoforte, harmony and counterpoint. Her son wrote that: "She had been tyrannously taught French enough to recite one or two of Lafontaine's fables; to play the piano the wrong way; to harmonize by rule from Logier's Thoroughbass..."<sup>5</sup>

Her marriage to George Shaw was certainly not the most successful of associations. To start with, she wound up losing most of her inheritance because the match was not an approved one. Well, such occurrences would not get in the way of true love. However, Lucinda was to discover on her honeymoon that her new husband was a dipsomaniac (although not of an altogether disagreeable type). Add to this a sixteen-year age difference between them and the marital path was bound to be a rocky one. But, divorce was almost unheard of in that age. It was by turning to musical endeavours that Lucinda strove to forget her marital disappointments.

Shaw, writing about his mother's musical salvation, stated, "But there was one trump in her hand. She was fond of music, and had a mezzo-soprano voice of remarkable purity of tone."<sup>6</sup>

Enter Mr. George John Lee. By 1853 Lee was established as a vocal teacher of fine repute in Dublin. Also, he was the founder, orchestral conductor and inspirational force behind the ambitious Dublin Amateur Musical Society (established in



1852).<sup>7</sup> Little is known of Lee's musical background, but he certainly made a fine niche for himself in the cultural life of Dublin for a twenty year period from the early 1850s to the 1870s. The Irish Times reported one of Mr. Lee's endeavours on 6 May 1865 in the following glowing review:

### AMATEUR MUSICAL SOCIETY

The above society gave a concert last evening at the Antient Concert Rooms, in aid of the funds of the Whitworth Hospital, Drumcondra. There was a numerous and fashionable attendance, owing, no doubt, to the fact of the concert being for a charitable purpose, and more particularly to the expectation of a rich musical treat, as might be anticipated from a glance at the programme, and the prestige enjoyed by the society as a musical institution in the city. Mr. Lee conducted with characteristic accuracy and efficiency. The concert opened with Mendelssohn's Wedding March, then came in succession, selections from other composers, including Gounod, Sir John Stevenson, and a few compositions by Mr. G. J. Lee, which were listened to with marked pleasure, which the audience indicated at intervals by applause. The second part of the concert was more varied still, commencing with the "Village Chorister," arranged by Mr. G. J. Lee, and embracing many agreeable items. The vocalism throughout was of a high order, and the society have in fact much reason to congratulate themselves on the success of last evening's concert.

Maestro Lee was a man of many talents: conductor, vocal teacher, composer, arranger, pianist, organizational wizard and author. His book The Voice: Its Artistic Production, Development and Preservation (1869) outlined in general terms his vocal pedagogical method and philosophy. He took care, however, to make no outlandish claims that the book could solve all problems, and the aspiring vocal



George John Lee (seated, centre) with Lucinda Shaw (far left)  
and George Carr Shaw (far right), 1865<sup>8</sup>

student was advised to seek professional assistance. Published initially only in Dublin, The Voice was received well enough to go into a second edition, this time with a simultaneous publication in London.<sup>9</sup> Lee's actual authorship comes into question later in this study. It is probable that Lee had at least the assistance of a co-author in this production. Shavian scholar Dan Laurence believes that Lee was incapable of penning much of anything.<sup>10</sup> The ramifications of such a situation will be clarified later. Bernard himself was in future years involved in the revamping of a projected new release of The Voice. His notes for this venture have partially survived and have been published in Archibald Henderson's study of Shaw.

It was probably in the early 1860s that Lucinda decided to begin studying voice with G. J. Lee. Her son recorded the following some years later:

Singing lessons were cheap in Dublin; and my mother went to Lee to learn how to sing properly. He trained her voice to such purpose that she became indispensable to him as an amateur prima donna. For he was a most magnetic conductor and an indefatigable organizer of concerts, and later of operas...<sup>11</sup>

Bernard believed that Lee's "taste in singing was classically perfect. In his search for the secret of bel canto he had gone to all the teachers within his reach."<sup>12</sup> The turning point in Lee's pedagogical voyages came when "he heard an Italian baritone named Badeali<sup>13</sup> [sic], who at the age of 80, when he first discovered these islands, had a perfectly preserved voice, and, to Lee's taste, a perfectly produced one."<sup>14</sup> So emerged what Lee's followers were to call "The Method":

Finally Lee equipped himself with a teaching method which became a religion for him...and my mother, as his pupil, learnt and embraced his musical faith, and rejected all other creeds as uninteresting superstitions. And it did not fail her; for she lived to be Badeali's age and kept her voice without a scrape on it until the end.<sup>15</sup>

Vocal lessons had given Lucinda "a Cause and a Creed to live for."<sup>16</sup>

Besides becoming indispensable as Lee's prima donna and chorus leader, she also became Lee's general musical factotum. With her knowledge of harmony and counterpoint she thought nothing of concocting orchestral scores from the piano reductions. This was a necessity with the limited resources and unreliable instrumentation of a troupe such as the Amateur Musical Society.<sup>17</sup> Lucinda even composed a number of parlour songs to popular verses, which she published under the pseudonym "Hilda". The Night is Closing Round, Mother, Silver Music Ringing, and The Parting Hour are three of her compositions published in Dublin.

Eventually the Shaw drawing-room became the rehearsal centre for Lee and his entourage. And by 1866 it was arranged for Lee and the Shaw family to share dwelling space, first at an idyllic setting up on Torca Hill overlooking the Bay of Dublin, Torca Cottage. A year later they moved to No. 1 Hatch Street, Dublin, a larger establishment in a more fashionable part of town. The Shaw household had developed into a musical focal point. So emerged the innocent ménage à trois that so many Shavian commentators have found worthy grist for their speculation mills. Whatever the facts of the situation may have been, Sonny was blessed with a

tremendously active musical hothouse in which to thrive.

Bernard later recorded in his Preface to London Music that, "my earliest recorded sign of an interest in music [was] when as a small child I encored my mother's singing of the page's song from the first act of *Les Huguenots*...music has been an indispensable part of my life."<sup>18</sup> As an evidently precocious lad he "could sing and whistle from end to end leading works by Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi."<sup>19</sup> No mean feat for a mere sprig of a boy.

There is little record of the musical gifts of Sonny's sister Elinor Agnes ["Yuppy" (1855-1876)], but his elder sister Lucinda Frances ["Lucy" (1853-1920)] had evidently inherited much of her mother's talents. Bernard wrote of Lucy that,

My elder sister had a beautiful voice. In the last of Lee's Dublin adventures in amateur opera she had appeared as Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, on which occasion the tenor lost his place and his head, and Lucy obligingly sang most of his part as well as her own. Unfortunately her musical endowment was so complete that it cost her no effort to sing or play anything she had once heard, or to read any music at sight. She simply could not associate the idea of real work with music; and as in any case she had never received any sort of training, her very facility prevented her from becoming a serious artist, though, as she could sing difficult music without breaking her voice, she got through a considerable share of public singing in her time.<sup>20</sup>

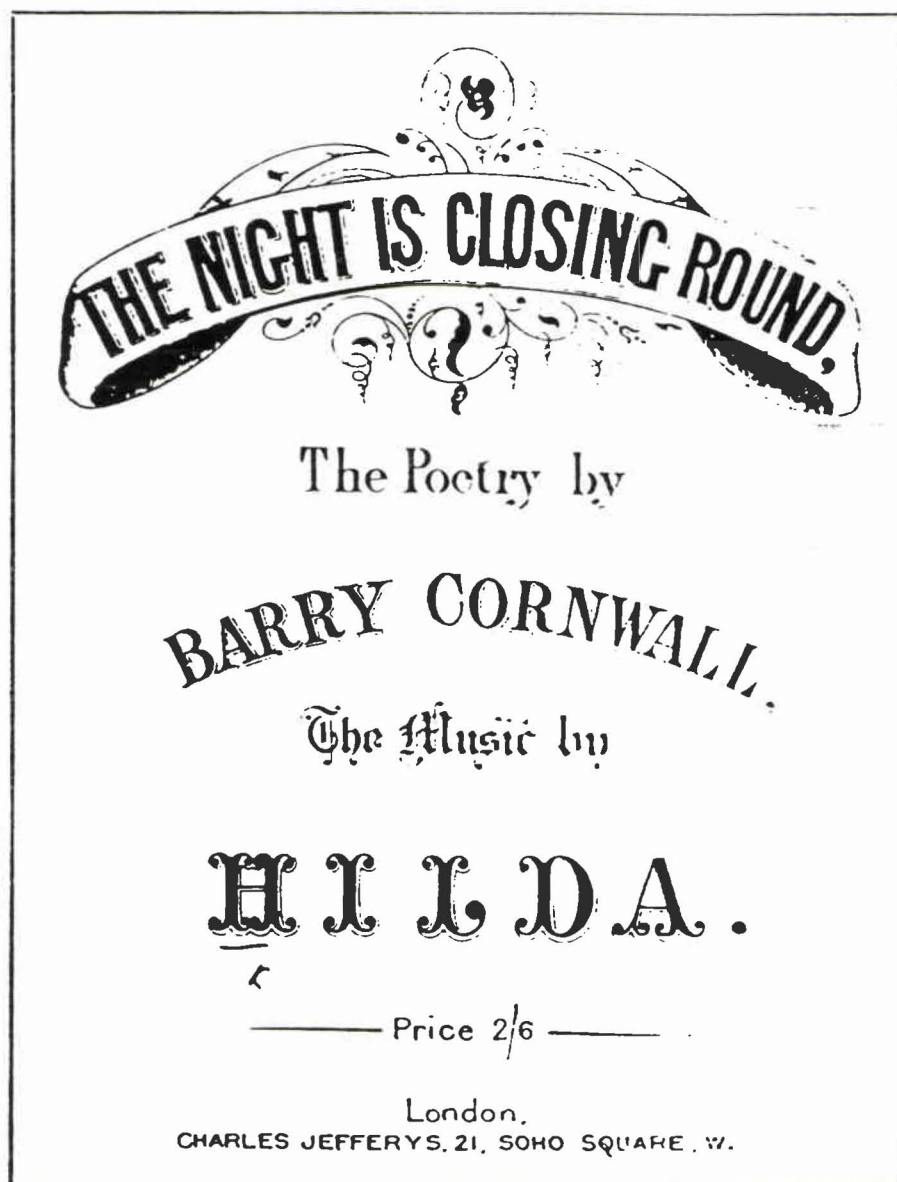
She was bound to be yet another influential source in Sonny's musical upbringing.



So proceeded the important period in Sonny's musical nonage. However adamant he was about being self-taught, he must have acquired a great deal of essential musical tutelage during his first fifteen years, which included ten years of close proximity to the musical maestro, Lee. The situation was soon to change. Ambition and/or circumstance were to alter the cozy arrangements of the Dublin ménage à trois. Looking back Shaw wrote:

The summit of a provincial conductor's destiny was to preside at a local musical festival modelled on the Three Choirs or Handel Festivals. Lee declared that he would organize and conduct a Dublin Festival with his own chorus and with all the famous leading singers from the Italian opera in London. This he did in connection with an Exhibition in Dublin. My mother, of course, led the chorus. At a rehearsal the contralto, Madame de Meric Lablache, took exception to something and refused to sing. Lee shrugged his shoulders and asked my mother to carry on, which she did to such purpose that Madame Lablache took care not to give her another such chance.<sup>21</sup>

By the early 1870s George John Lee, who had altered his name to Vandeleur Lee to suit his rising star, was becoming desirous of more grandiose conquests. Thoughts of London had probably been forming in his entrepreneurial mind for some time. What appears to have precipitated the relocation was an altercation with Sir Robert Stewart (1825-94), Dublin's most prominent musician.<sup>22</sup>



Title page of a ballad composed by Lucinda Shaw  
under the pseudonym "Hilda", 1865

Apparently, the professional musicians had for some time been feeling pressured by Lee and his very fine Amateur Musical Society, which he had renamed the New Philharmonic (undoubtedly to compete with Stewart's Dublin Philharmonic), in time for the festivities at the International Exhibition, in May of 1872. Vandeleur Lee was apt to be quite frank in his evaluations of his fellow musicians. Bernard wrote that Lee was "a teacher of singers so heterodox and original that he depended for his performances on amateurs trained by himself, and was detested by his professional rivals, whom he disparaged as voice wreckers, as indeed they mostly were."<sup>23</sup> Stewart possibly "resented the evolution of the Amateur Musical Society into a performing body that challenged professional musicians and threatened their livelihood."<sup>24</sup> It appears that Stewart managed to sabotage Lee's position with the society during the 1873 Dublin Exhibition. John O'Donovan suggests that "Lee's many technical weaknesses as a conductor" were revealed by his rival.<sup>25</sup> The Irish Lord later claimed that he had "unmasked one arrant impostor and drove him from Dublin."<sup>26</sup> Whatever the case, Vandeleur Lee had departed Dublin by June of that same year. Sir Robert assumed the leadership of the New Philharmonic immediately after Lee's departure, making the affair appear to have been some form of power struggle which Lee did not care to pursue.

The Shaw household was never to be the same again. Mrs. Shaw decided to go to London within a month of Lee's departure. Three possibilities could explain this action. She could not stand the loss of her musical mentor; her youngest



daughter, Agnes, who was ill with tuberculosis, was to be taken for medical attention; or she wanted to give her talented eldest daughter Lucy a chance at a singing career. As things stood, the female Shaws had all departed and left Sonny and Mr. Shaw to fend for themselves.

Rossett writes in his Shaw of Dublin that, "G.B.S. was hopelessly classical in his musical tastes. Surrounded in his childhood and youth, thanks to his mother and her music professor, by opera, oratorio and symphony, they were as much a part of his artistic growth as the material necessities were to his physical growth."<sup>27</sup>

Music was not only part of Sonny's "artistic growth," but by his own admission, when the musical half of the household moved to London he found himself "deprived of music, which had been [his] daily food all through [his] life."<sup>28</sup> Rossett's declaration that Sonny was "hopelessly classical in his musical tastes" is quite unwarranted. Although leaning more towards operatic and symphonic fare at this juncture in time, his natural curiosity led him to explore wide-ranging interests in musical and other fields (from bicycling to vegetarianism). Indeed, a glance at his musical scores still preserved in his library at Ayot St Lawrence demonstrates that he also had a keen interest in art song, folk song and dance music. His eloquent journalistic support of the Brass Band movement, coverage of music theatre, interest in Dolmetsch's Early Music revival amongst other sundry musical genres are further evidence of his roving musical interests. Eclectic would be a much superior term for

his musical tastes rather than "hopelessly classical."

Back now to Shaw's reflecting on his change in musical environment and the resolution to his dilemma:

And now, what about myself, the incipient Corno di Bassetto? Well, when my mother sold the Hatch Street furniture, it never occurred to her to sell our piano, though I could not play it, nor could my father....having lived since my childhood in a house full of music, I suddenly found myself in a house where there was no music, and could be none unless I made it myself. I have recorded elsewhere how, having purchased one of Weale's Handbooks which contained a diagram of the keyboard and an explanation of musical notation, I began my self-tuition, not with Czerny's five-finger exercises, but with the overture to Don Giovanni, thinking rightly that I had better start with something I knew well enough to hear whether my fingers were on the right notes or not. There were plenty of vocal scores of operas and oratorios in our lodging; and although I never acquired any technical skill as a pianist, and cannot to this day play a scale with any certainty of not fozzling it, I acquired what I wanted: the power to take a vocal score and learn its contents as if I had heard it rehearsed by my mother and her colleagues. I could manage arrangements of orchestral music much better than piano music proper. At last I could play the old rum-tum accompaniments of those days well enough (knowing how they should be played) to be more agreeable to singers than many really competent pianists. I bought more scores, among them one of Lohengrin, through which I made the revolutionary discovery of Wagner. I bought arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies, and discovered the musical regions that lie outside opera and oratorio.<sup>29</sup>

It does seem surprising that Bernard was not at least taught the piano as a child. Admittedly, the piano was primarily thought of as an instrument for the ladies as part of their social skills. Not until he was sixteen did Shaw begin seriously to consider learning the instrument. His efforts at self tutelage appear to have been quite successful. He claims that he only made partially fruitful attempts to teach himself and that it was this or musical starvation. He would later prove his prowess upon the instrument with his ability to accompany Vandeleur Lee's operatic troupe in their renditions of both opera and operetta in London. But more of that later.

He never found the Dublin school system to be of any value. Sonny was placed in a variety of schools in an attempt to find the right fit for him. He had no time for their curriculum and so read what he wanted to read and studied what he fancied (art and literature). "I was acquiring an equipment which enabled me not only to pose as Corno di Bassetto when the chance arrived, but to add the criticism of pictures to the various strings I had to my bow as a feuilletonist."<sup>30</sup>

The veracity of Shaw's comments on his musical training must be dealt with cautiously. His disdain and distrust of traditional educational institutions and processes was apt to taint his version of events. To be completely self-taught and to attain the level of execution that Shaw, though reluctantly, admits to having reached is extraordinary, even for a 'Superman'. One is led to suspect that he was, at the very least, taught to read music. How else could he possibly have been able to hum or



Bernard Shaw at the piano with Robert Moor Fishbourne, 1876<sup>31</sup>

whistle complete operas as a youth? But, perhaps his musical memory was phenomenal. He did admit that he could pluck a tune on the piano. Quite likely he had at least a modicum of piano instruction from either his mother, sister Lucy or from Lee.

His tales of being self-taught abound. It is almost as if he was trying to convince himself that this was the way it actually happened. No one else could get any credit for the creation of Shaw. The following is a sampling of sources which reveal similar tales of Sonny's self tutelage.

He learnt of new genres and the depth of Bach on his own:

I did not know that such things as string quartets or symphonies existed until I began, at sixteen, to investigate music for myself. Beethoven's sonatas and the classical operatic overtures were all I knew of what Wagner called absolute music. I should be tempted to say that none of us knew of the existence of Bach were it not that my mother sang *My Heart Ever Faithful*, the banjo like obbligato of which amused me very irreverently.<sup>32</sup>

The self-taught pianist struggled on despite the anguish of the rest of the neighbourhood:

...though I had never touched it [the piano] except to pick out a tune with one finger. In desperation I bought a technical handbook of music, containing a diagram of the keyboard. I then got out my mother's vocal score of *Don Giovanni*, and tried to play the overture. It took me some minutes to arrange my fingers on the notes of the first chord. What I suffered, what

everybody in the house suffered, whilst I struggled on, laboring through arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies and vocal scores of all the operas and oratorios I knew, will never be told. In the end I learnt enough to thumb my way through anything.<sup>33</sup>

And, he revealed why he had to become a music critic and not a performer:

Meanwhile nobody ever dreamt of teaching me anything. At fifteen, when the family broke up, I could neither play nor read a note of music. Whether you choose to put it that I was condemned to be a critic or saved from being an executant, the fact remains that when the house became musicless, I was forced to teach myself how to play written music on the piano from a book with a diagram of the keyboard in it or else be starved of music.<sup>34</sup>

The only proof to show that Sonny had any keyboard training is found in his diary for 1875-76. He wrote (in Pitman shorthand) that he took "a few pianoforte lessons from T. Moore without result."<sup>35</sup> As to be expected he downplayed any outside educational influences as negligible.

A couple of attempts at learning the cornet must also be noted. Sonny's Uncle Walter played the cornet and at one stage encouraged Sonny to learn that instrument. With this encouragement he went for lessons to a Mr. Kennedy, an English band musician. However, Sonny discontinued the cornet lessons due to an illusion that playing a brass instrument might well ruin his singing voice. This demonstrates the importance of the voice in the Shaw household.



Bernard's boyhood friend, McNulty, wrote years later that Sonny took lessons from

Mr. George Connolly, a member of the Theatre Royal orchestra, and to this gentleman's residence in Mount Pleasant Avenue Shaw used to trudge twice a week, with his cornet wrapped in brown paper under his arm. But this phase lasted only a few months; Shaw explained its collapse by the fact that it was necessary for a cornet player to have his lips of horn-like consistency, and he found that too tedious a process.<sup>36</sup>

At one stage Sonny yearned to become a painter like Michael Angelo [sic]. He alternatively "had dreams of being a Badeali"<sup>37</sup> (operatic singer), which he fostered through his mid-to-late teens. Sonny was hired as a clerk at a land assessment office when he was about fourteen years of age. Since he was getting nothing out of his schooling the sentiment was that he may as well be earning his way. Music was not left out of the generally tedious office routines. To make the time pass more quickly, when the superiors were out, Shaw would coach the gentleman apprentices in the singing of "scraps" of selections from operas:<sup>38</sup>

I recall one occasion when an apprentice, perched on the washstand with his face shewing above the screen that decently concealed it and stood for Manrico's tower dungeon, sang Ah, che la morte so passionately that he was unconscious of the sudden entry of the senior partner, Charles Uniacke Townshend, who stared stupended at the bleating countenance above the screen, and finally fled upstairs completely beaten by the situation.<sup>39</sup>

Particularly noteworthy is the preponderance of vocal music in Shaw's early years. It was the basis from which emerged one of the most authoritative vocal critics ever to pen criticisms--opera, oratorio, music hall and song would all be well within his realm.

So went the four years of Sonny's musical self teachings. In April of 1875 he finally decided that he had enough of office life, even with its sizable annual salary of £84, and gave a month's notice. His intentions were to go to London to rejoin his mother and pursue the literary life.

The first stage of Shaw's musical development was a fruitful one. His first fifteen years had been filled with all sorts of musical ventures taking place within very close proximity indeed--within his own home. The last four years showed that music was a very necessary part of his existence. He required it enough to learn, virtually on his own, to play piano. He also taught himself assorted selections of operatic, symphonic and chamber music. Bernard Shaw's musical beginnings were enough to foster a love of music that would stay fresh within him for the next seventy-plus years of his life.



## ENDNOTES

1. Bernard Shaw, Immaturity (London: Constable and Company, 1879, reprint 1950), pp. xi-xii.
2. B. C. Rosset, Shaw of Dublin (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964), p. 13.
3. Bernard Shaw, Immaturity, p. xv.
4. Bernard Shaw, Immaturity, pp. xi-xii.
5. Bernard Shaw, London Music in 1888-89 (London: Constable and Company, 1937), p. 7.
6. Bernard Shaw, London Music, Preface, p. 9.
7. Nathaniel Harris, The Shaws: The Family of George Bernard Shaw (London: Dent, 1977), p. 33.
8. British Library 50587/10.
9. Nathaniel Harris, The Shaws, p. 55.
10. Private communication from Dan H. Laurence at the "Shaw on Stage" conference, University of Guelph, 24 August 1989.
11. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 10.
12. Bernard Shaw, London Music, pp. 10-11.
13. The successful Italian basso cantante Cesare Biadiali (b. early 19th century; died 1865) purportedly was able to sing a scale while drinking a glass of claret. He sang in Italy, Paris, Madrid and London.
14. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 11.
15. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 11.
16. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (London: Constable and Company, 1949), p. 14.

17. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 10.
18. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 28.
19. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 15.
20. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 23.
21. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 21.
22. Sir Robert, a composer, organist and music scholar, was appointed professor of music at the University of Dublin in 1861. From 1873 he conducted the Dublin Philharmonic. He was Charles Villiers Stanford's (1852-1924) first teacher.
23. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, p. 14.
24. Nathaniel Harris, The Shaws, p. 56.
25. Michael Holroyd, The Genius of Shaw (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 27.
26. Note in Stewart's copy of Annals of the Theatre Royal, now in Dublin's City Library.
27. B.C. Rossett, Shaw of Dublin, p. 11.
28. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, p. 34.
29. Bernard Shaw, Preface to London Music, pp. 26-27.
30. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 17.
31. Harold White/Lauder Bros. found in Holroyd's Bernard Shaw: 1856-1898 The Search for Love. vol. 1., p. 28.
32. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 16.
33. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, pp. 34.
34. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 17.
35. Stanley Weintraub, Bernard Shaw: The Diaries 1885-1897 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 29.
36. B. C. Rossett, Shaw of Dublin, p. 12.

37. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 17.
38. Bernard Shaw, Immaturity, p. xxxi.
39. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, pp. 31-32.

## II. THE HORNET'S STING

### LONDON 1876-77

Music in London was thriving during the 1870s. A general belief that foreign-produced talent was better than British showed itself in the marked preference for foreign musical artists of all types. German conductors, Italian and French singers, and Russian pianists were all to be found in the forefront of London musical events. At the same time that home-grown artists were disparaged, one of the questions most widely talked and written about was "When would the 'English Beethoven' emerge?" As for great artists, in 1877 alone three stellar musicians, Anton Rubinstein (1830-94), Clara Schumann (1819-96) and Richard Wagner (1813-83), who came for the London Wagner Society's Wagner Festival, all paid 'flying visits'.

Italian opera still ruled the roost in London, with two long-time rival impresarios vying for the upper hand. Frederick Gye (1809-1878) promoted the Royal Italian Opera at the Covent Garden, while James Henry "Colonel" Mapleson (1830-1901) led Her Majesty's Opera. Great female singers, whose names are still

familiar today, took the leading roles: Albani, Patti, and Nilsson. The new tenor of the day was Signor Gayarré, whom the audiences hoped to christen "another Mario".<sup>1</sup> The great Mario had done his farewell tour in 1874. Carl Rosa had mixed success in attempting to establish English opera at the Lyceum. However, British singers were better known for their renditions of ballads of the day; amongst them were Madame Lemmens-Sherrington (whom Shaw was to dub "the mistress of claptrap"), and the ever-popular and unreliable Mr. Sims Reeves.

Orchestral series' were thriving in the late seventies. August Manns (1825-1907) was conducting the Crystal Palace Orchestra, which had been performing since 1855. The Saturday and Monday Popular Concerts, under the aegis of Chappell and Co., the music publishers, had been running for almost twenty years at St. James's Hall. W.G. Cusins (1833-93) directed the conservative Philharmonic Society concerts. Hans Richter (1843-1916), who made his London début at the Wagner Festival, would start his own orchestral series in 1879.

Choral music was flourishing with many grand works being performed by the Sacred Harmonic Society, the recently formed Bach Choir (1876), Mr. Leslie's Choir (which specialised in more intimate fare), and the Albert Hall Choral Society under the direction of Joseph Barnby (1838-96). The vocal event of the season was the sixth triennial Handel Festival held in July in the Royal Albert Hall, complete with a monster choir and a vast orchestra. In addition to all this professional music-making,

chamber music concerts (notably by The Musical Union), presentations at the pleasure gardens (such as at the Royal Westminster Aquarium), lectures at the Musical Association, and many amateur offerings were available. The number and scope of musical activities in London in the late 1870s was staggering. It was no wonder that papers occasionally bragged that they had a team of music critics ready to go at a moments' notice to cover these events.

On 31 March 1876, Bernard Shaw left Dublin to join his mother and sister Lucy at Ventnor, on the Isle of Wight. His younger sister, Agnes, had died there four days previously, of consumption. A month later Bernard arrived in London, having no means of supporting himself; his own term for his situation was "unoccupied." Thankfully, he had lodgings provided for him, with his mother Lucinda and sister Lucy, in their new abode at 13 Victoria Grove, SW. Mrs. Shaw supported the household by teaching singing, the unadulterated Lee "Method," to Londoners. Lucy was actively pursuing her dream of singing professionally. She had made appearances in Vandeleur Lee's amateur opera series while in Dublin, her most notable success there coming with her portrayal of Amina in La Sonnambula. In London she appeared as the Queen of Spain in Lee's production of Marchetti's Ruy Blas. Apparently, she developed an intense dislike of Lee, perhaps because of amorous advances he made towards her, or because of personality differences. Lucy subsequently left Lee's retinue to seek other avenues of advancement. In 1879 she made her professional début in the pantomime Beauty and the Beast at the Royal Park

Theatre, Camden Town. Meanwhile, Sonny was receiving a small stipend from his mother, a necessity which certainly irritated his fierce sense of independence. In September 1877, after several months of attempting to find employment through family connections, he was still looking for something to free him from his maternal obligation. September arrived and in desperation Bernard paid three-and-a-half guineas tuition fees for enrolment in a cram course in Excise to prepare him for a Civil Service examination.<sup>2</sup>

The fullest description of how Bernard Shaw came to be the "ghost" music critic for the Hornsey Hornet is found, ironically enough, in a job application that he submitted after his dismissal from that paper. Shaw had received an introduction from his cousin, Mrs. Cashel Hoey, to Mr. Arnold White who was then the manager and secretary of the Edison Telephone Company of London. The following is an excerpt from Shaw's application as found in the Bernard Shaw Collected Letters (1874-1897). Writing on 5 October 1879 he deprecatingly described his past employment as clerk as one in which "I sulkily distinguished myself." Shaw candidly explained his prospects upon his arrival in London during April 1876 as follows:



"Dear Mr White

"After our recent conversation, I think it best to tell you what my circumstances are ... I at first prepared to enter the civil service, but as I was neither a linguist nor a mathematician, I had to study for a small berth. Whilst I was doing so, and getting very impatient of the society of schoolboys and the tutelage of a grinder, a friend of mine who was musical critic to a weekly paper, offered me the emoluments of the post if I would discharge its duties. I threw up my studies, and set to work to reform the musical profession.<sup>3</sup>

Shaw's "friend," the Hornsey Horner's music critic designate, was the incredible Vandeleur Lee. It was conceivable that Vandeleur had already been writing musical criticism for the Hornet. He had been in London since leaving Dublin in 1874. Certainly, Shaw's letter to Mr. White seems to indicate that Lee had been employed in writing musical criticism for the paper. However, it is also possible that he had just been approached for the position at the time that he offered the work to Bernard. It is thought that Lee, knowing of Bernard's desperate financial situation, may have arranged to take on the position in order to pass it on to Bernard. Precise accuracy on this point is impossible, for time has effectively clouded the details.<sup>4</sup> Difficulty in attributing the Hornet articles arises from the custom of the age to publish unsigned journalism. Some scholars believe that it was inconceivable that Lee ever produced any publishable written work at all. Indeed, Lee's book on vocal production was almost certainly ghost-written for him. A later unfinished edition even received the attentions of the protagonist of this tale.



The Hornsey Hornet, published in London by F. Arnold from 1866-80, was described by Shaw as a "critical and satirical journal."<sup>5</sup> Published weekly, the Hornet had rather eccentric contents, ranging from snippets about politics, inventions or foreign affairs ("Parisian Buzzings"), to music ("Musical Buzzings"), plastic arts ("Art Notes"), literature and humour ("Our Absurd Column"). The Hornet was not a publication to be ranked with the highly respectable Daily Telegraph or the prestigious Times; rather, it was a paper that catered to the newly literate. It is likely that Shaw would have placed the Hornsey Hornet amongst the lot that he labelled as "blackguard" papers (such as, perhaps, the Figaro, the Referee, or the Westminster). With its combination of satire and criticism aimed primarily at society, the Hornet appears to have been directed down towards the "masses" rather than up to the "classes".

Authorship of the ninety-plus critical contributions purportedly made to the Hornet by Bernard Shaw has been established by Dan H. Laurence through their inclusion in Shaw's own scrapbook of clippings, now housed in the British Library.<sup>6</sup> Since all the music columns in the Hornet were unsigned, it is quite possible that the total number of Shaw's submissions printed was greater than the group to be found in Dan Laurence's compilation, Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw.

Shaw's submissions were printed in the Hornet from 29 November 1876 to 27 September 1877 (slightly less than one complete calendar year). That the young critic "had not yet learned how to substitute the rapier for the bludgeon,"<sup>7</sup> is evident when one considers the severity of his Hornet criticisms. The reader may well wonder what stoked the critical fire in the heat of which Shaw zealously set out to "reform the musical profession." One possible solution is proffered to us by Shaw himself in his Hornet "buzzings" from 15 August 1877. He declared that in Ireland, "audiences are neither easily pleased nor particularly ceremonious in demonstrating their displeasure." Although Shaw apparently never went to the draconian lengths that Berlioz resorted to, by voicing his low opinion during performances, he nevertheless vigorously penned his "displeasure." The young Shaw bravely battled against incredible odds, one young voice against a plethora of deeply ingrained societal evils, the musical David against the philistine Goliaths.

Shaw received "some grievous knocks" due to what some of the critic's victims felt to be the "unreasonable tendency to be honest." Indeed, honesty was one element that the fledgling critic held in high regard. As we shall see, Shaw would not let the mere wounds inflicted upon indifferent artists worry or inhibit him in his quest to carry the banner of artistic integrity. If artists strayed from the course of musical integrity, then Shaw could be counted upon to see to it that they were unequivocally made aware of their transgressions upon taste. Nor was he one to bow down to the panjandrums of London's musical society. They would have to bring considerable

pressure to bear before our righteous critic would even consider altering his stance. Even though he was to be expelled from concert halls and was to face a barrage of vitriolic correspondence, he stood by his judgements and refused to be compromised. Furthermore, he sneered at his opponents who would reserve their favours for "complaisant critics."<sup>8</sup>

Shaw believed that there were appropriate times for one to criticize music. On several occasions he charitably chose a course of mere reportage of what had transpired. Regarding a so-called public rehearsal for the triennial Handel Festival and various benefit concerts, Shaw deemed critical comment inappropriate. Although, concerning an opera benefit performance staged for the relief of "distressed" Americans, he permitted himself to indicate that the soprano, Madame Van Zandt, had achieved "a floral success."<sup>9</sup>

False plaudits and gushing purple prose were not to be found in any Shavian musical criticism. In his columns Shaw pledged to stick to the objective truth, as he saw it, however objectionable it might be to the recipient. Those parties must have been unaccustomed to receiving such a delivery of the blunt truth. Shaw stated in the pages of the Hornsey Hornet that puffery would "appear overstrained and out of place in these columns."<sup>10</sup>

"Purple prose" concerned Shaw when Anton Rubinstein (1830-94), the famous Russian piano virtuoso, was to appear in London in the spring of 1877. Shaw pretended to balk at the daunting critical task ahead of him:

Greater pens than we can hope to wield have already told the world of the great pianist seizing his hearers by the ears with wings of golden fire. Highly popular essayists have circulated columns of exalted and original imagery, wherein we find Beethoven turning in his grave and gazing at the score of the Ocean symphony with admiring despair. Rubinstein is the Jupiter, the Cyclops, and the what other potent personality you will, of the pianoforte. One enthusiast, having apparently rushed straight from the exciting pages of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* into musical criticism, calls his idol "the d'Artagnan" of the instrument.<sup>11</sup>

Such labels were too much for Shaw to tolerate, as he wholly disapproved of the modern German fashion of purple prose adopted in many of the era's newspapers. He sharply castigated other journalists when he wrote that "our public prints have been pouring forth columns of such nauseous eulogy, not to say ignorant nonsense." Shaw added that if Beethoven were able to read such absurd pronouncements, he would have turned in his grave with a "characteristic grunt of disgust." So angered was Shaw that he concluded what turned out to be a non-review of Rubinstein's concert with the following stunning clincher: "For ourselves, we would out-Herod Herod in wild applause of the genius displayed by the great virtuoso at his concert, only--we wernt [sic] at it."<sup>12</sup>

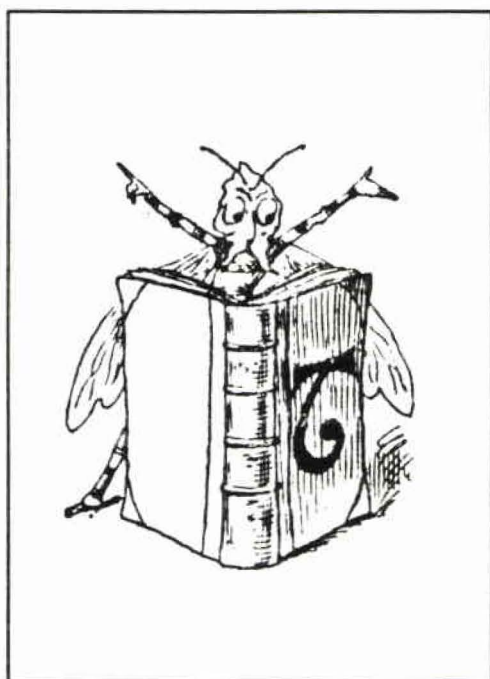
Shaw attempted to do some "mind reading" upon occasion for his readers. In July of 1877 he predicted what a renowned British conductor might have been thinking as he read the drivel published in rival papers. Concerning the Handel Festival, Shaw wrote that "Sir Michael Costa has probably enjoyed the triennial laugh in his sleeve over the journalistic exaggerations of the difficulties he had to contend with."<sup>13</sup> Costa (1808-84), amongst others, would have to search long and hard to discover even a glimmer of credit doled out to him by Shaw.

Bernard Shaw was the great equalizer. He was clearly disgusted by the "exaggerated encomiums"<sup>14</sup> that he read all too frequently in other critics' coverage of musical events. He pictured himself as being the arbiter of musical truth. So daunting was his self-imposed task of righting the imbalance, that as a result Shaw waxed more negatively than was really necessary. However, that approach may well have been considered necessary by Shaw in his crusade to offset the grave ills that he encountered.

Shaw refused to accept mediocrity from professionals, whether they be performers or composers. Commonplace new compositions were scathingly reviewed if they lacked the flame of inspired writing. This, however, does not mean that he had his critical "head in the clouds." Shaw believed that he could recognize famous composers' great works, as well as great works in diverse realms, such as parlour music.

A symphony by a certain M. Halberstadt was credited with showing "much ingenuity in the use of well-worn passages and commonplace themes."<sup>15</sup> This and other such "pieces of patchwork," often identified as being academic works contrived by professors of music, were reviled by Shaw. When he was bored with a work he did not let courtesy hinder him and appropriately dubbed the work dull or mediocre. Some compositions of this ilk by Dr. Ganz were savagely reviewed by Shaw in the following terms: "Such productions may be tolerated occasionally from young ladies in drawing rooms, but their intrusion on the concert platform amounts almost to an impertinence."<sup>16</sup> He was able to sense a spirit of individuality in Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots,<sup>17</sup> but he seldom unreservedly praised a work. In Cherubini's Anacreon Overture Shaw found music that "display[ed] a vivacity and fire" unlike many of that composer's staid works, however "polished and scholarly."<sup>18</sup> Writing in a rather mocking manner about the oft-discussed phenomena of music's effect upon man's behaviour, Shaw commented that "after a very unattractive air--I was tempted to crime."<sup>19</sup>

In his critique of a new opera, Biom, by Lauro Rossi, Shaw lamented over the "many difficulties which beset criticism." He declared that the chief amongst these difficulties, and by far the "most hopeless is the effort to review work which, without rising to originality or stooping to bad craftsmanship or absurdity, preserves a dead level of respectable mediocrity." Such compositions present:



A selection of cartoons accompanying Shaw's 1877  
Hornsey Hornet musical reviews (artist unknown):  
 (a) May 30 (b) & (c) July 25 (d) July 4<sup>20</sup>



To the most acute censor a purely negative completeness, in which there is nothing to be admired, nothing that can reasonably be condemned, and, in short, nothing but the constant demand for something with a semblance of novelty to justify its existence at all.<sup>21</sup>

Although "never directly plagiarizing," he feels that Rossi's works always sound as if they had been borrowed from some famous composer's compositions, very often Verdi. Along the same lines, William Carter's cantata Placida, the Christian Martyr was described in the Hornet column as being an "eminently inoffensive work. It constantly refreshes the listener with reminiscences of familiar masters."<sup>22</sup>

The Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the brother of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's Consort, certainly received an unwelcome stinging review from our hornet. His Highness's opera Santa Chiara, declared Shaw, did not even give the listener:

the consolation of laughing at it. It is a wealth of mediocrity and commonplace composition. There is nothing crude, nothing ludicrously weak in it. Only there is nothing original....The noble composer has borrowed everything, and assimilated nothing. Instead of impressing his own stamp on his levies, he has simply obliterated that which they originally bore.<sup>23</sup>

If the Duke did not achieve heights of inspiration in Santa Chiara, Shaw at least wanted to hear the composer's own voice emerge through his music. But this obviously did not materialize often, much to Shaw's dissatisfaction.



There was to be no blind reverence of any composer by Shaw, no matter how stellar his reputation. Shaw believed that the name of the creator alone does not immediately ascertain worthiness of a creation. Compositions of the acknowledged masters were still listened to critically. If they failed to live up to Shaw's standards, he would say so without hesitation. In only his third contribution to the Hornet he pointed rather mysteriously to weaknesses that he saw in Mozart's Strinasacchi Sonata. This came after he had stated that it had much in common with the Jupiter Symphony in its formal clarity and varied aspects. It was, in Shaw's opinion, "one of the composer's less important works,"<sup>24</sup> and suffered accordingly by being on the same program as Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata. Shortly after, in reviewing a performance of Felix Mendelssohn's Lobgesang, Shaw stated that he felt it did not rise to great heights due to the "feeble materials" employed.<sup>25</sup> What Charles Gounod (1818-93) was able to create in Faust was obviously not recaptured in his later opera Cinq Mars. He was lambasted for having "fallen back on manufacture as a substitute for inspiration. As it comes from a first-rate establishment, it is manufacture of a good sort, but as music it is valueless."<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Robert Schumann and many other musicians of the nineteenth century, the "inordinate long-windedness" of Franz Schubert did not register on Shaw's ears as "heavenly lengths." Shaw felt at times that that composer's works were often out of proportion. He maintained that in Schubert's String Quintet in C, op.163, the

composer "fell into error." Though Shaw found the music beautiful, he thought it unfortunate that it was so long as to become wearisome.

In a different vein, Shaw disapproved of performers and composers who irresponsibly embellished compositions. In more than one case the verdict of guilty was meted out by the judge and jury that was Shaw. M. de Fontaine supplied a cadenza for a child prodigy who played Mozart's Piano Concerto No.9 in E-flat Major, K.271. He "might have saved his reputation for good taste by suppressing his responsibility for this--as it proved--very vulgar ornament."<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the singer rendering the part of Nevers in Les Huguenots, Signor del Puente, "attempted to embellish the recitative which precedes the finale of the third act, and illustrated thereby the remark of Michael Angelo [sic] that to alter is not to improve."<sup>28</sup> It becomes evident that Shaw took the words of his painter hero, Michelangelo, to heart. The evidence can be read in Shaw's musical columns found in the Hornet.

A production of Les Huguenots led Shaw to make one of his strongest pitches against alterations of scores. He felt that the use of the "pruning-knife" on the opera was barbarous and he decried the manner in which the opera had been "recklessly mutilated." Shaw felt that "what cannot be done properly is best left undone," rather than having it "tastelessly curtailed." Furthermore, he asserted that much of the bad press that Meyerbeer's opera had received was due to the critics who

had not studied the score themselves. Without this requisite knowledge, they were pronouncing that the work was a "fragmentary arrangement of musical odds and ends."

Shaw's preparations made prior to his reviewing of musical works is clearly evident. In the Les Huguenots article he declared that the work is "highly finished in all its parts." His knowledge of the omissions and variants that were offered is evidence of his intimate knowledge of that work; such as is derived only through score-study. In the same column Shaw ridiculed the conservative critics who shift allegiances according to the weather of conservatism. Shaw himself, rightly so, attempts to weigh each musical work on its own merits:

The conservative critics, having glorified Mayer and Paisiello in order to disparage Rossini, at length discouraged, invent rhapsodies about Meyerbeer for the purpose of depreciating Wagner.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of background preparation by other critics restricted their scope significantly. Perhaps this limitation led to the great number of positive reviews that filled the London presses. Possessing a wealth of knowledge obtained through diligent study, Shaw was able to depart from "the usual cautious reserve of critics."<sup>30</sup>

Shaw believed in the necessity of studying the score in advance, as well as the libretto and related materials. He, as critic, was consequently able to give insightful analyses of the merits of a work and also to take into consideration whether

or not the performers had faithfully reproduced the work according to the composer's indications. The pains that Shaw took to be well prepared are apparent in his knowing comments concerning a presentation of Gioacchino Rossini's Stabat Mater. He unyieldingly stated that the baritone "entirely failed to realize the sharp markings of the Pro peccatis."<sup>31</sup>

The level of Shaw's score knowledge was indicated several years later. On 7 January 1883, in correspondence with Francis Hueffer (1843-89), music critic of the Times, Shaw stated that he had the ability "to arrive at some conclusion as to the merits of a work from the score when I am out of reach of a performance."

A rampant habit amongst chamber music performers was that of not studying their scores prior to concerts. This, to Shaw, was a sign of their lack of professional commitment. Such spontaneous renderings were evidently commonplace. Rather kindly, Shaw merely indicated that the accompanist in a performance of the Schumann Sonata No.2 in D Minor, op.121, for violin and piano, possessed "evidently limited foreknowledge of the work."<sup>32</sup>

Conductors, who should be the guardians of music, were frequently found to be less than adequate watchmen. A fair amount of Shaw's bellicosity was directed towards them. The following are some general observations made in the preamble to

some complimentary observations that Shaw wrote about the conductor August Manns:

The performances to which we are accustomed in London seem to move in a narrow circle from weak incompetence or coarse violence to the perfection of lifeless finish, according to the incapacity, the misdirected energy, or the cold autocracy which distinguished the conductors.<sup>33</sup>

Most frequently their skills were pugnaciously attacked. Two conductors who were very active on the London scene, Joseph Barnby (1838-96) and Michael Costa, were frequent recipients of Shaw's gibes. They owed this distinction to their frequent misinterpretation, in Shaw's opinion, of tempi and styles. Shaw observed that Barnby, primarily a choral specialist, lacked the "gift of magnetism" so necessary for conductors and possessed a "painful tendency to drag." His efforts were found to be "unsatisfactory in the extreme."<sup>34</sup> On another occasion, Barnby:

seemed to be actuated by one motive: that of getting through his work as quickly as possible. We believe Mr Barnby will find few musicians to agree with him as to the tempo of Oh, thou that tellest, which was played more in the trivial measure of a dance tune than with the solemn emphasis of a sacred air.<sup>35</sup>

Barnby and Costa were not the only conductors whom Shaw tormented. At the Covent Garden production of Les Huguenots, Shaw found that "under his [Auguste Vianesi's (1837-1908)] direction the orchestra quite surpassed themselves in rough and inartistic execution."<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Richard Wagner's conducting stood up rather poorly when it was displayed at a concert alongside that of Hans Richter

(1843-1916). Shaw stated that Wagner's, "beat is nervous and abrupt" and that his "tempo is capriciously hurried or ritarded without any apparent reason." In contrast, he described Hans Richter, one of the few conductors that Shaw regularly praised:

Herr Richter, whose assumption of the baton was hailed by the band on each occasion with a relief rather unbecomingly expressed, is an excellent conductor, his beat being most intelligible in its method, and withal sufficiently spirited.<sup>37</sup>

What Shaw desired to see and hear in a conductor he found at a Philharmonic Concert lead by William G. Cusins (1833-93)<sup>38</sup>: "Great praise is due to Mr Cusins, whose conducting and personal influence on his band shew his musicianly interest in and appreciation of his work."<sup>39</sup>

From the numerous instances where Shaw mentioned the precise pitches that were sung or played it appears quite likely that he possessed absolute pitch. It would account for the numerous comments about faulty tuning that filled his columns and drove him to distraction. At a Monday Popular Concert Shaw found the "imperfect tune [sic] being occasionally quite painful." In many instances he actually indicated the precise pitches that were, or should have been, produced. An aspiring tenor, Giuseppe Fancelli (1835-88), was informed that his "organ of tune seems to have improved since last season."<sup>40</sup> Signor Talbo (Hugh Talbot Brennan) "spoiled *La donna e mobile* by concluding on a weak B natural."<sup>41</sup> A soprano, one of the few

that Shaw thought highly of, had the ability of singing "up to F in altissimo."<sup>42</sup> Shaw was even aware when pieces had been transposed out of their original keys.<sup>43</sup>

In a cantankerous mood, Shaw speculated that the tuning transgressions of Oluf Svendsen (1832-88), a Norwegian flautist, were attributable either to a "defective ear" or to his "craving to be conspicuous!"<sup>44</sup> If a performer had just made her début, then Shaw may have relented a little and merely mentioned some incapacity owing to nervousness. But, if a big-name performer had faulty intonation, it was unforgivable and was resoundingly condemned. The lack of mention of intonation problems in other newspaper's coverage of musical events makes one wonder as to the latitude that most critics permitted artists in performance. Shaw permitted only perfect pitching.

Shaw's experiences with the few daring performers who attempted memorization of their music was not a happy one, as the following excerpt attests:

Mlle Marie Krebs [1851-1900] appeared for the first time this season, and achieved the somewhat heroic feat of executing the Sonata Appassionata from memory. Nevertheless, this fashion of dispensing with the book, which has come into vogue of late years, we hold to be not only unnecessary, but undesirable, except in the case of compositions intended to display technical proficiency only. In the interpretation of Beethoven's greater sonatas, the strain on the executive powers is sufficiently engrossing without further distracting the attention from the feeling of the tone-poem by adding the difficulty of remembering it by rote.<sup>45</sup>

There was much written about the state of the orchestra and instrumentalists in Shaw's "winter of discontent" as music critic of the Hornsey Hornet. Shaw did not hesitate to point out what he considered to be significant faults in orchestration. The frequent misuse of the harp in many compositions of that period was the basis for more than one Shavian tirade. In the new opera, Pauline, of Frederick Hymen Cowen (1852-1935) the utilization of the harp was "conspicuous by its abuse."<sup>46</sup> When discontented with shortcomings of orchestration such as he found in the Duke of Saxe-Coburg's opera Santa Chiara, Shaw would dwell on the subject. So it was that the Duke's excessive maltreatment of the harp was attacked.<sup>47</sup>

One of Cowen's songs was also injured through the inclusion of "tasteless flute passages at the end of each verse." His knowledge of this field came from his impressive grounding acquired through a wealth of listening experiences and through his thorough knowledge of Berlioz's treatise on instrumentation.

Bad orchestral playing would send Shaw into a frenzy. He could not tolerate what he called an "impoverished" orchestra and lambasted more than one impresario for subjecting the public to such an outrage.<sup>48</sup> After a performance of [Gounod's] Faust Shaw noted that "the orchestra plays strepitously--most offensively so, indeed."<sup>49</sup>



Blatant instances of inartistic playing were unmercifully highlighted in his criticisms. One such outrage was a particular string ensemble's manner of "dry, rasping style of bowing."<sup>50</sup> This group was perhaps fortunate that Shaw straightforwardly told them about their ills; countless others had their shortcomings mercilessly lampooned in all sorts of farcical manners.

Brass players in particular were well warned to brace themselves to receive a resounding Shavian blast if they dared to read the musical criticism as found in the Hornet. Shaw moaned that the offensive trombones "have become a nuisance to frequenters of the Albert Hall."<sup>51</sup> When Rossini had desired accented fortissimo notes played by the trombones for his Stabat Mater, Shaw wrote that the composer "studied instruments in the hands of artists, and not in the circus." Worst of all is the fact that the conductor of the ensemble, Mr. Barnby, apparently approved of the "hideous bark" from which "audiences visibly shrink."<sup>52</sup> So resigned to dreadful trombone playing did Shaw become that he complimented them on one occasion when they atypically "played without any of the noisy vulgarity"<sup>53</sup> that he was so used to hearing. Similar characteristics amongst the performers of the brass family apparently rubbed Shaw the wrong way. On one occasion the "trumpets were disagreeably harsh in one or two places."<sup>54</sup>

After having heard a transcription for orchestra and military band of Handel's "See the Conquering Hero comes," Shaw wrote in a sarcastic tone that:

The delighted listeners had the pleasure of hearing the simultaneous explosions of six cornets, six horns, four euphoniums, one ophicleide, and seven trombones, in addition to the full orchestra of reeds and strings. The trumpets alone remained silent, probably in order to avoid undue noise.<sup>55</sup>

The much dreaded brass "noise" returned often to haunt Shaw and to amuse the Hornet readership:

Some weeks ago we departed from the usual cautious reserve of critics as far as to predict a failure for the orchestral portion of the opera [Der fliegende Holländer] Signor Vianesi's band has obligingly borne out our statement, but not without a faint effort to redeem its reputation. The strings and reeds were a little better than usual, whilst the brass exercised an unwonted self-denial in the matter of noise, and so added indecision and feebleness to their customary defects of coarse tone and absence of phrasing.<sup>56</sup>

A "stage carpenter" motif reappeared occasionally in Shaw's column. The outrageous notions that he purported to advance are hilarious (as long as you are not the recipient of the criticism!):

The orchestra was at times rather noisy. The military drum and cymbals, never very welcome, are particularly objectionable at Her Majesty's, the instruments used being utterly destitute of tone. It would be cheaper, and equally effectual, for Sir Michael to employ a stage carpenter to bang the orchestra door at a pre-arranged signal.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere, the carpenters close up shop:

On the first night the stage carpenters abetted the endeavors of the orchestra to make the picturesque music-opera fail. On the second the band lost their allies, but still contrived to do some damage.<sup>58</sup>

Whether or not the full blame of poor performance should lay at the feet of the orchestral members, most particularly the brass players, or of the conductor, is a moot point. Both received the sting. The Covent Garden opera orchestra played in a "style more suited to a circus or dancing saloon."<sup>59</sup>

The plentiful band of pianists in London during the 1870s obviously did not impress the Hornet's critic appreciably. In an unusually resigned mood Shaw penned this review of the concert pianist Agnes Zimmerman (1847-1925):

Miss Zimmermann's playing is always thoroughly satisfactory: being accurate, free from affectation, and only lacking that natural gift of the highest expression, which is so rare, and so impossible of acquisition, that we have no right to complain of its absence.<sup>60</sup>

Although he most frequently tormented female pianists, he did not restrict his adverse criticism to them. A certain Mr. Henri Ketten's (1848-83) injudicious "use of pedal [was] abhorrent to an educated ear."<sup>61</sup> Clara Schumann was the only pianist whom Shaw spotted as possessing the divine fire and musical intuition so lacking in other established artistes.

The popular pianist Arabella Goddard (1836-1922), though "unrivaled in manual dexterity,"<sup>62</sup> was the recipient of a fair number of Shaw's barbs. That Madame Goddard's husband happened to be the critic of the Times, James W. Davison (1813-85), may possibly have spurred Shaw on to be more lyrically negative. She assumed her "splashy style...with ease thanks to the extraordinary technical attainments and lack of esthetic feeling."<sup>63</sup> Upon one memorably painful occasion, Madame Goddard,

fascinated her hearers with a strikingly unpleasant imitation of bagpipes, which must have astonished those who had studied her program for a recital on the 23rd inst. [of this month], where she figures as the exponent of Bach, Handel, and Schumann.<sup>64</sup>

At all times Shaw was concerned with the authenticity and musicality of performances. When the offerings fell short of Shaw's expected level of excellence he prepared his sting:

Instead of an orchestra conscientiously endeavoring to do justice to a great work the audience were entertained by the spectacle of a number of individuals bent on displaying the consummate ease with which they could rattle through so simple an affair as a score of Mozart's.[Symphony No.39 in E-flat Major, K.543]<sup>65</sup>

A further indication of Shaw's awareness of proper performance practice was demonstrated in his review of a concert at the Crystal Palace on 24 February 1877. Mozart's Symphony No.40 in G Minor, K.550, was performed with far more

strings than the composer could possibly have envisioned. Shaw argued that Mozart's intention was to a great extent frustrated by the abundance of strings employed in the modern orchestra. The weightiness of an ensemble equipped to perform the Tannhäuser Overture was scarcely fit to reproduce a Mozartean masterwork.<sup>66</sup> No doubt Shaw would heartily applaud the likes of John Elliot Gardiner, Roger Norrington and Trevor Pinnock for their efforts to recapture a spirit closer to the composer's original expectations.

Even the audience could not escape Shaw's wrath in the pages of the Hornet. Their behaviour and musicality were just as scathingly attended to as were the artists' performances. The pernicious problem of unwarranted ovations was as prevalent in Shaw's day as it is in our own. Shaw felt that the "lavish applause with which our music mobs" praise the performers had lulled them into a "false security." When Enrico Tamberlik (1820-89), definitely not one of Shaw's favourite tenors, "substituted a strange description of shriek" at an approximate pitch, instead of an appropriate ringing high note, Shaw in disgust, noted that "the audience, ever appreciative of vocal curiosity, eagerly redemanded it."<sup>67</sup> This was a tricky matter, because the source of the malady often received positive reinforcement.

A further indication of audience ignorance was humourously pointed up by a display of bouquets being "dropped promiscuously" during a performance of Gounod's Faust. While it was fine for a performer to have achieved a "floral success"



Shaw, nevertheless, ventured to add that it was inappropriate for a bouquet "bearing a message of peace and charity" to fall into Mephistophele's hands!<sup>68</sup>

Shaw's comments concerning the end of a concert were often his most amusing, though for Shaw the hidden agenda was very serious. Writing on 13 December 1877, he noted that:

Neither the romantic beauty of the work, nor the ordinary politeness due to the artists, availed to secure it a hearing until the last overcoat in the hall was comfortably buttoned and everybody prepared to rush forth at the first notes of the coda.<sup>69</sup>

All hope was not abandoned even though lamentations were regularly aired in the Hornet column. "Her [Etelka Gerster] success was a gratifying proof that our national habit of believing blindly (or, rather, deafly) in any worthless artistic material that impresarios think fit to impose on us, has not quite blunted our appreciation of genuine merit. Mlle Gerster is evidently a born musician."<sup>70</sup> After a "classical" program at the Promenade Concert held in Covent Garden, Shaw thought that he saw some reason to believe that the public does like good music. This was despite the popular theory that indicated that the mobs demanded "the worst possible value for their money."<sup>71</sup> Perhaps Shaw had been spoiled, for he wrote that in Ireland the audiences "are neither so easily pleased nor particularly ceremonious in demonstrating their displeasure."<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Shaw may have been flinging an insult at insular London attitudes by rating "provincial" Dublin audiences as more discerning.

Some of the best known Shavian musical criticisms involve Johannes Brahms (1833-97) and Richard Wagner. Various compilations and articles, such as Nicolas Slonimsky's Lexicon of Musical Invective, have culled only the most outrageous of Shaw's pronouncements. This sensational distilling process created a false impression of Shaw, the critic. It is true that he occasionally made outrageous comments, but to isolate these does not give a balanced view.

He was a Wagnerite, but in his admiration, Shaw was not blind to Wagner's faults. Brahms was not slashed in Shaw's Hornet reviews. Although Shaw's terms were not glowing, Brahms's strengths were not denied. The rose-coloured glasses that many critics wore were not perched on Shaw's proboscis. Shaw did not put his hero on a pedestal at the expense of other composers. Shaw was open-minded. He gathered information carefully. As his knowledge grew his ideas and sympathies developed. He was not too stubborn to reverse his decisions.

Lest one think that Shaw was always a Brahms-basher "extraordinaire," Shaw's early writings should be considered. In a review of one of Brahms's string quartets, Shaw wrote that it gave the listeners "sufficient example of the genius of a master of whom we in this country know far too little."<sup>73</sup> This is definitely not what the casual reader of one of the aforementioned Shavian distillations would have expected. Brahms's Liebeslieder Waltzes were premiered in London in 1877. Shaw commented that they "must have been delightful to all whose temperaments were

sufficiently poetic to grasp the spirit of the composition." One can not be too sure which way Shaw leaned on the merits of this set of vocal pieces. But, since he was not one to shy away from the negative, its absence here would seem to indicate a fair acceptance of the work.<sup>74</sup>

After a production of Wagner's Der fliegende Holländer, Shaw wrote that he has found an element here that "the other operas of Wagner grievously lack - human interest."<sup>75</sup> This was a common complaint of his. Shaw, was not, and indeed never did become, a non-judgmental admirer of Wagner's creations. Another indication that Wagner was not considered an untouchable in Shaw's books occurred after Wagner had participated in the London Wagner Festival in 1877:

He was presented with an address, and a laurel wreath was placed on his brow, which latter distinction was probably more gratifying to his feelings than favorable to the dignity of his appearance. After the last concert he made a brief speech to the orchestra, expressing a satisfaction at their performance which we hope was sincere.<sup>76</sup>

Shaw obviously looked upon the laurel wreath as an absurd visual distraction and was not so much a "perfect Wagnerite" as to suppress mention of it in his review. Shaw also knew that the orchestra was not up to par because they had great difficulty following Wagner's erratic beat pattern and wildly fluctuating tempi.



The British audience's conservatism was attacked by Shaw. He pointed to the absurd fact that the "public who are not afraid to face the combined power of nine military bands...[have been] foremost in denouncing Wagner and his school as mere noise manufacturers."<sup>77</sup> He added, "tongue in cheek", that for the massed band concert "jewelers' cotton will be at a premium!"<sup>78</sup>

Shaw got his jabs in at the conservative critics' lack of insights:

The merits of Meyerbeer are now rarely disputed. The conservative critics, having glorified Mayer and Paisiello in order to disparage Rossini, at length praised Rossini at the expense of Meyerbeer; and now, nothing discouraged, invent rhapsodies about Meyerbeer for the purpose of depreciating Wagner.<sup>79</sup>

A great time was to be had by the readership in sorting out the stodgy critics' beliefs! Their hidebound minds were marvellously duplicated by Shaw's weaving strands of verbiage.

An intriguing Wagnerian article was passed on to Shaw via Lee for revision. It appeared in the Hornet's "Men and Women of the Day" column on 9 May 1877. Laurence indicated that the article was then further refined by the editor of the Hornet. However, some markedly similar sentiments to Shaw's still peep through. It is tempting to claim that these following passages were definitely Shaw's. On the negative side, it was regretted that "the hand that produced 'Tristan and Isolde' should

have wasted so much of its cunning on the absurd myths and shadowy personages with whom it is impossible to feel a ray of sympathy." And on the positive side, although the anti-Wagnerian "notion that he [Wagner] was a mere noisy charlatan," held by so many Englishmen, this old belief it was claimed, had "vanished."<sup>80</sup>

Shaw's preference for the revolutionary Wagnerian operas as opposed to the tired Italian standards was clearly stated in the following passage from a review of Bellini's I Puritani:

The Suoni la tromba was taken too fast; but it was the sooner over. What a boon this duet must be to the clamorers for "melody" and Wagner extirpation. Everybody can whistle it. To hear it is to learn it. To learn it is to detest it.<sup>81</sup>

The critical climate of the day tended to push critics to extreme positions. Pressures were brought to bear by colleagues to encourage the fence sitters to join a side. "Paper wars" raged over many issues. Besides the Wagner controversy, the anti-Schumannites faced off against Schumann's English supporters. The main protagonists were the critics Henry F. Chorley (1808-72) of the Atheneum and Charles L. Gruneisen (1806-79) of the Daily Standard, battling James W. Davison (1813-85) of the Times<sup>82</sup> with his coterie which included Joseph Bennett (1831-1911) of the Daily Telegraph. Another rather extraordinary sample of the sort of bickering found in the papers arose when Bennett was asked by the composer Julius Benedict (1804-85) to rewrite Chorley's libretto for the oratorio St. Peter. Chorley was rather "put

Men and Women of  
the Day.

No. LXV.

RICHARD WAGNER.

WAGNER's present visit to this country is made under circumstances very dissimilar to those that brought him here before. In fact, he makes just such a triumphal return as did Louis Napoleon to the shores of France, from which he had fled a penniless exile. Hitherto, Wagner's arrival has not altogether been heralded by a flourish of trumpets whereas now the enumeration of the instruments that he brings with him, seriously stated in the following matter-of-fact manner in his address's list, would augur that literally no less than figuratively, he is likely to make a considerable noise. For he is accompanied by twenty-four first and twenty-four second violins, twenty violas, twenty violoncellos, twenty-two double basses—one hundred and ten strings in all; six flutes, six oboes, two corni ingrali, six clarinets, one bass clarinet, six bassoons, one contrabassoon, eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, four tubas, one contra-bass tuba, two pairs of kettle-drums, one triangle, one pair of cymbals, one side drum, one glockenspiel, and six horns. Surely, since King Nebuchadnezzar set up the golden image, no such an assemblage of musical instruments was ever collected together. The apostle of the music of the future, first lauded here in 1840, an unknown man. In 1855, he came here at the invitation of his firm supporter, Ferdinand Praeger; and conducted eight of the Philharmonic Society's concerts. He was not highly thought of, either by the public or the press; but the late Prince Consort was one of his warmest admirers. Certainly no man ever had more artistic supporters and antagonists, than Wagner. Born at Leipzig, May 22, 1813, he was educated in the Universities of that town, and of Dresden. Early in his career distinguished himself as a poet and a librettist. His first work was a blood-and-thunder tragedy, with fifty-two murders or deaths by natural causes, a crowd of ghosts and spectres, and half-a-dozen survivors of some sixty dramatic persons. As a pianist, he was considered a failure, for he would persist in playing by ear. Under Weinlig, he studied harmony, and became a finished contrapuntist, and at the age of twenty he brought out a serious opera, *Die Joten*, which was followed by *The*



successfully in 1836, or thereabouts. His next work, played during his directorship of the Magdeburg Opera, failed completely. It was a setting of Shakespeare's *Messiah for Messias*. Hence, his first work of importance, was written just thirty years ago, and despite the influence of Meyerbeer, who cordially admired the young composer, then in his 24th year, it was refused in Paris. Only a year or two ago some of the numbers were cordially based at one of M. Paderewski's concerts, in the Cirque d'Hiver. This was followed by *Die Fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*), but while the music was pronounced vile, the book was given to another composer to reset. This he did with complete lack of success. Better luck, however, attended the prophet in his own country. In 1842, *Tristan*, was produced at the old Opera House in Dresden. It created a furor, and the King of Saxony at once made the composer his own capellmeister. In rapid succession came *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, while his only comic opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, was given with great effect at Weimar.

To enter into any exposition of the merits of Richard Wagner as a composer, would require a space considerably exceeding, not only this column, but an entire number of our paper. The old notion that he was a mere noisy charlatan, has vanished before his music, which proves, at each hearing, more beautiful and intelligible. His method is clear to everyone who can appreciate poetry, whilst the rules which it violates are known only to the few, and by these little rays of light. That his absolute rank must be amongst the greatest composers is evident, but only a future which will have forgotten his voluminous writings on opera, his factious partisanship, his egotism, his contemptuous notice of Mendelssohn as a gentleman amateur, his fierce hatred of Meyerbeer, whose genius and originality paved the way for the "music of the future," and his personal eccentricities; can decide how his fame will stand in relation to that of Beethoven, of Mozart, and of John Sebastian Bach. As a dramatic poet, Laetz and others have not hesitated to compare him with Shakespeare. Posterity will only smile at their arrogant presumption, and regret that the hand that produced "*Tristan and Isolde*" should have wasted so much of its cunning on the alleged myths and shadowy personages with whom it is impossible to feel a ray of sympathy.



out", to say the least, to discover tampering that had been surreptitiously undertaken, and launched a printed assault through the pages of his column in the Atheneum. The exchange was lengthy and acrimonious as the opponents did battle. In the end the affair died out to the satisfaction of neither side, as they both limped off the battlefield licking their wounds.

The fact that Shaw was a ghost writer may have allowed him to voice opinions in a much more direct manner. He was not pressured by colleagues, or tempted by offers of remuneration from artists. He was an unknown quantity that could not be "got at". Rumours had it that James Davison, the big gun of the Times, had accepted monetary favours from artists. Joseph Bennett (1831-1911) of the Sunday Times wrote in his memoirs tales concerning several bribes offered to Davison. But, being a staunch Davison supporter, Bennett declined even to entertain the possibility. The moral arbiters of the day viewed personal friendships between artists and critics, gifts to critics, and libretti set by critics of works that they would later review, as coming with the territory. For instance, Hermann Klein (1856-1934), critic of the Sunday Times from 1881-1901, was a great friend and advocate of the coloratura soprano Patti who had an illustrious career. Klein often spent his summer vacations at Patti's Craig-y-Nos Castle, in Wales, where he participated in small productions at Patti's private auditorium. Amongst the critics who "churned out" libretti it would be hard to beat Joseph Bennett who wrote a couple of dozen libretti for operas, oratorios and cantatas. Righteous indignation was roused only when

money exchanged hands. Since the paper was paying the journalist for the rights to publish his opinion, they felt that he should not be paid twice, let alone being paid to plant puffs. It seems that it was permissible, however, to print effusions as long as no monetary favours were proffered.

Shaw's Hornet jottings demonstrate that he possessed a spectrum of views and not simply a dogmatic stance. Richard Wagner's appeal for Shaw, I believe, was as much a literary one as a strictly musical one. Shaw, the aspiring writer devoted five full years, from 1878-82, to his dream of achieving literary glory. His one-novel-a-year pace certainly helped him to hone his writing skills, but it did not in any major way alter his musico-critical stance.

Undaunted by the immensity of the task ahead of him, Shaw, the tyro, campaigned relentlessly against the slipshod practices that he encountered on the London musical scene. Audiences, conductors, composers, performers alike were condemned if they dared to besmirch the sacred soils of music. With religious zeal Shaw sought to reform in "one fell-swoop" the multitudes of ills. He was one of few observers who was not hoodwinked by title-bearing doctors or by the concocted legends about foreign superstars. What he found to be lacking, be it a dismal trombone or a cribbed composition, he was quick to condemn in his Hornet column.

## ENDNOTES

1. Gayarré's manner of attacking high notes became widely known as the "Gayarré bleat"!
2. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1874-1897, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1985), p. 17.
3. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, pp. 22-23.
4. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw, 3 vols., ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: The Bodley Head, 1989), p. 13.
5. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, 24 August 1882.
6. George Bernard Shaw Papers, British Museum, 50662.
7. Dan H. Laurence, Shaw's Music, p. 15.
8. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 97.
9. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 67.
10. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 97.
11. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 119.
12. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 119-120.
13. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 151.
14. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 131.
15. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 79.
16. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 156.
17. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 168.
18. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 178.
19. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 64.

20. Dan H. Laurence Collection, Archival Collections, University of Guelph Library.
21. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 82.
22. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 90.
23. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 147.
24. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 69.
25. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 88.
26. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 179.
27. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 80.
28. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 168-9.
29. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 168.
30. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 140.
31. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 88.
32. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 92.
33. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 94.
34. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 103-104.
35. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 75.
36. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 118.
37. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 126.
38. W.G. Cusins lead the Philharmonic Society from 1867-83. He also was a professor at Queens College and the Guildhall Music School.
39. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 132.
40. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 124.
41. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 133.

42. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 142.
43. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 77.
44. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 114.
45. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 81.
46. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 63.
47. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 64.
48. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 65.
49. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 67.
50. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 76.
51. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 89.
52. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 89.
53. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 93.
54. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 102.
55. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 179.
56. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 140.
57. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 154.
58. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 158.
59. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 160.
60. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 87.
61. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 133.
62. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 108.
63. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 101.
64. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 105.



65. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 178.
66. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 98.
67. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 136.
68. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 67.
69. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 72.
70. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 142.
71. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 178.
72. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 55.
73. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 75.
74. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 84-5.
75. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 112.
76. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 127.
77. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 125.
78. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 126.
79. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 168.
80. Anonymous, Shaw's Music, ed. Bernard Shaw, 9 May 1877.
81. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 165.
82. The tradition of British music critics taking a keen interest in cricket can be traced back beyond Neville Cardus to James Davison. Showing his biases clearly, Davison wrote that "Robert Schumann has had his innings and then been bowled out like Richard Wagner."
83. Dan H. Laurence Collection, Archival Collections, University of Guelph Library.

### III. THE VOCAL CRITIC AND HIS DEMISE

Shaw's youthful vocal adventures were amusingly outlined in his Preface to

#### Music in London: 1890-1894:

I had sung like a bird all through my childhood; but when my voice broke I at once fell into the error unmasked by Alexander<sup>1</sup> of trying to gain my end before I had studied the means. In my attempts to reproduce the frenzies of the Count di Luna, the sardonic accents of Gounod's Mephistopheles, the noble charm of Don Giovanni, and the supernatural menace of the Commendatore, not to mention all the women's parts and the tenor parts as well (for all parts, high or low, male or female, had to be sung or shrieked or whistled or growled somehow) I thought of nothing but the dramatic characters;...the results were wretched.<sup>2</sup>

In his 1932 collection of musical criticism he reminisced with mock regret that:

When I look back on all the banging, whistling, roaring, and growling inflicted on nervous neighbours during this process of education, I am consumed with useless remorse. But what else could I have done? Today there is the wireless,...<sup>3</sup>

With Bernard's arrival in London, Lucinda Shaw found that her son had taught himself "to play accompaniments and to amuse [himself] with operas and oratorios as other youths read novels and smoke cigarets." Lucinda heard the

"wretched" results of his unsupervised singing and, fortunately for Bernard, not wanting him to spoil his voice, agreed to teach him to sing properly, according to "The Method." Bernard consequently enjoyed a long and healthy vocal life, though he "developed an uninteresting baritone voice of no exceptional range."<sup>4</sup>

In the Preface to London Music in 1888-89 as Heard by Corno di Bassetto..., Shaw summarized his musical studies undertaken while in London in the 1870s:

I was forced to learn to play the classical symphonies and overtures in strict time by hammering the bass in piano duets with my sister in London. I played Bach's Inventions and his Art of Fugue. I studied academic textbooks, and actually worked out exercises in harmony and counterpoint under supervision by an organist friend named Crament<sup>5</sup>, avoiding consecutive fifths and octaves, and having not the faintest notion of what the result would sound like. I read pseudo-scientific treatises about the roots of chords which candidates for the degree of Mus.Doc. at the universities had to swallow, and learnt that Stainer's commonsense views would get you plucked at Oxford, and Ouseley's pedantries at Cambridge. I read Mozart's Succinct Thoroughbass (a scrap of paper with some helpful tips on it which he scrawled for his pupil Sussmaier); and this, many years later, Edward Elgar told me was the only document in existence of the smallest use to a student composer. It was, I grieve to say, of no use to me; but then I was not a young composer. It ended in my knowing much more about music than any of the great composers, an easy achievement for any critic, however barren.<sup>6</sup>

That he made great strides as a pianist is evident by his ability to accompany vocalists in assorted situations, including that most harrowing experience of all--operatic accompanying on the pianoforte! Perhaps because of his unorthodox pianistic

beginnings, Shaw found that he was able to read more fluently from orchestral scores than from music composed distinctly for the piano:

I never mastered the keyboard; but I did a good deal of rum-tum accompanying in my first days in London, and even once, in a desperate emergency, supplied the place of the absent half of the orchestra at a performance of *Il Trovatore* at a People's Entertainment evening at the Victoria Theatre in the Waterloo Road (the Old Vic) and came off without disaster, and in fact, mostly imposed my own tempi on the amiable and unassertive Italian conductor.<sup>7</sup>

Characteristic diminution of his achievements is seen in this paragraph. This was not a solitary event; sometime later Shaw replaced the composer Alfred Moul as the regular rehearsal pianist for Lee's London operatic ventures.

Bernard's desire to gain understanding of musical matters had emerged in his teen years, but was not restricted to them. From the time of his arrival in London and throughout his years as a music critic he opportunistically exploited all available musical resources. In his 1878 diary Shaw wrote a list of his accomplishments for that year. He noted that he had worked at French, and had been instructed in Harmony and Counterpoint studies by Crament, his organist friend. Another acquaintance who assisted Shaw in his musical pursuits was the Alsatian basso profundo, Richard Deck, who instructed him in the voice control "method" of Delsarte.<sup>8</sup> Chichester Bell, the nephew of the inventor of the telephone, introduced Shaw to James Lecky (1856-90), an accomplished musician. Lecky, who contributed the article on musical

temperament for the first edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians,<sup>9</sup> taught Shaw the intervallic mysteries of musical temperament.

It is rather ironic that the school-hater, "Sonny" Shaw, actually admonished people who scorned learning through Hornet columns. In his "buzzings" he even advised many performers to undertake further study. If Shaw spotted improvement in intonation or histrionic competence, he often mentioned it. He also suggested that the professional musician really should have at least a "vague knowledge" of the physics of sound. The study of acoustics, he believed, should be an integral part of a performer's musical education. In this, Shaw foreshadowed its place in twentieth-century university music curricula.<sup>10</sup>

Shaw never stopped seeking knowledge. Indeed, his insatiable thirst for knowledge continued unabated throughout his ninety-plus years. As a result, from the 1870s through the 1880s, he habitually sequestered himself in the reading room of the British Museum and researched a wide array of topics. He attended countless lectures and debates, and successfully coerced his acquaintances, if they happened to be experts in any given field, to instruct him.

Meanwhile, Vandeleur Lee's dreams of taking London by storm were fading. Shaw felt that Lee had lost sight of the true spirit of "The Method." This may have happened because of having had so many misguided students who "would listen to

nothing less than a promise to make them sing 'like Patti' in twelve lessons."<sup>11</sup> Luigi Arditi mentioned his own involvement in My Reminiscences of one of Lee's setbacks that occurred in 1875:

Major Carpenter was getting up an amateur performance of "Ruy Blas," which was to be given at the Bijou Theatre in the Albert Hall. He came to me in great consternation to ask me to undertake the conducting of the whole, since Mr. Vandeleur Lee, who was an able singing-master, did not seem to be quite capable of directing the music. Of course I was only too happy to do anything for a man whose friendship was so dear to me, and I readily consented to help him.<sup>12</sup>

Bernard wrote that Lee did manage to stage a number of amateur operatic productions. These productions included a bit of a surprise, considering Lee's experience with George Carpenter:

Performances of Marchetti's Ruy Blas with my sister as the Queen of Spain, and later on of Sullivan's Patience and scraps of Faust and Il Trovatore were achieved; but musical society in London at last got tired of the damaged Svengali who could manufacture Pattis for twelve guineas; and the guineas ceased to come in.<sup>13</sup>

In his very first Hornet review on 29 November 1876, of Frederick Hymen Cowen's (1852-1935) new opera Pauline, Shaw aired his thoughts. Though loathe "to discourage a young musician who has come to the front amidst a dearth of native talent," he felt that Cowen's music "possesses little originality, and displays an utter absence of dramatic faculty."<sup>14</sup> In a very thorough manner, more so than in any

other Hornet review, Shaw summarized the opera's musical weaknesses and dramatic shortcomings, the vocalist's capabilities or faults, and even mentioned staging follies.

The large number of vocal performances that Shaw covered was not simply an indication of his passion for the vocal arts, although he did describe himself as being "something of an adept in the superstitions of singing mysteries."<sup>15</sup> We must bear in mind that vocal performances occupied a much greater prominence on the Victorian concert scene. Fully one half of Shaw's Hornet coverage was comprised solely of vocal presentations (see Appendix). Even large scale instrumental recitals of that period were almost invariably interpolated with a series of vocal selections, either from the operatic repertoire or from the domain of ballads.

This vocal preoccupation is demonstrated not only in memoirs of Victorian vocalists, but also in the jottings of critics, conductors, instrumentalists and publishers. That vocal music was *de rigueur* becomes evident on examining any of the numerous Victorian reminiscences churned out. One of the most renowned critics of the generation previous to Shaw's was Henry F. Chorley. He devoted his compilation entitled Thirty Years' Musical Recollections entirely to vocal matters. Similarly weighed are Herman Klein's Thirty Years of Musical Life in London: 1870-1900, Luigi Arditi's My Reminiscences<sup>16</sup>, and William Boosey's Fifty Years of Music.

Unlike so many other reviewers of the vocal scene, Shaw did not concern himself with commonplace biographical facts. These, he figured, could easily enough have been gleaned elsewhere, where they were "abundantly promulgated."<sup>17</sup> Instead, he got right to the heart of the matter. The art of fine vocal production, according to Shaw, was "one of the most important musical questions of the age, and, unfortunately, one of the most obscure."<sup>18</sup>

Even though Shaw was not seriously interested in boxing until the 1890s, he knew how to deliver knock-out punches in his vocal criticism. One victim in early rounds was Mlle d'Angeri. Her "tremolo was in such force that she cannot be said to have sung at all."<sup>19</sup> On another occasion when she played Valentine, she was informed that "her singing, until she overcomes her constant vibrato, can only be allowed to pass muster by a stretch of courtesy."<sup>20</sup> The soprano, Mlle Enequist, was unmercifully told that her "method of singing effectually precludes her from succeeding as a vocalist."<sup>21</sup> In regard to Mlle Bianchi's (née Schwarz!) ornamentation, it seemed to Shaw that she was

under a delusion as to the nature of a shake -- a delusion which is shared by some greater artists. She delivers it in a series of spasmodic expirations, and the tone becomes flatter and flatter to the end, which usually conducts her unexpectedly into another key.<sup>22</sup>

Shaw delivered severe blows. The few "rabbit punches" in his arsenal were seldom deployed.



The operatic season's great disappointments were in large part due to the puffery of the press. Up until the early 1870s opera impresarios had printed incredible yearly prospecti, in which they listed all past successes and predicted future glories. This definitely stirred up the public's anticipation. Joseph Bennett noted that this pretentious display was thankfully waning by the mid-1870s. However, the deception was to a large measure continued by impresarios who still possessed power to manipulate the press.

Much to Shaw's dismay the operatic tenor Enrico Tamberlik (1820-89), who had returned from the continent, failed to live up to expectations. He had appeared previously at the Royal Italian Opera, 1850-64, and most recently, 1870, at Covent Garden. Shaw described him as having "slender resources in the matter of voice," so much so that Shaw found that "the spectacle of an artist who has survived his voice and who possesses no compensatory gifts is a painful one."<sup>23</sup> Alexis Chitty, writing in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, wrote that "Tamberlik was well received, though his powers were on the wane."<sup>24</sup> Not Shaw though. In his depiction of Rossini's *Otello*, Tamberlik "[gave] his admirers one more chance of hearing the C sharp which they fondly imagine is a chest note."<sup>25</sup> Tamberlik retired soon after this appearance. Shaw found the musical mob's taste was questionable when they admired a leading concert and oratorio tenor. "Mr Cummings [William Hayman (1831-1915)] sang the tenor music as he sings always, which was, doubtless, gratifying to admirers of his voice and style,"<sup>26</sup>--but, not to Shaw.

Following the Covent Garden début of the much sought after Spanish tenor Julian Gayarré (1844-90), as Fernando in La Favorita, Shaw attempted to gauge his potential to assume the "somewhat threadbare" mantle of the past great Mario [Mario Giovanni Matteo (1810-83)]. To this end he created a list of talents that most operatic pretenders to the throne possessed:

Some of the wearers have striking personal advantage, without either voices or dramatic ability. Some are singers who cannot act, others are actors who cannot sing. A great many can neither sing nor act nor look well - nor, in fact, offer any reasonable excuse for their appearance in opera at all, except that the public, not knowing any better, is content to endure them for a season.

Of this class Signor Gayarré is an illustrious example. We believe he once had a voice - and a robust voice, too - though not of remarkably fine quality, and to abuse its wreck without taste or artistic skill constitutes his present employment.<sup>27</sup>

Gayarré's appearance as Raoul in Les Huguenots "was simply below criticism"<sup>28</sup> and he "contributed considerably to its [Her Majesty's Opera's] success by transferring his services to Covent Garden." So much for the appearance of this hoped for successor to the great Mario.

Shaw observed little worth commending after the appearance of two young male singers at the "Proms":

Signor Giannini, the tenor, does his best. Signor Medica, the baritone, does his worst. It is impossible to witness the performance of this very young singer without a sensation compounded of mirth and pity. As he sings he repeatedly makes a stereotyped gesture with his disengaged hand, and glares about

him with the eagle eye of affectation. He has no artistic style, but his voice is a noisy one, and he seems to delight in the sound of it. We expect modesty of demeanor even from singers who have just reason to be proud of their gifts, and Signor Medica, having neither the one nor the other, seems to have adopted the dignified principle that the best palliative of groundless arrogance is boundless absurdity.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most entrenched rituals of the British music scene was the choir festival. Shaw did not let tradition intimidate him. He listened to the choruses sung at the Handel festival in "stale wonderment." He scathingly attacked the aims and philosophy behind the festival's promulgation and sustainment. As he saw it, the aims were primarily commercial, followed by phenomenal and only lastly came the artistic.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, there were many opportunities for a choral festival to go astray. The orchestra was in many cases a "scratch" outfit. These players, very often from London, had no respect for the often slipshod directions that they received. A description by the critic Joseph Bennett of Dr. Samuel Sebastian Wesley's conducting during the Gloucester Music Festival gives us an indication of the standards that were encountered:

The music went on well enough in such accustomed hands as those of the pianist and the "leader," the Doctor's beat being little regarded -- a circumstance which did not appear to trouble him. The music having hold of him, presently took entire possession. He swayed from side to side; he put down the baton, treated himself to a pinch of snuff with an air of exquisite enjoyment, and then sat motionless, listening. Meanwhile Blagrove [the first violinist] conducted with his violin-bow.<sup>31</sup>

JULY 4, 1877.

## THE HORNET.

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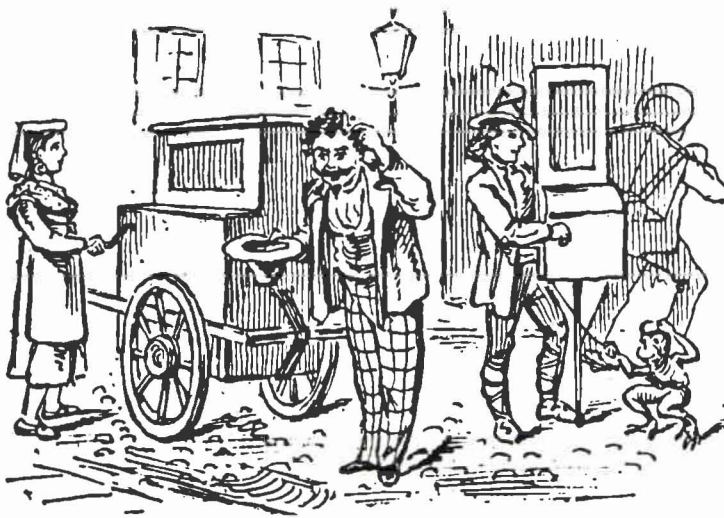
## THE HANDEL FESTIVAL.

ANOTHER Handel Festival has passed away, bearing testimony in its progress to the undiminished popularity of our most imposing musical institution. The occasion, considering its magnitude, affords but little matter for comment. The staid wonderment which the great chorus never fails to elicit has already been exhausted; and Sir Michael Costa has probably enjoyed the triennial laugh in his sleeve over the journalistic exaggerations of the difficulties he has had to contend with. As a matter of fact, the time for regarding an ensemble of 4,000 performers as a prodigy has gone by; and the sooner we begin to consider the feasibility of adding another thousand or so to the number, and varying the *repertoire* a little, the longer our national interest in the Festival is likely to last. We do not mean to imply that the highest interests of music would be served by increasing a choir already so large as to entail conditions of performance incompatible with strict justice to the master. But a justification of such a course might be found in the increase of sensational attraction; for the aims of the Festival-givers necessarily are, firstly, commercial; secondly, phenomenal; and, lastly, artistic. The performance of the "Messiah" on the first day was excellent in the choral numbers, and generally respectable in the *ariae*. It would be invidious to select any particular chorus for mention. All were executed with perfect precision; and the text was enunciated with surprising distinctness. It is unfortunate that spirited renderings are considered incompatible with the safe conduct of large masses. However, all that could be done to relieve the somewhat mechanical rigidity of the great choruses by careful observance of *forte* and *piano* was done to the utmost, and the effect was, on the whole, stirring and impressive. The orchestra, though at times rather brassy, was satisfactory, the planning being conscientiously followed with the result of a fairly artistic reading. The solos were the weak points of the performance, except in a very few instances. Mdlle. Albani sang her first recitative out of tune, and in the subsequent *ariae* made no effect, "Rejoice greatly" being conspicuously weak. Madame Patey acquitted herself most meritoriously in the numbers allotted to her, which produced an impression due to her care and earnestness. Madame Edith Wynne, in "I know that my Redeemer liveth," struck the first really sympathetic chord in her listeners, and suggested regrets that her share in the performance was not greater. Mr. Cummings sang the tenor music in the first part

fully as his wont, but with more finish than usual. Owing to the high pitch of the organ, Mr. Sims Reeves was not available for the Passion music, but Mr. Vernon Rigby reproduced his masterpieces with more success than usually falls to the lot of imitators. Mr. Santley did not seem in as happy a mood as usual. Nevertheless, he sang "Why do the nations," and "The trumpet shall sound," as perfectly as could have been desired. Herr Henschel took the rest of the baritone music; and it is sufficient to any of him that his bad pronunciation was his misfortune, and his bad phrasing his fault. The programme for the second day was too varied to admit of detailed notice within our limits. In addition to the vocalists (Mdlle. Albani and Herr Henschel excepted) before mentioned, Madame Patti, Sherrington, and Sutor, M.M. Foh and Edward Lloyd sang—the last-named artist making a decided addition to his already high reputation. Mr. Best played

the musical portion of the second. Mdlle. Albani's artistic abilities, though not of the latest, are still of a very estimable order. She has to thank nature for a faculty for hard work, and a voice of the most beautifully clear quality in its highest register. Everything else she owes to her own unspurred exertions. It is to be regretted that these exertions seem to be always directed to the attainment of new and often visionary excellences, and never to the remedying of defects which are painfully obvious, and which may, more or less, her most admired performances. Her intonation is frequently false; and the fatal tremolo is already perceptible even in her clearest notes. No amount of talent could neutralise these two faults, which seem to gain ground every season. Yet Mdlle. Albani is apparently unconscious of their existence, and wastes the attention that might correct them on evolving forced dramatic effects which only rob her achievements of the simplicity essential to

really fine art. That the production of her voice is often forced, and always accompanied by ungraceful facial contortion, should, perhaps, be imputed to her illustrious master, Signor -or, as he delights to be styled, Commendatore -Lauriperti. But it is none the less a serious drawback to the enjoyment of the spectator. She is said to be qualified by special training for the impersonation of Wagner's heroines, and consequently her Elsa, Elizabeth, and Sembrana have always been regarded with peculiar interest. There is no necessity for alluding in detail to her reading of the various parts in her extensive *repertoire*. All exhibit the same characteristic



A Handel Festival.

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an organ concerto. The "Israel in Egypt" was given on the concluding day, according to custom. We cannot omit this opportunity of warning conductors against the common error of endeavouring to make all performances of the "Messiah" as like the Festival one as possible. The transept of the Crystal Palace is larger even than the Albert Hall; and the crushing brass and retarded rhythms which are appropriate enough on the vast Handel orchestra become misplaced and intolerably offensive in any smaller space.

## VOCALISTS OF THE SEASON.

Mdlle. ALBANI.

Mdlle. Albani has for some years past sustained the onerous task of Mr. Gye in a range of those leading parts which stop short on the one hand of the floral brilliancy of Emma and Caterina, and on the other of the weighty grandeur which we look for in Semiramide and Luciozia. Since her first appearance here she has steadily improved her position, and at present her hold of

earnest study, anxious striving after effect, and the genuine charm of her voice, are to be set off against art which is not concealed, defective management of the breath, artificial gesture, and an absence of genius which can never be compensated by talent, however sedulously cultivated. That she has no claim to what is arbitrarily called a classical singer she proved by her indifferent performance at the Handel Festival last week. Nevertheless, it is but just to add that Mdlle. Albani's capabilities have proved sufficient to gain for her an enthusiastic following, and deservedly so; for, notwithstanding, which we consider her greatest merit, can hardly be too highly esteemed. During her last visit to Paris her success, which we had not the pleasure of witnessing, was reported as extraordinary; and the appreciation evinced of her powers at her late appearance as Santa at Covent Garden was one of which any artist might justly be proud.

Next week we shall probably allude to M. Dupon.

Two of Shaw's three submissions for the Hornsey Hornet  
4 July 1877 edition (cartoonist unknown)<sup>32</sup>



Many times they only had one day of general rehearsals for a four-day festival. The difference between a successful or disastrous festival often depended on nothing more but a whim of the orchestra. The choruses at times numbered in the thousands and consisted mostly of amateurs. Shaw, thankfully for outlying the festivals, only covered the London scene, saving many a venture from having been badly mauled by our critic. In London, "the choruses were given with vigor and precision, but, as the wont of choruses is, without refinement."<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately all the above hazards faced opera extravaganzas.

Although Shaw did not regard ballads as highly as serious music, opera, oratorio and symphonic music, he was able to discern more positive aspects than other critics who simply spurned comment. Ballads, Shaw believed, possessed their own unique integrity. If a ballad was poorly constructed Shaw did not hesitate to label it as belonging to the genre "claptrap." The leading English soprano, Mlle Lemmens-Sherrington was obviously without scruple "as it is not otherwise conceivable that she or anyone else would sing them [some worn out old favourites],"<sup>34</sup> so wrote Shaw about one of the final London Ballad Concerts of the season. (The Boosey Ballad concerts had been in existence about ten years and were at that time held on Wednesday afternoons or evenings in St. James's Hall.)<sup>35</sup> At another outing Lemmens-Sherrington sang a vocal pastoral symphony "containing much imitation of an impossible bird." She "subsequently made the most of a capital piece of claptrap." Shaw speculated that Sherrington received the customary royalty for sale of these

pieces because there was no other conceivable reason that she or anyone else might want to sing those particularly insipid songs.<sup>36</sup> She "exhausted the resources of claptrap."

Although from the wording it appears that he did not know that his column was soon to be taken away, Shaw set his sights in his parting article on the absurdity of those who are the "most brilliant professors of claptrap." The typical popular vocalist and her artifices were laid open to view. "Popular," in Shaw's usage, denoted acclamation by the musical mobs for an artist. It was a term of derision for Shaw. He outlined all the procedures necessary to lay the foundation for popular success: "Let her then smile and trip forth as captivatingly as possible," and furthermore "a timely lapse of memory is useful when the singer has the gift of displaying confusion agreeably." He described what he felt was a "spurious imitation of real art," a perverted version of the musical art. The masters of claptrap may well have been trembling at the notice that Shaw tendered at the end of his last Hornet diatribe indicating that he "may be led on some future occasion to particularize offenders."<sup>37</sup>

Shaw wrote, in anticipation to the response his blunt opinions would illicit, that "if it is retorted on us that generous and enlightened criticism should rather dwell on his merits, we reply that we have not yet discovered what his [Signor Nicolini, the alias of Ernest Nicolas (1834-98)] merits are."<sup>38</sup> This idea of "enlightened" criticism being gentlemanly and tame is certainly different from our age. The definition of

criticism in Webster's Dictionary is "the art of evaluating or analyzing with knowledge and propriety works of art or literature."<sup>39</sup> This is fine; however, to criticize more often than not has recently taken the further meaning "to stress the faults of." One may conjecture that Bernard Shaw was on the cutting edge of this second negative connotation.

Shaw was well aware of the appropriate styles that were required in the performance of a concert piece and in the rendering of a ballad. Both the American-born soprano Antoinette Sterling (1850-1904) and the most famous English oratorio and concert singer of his generation, Edward Lloyd (1845-1927), managed to sing Beethoven Lieder in an inappropriate manner. Sterling sang two Lieder "with her peculiar mannerism and characteristic disregard of metric accent, charming in a ballad,<sup>40</sup> but quite the reverse in a song by Beethoven."<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile:

Mr Edward Lloyd attempted Beethoven's beautiful song The Quail, and completely failed to grasp the conception, his rendering being simply in the style which he has found so successful in the treatment of ordinary ballads. Signor Zerbini's accompaniment was merely mechanical."<sup>42</sup>

Shaw thought that these Victorian "crossover" musicians had made a grave mistake. He believed that the artists could not advantageously carry off such an injudicious venture.



Lest one gets the notion that Shaw could only shape vituperative phrases, let us look to his rare and carefully tendered plaudits. One of the elite group who met with Shaw's approval was the noted tenor Theodor Wachtel (1823-93): "His top C was a true note, not a concealing *mezzo voce* or the oft substituted scream or shriek." Furthermore it was declared that he was a true singing-actor. This was indeed high praise.<sup>43</sup> Alexis Chitty, who wrote for Grove's, was not as positive. He declared that Wachtel had "obtained a certain popularity more on account of his fine and powerful voice than from any artistic use he made of it."<sup>44</sup>

For the Hungarian coloratura Etelka Gerster's (1857-1920) début at Her Majesty's, as Amina in Bellini's La Sonnambula, Shaw wrote that "we are so accustomed to the heartless applause of claqueurs at first appearances that it was quite a relief to hear the true ring of outburst that followed the first few notes of the artist."<sup>45</sup> He went on to state that:

Of the lady artists who were newcomers, Mlle Gerster alone made any mark. Her début must be considered a notable event in the annals of opera. Milles Salla and Nandori were thrown into the shade, and Mlle Chiomi fairly extinguished by it. The last-named vocalist can only achieve distinction at the expense of severe study, if indeed, she has not wholly mistaken her vocation.<sup>46</sup>

Such plaudits as received by Gerster<sup>47</sup> are quite exceptional in Shaw's Hornet buzzings. In I Puritani, she "achieved another brilliant success," thanks to her admirable phrasing and execution, exceptional range, and tenderness of expression.<sup>48</sup>

Shaw felt that the merits of French-born mezzo-soprano Zella Trebelli<sup>49</sup> (1838-92), one of the few singers he acclaimed, were rarities on the London scene and were as good as wasted upon the musical mobs. Her "greatest excellencies are unfortunately 'caviare to the general.'<sup>50</sup> The majority of the audiences knew no better. They had been blinded by the glamour of foreign names and greatly misled by the active marketing campaigns for artists in the newspapers. Shaw strove to cut through to the truth. He ripped into the false beliefs surrounding one of his favorite targets, the French tenor Victor Capoul:

Some uphold him as the personified ideal of a finished singer; others, who never admit more than one sort of excellence in the same person, declare that he is an exquisite actor, but has no voice. Both views are fair specimens of the critical incapacity of the great body of music-hunters. As a matter of fact, M. Capoul has a very fair voice, an indifferent method of producing it, and worse than indifferent taste in using it.<sup>51</sup>

In a similar vein, the case against the "musical mobs" who had accepted foreign vocal school traditions had been previously thrashed out by Shaw. The masses clamour for foreign singers, "who have mastered a few unpleasant tricks during the final shattering of the vocal organs, which usually precedes their appearance in public."<sup>52</sup>

On 7 March 1877 another rare event happened. Shaw was favourably disposed towards a performance at the Popular Concerts featuring a string quartet. It was, in Shaw's words, one of those "rare occasions on which the artists can enter thoroughly into the spirit of their work, a frame of mind which will not be

commanded, and but seldom coaxed."<sup>53</sup> They had been able to capture music's elusive spirit.

Shaw had the intractableness of the musical mobs in mind when he wrote about the British baritone Charles Santley (1834-1922) that:

He has a voice; he knows how to produce it; he has acquired the art of managing his breath properly; and he conscientiously interprets the works which he sings without adding or subtracting a note. The taste of the present age has, it is true, voted all these accomplishments and gifts to be superfluous and old fashioned.<sup>54</sup>

Elsewhere, Shaw thought that Santley's acting style left more than a little to be desired. Shaw believed that the operatic performer, in order to be considered to be of an adequate calibre, must possess, in addition to the prerequisite vocal talents, fine acting skills. He might have been writing about contemporary twentieth-century expectations. Even artists who were universally esteemed seldom garnered high commendation in Shaw's column. Generally, a list of his reservations also appeared. Although Charles Santley was found to be vocally adequate the following passage illustrates some of Shaw's other concerns: "The position adopted by the accomplished baritone, who sang the second verse with one foot placed on a chair, was by no means graceful, and interfered decidedly with his respiratory powers." Elsewhere, Shaw supposed that a certain Mr. Turner, the "better to convey the foppishness of the character, adopted the unaccountable expedient of moving about as though his ankles

were tied together. The effect was sufficiently ridiculous."<sup>55</sup> The ability of Shaw to paint a vivid visual image, in this and in many other instances, makes his criticism much more than the common platitudinous recital of standard phrases found in so many British papers in the 1870s.

Shaw, the future dramatist "par excellence," not only thought of the appropriate movements when considering dramatic coherence of a performance, but also pored over musical writings of all kinds at the British Museum. Shaw might well have, by this time, read Richard Wagner's beliefs on the integration of music and drama as embodied in his Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft (1850). This book, presenting Wagner's interpretation of the unity of poetry, mimetics and music in Greek drama, had recently been published in London in an English translation by Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905). Certainly, Shaw's standards and ideals point in a direction similar to Wagner's. The essence of the dramatic success of opera depends in a large part, of course, on the quality of the music and its ability effectively to simulate the dramatic flavour of each scene. Cowen's opera, Pauline, did not qualify on this score. Needling Cowen, Shaw pointed out that there was a distinct similarity between one of the opera's tunes and "Auld Robin Gray."<sup>56</sup> He also cited the inappropriateness of Cowen's grandiose musical style in the portrayal of a paltry plot-line.

In his column, Shaw expressed his gratitude to the impresario, Carl Rosa, [actually Carl N. Rose (1842-89)], who was striving to build an English ensemble.

Previous to Rosa's experiment, every professional opera company had imported a couple of stars for the main roles, and had left the rest, more or less, to chance. Shaw hotly contested this "star system" on aesthetic grounds. With this system the music and drama could not be properly integrated. He believed in the integrity of music and drama, and therefore, would not stand for the substitution of artless pretext for the genuine article.<sup>57</sup>

Commonly, Shaw dwelt on the acting ability of individuals. In commenting on a production of Der fliegende Holländer at Covent Garden, Shaw found that the soprano, Emma Albani (1847-1930)<sup>58</sup> as Senta, "lacked spontaneity," and "had a melodramatic tinge wholly repugnant to the pure simplicity of the ideal Senta." She, however, received recognition for the "earnestness and the care" with which she obviously had studied the part.<sup>59</sup> French baritone Victor Maurel (1848-1923),<sup>60</sup> according to Shaw, as the Dutchman had "mistake[n] fervid affectation for true acting" and "his demeanor suggested an inartistic self-consciousness." As a result, his performance "verged dangerously on the ridiculous."<sup>61</sup> Surprisingly, Alexis Chitty, Esq., writing in Grove's, stated that, as Iago in Verdi's Otello in 1887, he [Maurel] "showed himself the best acting baritone on the Italian stage since Faure."<sup>62</sup> A dramatic metamorphosis must certainly have occurred in the intervening decade! Elsewhere, Shaw made it clear that "excessive energy can never convert stage business into acting."<sup>63</sup>

Although there were numerous stereotypical actions for operatic characters to perform, Shaw did not stand idly by if those traditions inadequately matched the dramatic needs of the scene. He bemoaned the lack of originality employed in many matters of operatic staging:

Bye the bye, why is it that the Master of Ravenswood [in Donizetti's Lucia], whenever he appears on the stage in the opera, proceeds to fling his cloak and hat on the ground with a melodramatic air? It is ridiculous in the first act, impolite in the second, and only justified by the prospect of suicide in the third. Yet tenors cling fondly to this absurdity.<sup>64</sup>

He found it nearly impossible to write about the interplay between characters, since ensembles were not the norm. At times he despaired over the defective "mise en scène."<sup>65</sup> Stage sets and special effects as well were commented on, often with the Shavian focus lighting on various absurd items employed in the productions: "Indeed, but for the liberal and sometimes unaccountable supplies of lightning and thunder, the opera would have proved rather dull."<sup>66</sup> He did not warmly applaud the singing and ignore all the other elements that needed to be employed if fine opera was to be staged. Shaw's practical bent led him at times to go so far as to suggest bits of advice concerning mechanical matters beyond what readers might have expected to read about in a music column: "We doubt whether Othello's garden was happily placed in the bed of a river; and we are sure that the gondola of the doge would glide all the more smoothly for a little lubrication."<sup>67</sup> The inclusion of such items served, as did his witticisms, to humanize his writing. Rather than

appearing to be the omnipotent critic whose word was gospel, Shaw's delivery makes him appear to be more mortal than those critics who set themselves up as demigods. In doing so, Shaw developed a rapport with his audience. The audience knew that outrageous connections between items, a fierce attack, or a good laugh, could be lurking just around the next line. Shaw was serious about his musical ideals, but at the same time he conveyed his message by entertaining his readership.

Shaw's eye missed nothing. Although he was not as readily satisfied as most observers, he gave credit when things were done tolerably well. When the staging misfired, he did not refrain from deliciously describing the disasters. In a production of Der fliegende Holländer the following observations were made:

The scenic arrangements were elaborate, but not always appropriate. The phantom ship was represented by a substantial structure which moved with the deliberation of a canal barge, and in the last act came to pieces, or rather folded itself up with a gravity that tacitly rebuked all inclination to excitement. The violence of the waves sometimes lifted them entirely from their bed, and revealed strange submarine monsters disporting themselves in perpendicular humps below. The billows in the opening storm were represented by an ingenious application of the principle of the corkscrew to a sheet of green canvas. The atmospheric effects were the most successful.<sup>68</sup>

A production of Friedrich Flotow's (1812-1883)<sup>69</sup> Martha found Shaw paying attention to the dress of the characters, undoubtedly to the dismay of the person in charge of this facet of the production:



Some humour was displayed by the stage manager in the selection of the costumes. Not content with the time-honored custom, which clothes the foster brothers in a garb such as no peasant ever wore at any period of the world's history, he introduced a company of soldiers in the attire of the Wars of the Roses. The attendants of Queen Anne were habited as Italians of the XV century; and the monarch herself led the fashion, in a style obsolete about 150 years before her birth. These matters do not trouble the public much; but it is well to point them out occasionally, lest they should be carried too far.<sup>70</sup>

Why, one may ask, would it be left to a stage manager to do the work of a costumer? Shaw was pointing to a serious breakdown in the organizational system. Simply to display his keen sense of humour was not Shaw's aim, we may be sure. He was not reviewing a production at the pantomime. Shaw, the watchdog, protectively sniffed at all elements of each performance. As long as these items remained within reasonable bounds he kept silent; and even on a rare occasion he commended someone for their efforts. In his mind, Shaw held an ideal that proved to be many decades ahead of the realities of operatic staging in London of the 1870s.

Shaw lamented the fact that operatic stars who were "extolled for their histrionic powers on the operatic stage are decidedly inferior to the third and fourth-rate performers at our ordinary playhouses."<sup>71</sup> Such inferiority obviously made Shaw's blood boil. Such as when the French tenor Joseph Capoul (1839-1924) combined his want of histrionic powers with an absurd lack of humility:<sup>72</sup>

He [Capoul] stands on tiptoe, waves his arms abroad, and with impassioned gesture expresses as intelligible as he could in words, "behold me in my elaborate frame! Here is excellent music written by men of talent to display my voice. Here are several worthy people behind me, whom you could see if I had not taken care to spread myself well across the footlights, engaged expressly to sustain my melody with judicious harmonies! But do not let them distract your attention from Victor Capoul!"<sup>73</sup>

Shaw definitely considered that Capoul was not sufficiently humble. For Shaw, art came before self. It was not merely meanness that caused Shaw to put such unflattering words in Capoul's mouth; Shaw desired an ensemble that worked together in creating something worthy of being called a work of art. He rightly pointed out that such "stage hogs" do grave disservice to the composer's intentions. Though the readership must have laughed uproariously at the vivid scene painted by our hornet, to the grave discomfiture of M. Capoul, at the same time they were also made aware that a serious problem was broached. Shaw's entertaining diatribe is appealing. The fact that the critic was outrageous was likely to have drawn the reader's attention to return to the next issue. They may well have asked themselves, "What could possibly top this week's harangue?" But Shaw was not out to savage all comers; he weighed, according to his severe scales of musical justice, the merits and the demerits of each individual performance. He was quite aware of the lameness of many of the critics of his day, though he himself was not "trigger shy". He made his viewpoint abundantly clear in his 20 June 1877 column:

If it is retorted on us that generous and enlightened criticism should rather dwell on his merits, we reply that we have not yet discovered what his merits are.<sup>74</sup>

Likewise, he wrote the following week that,

If he (primo tenore) is able to shout, he will do well to sing a bar or two occasionally in a light falsetto. The critics will fall into raptures over his exquisite management of the *mezza voce*, and the public will follow the critics.<sup>75</sup>

Few of Shaw's fellow critics possessed anything comparable to Shaw's vocal background. Herman Klein, critic of the Citizen and the Sunday Times, a rare exception, had studied voice with the most famous teacher of his day, Manuel Garcia<sup>76</sup> (1805-1906). This should have stood Klein on firm ground. But, as will be shown later, it appears that, through his close friendships with performers, he was "got at."

Critics are only human, and they will attribute their anguish whilst listening to the tenor to anything sooner than to his defects. If they can see no excellences, they will invent some.

For instance, it is easy to say that a singer "phrases" well, because so few know what phrasing means. A certain tenor of this season, who is the very worst singer we ever heard, had this accomplishment specially manufactured for him by critics who felt it to be their duty to admire him, and who were at a loss to see what they should admire him for. Yet his case was by no means an exceptional one.<sup>77</sup>

Gestation of a special series featuring singers seems to have begun in late May or early June of 1877. Shaw was an avid follower of the London vocal scene, and he undoubtedly felt that his rich and extraordinary upbringing provided him with unique insights into the mysteries of the art of singing. Vandeleur Lee's "Method" was ingrained in him and had been embodied in him through the vocalizations of his mother. Shaw's interest in producing a series of portraits of vocal personages may have been spurred on by the Hornet's publication of a similar series on notable people in the public light (such as statesmen, musicians, painters, actors). In the 6 June 1877 edition of the Hornet, Shaw contributed to the column "Men and Women of the Day" an article about two operatic stars, soprano Christine Nilsson, and tenor Jean-Baptiste Faure.

Although the Swedish born Nilsson (1843-1921) was hailed by Shaw as being the "most gifted" of London's sopranos, he expended most of his energies in commenting upon her deficiencies. He believed that her vocal method was faulty and she was at times unmusical. He found her acting inconsistent, and he thought that she was somewhat spoiled. Shaw was ahead of his day in campaigning for well-rounded operatic actor-singers.<sup>78</sup> In Shaw's eyes, integrity of the composer's vision came first and foremost. Nilsson received Shaw's wrath due to her "dramatic Suspensions." This bad habit was in evidence on occasions where she simply drifted through her part without taking care to meld the dramatic elements with the musical. When she deigned to rise to the occasion, which appeared to have happened only in the very

important grand operatic scenes, she could electrify the audience. But this histrionic genius, so Shaw pointed out, was offset by Nilsson's need for discipline, and a "little study."<sup>79</sup>

French baritone Jean-Baptiste Faure<sup>80</sup> (1830-1914), was coupled in the article with Nilsson because of their frequent collaborations in their most celebrated roles, not due to possession of analogous skills. In his blunt manner Shaw noted that Faure "is a vocalist of the French school, and a bad one." In the title role of Don Giovanni, Faure was "afford[ed] the highest test, both vocal and histrionic, to which an artist can be subjected, and in it M. Faure fails."<sup>81</sup>

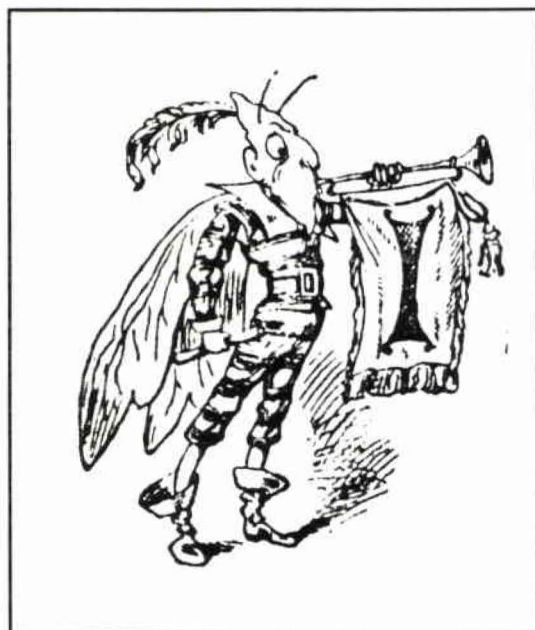
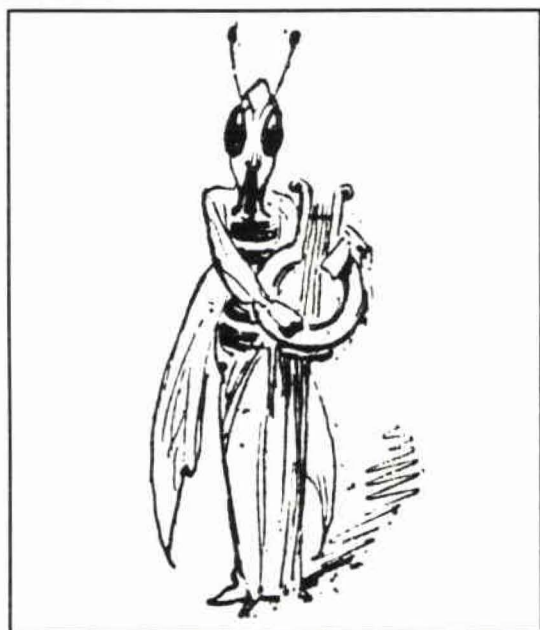
As a tag to his column that appeared in the Hornsey Hornet in the following week, 13 June 1877, Bernard Shaw wrote the following prospectus: "We propose to produce weekly a criticism on 'Vocalists of the Season' and next week shall refer to Signor Nicolini."<sup>82</sup> By this time Shaw had already produced two installments of what became an eleven-part series of vignettes concerning London singers. Positive reviews account for only a small percentage of these, even by Shavian standards, only four. Four other vocalists are panned, while the remaining two had a mixture of faults alleviated by some redeeming characteristics. Italian born Michael Costa (1808-84), the lone conductor represented, was included in the series because:

no one has a more influential voice in regulating our operatic repasts than Sir Michael Costa. Nay, he is the most successful of our vocalists, for his voice never fails -- and of whom else can as much be said?"<sup>83</sup>

The series ran from 13 June until 5 September 1877, in all covering a thirteen week span of Hornet issues. In the Bodley Head edition Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw, edited by Dan H. Laurence, we are presented with just eleven entries for this series:

June 13	Madame Trebelli
June 20	Signor Nicolini
June 27	Signor Fancelli
July 4	Mlle Albani
July 11	M. Capoul
July 18	Mr Edward Lloyd
July 25	Madame Lemmens-Sherrington
August 1	Sir Michael Costa
August 15	Madame Antoinette Sterling
August 22	Mr Santley
September 5	Mr Vernon Rigby





A further selection of cartoons accompanying Shaw's 1877  
Hornsey Hornet musical reviews (artist unknown):  
 (a) August 29 (b) May 2 (c) July 18.<sup>84</sup>



Authenticity of the Hornet articles was verified by reference to Shaw's own album of newspaper clippings, now housed in the British Museum. According to the Bodley Head count, there are ten singers in the series and one conductor. Now, what about those two missing weeks? When one examines the original Hornet editions, it is discovered that no "Vocalists of the Season" entry appeared on 8 August 1877. However, for the other date missing in Shaw's Music, 29 August 1877, a vignette of the American born Emma Aline Osgood (1849-?) appeared. By Dan Laurence's definition for this to be a genuine Shavian article it should have appeared in Shaw's folio of clippings. By analyzing the "Osgoode" article it will be shown that it was penned by Shaw, and therefore belongs in the "Vocalist of the Season" series. I speculate that through some oversight Shaw failed to collect this article for his cuttings book. Just two pages before the Osgood article, in the same issue, appeared Shaw's review of an all Beethoven program: "The once dreaded name of Beethoven attracted an unusually large audience to Covent Garden..." Shaw had been writing the lion's share of the Hornet criticism during the preceding ten months. There is little reason to believe that our ghost-writer conjured up a substitute to pen his specialty column. No Shavian source-book indicates any reason, illness or journey, for him to have forfeited this column.

There are a number of striking similarities between the unauthenticated "Mrs. Osgood" article and the "Vocalists of the Season" canon. The author of the Osgood sketch ridiculed the ludicrous adoption of Italianized names by English singers:

Of all the imposing Tuscan names in the musical directory of this year, probably not one in twenty is authentic; many being obviously English names thinly disguised.

The previous week, in the 22 August 1877 column, found reprinted in the authenticated Shaw's Music, Shaw picked on precisely this malaise. He had complimented the English baritone, Mr. Santley, for his unabashed display of his nationality. Given the state of affairs in the 1870s, Shaw conjectured that Santley may have been pressured to change his name to Sant, Santelli, Santalini, Saint Lis, or to some other "seductive disguise." Shaw then proceeded to rail on about the pseudonym adopted by the Dublin-born composer Slater--Odoardo Barri:

If Mr Slater thinks his name more befitting a critic than a composer, can he not adopt the worthy name of Barry without misspelling it? There is no custom for which we have a more hearty contempt than that prevalent amongst our artists of adopting foreign names. It is a species of fraud on our national reputation as a musical people (such as it is), and is practised only through affectation or a slavish regard for false conventionality.<sup>85</sup>

August 20, 1877.

## THE HORNET.

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## VOCALISTS OF THE SEASON.

Mrs. Osgood.

THERE was a period in the history of music in England when few but Italian singers were heard in the high places of the art. There were some bright stars whose nationality was forgotten in the universality of their reputation, with here and there a German baryton, or an English concert tenor; but the majority of the singers at the opera, from which our great concerts and festivals are supplied, were Italians. This state of things has now ceased to exist. Of all the imposing Tuscan names in the musical directory of this year, probably not one in twenty is authentic; many being obviously English names thinly disguised. Titles in other tongues, particularly Spanish and German, when not already musically associated, are mostly genuine. Italy, who once sent forth her singers throughout the world, now trades on her old reputation to entrap and impoverish the would-be vocalists of other lands, and then casts them out to prey on such nations as are too ignorant to distinguish singing from screaming, or artistic culture from affectation. To the enlightened Englishman, such obtuseness may appear singular; but, nevertheless, there are such nations. Fortunately, professional rivalry steps in to cure the evil created by the vagaries of an uneducated public; and artists are now beginning to arrive from lands hitherto unconsidered in connection with the supply of such material. From America in particular, some of the leading ornaments of our theatres and concert-rooms have come. There is Madame Antoinette Sterling, the greatest of ballad singers. There is Mlle. Albani, the chief dramatic soprano at one of the opera houses. It would be tedious to name our many Transatlantic cousins who figure in English Opera, even without mentioning those of mixed Irish extraction. From American singers we do not, as a rule, or rather as an unreasonable habit, look for artistic refinement as much as for sound voices and vigorous style. Yet Mrs. Osgood, who is an American, is one of the most refined of our concert singers. Her voice is a high soprano, not powerful, but of agreeable quality. Her best claims as an artist are based on her good taste; and on the fact, of rare occurrence on the concert platform, that she is most successful in dealing with music of a high order. Even the octogenarian critics, who have heard Catalani sing "God save the King," and will have it that the true art of singing is lost, may admit that Mrs. Osgood always sings "nicely." And indeed this is all that can be done for an ordinary ballad. But when more is required, Mrs. Osgood is still equal to the demand; in support of which we may instance her delivery of the death song of Isolde from Wagner's *Tristan*, which, despite its unfavourable position towards the end of a recent Philharmonic concert, and its unsuitability to the conditions of the platform, obtained an encore that would have done honour to Frau Materna herself. Mrs. Osgood is also remarkably successful in her treatment of the songs of Schubert; and as far as we have had opportunities of judging, we would be disposed to rank her as one of the most competent artists at present before the public in dealing with the tender element which characterises the best sort of popular German music.

## BUZZINGS AT THE WINGS.

"Julius, The actors are coming, my lord.  
Hast! Hast! hast!"

HAMLET, Act II. Sc. 2.



ENGLISH audiences are proverbially conservative, but none is so true to its idols, whether of gold or clay, as the frequenter of the Adelphi. For he belongs to a body of the ultra-Tory school. He shows novelty as nature or a theatrical manager, Bayla and Clarydine, battles a vacuum. He will not have it, or at least he will accept it so rarely, as in the case of *Nicholas Nickleby*, that the remembered exception proves the disputed rule. It is not once nor twice that this fact has been exemplified during the past five years, or five and twenty may be. But it has rarely been more strikingly proved than in the case of *After Dark* versus *Golden Plough*. The latter was not a good play, you (always) write "was" of withdrawn plays, though they still exist when the curtain has fallen; but at least it deserved a better fate and a longer rope. Nor, barring the second act, is *After Dark* a good play. But then the one was neither sympathetic nor inherently dramatic, whereas the latter is. So long—and long may it be—as the world chooses to put aside its own cares and to laugh or weep over those of others, so long will the sorrows of a deserted wife, the miseries of a bereaved father and the repentance of a sinning husband prove interesting. No matter how often the theme be iterated, it never tires. It is like the *Morte d'Arthur*, a treasure-house of unending lore. It is all very well to say that Boucicault's success depends in a great measure upon his supreme knowledge of stage management. It is true, and happily so. Shakespeare, Molière, Sheridan, and Tom Robertson were, as is Byron, all practical stage craftsmen, as everyone must be who intends to do good work dramatic. But each of these had the quality that comes to a great extent from experience, but far more from insight—the knowledge of human nature. Now, Mr. Merritt, clever and promising as he is, knows no more, or allows no more knowledge, of what men and women are than Mr. Albery. So it is not merely the leap from the bridge, nor the railway scene, nor even that abominable desecration of dramatic art, that ill-judged concession to vile public taste, the interpolated scene of the music-hall that attracts; for it is in the fortunes of Old Tom, Eliza, Modburst, and Rose that the public is interested. It was so at the Adelphi on Saturday, when a noisy and superfluous audience yelled and shouted far more at Mr. Emery's scene with the daughter, who does not know him, than at all Mr. Mackenzie's amusing pranks. Mr. Emery has rarely played better. Mr. Ferriss was manly and interesting as ever, and Mr. J. G. Shore a capital Chumley, though he cannot look the part as Mr. Billington did. Mr. Morland filled his small part well, and Mr. Chris. Smith was welcomed for a moment. Mr. Howard Russell and Mr. H. Jackson seem to have gained the proverbial familiarity with their parts, and they lose accordingly. It is not everyone that can attain the position of a stage manager without suffering, and Mr. Jackson shows too palpably the traces of having had his head to an extent which has led well nigh to his losing it. For, truth to tell,

he gazes obtusely, offensively, incessantly, and he should not do it. He can amuse people legitimately, and he has often amused us. But he is seducing us. Dicky Morris, and Mr. Russell who "feeds" him must find it so. Miss Hulseforth was seen to great advantage as Eliza. She dressed the part well, looked equally well, and acted with pleasant grace. Miss Edith Stuart as Eliza was as intelligent as ever, and found abundant favour. It is not fair to recall the memory of Miss Foote in the same part, for Miss Stuart played very much better than other representatives of the same character. The Miss Hulseforth, and Mr. Hulseforth were as good as ever. The young lady might well be replaced by a tumbler, but Mr. Mackenzie is still the "glass of fashion and the mould of form"—"form" is accepted at the music hall.

Miss Jenny Hill is engaged for the pantomime at the Aquarium, where Mr. James Fawcett remains three years.

Mr. Archer will, perhaps, rejoin the Olympic company.

Miss Katie King (Mrs. Arthur Lloyd) is engaged at the Gaiety.

Miss Kate Vaughan continues in very delicate health.

A new comedy by Mr. W. S. Gilbert will follow *Princess Ida* at the Haymarket, probably in about a month.

Mr. H. Macklin joins the Globe company in September.

Mr. Thomas Swinburne joins the Olympic company for *The Mountebank*.

The Folly company will play for a short time in Brighton, prior to the opening of their own theatre on the 15th with Offenbach's *La Grande Vierge*. *The Sea Nymph*, a fairy opera by Levee, and an operetta, *Up the River*, by Herry, will be produced. The prices will be unchanged.

The *Rail's Progress* is doing well at the Park, and Madame St. Clare has decided not to close the theatre.

The Wardrobes have separated. One goes into the country, the other goes in for the musical halls.

We hear a great deal about "speaking parts," but how very tired the little people who "fill in the picture" must grow of their thinking parts.

It is suggested that the St. James's Theatre be turned into a club. It would make a capital one.

Madame Celeste finds herself unable to play *Fouelle in England*, and Miss Louise Willis is engaged for the part.

Mr. Midway will open the Duke's Theatre in September.

New Men and Old Acres will not commence the new season at the Court, but Lord Lytton's new comedy will be performed.

Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Brooke leave the Lyceum company.

Mr. Macabe starts on Monday on a long provincial tour.



Shaw was consistent in condemning British performers for this reprehensible habit. Besides foreign names, adopted accents and mannerisms were ridiculed. One individual singled out was the Irish operatic tenor, William Ledwidge (1847-1923).<sup>87</sup> Ledwidge adopted for his stage-name the German sounding surname "Ludwig". He was taken to task for ruining his arias, while depicting Valentin in Gounod's Faust, by singing the words with a thick foreign accent.<sup>88</sup> Yet another disguised personality's "nom de plume" was alluded to by Shaw after a London Ballad Concert: "Mr Maybrick paid his tribute to the abilities of the mysterious composer Adam."<sup>89</sup> Indeed he did! Stephen Adams, the composer of The Holy City and other blockbuster ballads, was the pseudonym for Michael Maybrick (1844-1913), the balladeer.<sup>90</sup>

The first half of the Osgood article also contains vitriol that is strikingly similar to that which flowed through Shaw's earliest criticism. The author of this article loathed the Italian school of singing and all that it entailed. So great did he feel its influence was, that he believed her old reputation now could "entrap and impoverish the would-be vocalists of other lands." True aesthetic value had lost its rightful place to foreign affects. Familiar sounding indeed! The anonymous author, also like Shaw, felt that the ignorant public was deluded and at times could not "distinguish singing from screams." As well, the inappropriate placement of Wagner's Liebestod at the very end of a program, let alone on any program, was attacked. Shaw's concern with this matter has already been alluded to. The clincher, however, would appear to be the following Irish plug found in the column: "It would be tedious to name our many

Transatlantic cousins who figure in English Opera, even without mentioning those of mixed Irish extraction." Who else but the ever-so-Irish Shaw would care to point out the genealogical connection of Irish singers on the London stage? I have been unable to unearth any Irish critics besides Shaw in circulation on the London scene at this juncture in time. Certainly it would have been rather unlikely for a very English critic such as a Joseph Bennett or James William Davison to write such a line. The cumulative coincidences in style have convinced me that Bernard Shaw was the author of this long-buried critical column.

It is a relatively simple matter to dwell upon Shaw's negativity since it was none too rare a commodity, quite unlike the musical criticism that appeared in the majority of British papers. However, when Shaw happened upon unadulterated talent, he did pay the appropriate compliments. Shaw, rather uncharacteristically, penned a rave review of the mezzo-soprano Zella Trebelli (1838-92). With her finished style and richness of quality Shaw felt that she

alone combines the truest lyrical expression with a style and phrasing so perfect that the greatest virtuoso of the pianoforte or violin might profit by hearing her sing the works of Handel and Mozart.<sup>91</sup>

What is most extraordinary about this article was that Shaw did not mollify the positive initial statements with a heaping portion of shattering negations.

The young critic Shaw most certainly did not walk the fine line between ignoring faults and giving only praise or dwelling on faults. If Shaw's writing had not been so negatively skewed, one might wonder if the editor would still have dismissed Lee. Perhaps, if the writing had been more pedestrian, even when the "Hornet-gate" scam was discovered, the Lee-Shaw duo may have been retained. The cold cruel truth was that Shaw no longer had a column in which to voice his musical opinions.

Several factors may be cited as reasons for Vandeleur Lee and his ghost writer to have been sacked from the Hornsey Hornet. The first was that the editor of the paper was receiving complaints from advertisers about the musical criticism. Another was that at least one performing venue refused to admit the Hornet's critic, thanks to the less than tame comments that Shaw had written in his column. It would appear that Shaw did not care to ingratiate himself with those who were in a position of influence. Lastly, Lee's "ghost" deception that had long been suspected apparently reached the editorial "final straw" stage.

Rather than slowly chipping away at the edifice of the "status quo", our bold hornet felt obliged to bare his stinger and "let fly." On 17 January 1877, a scant two months after his first review, Shaw exposed the "pernicious system of publishers' concerts," the so-called "ballad concerts." He was appalled that some leading music publishers had started their own musical journals in order to guarantee favourable reviews with which to sell their wares. Although he did not specify names, his attack

on "Messrs Blank and Co." is clearly a frontal assault on Messrs. Boosey and Company. Shaw maintained that the hiring of the foremost singers to present the publisher's songs legitimized the affair in the eyes of the musical mobs. This was so since the average listener often naturally linked the quality of product to the stature of the singer involved. Of course, all the works performed at the "dreary entertainments known as ballad concerts" that Shaw disdained were only from the sponsoring publisher! Shaw felt that the concert-going public should be made aware of the fact that by paying admission to such concerts they were in fact contributing to the publishing houses advertising budget. He hoped that if he made this fact common knowledge, then the "whole pernicious system" would fall apart. Accompanying this disintegration would follow the abolition of "royalties and similar varieties of blackmail, alike degrading to art and oppressive to composers of real merit." The royalties that Shaw wrote about were given to the performing vocalists on a commission basis calculated from the sheet music sales. Shaw's article, in retrospect, could be considered a near suicidal assault for a fledgling writer to have launched. He had at this point less than ten reviews to his credit.

Indication was given in the 7 March 1877, edition of the Hornet that they had been "getting some grievous knocks...owing to its unreasonable tendency to be honest in the matter of musical criticism." Shaw considered the ballad concert system to be detrimental to the growth of musical culture. "It reduces the concert room to the level of the market," he argued, "and degrades the artist into what is vulgarly



termed a 'tout'." Since he mentioned no names, Shaw may not have expected Boosey and Company to claim the dubious honours, however "closely though the cap might fit."

Another retort from Messrs. Boosey and Company was not long in coming. On 14 March 1877, the editor of the Hornet published Boosey's response. The music publisher pointed out that the Hornet article appeared coincidentally with Boosey's first concert of the season, and that Boosey was the only firm that held "these entertainments." Shaw's "story of the 'capfitting'" was declared to be a misplaced joke, since the intended victim was obvious. Shaw responded that he felt that Boosey was taking credit for being "hit by a random dart." They insisted that they had "no objection to criticism in the present day." However they argued that the Hornet's attack was not "founded upon fact," and declared that the article had been "altogether unjust and malicious." In making their case Boosey pointed to their successful run of eleven consecutive years of Boosey Ballad Concerts. Furthermore, they immodestly stated that these presentations had grown with increasing "reputation and prosperity." This, they insisted, certainly did not point to "the low shop-keeping system which you deprecate." If that was the case, the concerts would have "come to an early end, like all other rotten and false things." Boosey maintained that they had not forced their songs upon the public and were not popularising bad music. In fact, they argued that they were doing exactly the opposite. Their new songs were chosen by merit only. They were "left entirely to the singer and the eminent composers who contribute[d]

them." Twelve new songs had been presented at eight Ballad Concerts during the 1877 season. Such eminent composers as Messrs. Arthur Sullivan, Frederick Cowen, James Molloy, Jacob Blumenthal, Stephen Adams, Joseph Barnby, and Ciro Pinsuti, ensured that the offerings were "the best modern songs that England [could] produce." The Boosey system, so they claimed, was one of "natural selection," (a timely Darwinian defence), whereby "bad songs are condemned after a single trial. Good songs are repeated as long as they continue to be well received." Boosey had greater faith in public opinion than did Shaw. Boosey concluded that the public was there to stand in judgement upon the composers, singers and publishers, who were "all equally powerless to oppose the public taste."

There was a distinct dissonance between Shaw's and Boosey's opinion of public accountability. Shaw was concerned that the public might well be "hoodwinked" by the circumstances, since the songs were presented to them by eminent singers, composed by famous composers, and published by an established publishing house. A humble member of the public was likely not to dream of questioning this swarm of experts.

Shaw, under certain circumstances, maintained a faith in the natural ability of audiences to ascertain true value. He stated this when he wrote that "the public always retain their natural predilection for what is good beneath their affected raptures at what is mere imposture." However, he insisted that performers, composers and

publishers, who have the public trust could lead the public astray. The balance between the innate ability of the masses to register what is good was easily set out of balance as "the public are not acute critics."<sup>92</sup>

"The judicious hearer," so Shaw stated, "is in most concert rooms an uninfluential minority of half a dozen persons, whose disapproval matters little to the vocalist."<sup>93</sup> What was required was the trained critic. This was the one person who could have been expected to know and communicate what is "good." He should be able to make sound pronouncements, since he had acquired a wealth of background experiences and knowledge upon which he was able to draw upon.

In March of 1877, Messrs. Boosey and Company delivered their final "trump card" when they pledged to advertise no longer in the pages of the Hornet. This announcement, according to Shaw, "caused unspeakable dismay in the nest, and will, no doubt, speedily accomplish its financial ruin." The editor of the Hornet added a footnote to the Boosey blast in which he indicated that his newspaper's columns would remain open to all, including Messrs. Boosey and Company. The editor must have felt the pressure that was brought to bear, but he stood firm in the belief that, "the action originally taken by them [Boosey] (however harmless to us) was not in keeping with the dignified tone their letter suggests."<sup>94</sup>

A further blast from Boosey and Company was received by the Hornet and was teasingly mentioned in a later edition. "We have received a letter from Messrs. Boosey, which together with some others, have been crowded out this week. We hope to insert and answer them in our next."<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, it was evidently crowded out in the following week as well, and is apparently lost. Although the Boosey affair took place in March 1877, and the tag team of Lee and Shaw were not "down for the count" until the following Fall, the affair undoubtedly added to the cumulative effect.

The Hornet, Vandeleur Lee, and consequently Shaw himself were receiving a great deal of flak for their publication of frontal attacks on established musical practices. On 27 December 1876, Shaw reviewed the performance of Messiah at Albert Hall. Though having written only his sixth published review, the performance was described as having been "unsatisfactory in the extreme". A solitary singer received praise; The other soloists, the chorus, the orchestra and the conductor were all panned. Response to this critical barrage precipitated the column that followed on 7 March 1877. Shaw reiterated in that issue, that he "refused to accept a thousand performers as a substitute for a decent performance." He also defended his "unreasonable tendency to be honest in the matter of music criticism." His frankness about what he heard and saw was undoubtedly taken to heart by more than a few concerned members of the arts community. He informed his readership that he was beset with difficulties. Most likely because he had resolved to "to do justice to himself

and his duty to his readers'." In describing "a certain colossal temple of art, erected to the memory of the late Prince Consort," he did everything just short of actually naming the Albert Hall. Shaw explained how the management of that establishment attempted "to exclude the sensitive insect" from the hall, (perhaps by withholding critic-tickets regularly assigned to the Hornet). This critical hornet refused to be cowed and resolved that he would not be a timid critic and would continue to "criticize such performances as impartially as ever." There was no further mention of similar responses to Shaw's candidness in any of the succeeding Hornet columns, but one suspects they were received.

The editor of the Hornet had for some time evidently suspected underhandedness in the creation of Vandeleur Lee's musical column. In May of 1877 a note was sent to Lee in which the Hornet's editor stated that, "I have frequently rec'd 'copy' palpably not your [Lee's] style but that in composition, idea and writing of a Lady." From this arises the possibility, which must be seriously considered, that Lee had been writing the Hornet's musical criticism before Shaw's incumbency. At the very least there must have been some sort of written communications between Lee and the editor for him to have made his charges. At another point Lee was accused of employing a committee of writers to produce his criticism. The editor of the Hornet furthermore declared that in his opinion "they can't write!" Another possibility was that Lee may have been seen elsewhere when he was supposedly covering a concert. A hint

of this surfaced in Shaw's later application for employment with the Edison Telephone Company:

At the end of a year my friend was one of the most unpopular men in London, the paper was getting into difficulties, and complications were arising from the proprietor's doubts as to a critic who was not only very severe, but capable of being in two places at the same time. I gave up that too (making a virtue of necessity), and the proprietor presently retired, ruined.<sup>96</sup>

Shaw characteristically exaggerated the fate of the Hornet. It was to continue in publication until February 1880, well after the critic's dethronement. The paper, one suspects, did not collapse due to Shaw's association with them. Whatever was the ultimate cause of Shaw's demise, the outcome could have been seen to be forming for a number of months. The full details will probably never come to light, but the resulting dismissal of the Lee-Shaw tandem we know plainly enough.

In September of 1877 the editorial axe fell with Lee's receipt of the following communiqué:

I must tell you candidly that our agreement is not being kept by you, I stipulated for your production and not that of a Substitute. I can't insert the class of writing I have rec'd the last 2 weeks...Please send word to your man to send no more copy.

Whether or not it was Shaw's prose that the editor was rejecting, and for what reason, remains a mystery since the articles in question have been lost.



Shaw's "ghost" position with the Hornsey Hornet could not have been a comfortable one for him. He was more than a little annoyed at the barbaric treatment that he claimed some of his articles had suffered at the hands of the editors. Even if this assertion was true, Shaw found himself in a "Catch 22" situation. He was forced to maintain his anonymity and therefore could not contact the editor to voice his displeasure, perchance to work out a compromise. His fierce sense of independence was also certainly bothering him. Although he had received an income during this period and therefore was no longer dependent upon his mother's benevolence, he owed a debt of gratitude to Vandeleur Lee instead. Most likely Lee had procured the position realizing that Sonny had no means of supporting himself. This charitable act one suspects would have bothered the independently-minded Shaw, since he had not obtained the position himself.

Upon his dismissal (actually Lee's dismissal) from the Hornsey Hornet, Shaw once more had to go seeking his fortune. Unfortunately for Shaw, the tale at this juncture did not end "happily ever after." Our musical Napoleon was banished to Jalna (in his case the British Museum). It was not until ten years had elapsed that he was to find himself once again regularly sending tremors through London's musical community in his own column in the Star.



## ENDNOTES

1. F.M. Alexander creator of the Alexander Technique. Currently favoured by actors, musicians and dancers to gain awareness of efficient bodily usage and alignment.
2. Bernard Shaw, London Music in 1888-89 as Heard by Corno Di Bassetto (Later Known as Bernard Shaw) with Some Further Autobiographical Particulars, (London: Constable and Company, 1937), p. 18.
3. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 22-3.
4. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 18.
5. Probably one John Maude Crament (1845-?). A number of his works were published including some hymns, anthems and ballads.
6. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw, 2nd ed., ed. Dan H. Laurence. (London: The Bodley Head, 1989), pp. 55-56.
7. Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches, (London: Constable, 1949), pp. 34-5.
8. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1874-1897, vol.1., ed. Stanley Weintraub (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 18.
9. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, p. 34.
10. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 71.
11. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 22.
12. Luigi Arditi, My Reminiscences, ed. Baroness von Zedlitz (New York: Dodd Mead, 1896), p. 182.
13. Bernard Shaw, London Music, p. 22.
14. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 61-2.
15. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, p. 56.
16. Luigi Arditi (1822-1903) was an active conductor on the London scene from the 1870s through the 1890s.

17. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 99.
18. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 100.
19. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 148.
20. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, P. 117.
21. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 155.
22. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 117.
23. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 163.
24. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 3rd ed., s.v. "Tamberlik, Enrico," by Alexis Chitty.
25. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 161
26. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 113.
27. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 116.
28. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 116.
29. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 180.
30. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 151.
31. Joseph Bennett, Forty Years of Music 1865-1905, (London: Methuen, 1908), p. 45.
32. Dan H. Laurence Collection, Archival Collections, University of Guelph Library.
33. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 114.
34. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 101.
35. St. James's Hall was situated on Regent Street (1858-1905) and was London's principal concert hall.
36. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 101.
37. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 188-9.
38. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 139.

39. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 8th ed., s.v. "Criticism."
40. Sterling was noted for her distinct manner of declamation, especially in ballads "weird or grim."
41. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 78.
42. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 90.
43. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 137.
44. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 4th ed., s.v. "Wachtel, Theodore," by Alexis Chitty.
45. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 143.
46. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 164.
47. Gerster was described as "one of the most remarkable coloraturas of her time." British musical biography: a dictionary of musical artists, authors, and composers born in Britain and its colonies, s.v. "Gerster, Etelka."
48. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 165.
49. Trebelli was arrived at by reversing her true name Gillebert. She presented an "intelligent and refined impersonation of Carmen, though it lacked the vivid animalism now preferred." Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 4th ed., s. v. "Trebelli, Zelia," by Miss Louisa Middleton.
50. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 136.
51. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 156.
52. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, pp. 80-1.
53. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 97.
54. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 180.
55. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 65.
56. A popular song of this era. The tune known at that time was composed by the Reverend William Leves, a Somerset clergy-man, in 1772 to words written in 1771 by Lady Anne Barnard.
57. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 64.

58. French-Canadian born Albani, née Lajeunesse, appeared at Covent Garden between 1872 and 1896. She was also a great favourite at the Handel and other festivals.
59. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 141.
60. Maurel sang at London's Royal Italian Opera from 1873-79.
61. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 141.
62. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 3rd ed., s.v. "Maurel, Victor," by Alexis Chitty.
63. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 133.
64. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 154.
65. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 67.
66. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 84.
67. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 137.
68. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 141.
69. German composer Flotow was best known for his operas Martha and Stradella.
70. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 144.
71. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 157.
72. Capoul appeared at Drury Lane between 1871-75 and at Covent Garden from 1875-79.
73. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 157.
74. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 139.
75. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 145.
76. Garcia came to London in 1848. He taught Jenny Lind and Charles Santley. He brought scientific investigation to vocal studies, specifically with his invention of the Laryngoscope.
77. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 145.

78. According to William Boosey, in order to remain an enormous success prima donna Mary Garden (1877) had the "desire to assume more liberal proportions physically" in order to emerge as "la femme maigre."
79. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 128.
80. In Grove's it was reported that Faure appeared in Berlin in 1861 at Meyerbeer's request, "but the tremolo in his voice did not please the Germans."
81. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 130.
82. Tenor Ernest Nicolas (1834-1898) achieved only moderate success. Shaw stated that he "fills up a blank in a cast when no better is to be had." [Shaw's Music, p. 140.]
83. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 169.
84. Dan H. Laurence Collection, Archival Collections, University of Guelph Library.
85. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 182.
86. Dan H. Laurence Collection, Archival Collections, University of Guelph Library.
87. Noted for his Wagnerian portrayals, Sidney H. Pardon, Esq., wrote for Grove's: "Ledwidge's voice was always marred by a pronounced tremolo, but he sang with such fervour and sincerity that the defect was readily forgiven."
88. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 67.
89. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 101.
90. Maybrick and J.L. Molloy had been dining with Boosey a little way out of town. Boosey (p. 18) tells the tale that "Molloy mixed very little in the musical world, so there is some excuse for what followed. Maybrick had been singing at John Boosey's, and Molloy said to him...'You have got a splendid voice, Maybrick; what a pity you waste it on those rubbishy songs of Stephen Adams'!"
91. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 135.
92. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 157.
93. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 176.
94. The Hornsey Hornet, 14 March 1877, p. 149.

95. The Hornsey Hornet, 21 March 1877, p. 156.
96. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, p. 23.



#### IV. THE SHAVIAN MUSICO-CRITICAL LEGACY

In the initial chapters we saw how Bernard Shaw acquired his grasp of musical language from the operatic hothouse that was the family's Dublin home. Unable to bear the loss of all musical activity which occurred when Lee left for London, followed shortly thereafter by Shaw's mother and sisters, Bernard Shaw coveted every opportunity to further his own musical education. Indeed, this learning continued unabated throughout the first four decades of his life. By 1876, when Shaw reached London, he was well equipped and audacious enough to handle the journalistic position thrust upon him. He succinctly laid out his musico-critical credo in his columns during his year as critic for the Hornsey Hornet. Several questions remain to be examined, however. How did Shaw feel about his earliest published efforts? In light of Victorian critical tenets, how did Shaw measure up to the standards of his day? Finally, how does posterity view Shaw's musical criticism and why should he be known at all for this journalistic output?

His own views about his earliest musical journalism are found in a number of sources. Shaw referred to his Hornet agitations in an article which he submitted to the Scottish Musical Monthly in December 1894. In this contribution, on music



criticism, he recalled his early works and found them deficient. His early "sins," then unknown to his readership, Shaw still kept ferreted away as a reminder of his "critical crimes, much as a murderer keeps the bloodstained knife under which his victim fell."

In recalling his Hornsey Hornet criticisms, Shaw wrote of them as uneven jottings that rather distressed him. In a letter of application to Dr. Francis Hueffer (1845-89), the Times critic and editor of the Musical Review and Musical World, dated 7 January 1883 we can read Shaw's candid self depiction:

I was a musical critic once before - for about a year. What I should, I will, with your permission, leave forgotten. I slashed away indignantly at the shortcomings of musical London -- got concert advertisements withdrawn from the paper and, briefly, played the deuce. So I have done little more than sow my wild oats....I am now desirous of turning my knowledge of music again to account -- more discreetly than before, I hope.<sup>1</sup>

The belief that "condemnatory criticism is illegitimate" and that indifferent compositions or performances should be disregarded appears to have been fairly widely held. Only praise should be meted out. Percy Scholes thought that people adopting this attitude failed in what he referred to as "the double duty of the gardener," whose cultivation of the flowers will not be successful if he does not remove weeds."<sup>2</sup> Scholes, in the same article, quoted Robert Schumann who felt that, "the critic who dares not to attack what is bad is but a half-hearted supporter of what is good." According to these provisions, both Scholes and Schumann would fully support

Bernard Shaw's mode of criticism; Shaw would not let his columns be anything but personal expressions of his beliefs.

Although Shaw begged forgiveness for his Hornet indiscretions, he could not shake his habit of irreverence and buffoonery, much to his readers' delight. Though not a Catholic, he would always have some new "sin" to confess in the musical critical confession box. He was taught to see humour in anticlimax through his father's own sense of the absurd. Apparently, George Carr Shaw would rail on in an impressive manner about serious topics and then just prior to his conclusion he would add a deft comic diversion. His description of the Bible's importance as a universally acknowledged literary and historical cornerstone was one such example detailed by Bernard Shaw. At the penultimate point in the delivery, Shaw's father declared that, "even the worst enemy of religion could say no worse of the Bible than that it was the damnedest parcel of lies ever written. He would then rub his eyes and chuckle for quite a long time."<sup>3</sup> The younger Shaw saved his religious zeal for music. His reverence for it emerged in the pages of the Hornet in which he carried out his holy crusade to vanquish the musical pretenders from London's musical scene.

Shaw cleverly parodied the style of buildup that many other writers of that time used to puff "esteemed" artists. However, in Shaw's case, one always had to be wary of the sting that followed the apparent buildup. Shaw often listed, in mock-serious verbiage, the brilliant things that could have been done, leading the reader to

suppose that the performer in question must have attained those heights. However with a nimble twist, he would craftily negate the entire compendium of attributes. The cunning alteration of a descriptive line, when the reader least expected it, and the darting quip, were two of the sly methods Shaw had up his sleeve. Like father like son. George Carr Shaw would have been proud.

In a posthumous homage in August 1877 to Mrs. Marsh (alias Virginia Gabriel), a famous balladist of the day, Shaw wrote: "a great many of her ballads (who does not recollect Ruby?) enjoyed a popularity rarely accorded to the ephemeral productions which our music publishers scatter forth weekly."<sup>4</sup> This throws some light on Shaw's low opinion of many of that era's new song releases. As music critic of the Hornet he would often have received these offerings for his consideration.

New vocal selections and keyboard works were regularly reviewed in the Hornet under a column entitled "MUSICAL REVIEWS." Only two such sets of reviews have been categorically designated by Dan Laurence as having been penned by Shaw. In these two columns, nine songs and two piano pieces were surveyed. In criticizing a set of piano pieces, the Fairy Glen Waltzes by A. F. Delmar, Shaw indicated that they "will not distract the attention of the dancers by their originality." The composer Charles Handel Rand Marriott (1831-?) was labelled as being "a facile manufacturer of little tunes." Though generally scathing, there are kudos distributed, albeit with reservations, for several works. Three songs by Franz Abt (1819-85) "are

all melodious and agreeably constructed, except *The Patrol*, the words of which are absurd even for Mr Edward Oxenford. They contain in almost every phrase reminiscences of other composers, from Mozart to Arthur Sullivan."

Since none of the "MUSICAL REVIEWS" were signed, it is nigh on impossible to definitively attribute their authorship to Shaw. However, circumstantial evidence clearly points to his involvement. Many similar stylistic characteristics can be seen in two intriguing unattributed song reviews. In them, familiar complaints and word usage strikingly similar to Shaw's would appear to point to Shaw's authorship. As well, there is no reason to believe that the Hornet would have assigned anyone but the music critic to write reviews of new musical compositions.

A review of the song "Kiss Me To-Night for the Old Love's Sake," with music by Rosina, appeared in the January 17, 1877 edition of The Hornet. Its truculent tone certainly reads like Shaw. The initial compliment is tempered with a potent sting:

Though the melody of the ballad is pretty, and indicates ability, it suffers materially from the very unmusician-like errors in the accompaniment and the inartistic placing of the words. We would suggest to Rosina to submit her songs to a competent critic before having them printed.

Let us speculate for a moment about an extraordinary possibility. Shaw's mother, Lucinda, while in Dublin, had published several songs under the pseudonym

of "Hilda." In London, she continued to compose. Sometime around 1877 she had a number of her songs published by Cramer and Company of Regent Street. In the 21 March 1877 edition of The Hornet there appeared a review of two of her compositions. "The Silver Music" was described as: "An exceedingly bright and pretty setting of Mrs. Hickes Boiyant's charming verses. We have but one fault to find - it is too short." The anonymous critique of Mrs. Shaw's "Remembrance" has the ring of Shaw's sly descriptive style: "A sweet effective ballad which does not trespass on the incapacity of any soprano or mezzo-soprano voice."<sup>5</sup>

It seems very possible that Bernard Shaw wrote the reviews of his own mother's songs. Besides the internal stylistic evidence there are other strong indications that lead us to this view. On the same page as the write-up of Mrs. Shaw's songs appeared Bernard Shaw's reviews of the Saint Matthew Passion, the Covent Garden opera, and the ninth Ballad Concert. If "MUSICAL REVIEWS" were indeed written by Shaw, it would appear to be a rare case of Shaw breaching his own strict code of critical distance. He normally eschewed such partisan actions. However, if we recall the antics of two of his contemporaries, Joseph Bennett and Herman Klein, as seen in the previous chapter, Shaw's transgression was a mere peccadillo.

Numerous of his writings make it evident that Bernard Shaw, the critic, was deeply concerned with the notion that a critic should maintain distance from his prey. Shaw's aim was to sustain a state as close to objectivity as possible. He believed that

critics should beware of becoming overly intimate with the artists that they must review. Shaw addressed the question of critical distance in a letter to his journalist friend William Archer. The note concerned the conduct of Sidney R. Thompson (alias "Piccolo"), Shaw's successor on the Star. Shaw described how the Italian prima donna Giulia Ravogli (1866-1905?), arguably one of the foremost dramatic sopranos of the age, was "getting at" critics:

The other evening, at the Shaftesbury, Thomson [sic] of the Star came up to me with tears in his eyes (positively) and shewed me "her last gift." It was a handsome cigar box which Giulia Ravogli had given him on her departure. Poor Thomson was as void of all guile in the matter as you were when you were taking tea with Miss Robins. To him it only meant that he liked Giulia and that she had been kind to him. To the public it meant that "Piccolo" had been got at. In Thomson's place I being an older man, should have returned the cigar case. In your place I should have taken tea with Miss Robins - possibly have gone to greater extremities, but my article in the Fortnightly should have been a graceful explanation of how the corruption actually worked -- how different it was from the fancy picture of gross bribery & blackmail painted by apriorists....<sup>6</sup>

The behaviour of other London critics, then, makes the possibility of Shaw's breach of conduct appear to be a mere misdemeanour. Critics with a literary bent, such as Joseph Bennett of the Daily Telegraph, Henry Chorley of the Athenaeum, and Francis Hueffer of the Times, churned out libretti. Bennett reviewed Sullivan's Golden Legend, even though he was the librettist! In praising the cantata, he found that "a greater, more legitimate and more undoubted triumph than that of the new cantata has not been achieved within my experience."<sup>7</sup>



Celebrated artists, upon occasion, may even have had the pleasure of attending a dinner party in their honour hosted by a London critic! Hermann Klein, whom we have already seen vacationing at the palatial retreat of Albani and dabbling with libretti, compiled his reminiscences of the period in a volume he entitled Thirty Years of Musical Life in London. An alternative title might well have been "Artists Whose Acquaintance I Had The Privilege of Knowing!" In his prefatory note Klein declared that:

I trust that I have succeeded in accomplishing my task without overstepping the border-line which should separate the friend from the critic. I have always watched that delicate yet important boundary with scrupulous care; and, happily, I have found it easy to observe and obey without loss of good-will or esteem on either side.

He was one of the hosts who threw parties for star performers (usually prima donnas)! That Klein felt he had not overstepped the bounds of objective distance, when he clearly had, is a sign of that era's loose ethical standards. Klein sincerely believed that he had maintained the appropriate decorum.

This social-critical distinction was more than a little blurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. Composers actively sought to align critics with their camps. A glance at the self-marketing activities of the renowned composer Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) confirms this. No less a person than George Grove (1820-1900), of Dictionary of Music and Musicians fame, counselled Sullivan to write



directly to Francis Hueffer of the Times (1878-89) in an attempt to get him to put in a plug for the new music school of which Sullivan was the principal.<sup>8</sup> On October 19, 1880, Grove wrote the following:

Still, he [Hueffer] pulls the strings of the Times and I think that with reference to the Training School it might be well if you saw him. He's going to treat the subject before long and if you could write him a civil note and propose to call upon him it would not do harm...<sup>9</sup>

Arthur Jacobs, writing in his study Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician, believed that after a production of Sullivan's Cox and Box was given at the Royal Gallery of Illustrations, with only piano accompaniment, Sullivan "may perhaps [have] dropped a hint in the friendly ears of Davison and Chorley," urging them in their columns to recommend the employment of an orchestra.<sup>10</sup>

Yet again, after a botched Berlin performance of his Golden Legend (1886), Sullivan sent his own version of the affair to the friendly Louis Engel of the World. Engel wrote a sympathetic review while vouchsafing only that his information came from a correspondent. In such a manner did Sullivan and others, in that age prior to agents, keep their publicity machines rolling.

Incredible as it may seem to observers from the twentieth century, extramusical values held an incredible importance. Operatic stars could apparently be assured of phenomenal careers if they were well endowed in the department of

manners. Good looks or a pleasant demeanour could contribute greatly to an operatic singer's success. It seems such attributes could cause the audiences and critics to forgive what were considered slight weaknesses such as a deficient voice or lack of histrionic ability! The cult of fashion and personality can be observed in many accounts from the 1800s. Mario, that century's greatest tenor, was described in Grove's in the following manner:

To the brilliance of his success in opera he brought one great helping quality, the eye for colour and all the important details of costume. His figure on the stage looked as if it had stepped out of the canvas of Titian, Veronese or Tintoretto. Never was an actor more harmoniously and beautifully dressed for the characters he impersonated -- no mean advantage, and no slight indication of the complete artistic temperament.<sup>11</sup>

Shaw did not subscribe to such extramusical persuasions. Such window dressing could not sway him from his crusade for a sound London music-scene.

For a fledgling journalist Shaw certainly possessed a well stocked arsenal of verbal weapons. He was not one to shy away from the use of negatives, quite unlike so many journalists of his day. Shaw's incredible ability to string together a cluster of negatives is in evidence in this passage from a review of The Barber of Seville. We find a flourish of five fast negative statements that seemed to flow so effortlessly from his pen:

Signor Cotogni was the Figaro, but he cannot be said to have sung the part. His acting was exaggerated and farcical. Words could scarcely paint the dreariness of Signor Ciampi as Bartolo. Ordinas was the conventionally grotesque Basilio, and Signor Nicolini's Almaviva was not calculated to raise the clouded spirits of the house. Mlle Corsi was excellent as Bertha. The orchestra performed in a style that, to say the least, was not first-class. Signor Vianesi conducted.<sup>12</sup>

Only one solitary note of praise is to be found in the entire passage! The gruff final sentence, which merely indicates the conductor's name, seems to carry a blunt message of dissatisfaction.

His critical blunders were relatively few and far between. The scathing attacks that he made on works such as Lauro Rossi's Biorn and Charles Gounod's Cinq Mars express views shared by other cognoscenti, though they diluted their dosages of vitriol. Other journalists would blow up their columns to balloon-like proportions with their penchant for hyperbole, so much so that one comes away with the disconcerting feeling that the puffery might just burst at any moment. The niggardly manner in which Shaw meted out plaudits made them all the more precious and meaningful when they arrived, though they seldom arrived without some nullifying, or at least modifying, provisos.

During his later years of music journalism with the Star and World Shaw could, in the heat of one of his tirades, write exhausting sentences. These were not in evidence in his crisp and reasoned Hornet submissions. While avoiding the traps so

often stumbled into by other Victorian journalists, i.e. obscure allusions, inner-circle riddles and stupefying syntactical constructions, Shaw often hit upon apt metaphors to describe what he saw or heard. The reader found that a performance of Mozart's Requiem was presented to a "desert of vacant chairs."<sup>13</sup> Other similarly vivid depictions are liberally spread throughout his criticism.

In his article from 5 September 1877, a feature about the tenor George Vernon Rigby (1840-?), Shaw's knowledge of vocal production and musicality came once again to the fore. He felt that Mr. Rigby fell into the trap of imitating a famous singer's style of production. Shaw wisely realized that each vocal instrument is as unique as the individual. He used a wonderfully sustained metaphor to describe what the singer was attempting to portray. Mr. Rigby's voice, Shaw wrote, was like a counterfeit coin in that the metal is genuine, though of baser quality, and the stamp is imitation. It is through such acute comparisons that Shaw was able to get to the heart of the weaknesses of his victims, and at the same time make his criticism appealing to his readers.

There were no contradictions in his strong stance. His instincts led him to believe that the inequities which the decrepit system perpetuated must be demolished. From audiences to conductors to singers to violinists he hauled his targets in with his widely flung critical net. His scope was large and the undertaking

of the task was surely declared to be rash by most Victorian observers. But his fervour for artistic integrity in an impure world led him to strive for perfection.

On many occasions, Shaw must have been tempted to apply the same draconian measures that Hector Berlioz adopted for his musical criticism. We are made confidants to the (mock?) violent thoughts that frequently clouded Shaw's brow; but we are not informed of any guerilla tactics that he may well have carried out. I believe that a present-day analogue may be found for Shaw's style of criticism. Long time hockey commentator, Danny Gallivan, has described Don Cherry's<sup>14</sup> style of criticism in a manner that automatically makes one think of Bernard Shaw:

Cherry is quite simply one of the most colorful personalities to have graced sports broadcasting. He knows the game, loves the game, and while I don't always agree with what he says, I know he's coming from a position of understanding and experience.<sup>15</sup>

If one were to substitute the musical arena for the hockey rink, the similarities between the two critics would strikingly emerge. Like Shaw, Cherry boldly says what is on his mind. Their observations often emerge in the form of blunt, direct critical comments that, though outrageous, ring with conviction. "Tell me you don't think that Winnipeg's Finnish assistant coach Alpo Suhonen has a name that sounds like a kind of dog food. But only Cherry had the nerve to bring it up." Though at times frivolous, both Cherry and Shaw broach topics concerning the quality and survival of their respective art forms with insight.



Cherry's broadcast commentaries ("Coaches' Corner") serve much the same purpose as did Shaw's newspaper columns. Both highlight their concerns about the state of each of their domains. Neither minces his words, regardless of whom or what they feel they must assault. Both could appear gruff, and ill-mannered as they deliver their propaganda; But, in actuality, both have usually carefully plotted their sallies. They are both highly opinionated and come quickly to the point. To entertain their respective audiences, they often are outrageous in their manner of presentation. However, seemingly absurd pronouncements always conceal the precious kernel of conviction that both of these critics possess. Their obvious love of each of their arenas, however divergent, will not allow them to stand idly by, should anyone attempt to blur their conception of the ideal art form towards which they strive.

In 1877 Shaw was not yet consumed by his political conscience. His Hornsey Hornet writings, though forthright and immoderate, were pure in their musical content. A decade later, when he was more widely known as a character, and more free to contribute whatever his whims lead him to offer, he presented essays on a score of other topics (from bicycling to vegetarianism) under the guise of his musical column. They serve to remind us of the all-encompassing interests of this English Renaissance man.

Louis Crompton suggested, in his Shavian distillation entitled The Great Composers: Review and Bombardments by Bernard Shaw, that "it appears that Shaw,

perhaps from some unhappy experiences, deliberately wrote his reviews in a 'diminuendo' style so they might be cut at the end if space required." Shaw did indeed leap to the heart of the matter at the outset of all his reviews. But, unlike Crompton, I feel that the Shavian style does not merely fade away to a pianissimo; rather, the fortissimo markings continue to occur right through to the closing measures of his opuses.

There is no easing up which might allow his opponents time to recover. Shaw was merciless; he possessed a knock-out punch that became activated whenever he had his pen in hand. It cannot be denied that the Crompton theory is probably partially correct. The last paragraphs of a submission might quite possibly stand more of a chance of being brutally edited. However, there is no evidence to indicate that any such actions were ever taken against Shaw's criticism.

Writing years later, Shaw claimed that the editor of The Hornet "had mutilated and interpolated my notices horribly." Because of the clandestine arrangement, Shaw had no opportunity to correct the proofs prior to their running on the presses. Since none of his Hornet drafts are extant, it is impossible to say unequivocally to what extent, if at all, his reviews were tampered with. Shaw had a remarkable flair for exaggeration.



Dan Laurence, in his preface to Shaw's Music, believes that the only article that demonstrates cause for suspicion of tampering is the 28 March 1877 review of Sterndale Bennett's (1816-75) Parisina Overture. I would certainly concur and further add that such rampant puffery as we find in this column is distinctly beneath Shaw's critical sensibilities:

Beethoven was represented by a terzetto in his Fidelio style and by the Choral Fantasia, the pianoforte part of which was excellently rendered by Miss Agnes Zimmermann. Indeed, we have never heard her play better - a fact which implies no trifling measure of merit. The orchestra, saving a few slight drawbacks, was satisfactory throughout the concert, and did justice to the late Sir Sterndale Bennett's Parisina, an overture which will compare without derogation with any of Mendelssohn's. They also distinguished themselves by the fire with which they executed the overture to Der Freischütz. A word of commendation is due to the unusual steadiness of the horns in the adagio.

More typically, the brass section's poor playing would have distressed Shaw (especially from those dreaded trombones) and he undoubtedly would have chastised the conductor. Miss Zimmerman was quite fortunate not to have been stung in the usual "buzzings" of the incumbent hornet; Shaw rarely was favourably inclined towards pianists. A characteristic Shavian review of this vintage may have pegged Sterndale Bennett as an unimaginative imitator of Mendelssohnian strains.

In the fourth edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Winton

Dean outlined what he considered to be qualifications for a music critic:

- (i) A knowledge of the technical and theoretical principles of music.
- (ii) A knowledge of musical history and scholarship.
- (iii) A wide general education, covering as many as possible of the subjects with which music can be shown to have a point of direct contact.
- (iv) The ability to think straight and to write in a clear and stimulating manner.
- (v) An insight into the workings of the creative imagination.
- (vi) An integrated philosophy of life of his own.
- (vii) An enduring inquisitiveness and willingness to learn.
- (viii) An acceptance of his own limitations, both individual and generic.

After providing this "catalogue aria" listing of qualifications, Winton Dean proceeded to state the following:

It is not altogether an accident that one of the few really outstanding music critics, at least in English, was a man who had trained himself as a novelist and social thinker and was to reach eminence as a dramatist -- Bernard Shaw.

The only qualification for which Dean did not grant Shaw high marks was in the second category, that of scholarship.

Henry Pleasants, although placing Shaw amongst the likes of Robert Schumann, Hugo Wolf, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Virgil Thomson, in terms of critical brilliance, perception and articulation, is one of few twentieth-century commentators who felt that Shaw, along with these others, did not fit into the category of great critics. He ruled them all out because he felt that their output was rather more along the lines of "an avocation rather than a calling." Chorley and Davison, both of whom had critical careers spanning several decades, in Pleasant's tally are numbered among the greats.<sup>16</sup> Although undeniably an economic stop-gap at the beginning of his career, Shaw demonstrated that he truly desired to continue in musical journalism. Until 1885 it was more a lack of connections rather than a lack of effort that kept him out of print. From the mid-1880s he produced musical criticism for ten unabated years. His journalistic contributions did not abruptly cease once he had made his mark in the theatrical world. After his departure from full-time musical criticism (1894), he still delivered over fifty submissions to a wide array of magazines and newspapers; as well, he delivered a number of musical lectures.

It is not difficult to imagine that Shaw's criticisms would now be as obscure as Bennett's, Chorley's, Davison's or Fuller Maitland's, if Shaw had not been "G.B.S." of the theatrical world. The influence of his dramatic fame on his musico-critical reputation is immeasurable. To illustrate this, let us briefly glance at the critical legacy that John Alexander Fuller Maitland (1856-1936), Shaw's exact contemporary, has left.

His sustained production of musical criticism is impressive, spanning nearly thirty years from his initial Pall Mall Gazette offerings beginning in 1882 to his last twenty-two years (1889-1911) as the contributor to the Times. Fuller Maitland's writing was careful, reasoned and scholarly. Henry Cope Colles (1879-1943), Fuller Maitland's assistant and successor on the Times, assures us that his predecessor had a keen sense of humour, but it was obviously kept in check by his sense of decorum. In reading Maitland's autobiography, A Door-Keeper of Music one finds that, "he was at last able to unleash the humour which devotion to serious music and the higher journalism had kept under restraint during his career as a professional critic."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps Shaw's entertaining and readable musical criticism owes some of its "intrinsic value" to his venue. As Margery Morgan explained: "He settled on a style as different as possible from the pontifical formality of the Times; it is personal, spontaneous, easy, and vivid, befitting a more democratic paper reaching out...toward a newly literate public."<sup>18</sup> Although he was not the entertainer that Shaw was, Fuller Maitland's extensive "archaeological research" put him leagues ahead of Shaw in matters of musical scholarship.<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to decide which of these two deserves to be considered the greater critic. This would be akin to comparing the proverbial apples to oranges, or chamber music to Palm Court music. Both Fuller Maitland and Bernard Shaw take their places as important cogs in the wheel of musical critical evolution. But why have Shaw's musico-criticisms resurfaced and not Fuller Maitland's?

Ernest Newman (1868-1959) presented his view of what constitutes the judgement of critical history in his Introduction to Chorley's Thirty Years' Musical Recollections. Newman felt that the "reason was obvious":

It is difficult for the musical critic to achieve any immortality except one of opprobrium. He is remembered solely by his few misses; his many hits are not counted to him....If he talks sense, his views become the commonplaces of later musical opinion, and no one thinks of crediting him in particular with them. If he talks nonsense, this is regarded as peculiarly his own.<sup>20</sup>

Like in his plays, the entertainment element, with few exceptions, seems to be virtually omnipresent. Often it is only after the laughter has subsided that the force and the gravity of the matters dealt with become glaringly evident to the reader. But did his sugar-coated pill, Shaw's teaspoon of comic sugar, serve to negate the importance of his message? Was the fool of the London musical court ever taken seriously, or was he remembered only for his cunning sense of humour? Like *Rigoletto*, one supposes that Shaw would have had to bellow long and loud to be taken in earnest. He certainly made music's mysteries entertaining to the unordained, "the deaf stockbrokers", and the newly literate who comprised his readership. In retrospect, his writing for *Everyman*, and his lack of scholarly publications must have, in his time, hurt his musico-critical reputation considerably. The Victorians were lorded over by the arbiters of artistic taste; those individuals who possessed degrees ruled almost by decree. A fair number of them were even knighted for their distinguished service in the preservation of the status quo (i.e. doing nothing).



Shaw declared his appreciation of a good "war of letters" when he wrote to Francis Hueffer on 19 January 1883. Shaw's frankness more likely convinced the conservative Hueffer that the young aspirant would not be an appropriate addition to his staff. Shaw wrote:

I believe the public likes to see a fight, I think they ought to be gratified when there is battle to be done in a good cause, and I see that the journals which make a rule not to touch a subject without leaving a mark on it, are those which succeed: The Westminster, The World, The Saturday Review, The Figaro, The Referee &c, blackguard papers, no doubt, some of them, but all ready to fight for their opinions. I grant you that it is not worth while to fight, that most things, impartially considered, are as broad as they are long, but in this spirit is it not still less worth while to publish a journal? and criticism is mere waste of time.<sup>21</sup>

As far as can be reckoned, his first seige had been the Boosey affair from 1877. His most recent one, prior to the tussle with Ernest Newman in 1910, had been some ten years previous. In February of 1899 he found J. F. Runciman, a fellow critic on the Saturday Review staff, insisting on Shaw's "tomahawking" him due to differences concerning Wagner's Ring.

When Newman scathingly reviewed Strauss's new opera Elektra for the Nation in 1910, Shaw came to Strauss's defence. Shaw had not heard the work or even studied the score before he delivered his first retort. In the seven exchanges between the two antagonists, Shaw managed to send his younger sparring partner reeling with a combination of bluff, reason and humour:



Though Mr Newman is not the only offender, I purposely select his article as the occasion of a much needed protest, because his writings on music are distinguished enough to make him worth powder and shot. I can stand almost anything from Mr Newman except his posing as Strauss's governess; and I hope he has sufficient sense of humor to see the absurdity of it himself, now that he has provoked a quite friendly colleague to this yell of remonstrance.<sup>22</sup>

In 1914 Newman admitted that "for three years I have been trying to decoy Mr Shaw into another argument. After each article I have written on Strauss I have said to myself: 'This will draw him.'"<sup>23</sup> In the Testament of Music, Herbert van Thal gave his impression of the Newman-Shaw battle:

Newman, the youthful apprentice, is anxious to prove his maturity. For him this requires bearding the great lion in his den and bringing home a few whiskers to show his grandchildren some day.<sup>24</sup>

By 1914 Shaw had unfortunately lost his more thorough musical research habits that led him in 1893 to warn: "Don't be in a hurry to contradict G.B.S., as he never commits himself on a musical subject until he knows at least six times as much about it as you do."<sup>25</sup>

Rather than the reflection that produced the balanced expression of Shaw's earlier musical opinions, Newman had connived to catch Shaw up in the heat of the moment. The trap was well laid and finally paid off for Newman four years after the initial setback. The result showed the weakness of a critic who had been out of

circulation for twenty years. Shaw's greatest weakness may be seen to have been his lack of preparation. Although fairly well-versed when he wrote his Hornet, Pall Mall Gazette, Star, and World criticism, he never was as thorough a scholar as Joseph Bennett, J. A. Fuller Maitland, or his new rival Ernest Newman. In 1914 Shaw defended Strauss by pointing out that he was "a foreign visitor of great distinction and of extraordinarily attractive personality, who has impressed Europe as a genius of the first order."<sup>26</sup> This sort of defence, based as it is on a superficial knowledge of Strauss's works, is disappointing. It reeks of the style of argument prevalent in the previous half century. These were feeble, objectively insupportable statements, such as Shaw never penned in any of his early musical columns. Was he tripped up by Newman or did Shaw wish to tie one of his own hands behind his back in order to give his foe a better chance?

While Newman admired Shaw's prose style, at the same time he branded him as a "dilettante" after he had seen the 1932 collection of Shaw's criticisms, Music in London. One feels that this pronouncement by Newman is perhaps more due to their Straussian sparring in 1910 and 1914, than to Shaw's earlier journalism. Shaw, London's reasoned debater of the 1890s, was more of a rash controversialist twenty years later. Had Shaw succumbed to the carelessness bred from security for which he himself had admonished so many artists? Possibly, but some compensation may be given, for Shaw had diverted all his energies away from musical endeavours. His musical interests never left him, but his dramatic creations consumed too much time

for him to be able to keep up with musical trends, which were certainly perplexing even to full-time observers. It would appear that, above all, Shaw longed for a taste of his beloved battles carried out in fondly remembered "paper wars".

Shaw's upbringing provided a rich soil in which grew his fertile musical interests. Thanks to the musical efforts of Lucinda Shaw and Vandeleur Lee, Bernard Shaw was exposed to an incredible variety of musical activity. Shaw's love for music and desire for initiation into its secrets lead him to experiment with various instruments and explore numerous musical tomes. His early environment and further explorations enabled him to obtain insights into musical mysteries.

His diverse, if not orthodox, musical grounding stood Shaw in good stead to assume the chair of music critic on the Hornsey Hornet in the fall of 1876. His Hornet "buzzings" were remarkably polished and self-assured, if rather rash, for a young man of twenty. With an honesty and integrity rare in Victorian journalistic circles, Shaw carried on his righteous crusade against corrupt musical practices. His all-encompassing scope covered mediocre composers, inadequate conductors, misbehaving audiences, lethargic choirs, puffing journalists, histrionic absurdities, orchestral malfunctions and stultified conservatism. The humour, irreverence and directness with which he attacked London's musical stagnation was astounding. In his brash manner, Shaw pointed the direction for others to follow in the journalistic world

of the twentieth century. In essence in his year with the Hornet, Shaw encapsulated the musico-critical credo that he was to maintain for the rest of his life.

G. K. Chesterton described Shaw as "a shooting star and sometimes a destroying comet."<sup>27</sup> Despite Shaw's fanciful literary excursions and critical high jinks, his plays may be the key ingredient in the alchemical mixture that has tilted the scales of "immortality" in Shaw's favour. Or, was it Shaw's crystalline perception and his clever wit that gave him the almost universally recognized status as a superb music critic? Whatever the answer, the fact is that experts from diverse realms have commented favourably on Shaw's musical critical writings. Musical specialists, such as Winton Dean and Henry Pleasants, one-time musicians, such as Anthony Burgess, and even the totally uninitiated, all paint Shaw the music critic in a spectrum from glowingly memorable to incandescently brilliant.



## ENDNOTES

1. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1874-1897, vol.1., ed. Stanley Weintraub (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), p. 55-56.
2. The Oxford Companion to Music, 10th ed., s.v. "Criticism of Music," by Percy Scholes.
3. Hesketh Pearson, Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality (London: Wm. Collins and Co., 1942), p. 12.
4. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music: the Complete Musical Criticism of Bernard Shaw, 2nd ed., ed. Dan H. Laurence. (London: The Bodley Head, 1989), p. 175.
5. The Hornet, 21 March 1877, p. 156.
6. Collected Letters, 9 November 1891, p. 322.
7. Arthur Jacobs, Arthur Sullivan, A Victorian Musician (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 242.
8. The National Training School for music, established in 1876, was promoted, curiously enough, by a number of royal notables--the Prince of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and the Queen herself--even though the existing Royal Academy of Music had a Royal Charter.
9. Arthur Jacobs, Arthur Sullivan, p. 146.
10. Arthur Jacobs, Arthur Sullivan, p. 53.
11. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 3rd ed., s.v. "Mario, Cavaliere Di Candia," by Jullian Marshall.
12. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 138.
13. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 91.
14. Cherry has appeared on Hockey Night in Canada's television broadcasts for nine seasons (1981-90). Previously he had coached the Boston Bruins, during the mid-to-late 1970s, before he moved on to coach the Washington Capitals.

15. Richard W. Charteris, "Next to the game, the main event for hockey fans is Ron Maclean vs. Don Cherry," TV Guide, May 19-25, 1990.
16. Henry Pleasants, "Schumann the Critic," in Robert Schumann: the Man and his Music, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), p. 187.
17. Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed., s.v. "Fuller Maitland, John Alexander," by H.C. Colles.
18. British Writers, s.v. "Shaw, George Bernard," by Margery M. Morgan.
19. Fuller Maitland helped to found the Folk-song Society, translated, with Mrs. Clara Bell, Spitta's Life of Bach, wrote volume four of The Oxford History of Music, and edited the second edition of Grove's.
20. Henry F. Chorley, Thirty Years' Musical Recollections, ed. Ernest Newman. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926; rpt. New York: Vienna House, 1972), p. v.
21. Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, p. 58.
22. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 603.
23. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, III, p. 671.
24. Kummel, Donald W. "Testament of Music: Essays and Papers of Ernest Newman," Notes (March 1967), p. 540.
25. Bernard Shaw, Music in London 1890-94, vol. II (London: Constable, 1932), pp. 229-30.
26. Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Music, p. 654.
27. G.K. Chesterton, "The Critic," in Modern Critical Views: George Bernard Shaw, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 48.



## HORNSEY HORNET

The following is a compilation of information derived from Bernard Shaw's Hornsey Hornet reviews. Prior to this, the contents of Shaw's musical reviews have never been assembled in chart form. I believe that in this configuration the wide scope of Shaw's coverage of the London musical scene can be more fully appreciated. The first column provides the date on which the articles appeared. Following that is a listing of major works reviewed by Shaw. The second column indicates the performing group and venue. Lastly, the artists participating in the performance are named. When certain information, such as the name of the artist, the performing group, or the venue, is not to be found in Shaw's article, the corresponding omissions appear on this chart. All additions appear in square brackets. As well, any unusual titles are Shaw's own concoctions.

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
1876			
NOV 29	Cowen: <u>Pauline</u>	Royal Italian Opera/Covent Garden	Mr Santley, Miss Yorke, Miss Gaylord, Mr Celli, Mrs Aynsley Cook, Mr Turner, Mr Carl Rosa
DEC 6	English Opera [Wagner]: <u>The Flying Dutchman</u> [Beethoven]: <u>Fidelio</u> [Cowen]: <u>Pauline</u> [Gounod]: <u>Faust</u>	Carl Rosa Company/The Lyceum	Mr Santley, Madame Van Zandt, Mr Ludwig
	Cagnoni: <u>The Porter of Havre</u> Cherubini: <u>The Water Carrier</u>	Carl Rosa Company	
	Mozart: String Quartet, No. 2 in D Minor Beethoven: <u>Kreutzer</u> Sonata	Saturday Popular Concert/ St. James's Hall	Mr Hall, Madame Neruda, Miss Butterworth

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
	Mozart: Quartet No. 7 in D Major Mozart: <u>Strinasacchi</u> Violin Sonata Mendelssohn: <u>Fantasia</u> , Op.17 Haydn: Quartet No. 6, Op.17	Monday Popular Concert/ St. James's Hall	Madame Norman-Neruda, M. Kies, M. Zerbini, M. Piatti, Miss Zimmerman, Signor Gustave Garcia
DEC 13	Musical Intervals (lecture)	Exhibition of Scientific Apparatus	A. S. Ellis
	Rheinberger: Violin Sonata	Saturday Popular Concert	Madame Norman-Neruda, Mr Hall
DEC 20	Liszt: <u>Mazeppa</u> Bennett: Symphony in G Schumann: <u>Genoveva Overture</u> Hiller: Piano Concerto [F-Sharp Minor]	Crystal Palace	
	Schubert: String Quintet in C, Op.163 Schumann: Toccata in C. Op.7 Brahms: Piano Quartet in G Minor	Monday Popular Concert	M. Piatti, M. Ries, M. Zerbini, M. Pezze, Herr Straus, Miss Anna Mehlig
DEC 27	[Handel]: <u>Messiah</u>	Albert Hall Choral Society	
	[Beethoven]: Piano Concerto No. 5 <u>Prometheus Overture</u>	Beethoven Birthday Concert/ Crystal Palace	Mr Barnby, Dr Stainer, Mlle Titiens, Madame Trebelli-Bettini, Herr Behrens, Mr W.H. Cummings, Arabella Goddard, Madame Blanche Cole, Mr Lloyd, Madame Antoinette Sterling
1877			
JAN 3	Woolf: <u>The Fall of Pompeii Overture</u>	Royal Westminster Aquarium	
	M. Halberstadt: Symphony Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 9 Hérold: <u>Zampa Overture</u>		Mlle Douste, Mr Thurley Beale
JAN 17		Ballad Concerts - (article)	
	Beethoven: <u>Appassionata</u> Beethoven: Violin Sonata in F Mozart: Divertimento No. 3 Haydn: Quartet No. 2, Op.50	Monday Popular Concert	Mlle Marie Krebs, Signor Piatti, Herr Straus, Mme Thekla Friedlander

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
JAN 24	Lauro Rossi: <u>Biorn</u>	Queen's Theatre	Mrs Fitzinman Marshall, Miss Cora Stuart, Mlle Corandi, Signor Mottino, the Scots Fusilier Guards, Mr J. P. Clarke
	Mozart: Piano Quartet in G Minor Beethoven: <u>Adelaide</u> Beethoven: <u>Sonata Pathétique</u> Schubert: Octet	Saturday Popular Concert	Mr Sims Reeves, Mlle Marie Krebs
	Brahms: Liebeslieder Waltzes Chopin: Rondo for Two Pianos Schumann: "Spanish" Quartet Beethoven: Piano Trio No. 2	Monday Popular Concert	Mlle Krebs, Miss Zimmermann, Mlle Löwe, Mlle Redeker, M. Shakespeare, M. Pyatt, Mr Henry Holmes
JAN 31	Beethoven: "Les Adieux" Mendelssohn: Quintet Op.87 Antoniotto: Cello Sonata	Saturday Popular Concert	Signor Piatti, Sir Julius Benedict, Mlle Redeker, Herr Straus
	Beethoven: Thirty-two Variations Beethoven: Quartet in F Major, Op.59 Beethoven: Violin Sonata, No. 1, Op.12	Monday Popular Concert	Mlle Krebs, Signor Piatti, Mlle Redeker, Mlle Friedlander, Herr Straus
	Concertina Concert (first concert)		Mr. Richard Blagrove
FEB 7	Beethoven: Sonata No. 3, Op.2 Schumann: Quartet in A Major, Op.41 Spohr: Salon Stücke Schubert: Piano Trio, Op.99	Monday Popular Concert	Miss Agnes Zimmermann, Mr Henry Holmes, Mlle Friedlander, Mlle Redeker
	Mendelssohn: <u>Lobgesang</u> Rossini: <u>Stabat Mater</u>	Albert Hall Choral Society	Mr Sims Reeves, Miss Anna Williams, Miss Braham, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Madame Antoinette Sterling, M. W. H. Cummings, M. R. Hilton, Mr Barnby



DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
FEB 14	Spohr: Sextet, Op. 140	Saturday Popular Concert	Mr Sims Reeves, M. Blumenthal, Herr Straus
	Beethoven: Quartet, Op.59 Haydn: Quartet Bach: Chaconne in D Minor Dussek: Sonata Clementi: Sonata	Monday Popular Concert	Herr Joachim, Mlle Marie Krebs, Mr Edward Lloyd, Signor Zerbini
	Bach's Art of Fugue (lecture)	Musical Association	
	Carter: <u>Placida, the Christian Martyr</u> (cantata) Mozart: Requiem	Alberta Hall	Signor Foli, Mr Llewellyn Winter, Madame Sherrington, Madame Patey, M. Lloyd
FEB 21	Tartini: "Trillo del Diavolo" Schubert: Piano Sonata No. 1	Saturday Popular Concert	Miss Zimmermann, Miss Gowa
	Cherubini: Quartet in E Flat Major Bennett: <u>The Lake, The Millstream,</u> <u>The Fountain</u> Schumann: Violin Sonata in D Minor	Monday Popular Concert	Mr Barton McGuckin, Herr Joachim, Mlle Marie Krebs
		American Chamber Organ Exhibition (J. Estey and Co.)	Mr Augustus Tamplin, Mlle Zimeri
FEB 28	Cherubini: <u>Medea Overture</u> Haydn: "Oxford" Symphony Bazzini: <u>Saul Overture</u> Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4	Crystal Palace Concert	Mr Manns, Mlle Marie Krebs, Mlle Sophie Löwe, Madame Antoinette Sterling
	Beethoven: "Pastoral" Symphony	Royal Westminster Aquarium	
MAR 7	Responses to Messrs Boosey and Co.	Albert Hall	
	Spohr: Nonetto Haydn: Quartet in C Major, Op.33 Beethoven: "Les Adieux" Sonata	Monday Popular Concert	M. Joachim, M. Zerbini, M. Svensden, M. Lazarus, M. Dubrucq, M. Wotton, M. Wendtland, M. Reynolds, M. Piati, Herr Henschel, Madame Schumann

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
	Benedict: <u>The Enchanted Forest Overture</u> Mozart: Symphony in G Minor Spohr: Violin Concerto in D Major, No. 9 Leclair: Saraband Brahms: Hungarian dances Wagner: <u>Tannhäuser Overture</u>	Crystal Palace Concert	Herr Joachim, Mr Oscar Beringer, Mrs Osgood, Miss Mary Cummings
	Review of Pamphlet: Arthur Baraclough, <u>Observations on the Physical Education of the Vocal Organs.</u>		
MAR 14		London Ballad Concert	Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Mr. Sims Reeves, Madame Goddard, Mr Edward Lloyd, Mr Maybrick, Miss Helen d'Alton, Madame Antoinette Sterling, The London Vocal Union
	Mendelssohn: <u>Elijah</u>	William Carter's Choir/ Royal Albert Hall	Signor Campobello, Madame Patey, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Mr Lloyd
MAR 21	Bach: St. Matthew Passion	Alberta Hall Choral Society	Mr Barnby, Mr Cummings, Mr Thurley Beale, Miss Anna Williams, Mr Svensden, Madame Antoinette Sterling, Mr Pollitzer, Dr Stainer
		London Ballad Concert (ninth)	Miss Edith Wynne, Madame Cave Ashton, Madame Antoinette Sterling, Mr Sims Reeves, Mr Shakespeare, Mr Maybrick, Madame Goddard, The London Vocal Union

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
MAR 28	Beethoven: Posthumous Quartets No.1 & 5 Beethoven: Quartet in F Major, Op.135 Beethoven: "Waldstein" Sonata	Saturday Popular Concert	J. Joachim, M. Ries, M. Straus, M. Piatti, Herr Henschel, Madame Schumann
	Schumann: [ <u>Scene from</u> ] <u>Faust</u> Wagner: Scene from <u>Tristan and Isolde</u> Beethoven: Choral Fantasia Bennett: <u>Parisina Overture</u> Berlioz: <u>Der Freischütz Overture</u>	Philharmonic Society	Mrs Osgood, Miss Agnes Zimmermann
		London Ballad Concert	Mr Shakespeare, Mr Lloyd, Mr Maybrick, Miss Frances Brooke, Madame Edith Wynne, Madame Antoinette Sterling, Madame Arabella Goddard
APR 4	Opera Prospectuses	Her Majesty's Opera	
APR 11	Lecture on Cathedral Reforms	Musical Association	Mr Barrett
	Notice about the forthcoming Wagner Festival		
APR 18	Bach: Mass in B Minor	Bach Choir	Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Madame Patey, Signor Foli, Mr Cummings, M. Wendtland, M. Straus Mr Svendsen, Herr Otto Goldschmidt
	[Donizetti]: <u>Don Pasquale</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Mlle Smeroschi, M. Capoul, Signor Cotogni, Signor Beignani
	[Meyerbeer]: <u>Les Huguenots</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Signor Gayarré, Mlle Bianchi, Mlle d'Angeri
APR 25	[Meyerbeer]: <u>Les Huguenots</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Signor Gayarré, Mlle d'Angeri, Mlle Bianchi, Mlle Scalchi, Signor Cotogni, Signor Bagagiolo, Signor Capponi, Signor Vianesi
	Fourth Concertina Concert	Royal Academy of Music	Mr Richard Blagrove



DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
MAY 2		Crystal Palace Concert	Anton Rubinstein
	The Troubadours (amateur opera - excerpts)	Park Lane	Mr Vandeleur Lee
	Retirement of Mr Santley		
MAY 9	Men and Women of the Day (feature): Richard Wagner		
	Verdi: <u>Un Ballo in Maschera</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Mlle Carolina Salla, Madame Lablache, Mlle Mila Rodani, Signor Fancelli, Signor Rota, Sir Michael Costa
MAY 30	Royal Cambridge Asylum for Soldier's Widows (benefit)	Albert Hall	Madame Trebelli
	Opera Announcements: [Meyerbeer]: <u>Robert le Diable</u> [Meyerbeer]: <u>Les Huguenots</u>	Haymarket Covet Garden	Mlle Salla M. Capoul
JUNE 6	Wagner Festival	Albert Hall	Richard Wagner, Herr Richter, Frau Materna, Frau von Sadler Grün, Herr Unger, Herr Karl Hill, Herr Wilhelmj
	Men and Women of the Day (feature): Madame Christine Nilsson and M. Faure		
	[Donizetti]: <u>Lucia [di Lammermoor]</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Mlle Chiomi, Signor Fancelli
	Spohr: <u>Consecration of Sound [Overture]</u> Beethoven: <u>Egmont Overture</u> Wagner: <u>Tannhäuser Overture</u> Macfarren: Violin Concerto in G Minor	Philharmonic Society	Herr Strauss, Signor Campobello, Madame Sinico, Mr Cusins
JUNE 13	[Verdi]: <u>Rigoletto</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Signor Galassi, Signor Talbo, Mlle Valleria, Madame Trebelli
	[Donizetti]: <u>Lucia [di Lammermoor]</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Mlle Chiomi, Signor Fancelli, Signor Rota

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
	Pianoforte Recital Beethoven: Piano Sonata, Op.106 Handel: Chaconne Bach: Italian Concerto Ketten: <u>Serenade Espagnole</u> , Op.60	St. James's Hall	Mr Henry Ketten
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Madame Trebelli		
JUNE 20	[Rossini]: <u>Otello</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Signor Tamberlik, Madame Nilsson, Signor Carrion, M. Faure, Signor Foli, Sir Michael Costa
	[Verdi]: <u>Il Trovatore</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Herr Wachtel, Madame Trebelli, Mlle Nandori
	[Rossini]: <u>Il Barbiere</u> [di Siviglia]	Royal Italian Opera	Madame Patti, Signor Cotogni, Signor Ciampi, Signor Ordinas, Signor Nicolini, Mlle Corsi, Signor Vianesi
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Signor Nicolini		
JUN 27	[Wagner]: <u>Flying Dutchman</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Mlle Albani, M. Maurel, Signor Vianesi, M. Maurel, Signor Bagagiolo, Signor Carpi, Signor Rosario, Mlle Ghiotti
	[Bellini]: <u>La Sonnambula</u>	Her Majesty's Theatre	Mlle Etelka Gerster, Signor Fancelli, Signor del Puente, Mlle Robiati
	[Flotow]: <u>Marta</u>	Her Majesty's Theatre	Sir Michael Costa, Mlle Chiomi, Madame Trebelli, Signor Fancelli, Signor del Puente, Signor Zoboli
	Handel Festival (Public Rehearsal)	Crystal Palace	Mlle Albani, Madame Sherrington, M. Rigby, M. Lloyd, M. Santley
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Signor Fancelli		

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
JULY 4	Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha: <u>Santa Chiara</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Signor Capponi, M. Capoul, Signor Catogni, Mlle Smeroschi, Mlle d'Angeri
	<u>La Figlia del Regimento</u>	Royal Italian Opera	Mlle Rodani, Signor Carrion, M. Sainton
	Director's Benefit	Albert Hall Choral Society	Mr Leslie, M. Lloyd, M. Santley, Miss Robertson, Madame Patey
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Mlle Albani		
	The Handel Festival <u>Messiah, Israel in Egypt</u>	Albert Hall	Sir Michael Costa, Mlle Albani, Madame Patey, Madame Edith Wynne, Mr Cummings, Mr Vernon Rigby, Mr Santley, Herr Henschel, Mesdames Patti, Sherrington, and Suter, M. Foli and M. Edward Lloyd, Mr Best
JULY 11	[Donizetti]: <u>Lucia [di Lammermoor]</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Mlle Etelka Gerster, Signor Fancelli, Signor Brocolini, Signor Rota, Sir Michael Costa
	Concert	St James's Hall	Mr Carlos Floretine, Madame Antoinette Sterling, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Mr Edward Lloyd, Signor Foli, Mlle Enequest, Herr Wilhelmj, Dr Ganz
	Vocalists of the Season (series): M. Capoul		
JULY 18	The Opera Season in Retrospect	Royal Italian Opera	
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Mr Edward Lloyd		
JULY 25	The Opera Season in Retrospect	Her Majesty's Opera	
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Madame Lemmens-Sherrington		



DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
AUG 1	[Meyerbeer]: <u>Les Huguenots</u>	Her Majesty's Opera	Madame Nilsson, Madame Trebelli, Signor Foli, Signor Fancelli, Signor del Puente
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Sir Michael Costa		
AUG 8	English Opera	Sydenham	Mr Carl Rosa, Signor Salvini
AUG 15		Royal Westminster Aquarium	
		Alexandra Palace	
	Beethoven: <u>Battle of Vittoria</u>	Crystal Palace	Madame Sterling, Madame Campobello, M. Shakespeare, M. Foli, M. Barton McGuckin
	English Opera [Mozart]: Don Giovanni, <u>Le Nozze di Figaro</u> [Wagner]: <u>The Flying Dutchman</u>	Sydenham	Madame Rose Hersee, Signor Campobello, Mr Aynsley Cook, Madame Blanche Cole, Madame Torriani
	Announcement of third Italian opera company for following season	Drury Lane	
	Obituary notice: Mrs Marsh (alias Virginia Gabriel), ballad writer		
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Madame Antoinette Sterling		
AUG 22	Promenade Concerts Cherubini: <u>Anacreon Overture</u> Schubert: Symphony in B Minor Mendelssohn: Scherzo from <u>Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Mozart: Symphony in E-Flat Major	Covent Garden	Signor Arditi, M. Hughes, M. Lazarus, Mr Howard Reynolds, Mlle Debillemont, Mlle Pommereul, Mlle Dravis, Signor Giannini, Signor Medica
	Vocalists of the Season (series): Mr Santley		

DATE	MAJOR WORK(S) REVIEWED	PERFORMING GROUP AND VENUE	ARTISTS
AUG 29	Beethoven Concert <u>Coriolan Overture</u> Symphony No. 4 Piano Sonata, Op.10, No. 3 [Vocalists of the Season (series): Mrs. Osgood]	Covent Garden	Mlle Pommereul, Mlle Drivis
SEPT 5	Vocalists of the Season (series): Mr Vernon Rigby		
SEPT 12	Music Reviews (songs and piano pieces)		
SEPT 19	Music Reviews (songs and piano pieces)		
SEPT 26	Popular Vocalists (article)		

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