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AN  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
INSTITUTION and PROGRESS  
OF THE  
ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC,  
WITH  
A COMPARATIVE VIEW of the MUSIC  
of the PAST and PRESENT TIMES.

BY A MEMBER.

ESTO PERPETUA!

Padre PAOLO SARPI.



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AN  
A C C O U N T  
OF THE  
ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC.

**T**HE Academy of Ancient Music, at the Crown and Anchor - Tavern, in the Strand, was instituted about the year 1710, by a number of Gentlemen, performers on different instruments, in conjunction with some of the most eminent masters of the time. The design of this establishment was to promote the study and practice of vocal and instrumental

strumental harmony ; in order to which, the foundation of a library was laid, consisting of the most celebrated compositions, as well in manuscript as in print, that could be procured, either at home or abroad.

Under the direction of the late Dr. *John Christopher Pepusch*, whose memory will be ever revered by all lovers of music, and with the assistance of Mr. *Galliard*, Dr. *Maurice Greene*, Mr. *Bernard Gates*, and the gentlemen and boys of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Chapel Royal, the Academy continued in a very flourishing state, till about the year 1728, when Dr. *Greene* thought proper to leave it, and set up an Academy at the Devil-Tavern, Temple-bar, which subsisted but a few years.

The

The secession of Dr. *Greene* and his dependents was not such an injury to the Academy, as it was feared it would prove: they left it, it is true, but they left it in peace, and the members of which it was composed, in consequence of the loss they had sustained, became emulous to excel each other in their endeavours to promote its interests, and to disseminate the love of harmony throughout the kingdom.

With these assistances, and that which the Academy derived from the performance of the amiable *Henry Needler*, Esq; who for many years led the orchestra, the late Earl of *Abercorn*, Mr. *Mulso*, Mr. *Millan*, Mr. *Dobson*, and many other gentlemen, who were excellent performers, it continued to flourish

flourish until the year 1734, when Mr. *Gates* retired, and drew off with him the children of the Chapel Royal.

In the interval between the secession of Dr. *Greene* and Mr. *Gates*, viz. in the Month of February 1731-2, the Academy had given a signal proof of the advantages arising from its institution: the Oratorio of *Esther*, originally composed for the duke of *Chandois*, was performed in character by the members of the Academy, and the children of the Chapel Royal, and the applause with which it was received, suggested to Mr. *Handel*, the thought of exhibiting that species of composition at Covent-Garden theatre; and to this event it may be said to be owing, that the public have not only been de-  
lighted

lighted with the hearing, but are now in possession of, some of the most valuable works of that great master.

The loss which the Academy sustained by the secession of some members, the death of others, and above all by the want of boys, laid them under great difficulties, and drove them to the necessity of trying what could be done without the assistance of treble voices; but the experience of one season drove them to the alternative of an increased expence, or annihilation. In this predicament they resolved upon an expedient that should not only make good the loss they had sustained, but convey a benefit to posterity. In short, they determined upon such an establishment, and such a subscription, as would  
render



render the Academy at once a society for the entertainment of its members, and a feminary for the instruction of youth in the principles of music, and the laws of harmony. Invitations to parents, and offers of such an education for their children, as would fit them as well for trades and busineses, as the profession of music, were given by advertisements in the public papers: these brought in a great number of children, and such of them as were likely to be made capable of performing the *Soprano* part in vocal compositions, were retained; Dr. *Pepusch* generously undertook the care of their instruction for a stipend, the largest the Academy could afford, tho' greatly disproportionate to his merit, and succeeded so well in his endeavours to improve them, that some of the  
 most

most eminent professors of the science owe their skill and reputation to his masterly method of tuition.

A subscription of two guineas, and a resolution to admit auditors as members, enabled the managers to carry this their benevolent design into execution: they enriched their collection with such a variety of compositions as rendered it even then, perhaps, the most valuable repository of musical treasure in Europe. Abbate *Steffani* transmitted to them from Hanover, the most valuable of his works from time to time, as they were composed. Mr. *Handel* and Signor *Geminiani*, lent the Academy their countenance, the latter frequently honouring it with his own exquisite performance, and it continued to flourish till the year 1752, when it sustained

a loss which will be long deplored in the death of Dr. *Pepusch*, and which was far from being repaired by his generous benefaction to it of the most valuable part of his library.

Soon after this melancholy event, some of the members of the Academy, reflecting on the great encouragement given to *Concerts*, thought it might tend to the interest of the Society, to give it a new form, and by engaging some of the most excellent performers on particular instruments, derive assistance to it as a *Concert*, from persons who might be apt to disregard it as an *Academy*. But here they were involved in a new difficulty: the great increase of late years in the number of places of public diversion, and the consequent

quent increase in the demands of eminent performers, made it impossible, even with a subscription of two guineas and a half, to continue a competition against greater resources than private contribution, and they now find, that these latter are not adequate to the expence of the plan which they last adopted.

The members of the Academy therefore find themselves reduced to the necessity of recurring to the principles of its first institution, and they desire, if possible, to perpetuate the existence of a Society calculated for the improvement of one of the noblest of the sciences, and the communication of rational and social delight, to which end they wish for the assistance of those, who profess to love and admire music; such as are susceptible of its powers,  
such

such in short as are capable of distinguishing between the feeble efforts of simple melody, and the irresistible charms of elegant modulation and well-studied harmony.

The friends of this institution are sensible of the prejudices which its very name, The Academy of Ancient Music, may excite; and that those persons, who think no music can be good which is not *new*, will hardly be induced to join in the support of an establishment, professedly intended for the study and practice of that which is *old*.

To obviate prejudices of this kind, little more is necessary than barely to state them: those now under consideration are reducible to the following two positions:

“ Nothing

“ Nothing in music is estimable,  
 “ that is not new. No music  
 “ tolerable, which has been heard  
 “ before.”

In answer to which it may be said, that this kind of reasoning is never applied to other intellectual gratifications; for no man was ever yet so weak as to object to the works of *Virgil* or *Raffaëlle*, that the one wrote seventeen hundred, or that the other painted two hundred and fifty years ago.

But, perhaps, nothing more is meant by the objection, than that  
 “ the efficacy of music is abated  
 “ by repetition.”

Not to enquire what kind of music that must be, the merit whereof evaporates in the performance, let it be asked, does any man forbear



bear the perusal of an Epic Poem, merely because he has read it before? or does any admirer of Painting or Sculpture withdraw his eye from a fine Picture or Statue, because it has once surveyed them? Nay, rather, does he not employ all his attention to explore their several beauties, and in the exercise of a learned curiosity find continual delight?

Again, let it be asked, are these objections to the best music of the best times, founded in truth and experience, or are they the result of a vicious taste and a depraved judgment? Much of the music now in the possession of the Academy is as new to us as it was to our fathers; and will any one in his sober senses assert, that they had not ears and rational souls as well as ourselves?

or

or that those sweet interchanges of melody, those artful combinations of concordant sounds, which inspired such men as *Shakespeare* and *Milton*, with the praises of this divine science, can at any time be heard with indifference by a nice and unprejudiced ear? If this be the case, music, the principles whereof seem interwoven in the very constitution of the universe, is mere delusion, and the pleasure arising from it, resolvable into caprice, fashion, into any thing but reason and philosophy.

Farther, let it be enquired, how far the love of novelty has contributed to the *variety* of music, and it will be found to have excluded some of the most valuable kinds of composition, and thereby produced *uniformity* instead of *variety*.

Every



Every judge of music is aware of the effects of compositions in the *minor* third of the several keys, and that by the hearing of such the sweetest sensations are excited; and the artful contexture of *fugue* and *canon* are the admiration of all who are skilled in the science: These two kinds of music are in danger of being lost; for the compositions of this day are almost solely in the *major* third, and their structure little better than divided counterpoint, and what is still worse, on a *monotonic* basis; nor are the compositions, which some affect to admire, less liable to the objection of uniformity in respect to their several *divisions* or strains: For reasons, which no one is willing to avow, Adagio-Music is exploded, and we are content to forego the Majesty and Dignity of the *Largo* and *Andante* movements,

movements, with all the variety arising from the interchange of different airs and measures, for the noise and rattle of an unisonus *Allegro*, to which no name can be given, or the intoxicating softness of that too oft iterated air, the *Minuet*.

He that reflects on such instances of modern Levity as these, and that the effect of new productions is such as that no one pretends, or even wishes, to remember the music that pleased him a month ago, may very reasonably demand, who are the competitors with the composers of the last century, and the former half of the present? or of which of them can it be said, that his crudities are less evanescent than the form of a cloud, or that his most laboured studies have survived the fate of an almanac?

But lest it should be imagined, that an unwarrantable fondness for antiquity is the motive with the Academy for the cultivation of ancient music, they desire it may be understood, that they apply the epithet *ancient* to the compositions of the *sixteenth* century \*, and that they

\* In order to understand the reason of this restriction, it is necessary to advert to the history of music, which, so far as is material to the present purpose, is this. About the year 1500, *Gafurius*, or as he is otherwise called *Franchinus*, a native of Lodi in Italy, having with great pains and expence procured copies and translations of *Aristides Quintilianus*, *Bacchius Senioris*, *Manuel Bryennius*, *Ptolomey*, and others of the Greek Musicians, and, having thoroughly studied *Boetius* and *Guido Aretinus*, read lectures on music in the public schools of Mantua, Verona, Milan, and other provinces and cities in Italy. The Provençal *violars* and *musars* were almost the only composers and musicians of the preceding ages; but the knowledge of the science which *Gafurius* diffused throughout Italy, gave rise to a new species of composition, of which, under the patronage of the Roman Pontiffs, *Palestrina* is supposed to have been the improver, if not the inventor; the nature whereof is best to be judged

they carry their researches no farther back than the time when *Palestrina* and his contemporaries, those glorious luminaries of the musical world, attracted the admiration of the ablest judges, and that they have ever paid a sedulous attention to such productions as their intrinsic merit has at any period rendered worthy of regard.

After so much care and pains taken to enrich it, it will hardly be objected to the Academy collection of music, that it is deficient in variety: and when it is known that

judged of by his motet *Exaltabo te, Domine*, and his no less excellent madrigal, *Veramente in amore*. He was organist and chapel-master of St. Peter at Rome, and flourished about the year 1580. The improvements in music since his time, consist in the associating instruments with voices, and the invention of new combinations, which, without transgressing the laws of harmony, are supposed to be capable of an almost infinite variety.

that the countries of Italy, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and England, have severally contributed, and that very largely, to the forming it, very little dread will remain of that satiety or indifference which attends the hearing of music calculated for the *present hour*, and not intended for posterity. For not to mention the great number of compositions which the Academy are possessed of, even so great as that the youngest person now living might hope in vain to hear them all, nor that variety of stile observable in them, which is the characteristic of different masters, every species of vocal and instrumental music is in its turn exhibited by the Academy in the entertainment of its members: the general arrangement of these is into compositions for the *church*, the *theatre*,



*theatre*, and the *chamber*; the first head includes Masses, Motets, Anthems, Hymns, and Psalms: the second, Oratorio's, Masques, Serenatas, Overtures, and Concerto's; and the third, Madrigals, Trio's, Duetto's, and Cantata's; to the true and just performance whereof the Academy have hitherto been, and with the assistance which they now solicit, trust they shall yet be, equal.

The hopes of success in these their endeavours arise from that propensity which they observe in people of this country to the cultivation of the politer arts, and the general encouragement it affords to laudable pursuits. They behold, with pleasure, persons of the first rank in this kingdom associated for the improvement of a particular species of vocal harmony, and with  
 exemplary

exemplary munificence dispensing rewards proportioned to the merit of such, as are emulous to excel in it. Farther, they repose great confidence in the good sense of this nation, of which they have a convincing proof in the respect, which, for a succession of ages, has been paid to the works of our great Dramatic Poet of *Elizabeth's* days, whose best compositions, by the way, are as liable to reproach on the score of their antiquity, as any of those which the Academy have long laboured to recommend. In short, they flatter themselves, that the studies of such men as *Palestrina, Tallis, Bird, Carissimi, Colonna, Stradella, Purcell, Bassani, Gasparini, Lotti, Steffani, Marcello, Buononcini, Pergolesi, Handel, Perez,* and many others, abounding in evidences of the deepest skill and  
 finest

finest invention, when duly attended to, will be thought worthy the admiration of every musical ear, and afford a manly and rational delight to all the votaries of this noble science.

A society founded on principles like these, can hardly fail of proving an inexhaustible fund of benefit and entertainment. Here the student in the musical faculty will find the means of forming his stile after the most perfect models. Here the timid and modest performer may acquire that degree of firmness and confidence which is necessary for displaying his excellencies in public. Here the ingenuous youth, who prefers the innocent pleasures of music to riot and intemperance, may taste of that mirth which draws no repentance after it; and hither  
 may



may those repair to whom the studies or labours of a day must necessarily endear the elegant delights of a musical evening.

Padre *Paolo Sarpi*, resigned his breath with a prayer for the Republic of Venice, which it is to be hoped every friend of the Muses, applying it to the Academy of Ancient Music, will adopt; and in the words of that excellent man cry out,

ESTO PERPETUA!