

**TIME AND TUNE IN THE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A  
NEW METHOD OF  
TEACHING VOCAL MUSIC**

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# TIME AND TUNE

IN

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*A NEW METHOD OF TEACHING VOCAL MUSIC.*

BY

JOHN HULLAH.



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AND

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## PREFACE.

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WILHEM's Method of Teaching Singing "adapted" by me "to English use," was published "Under the Sanction of the Committee of Council on Education," in the year 1840. The first issue, exhausted in a few weeks, was immediately followed by a second, presenting many alterations and improvements. Not, however, till 1849 was the work "revised and reconstructed"—finally, as it has so far proved—for the second time. For a quarter of a century this third edition has maintained a circulation both large and steady. Large as it has always been however, and larger as it has recently become, its magnitude is but a very inadequate measure of the extent to which the *Method* of Wilhem has been employed; for the publication of the "Exercises and Figures" on "Large Sheets" has rendered it available in places innumerable, whereto a new copy of "The Manual" has only occasionally found its way. During recent visits to almost every part of Great Britain I have found sets of these Large Sheets, often purchased many years since, which have served, and may still serve, for the instruction of many successive generations of scholars; among other places, in those invaluable Schools of Music, our Cathedral Choirs.

This circulation notwithstanding, I had long meditated still another "revisal and reconstruction" of the method, and had gradually accumulated a large mass of material in reference to it. When, however, about three years since, I had got some of this material into shape, I found

myself at work on, not a new edition, but a new book, wherein, though the principles of an existing one might be worked out, the manner of working would prove altogether different. To grace such a work with an imprimatur granted to another, bearing little at least external likeness to it, was not to be thought of; and to connect it with the name of the great apostle of popular musical instruction in France would have been equally an injustice to him, and—I hope it is not unbecoming to say—to myself. After much consideration I resolved to leave the Method as I had last left it, in 1849, still accessible to those to whom it might remain an acc. ptable, if only because an accustomed, text-book; and to work out all new processes in a new work, bearing a title by which it might be unmistakably distinguished from the old one.

“Time and Tune” includes hardly a sentence or a measure to be found in “The Manual” of 1849; and it differs from that work in a still more important particular—the employment of the fixed or immovable *Do*, with considerable modifications of detail.

As Inspector of Music in Training Colleges I have had unusual, indeed unequalled, opportunities of testing results of the two well-known methods of using the Sol-fa syllables. I am not disposed to overrate “results,” as evidence for or against methods of teaching. Not to say that “as is the master so is the school,” “results” are too often affected or disturbed by influences which we cannot trace, and which we could not control were we able to trace them. The results, however, which have come under my notice might seem to be numerous enough to justify generalization, which it would be unsafe and unfair to make from fewer instances. I cannot hope to record my impression of these more briefly than in the following extracts from my Report for the first year of my inspection, 1872:—

“The books of instruction and rudimentary exercises in use in the training colleges are many, but the principles on which they are based are two only—those known as the ‘moveable’ and the ‘immovable *Do*,’ in the one of which a given syllable is assigned to every note in a given scale without



## PREFACE

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reference to its absolute pitch, and in the other the same name is always given to the same note whatever be its place in whatever scale.

"The former of these methods of sol-fa-ing, as it is incomparably the older (dating back to the very infancy of modern musical art) is also incomparably the more attractive. The relations of musical sounds one to another are more easily appreciated, and for practical purposes recognised, by average students, as the occupants of certain places in a given scale than in any other capacity or way. Only to persons of very fine musical organization is it given (often very early in life) to appreciate and recognise sounds *absolutely*,—to recognise C as C, whether it be the dominant of F, the supertonic of B $\flat$ , or any other constituent of any other key. Were every piece of music confined within the 'narrow bounds' of the scale in which it begins and ends, there would be as little question about the practice as there is about the theory of the 'moveable Do.' For nobody questions the great—the supreme—importance of establishing in a student's mind the relations of one note to another as the occupant of a particular place in the scale. But notoriously few pieces of music remain throughout in the same key. The shortest and simplest melody generally 'modulates' into the key of its dominant, relative minor, or other. The moment it does this the moveable *Do* becomes, no doubt, a good because a severe test of the science of the proficient, but in the same degree it ceases to be a help to the beginner. It provides admirably for *note* relationship, but not at all for *key* relationship. So far from helping the tyro in vocal music over his chiefest real difficulty—that of dealing with 'accidentals'—it breaks down at the very first; for it leaves him to determine whether this accidental indicates modulation (and if so into what key), whether one of the 'alterations' needed for the minor key, or a departure from the diatonic to the chromatic *genus*,—points which in many cases even a proficient might be unable to determine without reference to other 'parts' possibly not under his eye."

This difficulty has suggested a variety of contrivances. Some teachers call *every* note accidentally sharpened *Si*, and every note accidentally flattened *Fa*; others call *Fa*  $\sharp$  *Fi*, *Si*  $\flat$  *Sa*, and the like. A few even make no changes whatever in the Sol-fa syllables on account of modulation; calling altered notes like unaltered, *Fa*  $\sharp$  still *Fa*, and *Si*  $\flat$  still *Si*; applying to a new leading note the syllable they have hitherto applied to the subdominant, and to a new subdominant that which they have hitherto applied to the leading note.

"If the 'moveable *Do*' is not to be moved, save in protracted modulation, and if, in a piece for the most part in C, F  $\sharp$  may be, as assuredly I have often heard it, called *Fa* or even *F*, then I ask why it should not be called so first as last, and students be spared what seems gratuitously difficult, and certainly is glaringly inconsistent.

"And here I must record my experience that the use of the 'moveable *Do*,' as it has come under my notice, does involve both difficulty and inconsistency. In adapting the sol-fa syllables on this system to musical notes I have remarked, on the part of individual students, repeated hesitation as to their names, ending as often in their giving them incorrectly as correctly. Of the bodies of second-year students taught on the 'moveable *Do*' principle who sol-faed a piece I put before them in the course of my examination, not one noticed or acknowledged the most striking feature of it—that the second subject was not, like the first, in B  $\flat$ , but in F! With charmingly unconscious violation of the principles so painfully instilled into them, they went on calling the third of the new scale *Si*, the fourth *Do*, and the seventh *F*, or even *Fa*; sounding the notes, however, very often quite correctly, and thereby, of course, condemning more conclusively the system on which they supposed themselves to be working. As for individuals, I found few of them who could sol-fa at all in more than two keys besides that of C. The best readers taught on this principle declined to avail themselves of its help, and either called all notes *La*, or sang the words, with more or less correctness. I find in my journal memoranda made at the moment like the following: 'Utter confusion about "moveable *Do*;" 'disposition on the part of students to shirk sol-faing altogether;' 'notes called by any names but the right,' &c. &c."

In its application to the minor mode the shortcomings of the moveable *Do* are however still more manifest. Here the Tonic is called *La*, and the leading note to it *Si*; so that *Si*, which the student has so far been taught, and is still taught, to associate with the major second above *La* and the minor second below *Do*, he is now told to associate with the minor second below the former, and the diminished fourth below the latter.

There are other objections to the moveable *Do*, wholly irrespective of the difficulty or impossibility of its consistent application, one only of which I will briefly notice—the impediment its use presents to any even

approximate recognition of pitch. Nobody, I believe, ever attempted to teach, or conceived the possibility of teaching, by "absolute pitch." Nevertheless an appreciation of it, even if only approximate, is notoriously of great practical use. With a moderate amount of practice, a student of singing becomes conscious by what mechanical act this or that note is producible from his own voice, and with what sensation its production is accompanied. At the least he soon learns that this or that note is nearer to the top of his voice than the bottom, or nearer to the middle than either. Now if the note G on the treble staff is one minute to be called *Sol*, another *Fa*, another *Do*, and so on throughout the septenary, what chance is there of his understanding, and remembering the unalterable scientific fact that G has an existence wholly independent of its position as a member of any scale whatever?

But that the moveable *Do* is a clumsy and imperfect instrument, even in skilled hands, and a hindrance rather than a help in unskilled, does not at all prove that the fixed *Do*, as used up to the present time, is a perfect instrument, unsusceptible of modification or improvement. On the contrary, I have long believed, and recent experiments, conducted under considerable disadvantages, have confirmed this belief, that its use might be modified to such an extent as to remove every reasonable objection that has ever been brought against it. In what way this is to be done, I have fully explained in an appendix\* to this preface; and in the work which follows, the explanation is practically applied. With this exception, there is no process recommended or enjoined in "Time and Tune," which has not, for many years past, been in use among the best teachers of Wilhem's Method. Some of these processes—I do not speak of those which could only have become traditionally known—have often I find, been altogether ignored, in spite of attention being continually called to them in the Manual. In some instances, I have found that the "manual staff" is not,

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\* Another extract from my first report.