

LYRICS · Φ · THE · RED-MAN

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INTRODUCTION

IT is a critical moment for music in America. For we must open our eyes at last to the fact that there is a clearly defined and all-embracing division of our whole musical world into two distinct groups, — of our whole musical progress into two divergent paths. And with the first clear realization of this division, there comes to us the responsibility of choosing one path or the other if we have a goal to reach — if we are not to join the dreamers by the wayside. The division consists in this, that whether one is born or lives in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, musically considered he is European, — or he is Universal. And this is the distinguishing mark: the European accepts only that which comes directly from Europe or is the immediate fruit (on American soil) of European tradition, while the Universal accepts any real music without respect to continent, tradition, or race. The latter, therefore, accepts in large measure what the former does, but welcomes one thing which the former never accepts, — music of universal significance, independent of traditional models, produced in America. These are not in reality opposing positions; the latter merely has a wider circumference and includes the former.

Now by a very natural development of culture-history, the Europeans have what we may regard as the Official voice concerning music in America. But the Universals have a voice which, though newer and at present less far-reaching, is nearer the truth because it more completely reveals the existing situation. The Official voice proclaims what the Europeans are doing, and the Universal ear lends its respectful attention. The Universal voice is a still, small voice telling of human aspiration and achievement anywhere, but the Official ear is apt to be otherwise engaged. The Official voice chants pride in ancient tradition. The Universal sings joy in new life for the present moment. The Official sometimes presents the spectacle of lauding inert works built in this country in impotent imitation of great European models. The Universal retains the dignity of accepting only the best from any source. The Official, the European-American, is exclusive, partial, detached; the Universal is inclusive, complete, integral with life itself, though having less understanding of itself, since there is so much more of itself to be understood. The former injures the possibility of its own growth by forbidding itself, in advance, to accept any but works based upon certain traditional models, and tends to become dry, hard, pedantic. The latter opens its mind to the floods of beauty and life coming from any source and in any shape, however unofficial, and becomes warm, glad, and magnetic.

These are the two great divisions in the musical world of America to-day. One stands with a strong grip upon the mass of our Official musical machinery. The other, alert, and happy in the growing power within its own spirit, is living its life of joyous creative work, or creative appreciation, until the moment of opportunity shall give the signal for broader action. If we are to advance music, either by creation or appreciation, the results of our efforts must find their way at last to one or the other of these great divisions. It is not a choice between two

parties, but between a party on one hand, and a universal cause on the other. If we do not lend to one or the other the powers of creation or appreciation with which we are gifted, but stand off to loot the field for our own pleasure when the fight is over, we find ourselves in the limbo of undecided souls, rejected and ignored of all, deprived of the power and privilege of exerting an atom of influence, either for good or evil.

Let it not be supposed that the Universal is to accept all the alleged serious products of American composition, — that were a cross to crush before it could save. The essence of his prerogative and his power lies in his ability to designate and his gladness to welcome the excellent composition, the perfect bar, the worthy underlying spirit, with equal grace, whether it bubbles up from the Rhine or bears down in the blasts from the Rockies. He will be the severest critic of American composition, for he will have its real interests deepest at heart. The wholesale condemner of American composition is no critic at all, but a butcher. We can never estimate justly by comparison with past models, but only by comparison with the present living ideal models in our own heart, mind, and will. What do *they* say of the new work, — is it alive, or is it dead? Is it telling the eternal truths of thought, feeling, and deed, — or does it lie and sentimentalize about them?

The European and the Universal must frequently come in contact with each other; and when the types are well defined there will be a concussion of some kind, especially upon the subject of Indian music, which touches the very heart of the discrepancy. Let us, then, for the clearer understanding of our own views, present certain pertinent questions which have been raised, and answer them by stating a few articles of faith. Especially now that others are taking up Indian music, it is well to clear up a little the ground on which workers in this field must stand.

Here are some queries and comments from various sources. First: Are not incursions into the realm of Indian and Negro music more interesting as a study than for the gathering of actual material for American music? Second: Genuine art is not gained by closing our eyes to the past, nor by clever adaptation. Third: We must draw our inspiration and need of artistic expression directly from the life immediately about us. Fourth: A music drawn from Indian sources is interesting and might well be inspiring, but after all it cannot be the basis of a true national music. It was a product of conditions we may never realize. Fifth: We are not Indians; what have we in common with them?

A broad response to these questions must frame itself somewhat as follows: —

1. In so far as Indian music and Indian thought is exotic, just so far is it perishable in the atmosphere of modern art and thought.
2. In so far as it is germane and vital to modern art and thought, just so far must it be permanently absorbed into our art and life.
3. Ultimate American composition will not be consciously and artificially based on Indian music.
4. Nevertheless, Indian music remains a great source of inspiration and a significant point of departure for the American composer who understands it in connection with its underlying wealth of mythical lore. For it springs from, and interprets in new colors, the "great mystery," the eternal miracle of natural and human phenomena, to which refreshing source American life is leading us back from the artificialities and technicalities which have latterly beset European culture.

5. It is entirely possible, in fact necessary, that ultimate American composition can (but by no means must) be achieved without the knowledge of Indian music. (True, the secret of American composition lies not in Indian music, but in the composer. But the latter may draw upon Indian music to attain his end.)

6. Ultimate American composition can be approached in a certain degree through the knowledge of Indian music, just as a traveller can help himself to reach the top of a mountain by means of a staff. (The Indian melodies, "Song of the Leader," "Ichibuzzhi," or "Inketunga's Thunder Song," might well awaken a composer or an appreciator who had "lulled himself with piano-tunes" to a sense of a power and a significance in music worthy the natural grandeur and sanity and the broad poetry of our land.)

7. Indian music may serve merely as a study of characteristic motives and rhythms, or as actual thematic material, as the case may be. The greater the composer, the greater the use he will make of it upon occasion, and the greater will be his power to depart from it.

8. Henceforth there will be two distinct channels of development for music suggested by Indian life. The first will employ actual Indian themes; the second will not, but will derive its creative impulse from the inexhaustible world of Indian mythos, to which we are now gaining access. (Mythos, — the quintessence of the poetic life and expression of all primitive races!)

9. The world of Indian life concerns us because the truth and splendors of Indian mythology, philosophy, and psychology are among the eternal verities and beauties, and the golden opportunity to revivify art at these springs is now. (It is a significant fact that no one who has caught a glimpse of these inside worlds of Indian life has ever again asked the question, "What have we to do with the Indians?")

In regard to article eight, second classification, such music will not, properly speaking, be Indian music, although it would never have had birth but for the inspiration of Indian life. Did it not sound too pedantic it might be called with accuracy, "Music born of Indian spirit." For we are not speaking of works born of that strange anomaly, the Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, or Latin view of Indian life, but of a very different thing, — works which are the outcome of a final and intimate penetration into the realities of the Indian world-view. And such is the universality and humanity of that world-view that the incursion leads us not merely to a greater knowledge of the Indian, but of ourselves as well.

With whatever detail, whatever special province of the whole musical problem we may be occupying ourselves to-day, let us stop for a moment and look beyond, that we may not lose a sense of the relative proportion which the parts must bear to the whole work to be accomplished. Therefore, let us say definitely, once for all, that whatever the immediate purpose of this or that day's work, it is, in the end, Universal music that we want, — music that shall make a human appeal the world over. But the universal can be approached only through the particular. It is only by giving vital meaning to this particular moment's work, here and now, that it will become universal, — that is, interesting, valuable, life-giving to humanity, now and hereafter. And if the moment's particular work be with the Indian spirit in the very air about us, clamoring in this day of reckoning for justice and appreciation through faithful expression in art, then the proper devotion to that work will bring about universal results. What is it in classic art that gives it universal meaning for us? The particular, critical moment in the life of a particular, typical individual, Antigone, Oedipus, expressed in a concrete picture for all time; or a particular

artist's conception of an abstract quantity, — triumph or beauty, — in a sculptured Venus, or winged Victory (essentially particular, or else the whole mass of stupid Greek sculpture in the Louvre would be equally vital to us, which it distinctly is not.) And so if we are just awaking to the dazzling moments of life that have been lived on the very ground we are treading, and if we find in those moments a heroic expression of our own ideal of courage, beauty, freedom, optimism, and succeed in giving it true and living expression for others, we are creating a thing of universal meaning and worth. It matters not what is the name of the race that lived that life.

If the vast spirit of the Indian race, which developed unknown to the rest of the world, is to blossom and live again in the consciousness of living races, we cannot deplore the fact that it is not the spirit of some race other than the Indian, some nameless race, which, being unnamed, will no longer arouse the ire of the philistine. Shall we take down the statues of Lincoln and replace them by tablets saying, "To the memory of abstract heroism," in order not to offend certain individuals. If not, then why should we withhold tribute from Metacomet or Inketunga, even if the task of expressing what they achieved or lived falls upon others? Naturally, we first ask ourselves if theirs is a worthy deed, having a vital meaning for living people to-day.

As a guaranty that those vagaries, abnormalities, or superstitions which must in some degree ally themselves to all life, wild or civilized, are not to be tyrannically saddled upon the realities of latter-day enlightenment, we refer the critical and doubting to articles of faith, one and two. For only where Indian life and American life meet at the shrine of the universal, will living art be born. And we do not yet dream how significant that meeting is to be. We are describing the achievements of the future. The essays of the present bear to the works of the future the same relation that youthful bears to mature thought. They necessarily exhibit lack of perspective, imperfections in the relation of form to matter, imperfect understanding of the forces at play, and many limitations which only time and the right workers can dispel.

No, clever interpretation is not the question. Any work answering to that description must certainly die the death. Let the composer stand on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi. Let him ask himself, an intruder, what those men must have felt, who through generations inherited that wonderland and the freedom of it. Let him study and learn what they thought and felt and sung. Then let him look for himself — and sing. Let him drink the cup of inspiration to the dregs, until his soul reels at the vision of undreamed-of splendors, the mingling of retrospect and present emotion. Who cares any longer if his song be Indian or American? If the truth is to be known, in that song, which the future is reserving for us, the Indian, the American, the European, the African, all, will live again in a universal expression which will be the collective voice of America's world-wide humanity.

And so, from this flight into the future, we return to our essays of the present, and offer in this volume some impressions which Harvey Worthington Loomis has derived from an examination of some Indian melodies in the collection of Miss Alice Fletcher. These melodies were originally printed in the Peabody Museum Report for 1893, which contains about ninety songs of the Omaha people. The cover design of the present book is by Frank Chouteau Brown, after an original drawing by Ohetowit, a Kiowa chief.

A. F.

FOREWORD BY THE COMPOSER.

IN general, these Indian sketches embody entire melodies transcribed literally from Miss Fletcher's "Peabody Museum Report" on the music of the Omahas. While secondary figures and contrapuntal devices have been introduced, the composer has sought to construct a frame about the original motives in such a manner as would bring into relief their individual beauty or peculiarity.

"The Music of the Calumet" is one of the many songs with which the Indian celebrates the ritual of the Pipes of Peace. The text of these Fellowship Songs typifies the idea: "Good are the heavens and the fruitful earth, but peace among men is better." The secondary melody in this composition is entitled the "Horse Mystery." This deals with occult aspects of Indian life; but the theme, though thoroughly in contrast with the first theme, seems to carry out on a different plane the pastoral exquisiteness of its predecessor.

"Around the Wigwam" is rather freely adapted from music for a children's game, in which those taking part imitate each other's antics, as in our "Follow the Leader." The secondary phrase is the song, "Receiving the Messenger," a detail of the Wa-Wan ceremony.

"The Silent Conqueror" is an expression of the idea of the one invincible force that the bravest chief cannot overcome.

It is desired to call special attention to the importance of correct and skillful pedaling as a factor in the interpretation of this music.

H. W. L.