

**NEW MUSICAL MISCELLANIES:
HISTORICAL, CRITICAL,
PHILOSOPHICAL AND
PEDAGOGIC. HOW TO
UNDERSTAND MUSIC. VOL. II**

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New musical miscellanies: historical, critical, philosophical and pedagogic. How to understand music. Vol. II by W. S. B. Mathews

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W. S. B. MATHEWS

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BY
W. S. B. MATHEWS.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND MUSIC.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:
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1895.

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE LATE
LOWELL MASON, DOCTOR OF MUSIC,
THE REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN MUSICAL EDUCATOR;
AND TO HIS SON,
WILLIAM MASON, DOCTOR OF MUSIC,
THE AMERICAN ARTIST, TEACHER AND VIRTUOSO,
THIS VOLUME,
IN TOKEN OF PERSONAL INSPIRATION AND ASSISTANCE,

Is Respectfully Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE present volume is a sort of accident, having grown out of the plan of modifying the first volume of "How to Understand Music," by replacing the last two essays and the Dictionary with new matter. Upon collecting the material it was found to greatly exceed such limits; so in place of adding it to the old volume it was decided to make a new one. The essays here collected represent the more important phases of the author's musical studies since the production of the first volume. Several of them were not originally intended for book form, and partake, perhaps too much, of the levity and sketchiness of newspaper writing. Others are essentially "studies," incident to the more important duties of a musical critic and teacher, or preparatory to a serious narrative of the entire course of musical history, the preparation of which is already well advanced, as a third volume of this series. The attentive reader will observe that the essays on Schubert and Berlioz belong to the same category as the biographical essays of the first volume, scarcely exceeding the limits of newspaper sketches. The chapters on Richard Wagner are, in part, from the essays published in the non-official program book of the Chicago Festival of 1884; in part, from the author's letters from Europe to the *Chicago Daily News*, in the same year, and in part, new. An important section upon "Die Meistersinger" and "Tristan and Isolde" was written expressly for this work by the well-known Wagnerian scholar and American composer, Mr. Fred. Grant Gleason, acknowledgment of which is here and elsewhere made. The essay upon the Tonal System will be found to contain the most complete historical summary of the subject accessible within similar limits. It is believed to present the existing state of knowledge and theory upon the subject of just intonation and temperament, with a series of tables affording at a glance an idea of the crudities concealed in our tempered keyboards and scales, which there is too much disposition in certain quarters to acquiesce in as final. The essays upon the Psychology of Music, the Tonic Sol-Fa, Piano Teaching, and Self-Culture in Music, are mutually complementary, and, taken together, form a foundation for Pedagogic, or the Philosophy of Teaching. The limits of the volume having been reached sooner than was expected, the elaborate essay upon Musical History, originally intended for this place, had to be cut down to about a fifth of its proposed compass. It is hoped that this circumstance will be taken into account in estimating its literary demerits.

The third volume of "How to Understand Music" has been in preparation for more than two years, and it is hoped will be ready some time in 1889. It is intended to present in one volume an account of the whole course of musical history, four leading questions being asked concerning each of the great Culture-Periods of human history in turn,

namely: What kinds of instruments did they have? What kind of music did they make? What did they think about music? and What part of our present art of music did they have? These questions applied to the periods of Ancient Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times, successively, lead to a comprehensive understanding of the entire course of the development of this art. The work will be, therefore, a *History of Music*, rather than a collection of musical biographies. It is hoped in this way to cover the ground of the entire nine volumes octavo proposed by Fétis, the six or eight of Ambros, and the voluminous treatises of many other writers. The design may appear large, but the author is not without hopes of being able to finish it to the approval of teachers and students generally. Meanwhile he hopes that super-sensitive readers will not allow the literary defects of the present volume to outweigh their appreciation of the value of the information here brought together from a wide range of sources.

CHICAGO, MAY 26TH, 1888.

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CHAPTER FIRST.

SCHUBERT.

Franz (Peter) Schubert, the son of a poor schoolmaster, was born at Vienna in 1797. His father began to teach him the violin when he was the merest child, and soon thereafter his older brother began to teach him the piano. At the age of eleven he had a superior soprano voice, which secured him place in a famous boy-choir, and free schooling and support in connection therewith. At the age of sixteen the loss of his voice returned him to his father's house. He struggled on in poverty and obscurity. For three years he assisted his father in the school; then he gave it up and eked out a meagre support by giving lessons, playing an organ, and the like. Thus he led an uneventful life until a year after Beethoven's death, when he too died, in 1828, at the age of thirty-one. This modest and unappreciated young man was already beginning to be known as a composer of popular songs, some of which had been sung by Vogl, the famous tenor of that day. He was also known as the author of a number of piano pieces, some quartets and an unsuccessful opera. Nevertheless, when Schubert died, the most wonderful melodist that the world has known went over to the majority. In his brief life he had composed more than 500 songs, among them many which, for beauty and graphic illustration of the text, will never be surpassed. He left a large volume of pianoforte sonatas whose difficulty and the refinement which they require of the player, have prevented their being fully appreciated, even to this time. Some of his most striking songs have been transcribed for the piano by Liszt and others, and are among the loveliest piano pieces which we have. He left ten symphonies, longer and more fully scored than those of Beethoven. In short, for spontaneity and beauty of ideas Schubert is the most fascinating and the most richly endowed composer who has ever lived. In silence and in obscurity he wrought on. He had not the inestimable advantage of hearing his works played and of amending his style according to the effect of it upon the public, hence, many of his pieces are too diffuse. He turns over an idea too many times. He lacks concentration and he is not abundant in strong contrasts. On the other hand, there are many movements by Schubert which, for con-