

the marriage of Her Royal Highness of the Low Countries, my daughter; and also one other remembrancer, in permitting you to publish these expressions of my satisfaction, if you approve of it.

(Signed)

"FREDERIC WILLIAM."

"Potsdam, June 29, 1825.

"The opera of *Alcidor* carries with it, as all your operas do, the stamp of original talent, and is as worthy of admiration as are the *Vestale*, *Cortez*, *Olympie*, and *Nurmahal*. I accept, with pleasure, the dedication of this opera, and am charmed and delighted thereby to afford a public testimony of the esteem in which I hold the composer, and of the real value I attach to the work.

(Signed)

"FREDERIC WILLIAM."

"Berlin, August 10, 1825."

It is not astonishing that so dazzling a distinction should have fixed the Author of *Vestale* in Prussia. The representations of *Nurmahal* and *Olympie* drew presents of equal value, and as honourable letters. This is truly rewarding the fine arts. It is this union of graciousness and munificence that induces talent to attach itself to courts, and to honour the power which thus renders homage to genius.

THE MISERERE OF ALLEGRI.

MUCH has been written, and more said, of the composition by Gregorio Allegri performed in the pontifical chapel during the passion-week: and while all admit that the effect produced by it is most imposing, few seem to be able to account for this in a satisfactory manner.

Andrea Adami,—who may have been a very good singer, but was a feeble writer,—tells us that "it is the wonder of our times, being conceived in such proportions as ravish the soul of the hearer." Upon which Sir J. Hawkins observes, that this eulogium, hyperbolic as it is, does not equal in warmth of admiration the terms in which many express themselves on the subject; and adds, "that the burial-service of Purcell and Blow may well stand in competition with it." The learned historian might with truth and propriety have expressed his opinion more undisguisedly on the subject, and have said at once that the composition which he names very far surpasses the renowned work of the Italian contrapuntist. But he should not have forgotten Morley, Farrant, and other early harmonists of England, particularly Orlando Gibbons, whose works for the church shew the advanced state of musical genius in this country before the depression of it commenced, shortly after the restoration, by the injurious partiality for foreigners manifested by the French-hearted Charles.

That the effect of the celebrated *Miserere* depends mainly on the theatrical manner in which it is performed, there can be little doubt; though its harmony is pure, and, for the time in which it was written, not without a considerable share of ingenuity, and a peculiar kind of beauty.

Dr. Burney's account of this composition, in his *Musical Tour in Italy*, is drawn from authentic sources, and partly confirmed by his personal observation. He seems to have discovered the cause of the impression which it makes on its hearers; though he is rather reserved in his mode of explaining the nature and working of the machinery employed in giving action to it.

"Signor Santarelli favoured me with the following particulars relative to the famous *Miserere* of Allegri. This piece, which, for upwards of a hundred and fifty years, has been annually performed in passion-week at the Pope's chapel, on Wednesday and Good-Friday, and

which in appearance, is so simple as to make those, who have only seen it on paper, wonder whence its beauty and effect could arise, owes its reputation more to the manner in which it is performed, than to the composition; the same music is many times repeated to different words, and the singers have, by tradition, certain customs, expressions and graces of convention, which produce great effects; such as swelling and diminishing the sounds altogether; accelerating the measure at some particular words, and singing some entire verses quicker than others. Thus far Signor Santarelli.

"However, some of the greatest effects produced by this piece, may, perhaps, be justly attributed to the time, place, and solemnity of the ceremonials, used during the performance: the pope and conclave are all prostrated on the ground; the candles of the chapel, and the torches of the balustrade are extinguished one by one; and the last verse of this psalm is terminated by two choirs; the *Maestro di Capella* beating time slower and slower, and the singers diminishing or rather extinguishing the harmony, by little and little, to a perfect point*.

"This composition used to be held so sacred, that it was imagined excommunication would be the consequence of an attempt to transcribe it. Padre Martini told me that there were never more than three copies made by authority, one of which was for the Emperor Leopold, one for the late king of Portugal, and the other for himself: this last he permitted me to transcribe at Bologna, and Signor Santarelli favoured me with another copy from the archives of the pope's chapel. Upon collating these two copies, I find them to agree pretty exactly, except in the first verse. I have seen several spurious copies of this composition in the possession of different persons, in which the melody of the soprano or upper part, was tolerably correct, but the other parts differed very much; but this inclined me to suppose the upper part to have been written from memory, which, being so often repeated to different words in the performance, would not be difficult to do, and the other parts to have been made to it by some modern contrapuntist afterwards.

"The Emperor Leopold the First, not only a lover and patron of music, but a good composer himself, ordered his ambassador to Rome, to entreat the pope to permit him to have a copy of the celebrated *Miserere* of Allegri, for the use of the imperial chapel at Vienna: which being granted, a copy was made by the Signor Maestro of the pope's chapel, and sent to the emperor, who had then in his service some of the best singers of the age; but, notwithstanding the abilities of the performers, the composition was so far from answering the expectations of the emperor and his court, in the execution, that he concluded the pope's *Maestro di Capella*, in order to keep it a mystery, had put a trick upon him, and sent him another composition.

"Upon which, in great wrath, he sent an express to his holiness, with a complaint against the *Maestro di Capella*, which occasioned his immediate disgrace, and dismissal from the service of the papal chapel; and in so great a degree was the pope offended at the supposed

* The original is written in *alla capella* time, two semibreves in each bar. We have subdivided the bars, for the convenience of those who are not accustomed to ancient church music. To such it will be necessary also to observe, that in this species of composition the notes are only half as long as in modern secular music. Paying strict attention to this, the above composition is to be performed *larghetto*, beating twice slowly in each bar.

imposition of his composer, that, for a long time, he would neither see him, nor hear his defence; however, at length, the poor man got one of the cardinals to plead his cause; and to acquaint his holiness that the style of singing in his chapel, particularly in performing the *Miserere*, was such as could not be expressed by notes, nor taught or transmitted to any other place, but by example; for which reason the piece in question, though faithfully transcribed, must fail in its effect, when performed elsewhere.

"His holiness did not understand music, and could hardly comprehend how the same notes should sound so differently in different places; however, he ordered his *Maestro di Capella* to write down his defence, in order to send it to Vienna, which was done: and the emperor, seeing no other way of gratifying his wishes with respect to this composition, begged of the pope, that some of the musicians in the service of his holiness might be sent to Vienna, to instruct those in the service of his chapel how to perform the *Miserere* of Allegri."

Mozart heard this composition twice, in 1769, and

such was the impression left by it on his sensitive mind, that he noted it down from memory, in exact conformity to the original manuscript*. In 1771, Dr. Burney published a score of it, at Bremner's, of which very few copies were printed, and it is now become extremely rare. In 1810, M. Choron introduced it in his *Collection des Classiques*; and as the work, whatever may be its positive merit, must often have excited the curiosity of lovers of music, and cannot fail to prove interesting to all who seek general information, it is here inserted, but in a very contracted space; though every note is given, except the repetitions.

The *Miserere* is the 51st psalm, whence Allegri has selected part of the 1st verse, and the whole of the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 12th, 14th, 16th, 18th verses, and part of the 19th. These are all set to the music now printed; it follows therefore that each of the chants—if they may so be called—is sung five times over, except the last, which is performed but once; for the effect of this, if reiterated as the others, would be lost,—reason would resume its sway,—the illusion would vanish†.

1ST VERSE, 2 Sopranos, Contratenor, Tenor, and Base. The 4TH, 8TH, 12TH, and 16TH Verses are sung to the same.

Mi - se - re - re me - i, De - us, Secundum mag-nam

Mi - se - re re me - i, De - us, Secundum mag-nam mi-

me - i, De

Mi - se - re - re me - i, De - us, Secundum mag-nam

mi - se-ri-cor - diam tu - am

mi - se-ri-cor - diam tu - am

- se-ri - cor - di - am, mi - se - ri - cor-diam tu - am

mi - se - ri-cor-di - am, mi - se-ri cor - di - am

mi - se - ri - cor - di-am tu - am

* See HARMONICON, No. III., page 32, in Memoir of Mozart, for a circumstantial account of this.

† Adami's instructions are these:—"Averta pure il Signor

Maestro che l'ultimo verso del salmo termina a due Cori, e però sarà la Battuta Adagio, per finirlo piano, smorzando a poco a poco l'armonia." Osservò per reg. il coro della cap. pont. p. 36.

2ND VERSE, 2 Sopranos, Contratenor, and Base. The 6TH, 10TH, 14TH, and 18TH Verses are sung to the same.

Am - pli - ùs la - va me ab i - ni - qui - ta - te - - - me - - - - - a.

et à pec - ca - to me - - o mun - da - - - mun - da me. - - -

et à pec - ca - to me - - o mun - da - - - me. - - -

SECOND PART OF 19TH VERSE: two Choirs; the first consisting of 2 Sopranos, Contratenor, Tenor, and Base; the second of 2 Sopranos, Contratenor, and Base. To be sung *adagio, piano, e smorzando*.

(1st Choir.)

Tunc - - im - po - nent su - per al - ta - - - re - - - tu - - um vi - - - tu - los. - -

Tunc - - im - po - nent su - per al - - - ta - - - re tu - - um vi - - - tu - los. - -

(2nd Choir.)

Tunc - - im - po - nent su - per al - - - ta - - - re re tu - - um vi - - - tu - los. - -

Tunc - - im - po - nent su - per al - - - ta - - - re tu - - um vi - - - tu - los. - -

The well-informed and entertaining author of *A Tour in Germany in the years 1820, 1821, and 1822**, gives the following account of the mode of performing the *Miserere*.

"Allegri's famed *Miserere*, as sung in the Sistine chapel

* Published in 1824, in 2 vols. 12mo., by Constable, Edinburgh.

at Rome, during Easter, justifies the belief that, for purposes of devotion, the unaided human voice is the most impressive of all instruments. If such a choir as that of his Holiness could always be commanded, the organ itself might be dispensed with. This, however, is no fair sample of the powers of vocal sacred music; and those

who are most alive to the "concord of sweet sounds" forget that, in the mixture of feeling produced by a scene so imposing as the Sistine chapel presents on such an occasion, it is difficult to attribute to the music only its own share in the overwhelming effect. The Christian world is in mourning; the throne of the Pontiff, stripped of all its honours, and uncovered of its royal canopy, is degraded to the simple elbow-chair of an aged priest. The Pontiff himself, and the congregated dignitaries of the church, divested of all earthly pomp, kneel before the cross in the unostentatious garb of their religious orders. As evening sinks, and the tapers are extinguished one after another, at different stages of the service, the fading light falls ever dimmer and dimmer on the reverend figures. The prophets and saints of Michael Angelo look down from the ceiling on the pious worshippers beneath; while the living figures of his Last Judgment, in every variety of infernal suffering and celestial enjoyment, gradually vanish in the gathering shade, as if the scene of horror had closed for ever on the one, and the other had quitted the darkness of earth for a higher world. Is it wonderful that, in such circumstances, such music as that famed *Miserere*, sung by such a choir, should shake the soul even of a Calvinist."

The Reverend GREGORIO ALLEGRI, born at Rome*, was admitted into the pope's chapel 1629, as a contratenor. He studied under the famous Nanini, who was cotemporary with Palestrina, and his most intimate friend; both of whom had been fellow-students under Gaudimel, who instituted a music-school at Rome, which produced many eminent professors. Allegri was accounted an admirable master of harmony: many of his works are still preserved and performed in the pope's chapel, particularly the above *Miserere*. His vocal abilities were not great; yet so much was he esteemed by all the musical professors of his time, that the pope, in order to secure his services, appointed him one of the singers of his chapel. He joined to his extraordinary merit an excellent moral character, for he not only assisted the poor, by whom his door was usually crowded, but daily visited the prisons of Rome, in order to bestow his alms on distressed and deserving objects. "Of this," says the author from whom these particulars are extracted, "I was assured by one of the scholars of Allegri, a man of the greatest veracity, who is now (in 1711) alive." He set many parts of the church service with such divine simplicity and purity of harmony, that his loss was much felt, and sincerely lamented, by the whole college of singers in the papal service. He died in 1652, and was buried in the *Chiesa Nuova*, before the chapel of *S. Filippo Neri*, near the altar of the Annunciation, where there is a vault for the reception of deceased singers belonging to the pope's chapel; upon which is the following inscription:

CANTORES PONTIFICII,
NE QUOS VIVOS,
CONCORDS MELODIA
JUNXIT:
MORTUOS CORPORIS,
DISCORDS RESOLUTIO
DISSOLVERIT.
HIC UNA CONDI
VOLUERE.
ANNO 1640.

* He was a relation of the great painter, Correggio, whose family name was *Allegri*.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF MOZART.

Translated from the German original.

IN laying before the readers of the *Harmonicon* the subjoined letter of the great Mozart, I beg to observe, that I am indebted for this valuable communication to the kindness of Mr. Moscheles. The authenticity of this document being therefore fully established, and the letter itself bearing such strong internal evidence of its being Mozart's, there cannot remain the slightest doubt on the subject with any one, who has, like myself, had an opportunity of inspecting other letters of that composer. The original is without date, but a Vienna correspondent, through whom it was received, supposes that it was written from Prague in 1783. As to the translation, I have taken the utmost pains to preserve the spirit, and the good humour of the original, but, above all, to render it as faithful and as literal as the idiomatic difference of the two languages would admit.

J. R. S—z.

LETTER OF W. A. MOZART, TO THE BARON F——.

HEREWITH I return you, my good Baron, your scores, and if you perceive, that, in my hand, there are more *nota bene** than notes, you will find from the sequel of this letter, how that has happened. Your *symphony* has pleased me, on account of its ideas, more than the other pieces, and yet I think it will produce the least effect. It is much too crowded, and to hear it partially or piece-meal (*stückweise*), would be, with your permission, like beholding an ant-hill; (*Ameisenhaufen*.) I mean to say that it is, as if Eppes the devil were in it. You must not snap your fingers at me, my dearest friend, for I would not for the world have spoken out so candidly, if I could have supposed it would give you offence. Nor need you wonder at this, for it is so with all composers, who, without having, from their infancy, as it were, been trained by the whip, and the curses (*Donnerwetter*) of the *maestro*, pretend to do every thing with natural talent alone. Some compose fairly enough, but with other people's ideas, not possessing any themselves; others, who have ideas of their own, do not understand how to treat and master them. This last is your case. Only do not be angry, pray! for Saint Cecilia's sake, not angry, that I break out so abruptly. But your song has a beautiful cantabile, and your dear Fränzl† ought to sing it very often to you; which I should like as much to see as to hear. The minuet in the quartett is also pleasing enough, particularly from the place I have marked. The coda, however, may well clatter or tinkle, but it never will produce music. *Sapienti sat*, and also to the *nihil sapienti*, by whom I mean myself. I am not very expert in writing on such subjects, I rather shew at once how it ought to be done.

You cannot imagine with what joy I read your letter. Only you ought not to have praised me so much. We

* In the original stands *fenster* (windows,) which signify passages marked †, for the sake of drawing the reader's attention particularly to them.

† Probably the Baron's daughter.