

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF THE
GREAT MUSICIANS

PERCY SCHOLES

This edition published 2025
by Living Book Press
Copyright © Living Book Press, 2025

ISBN: 978-1-76153-819-3 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-797-4 (softcover)

First published in 1923.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any other form or means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner and the publisher or as provided by Australian law.



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF THE
GREAT MUSICIANS

by

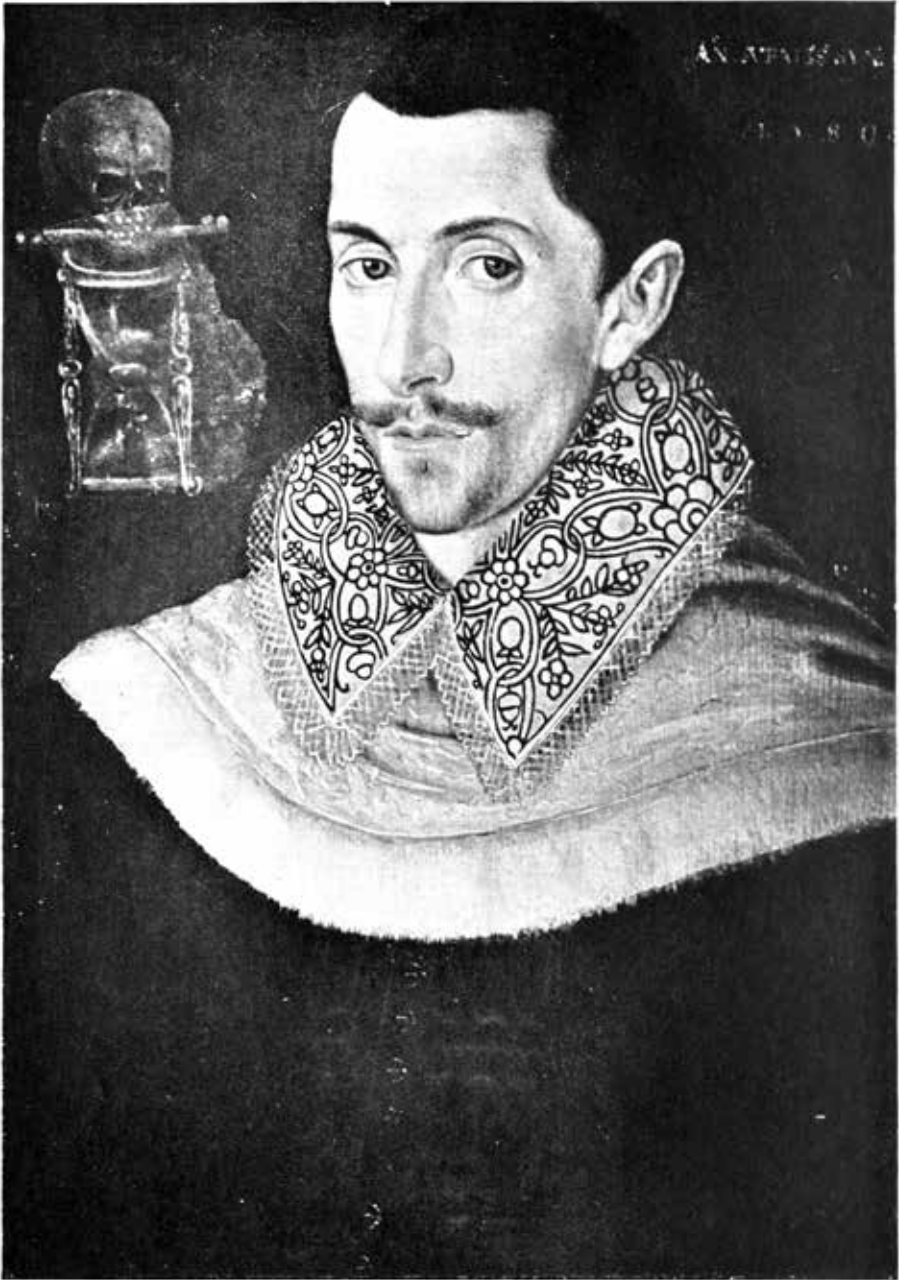
PERCY SCHOLES



CONTENTS

1. THE COUNTRY PEOPLE AS COMPOSERS	3
2. ENGLISH MUSIC IN THE DAYS OF DRAKE AND SHAKESPEARE	10
3. HENRY PURCELL	20
4. GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL	29
5. JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH	39
6. C-O-N-T-R-A-P-U-N-T-A-L	46
7. ALL ABOUT FUGUES AND HOW TO LISTEN TO THEM	51
8. HAYDN	58
9. MOZART	65
10. SONATAS AND SYMPHONIES	73
11. BEETHOVEN	81
12. WHAT IS AN ORCHESTRA?	87
13. ROBERT SCHUMANN	95
14. CHOPIN	101
15. WHAT IS ROMANTIC MUSIC?	111
16. GRIEG AND HIS NORWEGIAN MUSIC	119
17. EDWARD ELGAR	130
18. EDWARD MACDOWELL	137
19. SCHUBERT	147
20. THE INVENTOR OF THE NOCTURNE	160
21. JOHN FIELD	160
22. MENDELSSOHN	170
23. ABOUT THE OLD MIRACLE PLAYS AND MASQUES, AND WHAT SPRANG FROM THEM	179
24. ABOUT ORATORIOS	188
25. THE EARLIEST OPERAS	194
26. MORE ABOUT OPERA	203
27. WAGNER	211
28. VERDI	222
29. THE GAME OF 'CAMOUFLAGED TUNES'	229
30. ORGAN	233

31. DEBUSSY	245
32. MILITARY MUSIC	253
33. ARMY BANDS OF TODAY – HOW TO KNOW THE INSTRUMENTS	257
34. SULLIVAN	266
35. TO MUSIC TEACHERS	275
36. BRAHMS	276
37. CESAR FRANCK	287
38. HOW RUSSIAN MUSIC GREW UP	299
39. TCHAIKOVSKY	306
40. CLAVICHORD-HARPSICHORD-PIANOFORTE	314
41. SHAKESPEARE THE MUSICIAN	325
42. MORE ABOUT BRITISH MUSIC	342
43. ARNE, THE COMPOSER OF ‘RULE, BRITANNIA’	348
44. STERNDALE BENNETT	357
45. PARRY	368



JOHN BULL, 1580

From a painting belonging to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

INTRODUCTION

The Book of the Great Musicians, designed for the children on lines calculated to interest them, is an addition to the most important branch of musical education. Its very simplicity is its highest recommendation: it invites the children's confidence and stimulates their curiosity; it makes the whole thing rather like a game in which an individual child or a whole class may find a great deal of pleasure. It combines, in a happy way, the basic facts of music (such as melody, harmony, structure) with the living examples in composition and the personal qualities of history.

In the hands of an imaginative teacher, an Appreciation Class becomes a fascinating employment, and in its form of three separate small volumes, this book is perfectly suited to become the basis of work for such a class. But there are many music pupils who have no opportunity of attending an Appreciation Class, and whose musical instruction is, perforce, given in the form of individual Piano or Violin lessons. To these pupils, the reading of *The Book of the Great Musicians*, with an occasional friendly hint or suggestion from teacher or parent, will be a powerful stimulus and tend to remove the whole subject of music from the region of mere "lesson" and "practice."

One suggestion that should hardly be necessary is that this attractive book, with its lavish illustrations, is obviously designed to be put *into the hands* of the young musician. A mere reading and retailing of its contents by the teacher cannot possibly convey the vivid impressions that go with actual possession and personal reading of the book itself.

H. P. ALLEN

TO THE READER

If you want to play a good game at cricket, football, or tennis, you have to *learn* how the game is played and to *practise* it. When you have learnt and practised, then you get the enjoyment.

And, in the same way, if you want to listen properly to lots of the very best music, you have to *learn* about it and then to *practise* listening. And, here again, when you have learnt and practised, you get the enjoyment.

But learning about a game and practising it are really quite good fun in themselves.

And I hope you will find that learning about music and practising listening to it are also quite good fun in themselves. If you don't get some fun out of this book as you study it, and then, when you have studied it, get greater enjoyment out of listening to music, you will greatly disappoint -

THE AUTHOR

I
THE COUNTRY PEOPLE
AS COMPOSERS

A CHAPTER ON FOLK MUSIC

THIS is a book about the Great Composers — by which we generally mean men of musical genius, who have had a long training in music and learnt how to make beautiful songs and long fine pieces for piano, or orchestra, or chorus. But these are not the only composers.

It is not so difficult to compose little tunes as people think, and if you keep your ears open, you will often find people composing without knowing they are doing it. For instance, if a boy has to call “evening paper” over and over again in the street, night after night, you will find that he turns it into a little four-note song. Notice this and try to write down his song next time you hear it. Little children of two years old croon to themselves tiny tunes they have made up without knowing it. It would surprise their mothers if you told them their babies were composers — they are!

And in all countries, the simple country people, who have had no musical training, have yet made up very charming music — songs or dance tunes, or tunes for playing games. Music such as this we call FOLK MUSIC.

A Folk Tune is never very long or difficult, and it is only a “melody” (that is, it is only a single line of notes, without any

accompaniment). But, in their simple style, the Folk Tunes are very beautiful, and no composer can make anything better than the best of them.

Just in the same way, you will find that the country people in every land have Folk Tales and often Folk Plays — so they are not only composers, but authors and playwrights too.

Work Music, Play Music, and Religious Music

Some of the Folk Tunes are a part of children's games, which have come down for centuries. Others are a help in work, such as rowing songs (to help the rowers keep time with their oars), songs to be sung while milking, and so on. Others, again, are part of religion — Folk Carols to sing at Christmas from house to house, and songs and dances belonging to far-off times, before Christianity, when people thought they had to sing and dance to welcome the Sun God when he reappeared in spring; such pagan dances and songs as these latter still go on in some places, though people have forgotten their full meaning. Then, of course, there are love songs, hunting songs, drinking songs, and songs about pirates and highwaymen, songs about going to the wars, and sea songs. There are songs on all manner of subjects, in fact, for everything that interested the country people was put into songs.

How Nations Express Their Feelings in Music

You cannot imagine a sad baby making up happy little tunes, can you? Or a happy baby making sad ones? And so with nations — their general character comes out in their songs. And every nation gets into its own particular way of making its tunes so as to express its various feelings. English tunes are generally different from Scottish tunes, Irish from Welsh, and so forth. You can generally tell one of the negro songs from the Southern States when you hear it, and nobody

who has heard much Folk Music of various nations is likely to hear a Norwegian song and think it an Italian or French one.

Collecting Tunes — A Useful Hobby

The trouble is that the country people are now hearing so many of the town-made tunes that come to them in cheap music books or as gramophone records, that they are quickly forgetting their own old country songs. So some musicians have made a hobby of collecting the Folk Tunes before they get lost. They go out with notebook and pencil and get the older folks to sing them the tunes that were sung in the villages when they were boys and girls, and where the old Folk Dances are still used, they manage to see these and to copy down the music of the fiddler and the steps of the dance. So much of the Folk Music is being saved (only just in time!), and some of it is now printed and taught in schools so that it may be handed down by the children to coming generations.

In America, where so many races mingle, you can collect Folk Music of all nations. In the Southern Appalachian mountains, where the people are descended from British settlers of long ago and have not mingled much with other people because the mountains cut them off, the Folk Songs are still much the same as you find in England and Scotland. You can collect lots of Irish tunes in other parts of America, and Russian, German, Hungarian, and Italian tunes. In addition, there are, of course, negro tunes (partly descended from African melodies) and American Indian tunes.

How Folk Songs Have Influenced Composers

In all the countries, the skilled and trained composers have at times used Folk Songs as parts of their larger pieces. How they do this you will learn later in the book. And the “form” or shape of the Folk Tunes has shown composers how to form or shape their big piano and orchestral pieces. It will

help us in our study of the big works of the great composers if we can come to understand the little tunes of the people.

The thing to do is to play or sing a Folk Tune and then find out how it is made up. For instance, if we take this little North of England song and examine it, we shall learn a good deal.

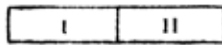
BARBARA ALLEN

I.

B 2

II.

Here you see is a tune that falls into two parts, balancing one another, so to speak. We might call it a 'two-bit tune' (inventing a useful word),



Now we will take another tune; this time it happens to be a Welsh one.

ALL THRO' THE NIGHT

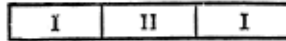
I.

II.

III.

There you see is a strain (I) which comes at the beginning

and end of the song, and in between, for the sake of variety, another strain (II). We might call that a 'three-bit tune', or (if you like) a 'sandwich tune'. There are lots of tunes we can call by that name. You see what it means — don't you?



QUESTIONS

(TO SEE WHETHER YOU REMEMBER THE
CHAPTER AND UNDERSTAND IT)

1. If somebody said to you, "*Can you tell me what is meant by the words 'Folk Music'?*" what would you reply?
2. What do we mean by a "melody"?
3. Mention some of the different subjects of the songs sung by the country-folk.
4. What should we mean if we said "a nation's heart is seen in its songs"?
5. Which do you think is the most useful hobby: (1) collecting foreign stamps, (2) collecting bird's eggs, or (3) collecting Folk Tunes, and why do you think so? (Do not be afraid of saying what *you* really think.)
6. Say two ways in which skilled composers have got help from the music of simple folk.

THINGS TO DO

(FOR SCHOOL AND HOME)

1. Play, or get somebody to play for you, a lot of folk tunes from some songbook, and find out how each tune is made. You will find a great many of them are either in two bits (I-II) or three bits (I-II-I). This exercise is important; it will teach you how to listen.

2. Get into your head as many good folk tunes as you can, so that you will always have something jolly to sing or whistle. This will help to make you musical. Some of the country people in England know as many as 300 or 400 old tunes. How many can you learn and remember?

3. Play or listen to a good many Scottish tunes, and see if you can find out from them what sort of people the Scots are. Then do the same with the tunes of the English, Irish, Welsh, or any other nation.

4. Get somebody to teach you a folk dance, or, if you cannot do this, make up your own little dance to one of the folk tunes in a songbook.

5. Find a really interesting folk song that tells a story and then get some friends to act it with you while someone sings the song. Dressing up will help to make this enjoyable.

6. Find a good folk tune with a marching or dancing swing; let one play it on the piano while others put in a note here and there on glasses tapped with spoons, and any other domestic orchestral instruments of the kind. Some can also play the tune on combs with paper. (Glasses can be made to sound particular notes by putting more or less water in them.)

7. Discover any other ways of getting some fun out of folk tunes and learning a lot of them.

BRITONS AND BRETONS

THE STORY OF A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD SONG

In 1758, a British force landed in France — at St. Cast, in Brittany. A Breton regiment was marching to meet it when, all at once, it stopped — *the British soldiers were singing one of its own Breton national songs!* The Bretons, carried away by their feelings, joined in the refrain. The officers on each side told their men to fire — and the words of command

were found to be in the same language. Instead of firing at each other, the two forces threw down their weapons and became friends.

How was this? The British regiment was Welsh, and the Welsh are descendants of the ancient Britons — driven into the mountains of Wales by the Saxons in the sixth century, at the same time as the ancestors of the Bretons were driven across the sea into Brittany.

After more than a thousand years, the descendants of these two bodies of the old British nation met and found they knew the same language and the same songs. Differences had crept into the language and into the songs, of course, but the two regiments could talk together without much difficulty and join in a chorus together.

This shows how people cling to their national songs. This one is now known in Brittany as *Emgann Sant-Kast* (The Battle of St. Cast) and is still popular in Wales as *Captain Morgan's March*. It can be found in some songbooks.¹

1 e.g., *Welsh Melodies*, published by Boosey & Co.

II

ENGLISH MUSIC IN THE DAYS OF DRAKE AND SHAKESPEARE

A CHAPTER ON THE BEGINNING OF MODERN MUSIC

An Explorer and His Music.

When Francis Drake set out on his expedition around the world in 1577, tiny though his ship was, he yet found room in it for musicians. You would imagine that he would use all his little space for sailors and soldiers; but it was not so, and at mealtimes, he always had the *musicians* play before him. A Spanish admiral whom he took prisoner and whose diary has lately been printed says "the Dragon" (for that was what the Spaniards called Drake) "always dined and supped to the music of viols."

The music of Drake and his men always interested the savages wherever they went. When the ship approached one island, the king came off in a canoe to meet them, with six grave old counselors with him. The ship's boat was towing at the stern, and the king made signs asking that the band whose music he heard might get into the boat; then he fastened his canoe to the boat and was towed along in that way, and (says Drake's chaplain, who wrote the story of the voyage) for an hour the king was "in musical paradise."

Drake's crew were great singers, and when they went onshore in another place and built a fort to stay in for a time, the savages used to come to hear them sing their psalms and

hymns at the time of prayers. "Yea, they took such pleasure in our singing of Psalms, that whensoever they resorted to us, their first request was commonly this, Gnaah, by which they entreated that we should sing."

If you read the chaplain's book, *The World Encompassed*, you will find many other little stories that will show you how musical were Drake and his seamen, or, if you prefer a modern tale book about Drake, Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* will tell you much the same.

So much for an Elizabethan explorer. Now for an actor and author.

A Dramatist and His Music.

In those days, the Stratford boy William Shakespeare was in London and had become a famous writer of plays. He must have been very fond of music, for we find he brings it into almost everything he writes. When he wants to make his audience believe in fairies (as in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*), he has music — pretty little fairy songs. And when he wants to make people realize how horrible witches are (as in *Macbeth*), he has grim witch songs. His mad people (like King Lear) sing little, disordered snatches of song in a mad sort of way. His drunken people sing bits of songs in a riotous way. His people in love sing sentimental songs.

When Shakespeare wants to represent a vision of any sort (as when Queen Katharine is about to die, in *Henry VIII*), he prepares the feelings of his audience by music. Whenever a marvelous cure is to be performed (as in *King Lear* and other plays), he has music. When there is fighting, he has trumpets and drums, and when there is a funeral procession, he has a Dead March.

There is much more music in Shakespeare than this, but enough has been said to show you how musical was that writer of plays and how musical must have been the audi-

ence for whom he wrote the plays. Because, of course, he wrote what he knew people would like.

A Queen and Her Music.

Once when an ambassador from Queen Mary of Scotland came to the court of Queen Elizabeth of England, one of the courtiers took him into a room and hid him behind the arras so that he might hear the Queen play the virginals (a sort of keyboard instrument, something like a small piano).² The courtier told him to be very quiet as the Queen would be angry if she knew. But the Scotsman pulled the arras aside, and the Queen saw him. She seemed very angry with him for taking such a liberty, so he fell on his knees and begged to be forgiven. Then the Queen asked him – “Which is the better player, the Queen of Scotland or the Queen of England?” and of course, he had to say “The Queen of England.” As he did so, he saw, of course, that his being taken to hear the Queen had really been at her command so that she could ask this question.

So queens played in those days and were proud of their playing.

Everybody Musical Then.

In those days, everybody seems to have been musical. The common people sang their folk songs and their rounds and catches. The rich people and courtiers sang a sort of part-song called a MADRIGAL and if you went out to supper, it was taken as a matter of course that when the madrigal books were brought out, you could sing your part at sight.

There were many musical instruments such as the virginals (mentioned above), small organs in churches, viols (big and little instruments of the violin kind to play together in sets), recorders (a kind of flute, big and little, also playing

together in sets), lutes (something like mandolins), and haut-boys, trumpets, and drums, for military and other purposes.

Choral Music.

The choral singing was very famous then. It was so made that every voice or part (Treble, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) had a beautiful melody to sing, and yet all these beautiful melodies put together made a beautiful piece of music. There were lovely anthems in the churches, made in this way.

THE ROUNDS AND CATCHES mentioned above were pieces where all the three or four voices sang the same melody, but beginning one after another, and the melody had to be carefully made so as to fit with itself when sung in this way. You can sing catches; they are very good fun. A round and a catch are almost the same thing. We might say that when a round has funny words, we call it a Catch. *Three Blind Mice* is an Elizabethan catch.

Keyboard Music.

The English composers led the world at that time in writing for the Virginals. They showed how to write music that was not just like choral music but was truly suited for fingers on a keyboard. All the piano music of the great composers may be said to have sprung from the English virginal music of the sixteenth century. The Elizabethan composers laid the foundation, and Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and others have built upon it.

Form in Instrumental Music.

When discussing Folk Songs, we learned a little about Form. In Queen Elizabeth's day, composers were trying to find out good "forms" for instrumental music.

One form they found was the VARIATIONS form. They would take some jolly tune (perhaps a popular Folk Tune)

and write it out simply. Then they would write it again with elaborations, and then again with further elaborations, and so on to the end. All the great composers down to our own day have been fond of the Variations form, and it was the English Elizabethan composers who invented it.

Another form was made by writing two little pieces in the style of the dances of the day and playing them one after the other to make a longer piece. Generally, one was a slow, stately dance called a Pavane, and the other a quick, nimble dance called a Galliard.

The Fame of English Musicians

In these days, English musicians were famous all over Europe and were often sent for by princes and kings of various countries to be attached to their courts. One called John Dowland became the King of Denmark's lute player and composer, and his music was printed in many European cities. Another, with the truly English name of John Bull, became the organist of Antwerp Cathedral. A very famous composer of choral and virginal music in those days was William Byrd, and another was Orlando Gibbons. Try to remember the names of these men and to hear some of their music.

QUESTIONS

(TO SEE WHETHER YOU REMEMBER THE
CHAPTER AND UNDERSTAND IT)

1. What do you know of Drake and his music?
2. What do you know of Shakespeare and his music?
3. Tell a story about Queen Elizabeth and music.
4. What were the Virginals like?
5. What were the Viols?
6. What is the difference between a lute and a flute?

to the mark, the third singer begins. Now all three are singing, but each “treading on the tail” of the one before, so to speak.

When the leader has sung the Catch about five times through, he gives a sign, and all stop together. Or better, as this is a quarrelling Catch, after going through three or four times, shaking fists at each other, you can fall to fighting and so stop.

2. Then (for a change) practice this quieter Round of Shakespeare’s day. Here, some occasional soft singing will be in place. Try various ways of arranging soft and loud passages, with *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, and settle on the way that sounds best.

Church-Going Catch

The musical score for "Church-Going Catch" is written in 2/2 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "All in - to ser - vice,". The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "Let us sing mer - ri - ly to - geth -". The third staff concludes the piece with lyrics: "- er, Ding dong ding dong bell." and ends with an asterisk (*).

3. Now practice *Three Blind Mice* in the same way.

4. Play this Elizabethan hymn tune on the piano:

The musical score for the Elizabethan hymn tune is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff uses a treble clef and the second staff uses a bass clef. The music is a simple, homophonic setting of a hymn tune.

