MELODY
for the
Photoplay Musician and
the Musical Home

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An interesting prophecy of what the next few years may do for the piano

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The Piano of the Future

To the most casual observer it is apparent that this generation is witnessing an unprecedented constructive scientific achievement. Such periods have always appeared at certain definite times in the history of civilization. There has been an increasing interest and opportunity that has brought about the necessary research work to improve greatly all our scientific and art products—to say nothing of those devices that are purely utilitarian and mechanical in their nature. It is evident that we are just entering such a period of mental and scientific activity. The development of the radio, talking machine, automobile, and flying machine (to mention only a few) is ample proof of this fact.

This constructive activity is bound to extend to the field of musical instrument construction. Indeed, there have been many evidences of this in the past few years. It is not logical to assume that any of our accepted musical instruments, no matter how satisfactory they appear to serve us as yet, are permanent. Neither is it logical to expect that they can in any way escape the effects of this scientific interest in moving a step or two closer to ultimate perfection.

A CHANGE IMPENDING

There is probably no instrument that will be more affected than the piano. In the first place it has the instrument per contra of the home. Its value as such and in the past, even if it ceased to be of importance, leads one to believe that there is more good music in the home than in any other place. It is the nature of the modern music room to allow music in all sorts and conditions of work. It is therefore necessary to consider the future of the piano and the part it is likely to play in the musical life of the future.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PIANO CONSTRUCTION

The piano started its career as a musical instrument as a development of the harp. In fact, at first it was nothing but a harp laid on its side, held in a frame, and played by pressing down keys which had at one end quills to pluck the strings as these keys were depressed. The developments which gave the triple and double stringing, the modern piano action, and the striking of the strings with felt hammers and controlling and augmenting the tone somewhat with the pedals, took place gradually but these factors have not been materially changed or improved for many good many generations. These improvements in construction, especially the ones that apply solely to the tone of the instrument, were identified by the age-old experimental method of trial and rejection or acceptance. That is, some constructive change was tried. If the effect it gave was good, it was retained; if the effect it had was bad, it was rejected; and so on until such time until the instrument was developed to its present degree of efficiency. There was no real scientific understanding of the principles involved, or of the mechanism behind the result obtained. It is to be expected that a good many contradictions in construction would develop. The experimental method of trial, rejection or acceptance, will in time give good results, but it certainly does not give them very quickly nor in the most efficient way. Then, it must be remembered, that what would be accepted as a good result several hundred years ago might not be as accepted at present. In fact, it should not be so accepted, because popular taste and artistic ideals are always improving.

Some of these contradictions in construction are quite apparent. For instance, the soundboard of a piano is built so that it is of very substantial construction. It is furthermore heavily braced and reinforced. In fact, its strength of construction the modern piano compares very favorably with a freight-car or an armored tank. Then, the triple and double stringing produces this tremendous string tension. In the modern piano this equals the enormous total of thirty to forty thousand pounds. If you ask, on the other hand, why it is necessary to have such a tremendous string tension, it will probably be told that the heavy soundboard and the sturdy bracing and generally heavy construction of the piano make it necessary to have this enormous string tension so that the vibratory activity of the strings can viibrate the soundboard. If you ask, on the other hand, why it is necessary to have such a heavy soundboard and such generally sturdy construction with its attendant great weight, you will probably be told it is necessary in order to support the enormous string tension. This is a contradiction that should be apparent to anyone. If the weight and strength of the piano construction is decreased, the string tension can be decreased in proportion and there will be a diminishing of the tone produced.

Another contradiction in piano construction is that all other stringed instruments depend for their pleasing tone colors on the vibration of a restricted body of air, which is tuned to the necessary pitch by its shape and size, and the shape and size of the soundboard which allows it to contact with the outside air.

A very important factor of good, string instrument tone-production has as far as been desired in the piano. It is true that the case of the piano furnishes a sort of air chamber, but it is not tuned to any certain pitch having a definite relation to the average pitch of the instrument. Neither is it a resonating cone or cone of a sort, in which the air is to be made to vibrate the air it contains by the vibration of the air itself, as well as that of its top or what is known as the soundboard of the instrument.

HEAVY CONSTRUCTION NOT NECESSARY TO TONE

It must be remembered that the strings themselves do not produce tone. They only furnish the motive power which vibrates the soundboard, and the soundboard itself is responsible for the tone. The kind of tone the soundboard furnishes is determined solely by the kind of vibration, produced by the strings and communicated to the soundboard, that the board can reproduce. At least, it's correct to say that a well-designed soundboard will not reproduce a vibration pattern that is not first represented in the vibration of the strings which controls the soundboard. Three strings tuned in unison will not furnish a vibration pattern that any one of them would not furnish.
THE PIANO OF THE FUTURE

Now as to this piano of the future. It will probably weigh about 2,000 pounds. The total string tension is about 175,000 pounds. There will be one string for each note instead of three for most of them and two for the majority of the bass. Built into the case will be many large air chamber shapes somewhat like the soundboard is shaped at present on a grand piano. It will have sides and back of the same size, a large body of a double bass. There will be three bridges, or better say, there will be three sets of strings, one for the treble strings, one for the middle register strings, one for the bass register strings, and one for the middle register strings. The air chamber will be planed and pasted in a fixed position in proportion to the average bass register, one in proportion to the treble register, and one in proportion to the middle register strings. The three sets of soundboards, planned somewhat like the Fiddles on the violin, are all soundboards, with each string, if you like, and placed approximately in relation to the bridge. The top and back, instead of being arched, as in the instruments of the violin family, will be curved so that they can more effectively sustain the tone, and the instrument will be more effective.

By this means they will be the highest under the strings and slope down to their edges. The inside surface of the top and back will be flat for greater manufacturing convenience and thus the tone holes will distribute and control the vibrations and communicate them through the body of the instrument.

The graduation of this soundboard will be worked out carefully as the graduation of a good violin, although my system is entirely different graduation pattern. With these three bridges resting on the one soundboard and each bridge holding strings of different pitch from either of the other two bridges, a special gradient pattern taking this into consideration will be necessary. Then, the piano must sustain its tone as long as possible, and to do this the soundboard resistance should be to the string pressure, how the air chamber would be constructed; the size, shape and location of the soundboards and the nature and thickness of the soundboard connected to top and back of the soundboard. It doesn’t seem probable to us that we shall see any change in the mechanical structural function of the piano. That feature of piano construction has apparently been worked out quite successfully and it seems to answer all the demands that are of the most technically finished order ever made on it. There will be, however, some device to control the string vibrations, a device to write piano-nine tuning and precision color it now lacks.

THE PHOTOPLAY ORGANIST AND PIANIST

By L. G. Del Castillo

The next development will be the Thematic Car Sheet, a nifty idea which gained such facility that we recognize it today as the standard form. On its heels have come two more novel ideas, and there is said to be fair and favorable to succeed the arduous task known by the boys and girls as “fitting the picture.” The first of these, like the thematic car sheet, is a Miza invention, and is called the Conductor’s Guide. It consists simply of the insertion of the intermediate cues between those which are otherwise independent of one another, thus enabling the conductor, pianist or organist to check up on the film, watch for cuts, and be better prepared for the next cue. It is a cue number which is to be multiplied for every copy of the籥 in all instances. It is a cue, in an elaboration of the idea I presented in these columns in the issue of, which I called the Pianist’s Guide, a tool of extremely construction. He writes as follows in the November 1st issue of the Music Trade Review, referring to a demand for a pianist’s guide, another tool of the pianist on which the Hammond device attached to a grand piano.

Meanwhile, we’re off, with regiments massed with the slightest of direction, the piano and the pianists of New York, caressed after the last act of the Maida Vale. It is a cue number which is to be multiplied for every copy of the sheet, and the piano plays to be issued and has no such difficulty with the tone of an instrument that its physical movements have been in such harmony with the musical interpretation of the pianist who has learned to distinguish the quality of each of the notes in the scale. The strings are then strung out, pointed, and the player has his first idea of the identity of the instrument. The pianist’s guide, the instrument is not changed, no matter how much it may be improved.

IM MODERN PIANO IS ON THE WAY

We can’t say now how such a piano will make its appearance. But that it is on the way is evidenced in many ways. One indication of the noticeable new being made to improve the instrument by experimenters and manufacturers is another indication that the piano is a very valuable instrument and that the pianist can no longer afford to neglect the study of the instrument, to study the pianist’s guide, the instrument is not changed, no matter how much it may be improved.

In the very fact of the Hammond organ, having worked up so much interest in the various musical organs and pianos, industry insists strongly towards a staff of artists which could not, if we would, ignore. It is pointed strongly to a growing classification with the positions of the phonograph in the Kennedy of automatic instruments. Last year, you remember, a melody of the following form was published in the American Phonograph, “Rosebud” by the Conductor’s Guide, “Simple Harmonium.” I must say that the tone, the identity of the pianist’s guide, the instrument is not changed, no matter how much it may be improved.

Mr. Laugh, if I may not make a comparison with the Harmonium, you will see that the instrument as a whole sounds differently when you have the presence of two disadvantages; either your themes and several of your racy used number will be talked alike, or else you must restrict your themes to a limited and arbitrary range of conventional selections. This would not be the cause for a new removable takes held by a clip. Themes chosen from your classified index would be temporarily talked for their use as such in specific pictures. I hope that this is not a castigating critique, for the scheme as a whole is illuminating mediums which should be of that sort of creative imagination as known or unknown, without which success in the photography field is impossible. At any rate these objections, if they are valid, can be easily solved by the introduction of the device, who will be better off for having to use a little ingenuity in performing.

I’M AN INVENTOR, TOO

referred above to a device of my own invention which I called the Appropriate Cue, but have come to the conclusion that a combination of it, and it is quite possible to discard the appropriate cue and obtain therefrom a finer and clearer effect. I was led to the creation of the appropriate cue by the fact, apparent to any one who has tried to follow the average cue sheet, that many of these suggested cues are not properly timed, and there is no numerical ascending or descending, and there would be no necessity for giving the pianist any indication of the time long enough to last through the two cues. It was therefore my suggestion that any such cue should be recognized as an Appropriate Cue by being given in the presence of the pianist and the preceding number could be continued on a stepping place rather than be broken off in the middle of a strain.

The reason that I have since changed my mind about the value of such association cue is that I found there were so many numbers to the end of the strain at the suggested point, and when the number is done over it when done at a little and over that a little in this particular cue, because when there are two similar numbers together, the two numbers will not be the same in a cue, even though there may be a number of times, that would be a cue.

The cleaned example, and the most necessary use of the Preparatory Cue is probably the use of the cue, and that is practically every cue that there is a color which is naturally associated with it. Red, for instance, always associated with danger, serves to foreshadow, danger, warning, and evil. White is used for love and purity, green for joy and perhaps for some.

In Mr. Laugh, the entire range is analyzed and defined in this fashion, and the associated are music are firmly fixed in mind. It is of course apparent that a tone picture must be extended and yet limit the emotional field of the different ideas, and that the pianist must intelligently grasp the distinction between a dramatic heavy number, which would be the dominant number, and which is to be played during the cue, and the number of the same color as some other number which is being used as a cue. In this latter case, you have the presence of two disadvantages; either your themes and several of your racy used numbers will be
SEVERAL of the numbers mentioned below, and some of the popular numbers, are not particularly new, but I feel my duty to call the attention of the public to them, under the impression that they might be of some interest to others, and I do not consider it as indulging in any kind of monopolistic practice in doing so.

The olden numbers, in any case, are the only ones that are not new, or which have not been reprinted before. The new numbers, on the other hand, are all original and are intended to be of interest to the public at large.

The next number, which is the last in the series, is the one that is intended to be of special interest to the public. It contains a number of new numbers, some of which are intended to be of special interest to the public at large, and others which are intended to be of special interest to the public at large.

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Just Two
(À DEUX)

Allegretto Capriccioso

NORMAN LEIGH

PIANO

Allegretto

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MELODY

Continued on page 23
Jacobs' Incidental Music
Excerpts from the Master Composers
Themes selected by
Classic Series
Adapted and Arranged by
HARRY NORTON
R. E. HILDRETH

A--SCHUBERT
1. AGITATO (Sonata in A Minor)
   2. PLAIN'TIVE (Death and the Maiden)
   3. FURIOSO (The Erlking)

B--BEETHOVEN
1. AGITATO (Sonata Pathétique)
   2. LOVE THEME (Adelaide)
   3. FUNERAL MARCH (On the Death of a Hero)

C--SCHUMANN
1. HURRY (Sonata in D Minor)
   2. PLAIN'TIVE (Why?)
   3. MYSTERIOSO (Santa Claus)

D--GRIEG
1. HURRY (A Ride at Night)
   2. DRAMATIC TENSION (At Thy Feet)
   3. GRUESOME MYSTERIOSO (Watchman's Song)

E--TSCHAIKOWSKY
1. AGITATO (Harvest Song)
   2. DOLOROSO (Autumn Song)
   3. MARCHÉ POMPOSO (Hunter's Song)

F--MENDELSSOHN
1. AGITATO (Scherzo in B Minor)
   2. FUNERAL MARCH (Song Without Words)
   3. FURIOSO (Capriccio in A Minor)

G--VERDI (Aida)
1. AGITATO (The Fatal Question)
   2. PLAIN'TIVE (Pity, Kind Heaven)
   3. TRIUMPHAL (Of Nile's Sacred River)

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Walter Jacobs
8 Bosworth St. Boston, Mass.
The Photoplay Organist and Pianist

Continued from page 3

The simplest example of the application of this procedure is perhaps in the Topic of the Day, where the preparatory cue is of course the last joke of the act. In certain other short subjects, such as the scores, in which there is comparatively little action, the preparatory cue is based on the action, and will frequently con- sist of an unnoticeable detail at the place where the next cue is likely to be difficult to catch, as there is seldom any fade-out or hint in the action to prepare one for the cue, and the reserve cue to some minor detail must be given as in the scores.

It is argued that such metatyping cue con- stitutes a ridiculous and unnecessary awkwardness to an audience, I can only maintain that I have never observed a leader of reputation who did not deliberately or unconsciously make use of this process. If you are still unconvinced, I ask you to go into any first class house and notice how often the last strain or phrase of a cue will be accelerated or retarded in order that the next cue may begin exactly with the one. And if you then weakly counter with the statement that this may be necessary for the orchestra, the organist can cover up all such places by improvising, I will then come back at you with the reminder that you are giving me an excuse, not an argument. I have no objection to good improvising (thirty note the qualifying adjective), but I insist that it should be done for a definite purpose, and not simply to camouflage a mental vacuum.

Improvising Again

It is significant how often any discussion of the procedure will revert to the subject of improvising. The reason is simply that so many organists either do it badly or avoid it. They consider it their safe haven of refuge for any or all of these emergencies. It is the dark spot on their reputation, and it is no wonder that it is the "easy way out," to use the truth phrase of the melodramas, because in the one case the incoherent reader it sounds less offensive than muddying the waters with the written note.

I have touched upon it often in the course of my travels and as a guest of those, but never, I observe in retrospect, with any con- clusive criticism. The source contained herein has consisted mainly of Don Vito. Don't use improvisation save for a definite purpose, and then only when no appropriate music can be found. Don't improvise against a constant harmonic scheme of diminished seventh chords, for those of you who are not versed in harmony, based on a succession of minor thirds. For example, C, E, A, G. Don't improvise with an aimless succession of harmonies and dramatic runs, under the impression that you are furnishing an amusing audience with a brilliant exhibition of technique.

And then there is a hardy belief, a hangover from the church service, that is in the theater perhaps the most unnecessary sort of improvising. Its saving grace is that it is a simple form of action which might even go unnoticed if it were not that it also is a very poor judge of pros and cons of placing that is fatal in the theater. I refer to the quite extravagant habit of opera from one cue to the next. The inference of the remarks on the Preparatory cue appearing there is plainly that a clear break between numbers is essential to a smooth and finished score. The exceptions are not one in twenty. Not only is there this principal reason against it, but there is the unity of that reason, which is that there should be contrast between adjoining numbers. And if it is even more necessary to select numbers in unrelated keys when they are adjoining pieces similar in type than when there is emphasis of obviously a definite break between them.

In this detail, as in all others that bear upon the subject of improvising, a study of operatic scores is of value. The exponents of constant improvisation in an unknown flow of legato tone seem to have no idea that operatic tradition bears them out. The reverse is the case. Analyze any successful opera — there are no exceptions — and observe how broken up in the treatment, and, in support of our present point, how often unrelated keys will suffer no preparation; with, in fact, a deliberative and premeditated abstraction.

And then, if you are ambitious enough to develop an intelligent and interesting style of improvising, go on and make an intensive study of the great operas, particularly Rigoletto, Verdi's and Wagner's, of the works of Bellini, Beethoven's and Handel's, of all those of Puccini and Massenet. You may secure me of omitting the two greatest operatic composers of all, Verdi and Wagner, but to my mind, and I say this prepared for this course, one or two which may properly come my way, there is more to be avoided in these two than in the others when it comes to a point of dividing and absorbing style. They are the Old Guard, whose works will continue to be heard with appreciation long after my crumpled footsteps have ceased to make their indefinable imprint on the general tone; but even today they show their age, and their machinery is a little rusty. If you do study them, be prepared to make cold approval of the modern formalism of the one, the spindly and attenuated recitative of the other.

Of the scores that I have suggested, the most valuable for purposes of imitation are, in my opinion, Caruso's, Carsini's, Ciacirri's, Caffi's, and La Scala. The first two are little more in the older operatic form as the latter two in time more toward the modern style, but all four are essentially young in spirit. By the latter convention I mean dividing the music frankly into episodes; by the former I refer to the tendency to make the music a continuous running commentary on the action.

Another point worth noting is that the breaks are constructed in one of two ways. Either the piece comes to a brilliant end, just as any path seems written for piano solo would, or else we have a sudden ending, as in a pastor. Lastly note that the parts of an opera that correspond most closely to improvising is known in the theater, that is, where it does not run along smoothly in regular phrases, are those parts where dramatic and emotional action is found. The moral is simply that improvising is wrong except to emphasize or replace sections of broken action on the score where the ordinary published composition will not synchronize closely enough. In short, "I must improvise with a definite purpose or not at all," is my cry, and I stick to it.

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