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The Dictionary of COMPOSERS



Edited by
CHARLES OSBORNE

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The *D*ictionary of
*C*omposers

Edited by Charles Osborne

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Foreword

These biographies are addressed to the music enthusiast who does not already have full-length biographies of his favourite composers on his bookshelves, and the collection is based on the proposition that one can deepen one's understanding of a man's music by knowing something about his life. The entries, therefore, are not merely lists of works, but essays in each of which the major events of a composer's life are set forth and, where appropriate, related to his music. I have not confined the collection to the 'great' composers, but have cast my nets more widely. On the other hand, I do not seek to be comprehensive. The criterion for inclusion has been whether one was likely to encounter the music of the composer in question in the concert hall or the opera house, not just on an isolated and rare occasion but with reasonable frequency. Consequently, none of the four known Charpentiers, for example, will be found in these pages, although it is possible, if not very probable, that something or other by two of them – Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1634–1704) and Gustave Charpentier (1860–1956) – might turn up in a concert pro-

gramme or at an opera house. But Villa-Lobos and Korngold, though not necessarily composers of the first rank, are included because their music, though hardly 'in fashion' at present, is nevertheless heard from time to time.

No unanimity of approach has been forced upon the contributors, beyond a general injunction to tell the story of the composer's life clearly and concisely, and to comment on the music in non-technical language. The great composers have, in general, more space devoted to them than the lesser figures, though again this is not consistently the case. The popular composer of the second rank who has led a long and interesting life may have a longer entry than the great genius who lived for nothing beyond his music and who died young. It is my hope that the reader may, by reading about composers in whom he has not hitherto taken an interest, be led to explore their work and thus to extend his own knowledge of and enjoyment in the art of music.

C.O.

ADAM, Adolphe

(b. Paris, 24 July 1803;

d. Paris, 3 May 1856)

Although his father, Louis Adam, was a pianist, teacher and composer of some importance in Paris, Adolphe Adam was discouraged from taking up music himself as a profession. His father sent him to an ordinary school and refused to allow him musical instruction, which the lad, however, acquired secretly. When he was fourteen, his father relented to the extent that the boy was allowed to enter the Paris Conservatoire, but only after Adolphe had solemnly sworn that he would never compose music for the theatre!

The first instrument which the young musician mastered was the organ, which was soon followed by the harmonium on which he used to improvise and compose tunes. One of his teachers was the composer Boïeldieu, master of the *opéra comique*, who took a particular interest in his young pupil. Adam was later to acknowledge that most of what he knew of composition came from Boïeldieu. It was certainly Boïeldieu who led him away from his solemn promise to his father, towards the attractions of the theatre and *opéra comique*. When Boïeldieu's *La Dame blanche* was being prepared for performance in 1825, he allowed his twenty-two-year-old pupil to compose the overture, or rather to construct it from Boïeldieu's themes.

Adam's first *opéra comique*, *Pierre et Catherine*, was produced in Paris, at the theatre called the Opéra-Comique, in 1829. It was only a one-act piece, but it was followed the next year by a three-act work, *Danilowa*, whose immediate success encouraged the young composer promptly to embark upon another. His talent, he discovered, was a facile one. Melodies came easily to him, and orchestration gave him no trouble. His prolific melodic gift was, in fact, his greatest asset; had he been a little more interested in the other aspects of composition, Adam's music might have risen to greater heights. But the comic operas that flowed from his pen were invariably successful with audiences, so he was hardly encouraged to experiment. One of the most charming of the operas is *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* with its fearsome entrance aria requiring the tenor to produce a high D in the chest register. *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* was staged in 1836 at the Opéra-Comique where the vast majority of Adam's operas were given their premières. His one or two grand operas, such as *Richard en Palestine* (produced at the

Opéra in 1844) were failures, but his reputation in comic opera is secure, though apart from *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* few of them are encountered on the stage today. Adam also composed a number of ballet scores, not only for Paris but also for Berlin, St Petersburg and London. One of these, *Giselle*, produced at the Paris Opéra in 1841, is still immensely popular with ballet audiences today.

Adam was generous in his encouragement of younger composers. In 1847 he founded the Théâtre National, to produce new works by young composers. The 1848 revolution put an end to this enterprise, in which Adam lost all his savings, and incurred debts which were to cripple him for the remainder of his life. In 1849 he became a professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire. His death in 1856 was sudden.

C.O.

ALBÉNIZ, Isaac

(b. Camprodon, 29 May 1860;

d. Cambó-les-Bains, 18 May 1909)

A caricature of Albéniz published in *La ilustración musical* of Barcelona in 1883 carried the caption: '*Como hombre, un niño – Como pianista, un gigante*' ('As a man, a midget – As a pianist, a giant'). Albéniz was then twenty-three, and about to settle down to marriage and study after a picaresque childhood and adolescence which had already taken him half-way round the world. He was born in Gerona, the son of a tax collector. Exceptionally precocious, he learned the piano almost instinctively, and improvised at a public concert in Barcelona when he was four. At seven he was taken to Paris, where he sailed through the entry examinations for the Conservatoire, tossed a ball through one of its hallowed windows and was refused admission, officially on account of his extreme youth.

Nothing daunted, he became a vagabond, running away from home and the Madrid Conservatory a year later, and supporting himself by his piano playing – chiefly in a vaudeville stunt with his back to the keyboard using the backs of his fingers, palms upwards. By the time he was fifteen, having stowed away on a westbound ship, he had explored Buenos Aires and Cuba, toured the USA from New York to San Francisco, and given concerts in Liverpool, London and Leipzig on the way back. His handicap was a fundamental

lack of self-discipline. Felipe Pedrell found him unteachable so far as theoretical principles were concerned. Albéniz did try. He studied at different times with Pedrell in Barcelona; with Liszt in Weimar and Rome; at Madrid, Leipzig and Brussels; with d'Indy and Dukas in Paris, but the exuberance of an instinctive improviser would not be tamed.

Most of his music is for the piano, from the light salon pieces of his adolescence, through the colourful nationalistic works like the *Cantos de España* and *Suite española*, to the ultimate stylisation of this in his last piano suite, *Iberia*. At the same time, Albéniz was convinced he had a neglected gift for the stage, which is no doubt why he accepted a handsome stipend from an English banker, Francis Money-Coutts, to turn the latter's verse-dramas into operas. This 'pact of Faust', as Albéniz later called it, first involved a trilogy on the Arthurian legends. The composer plodded doggedly through *Merlin* and half of *Lancelot*, in a weak imitation of Wagner, before giving up. He then set *Henry Clifford*, a Wars of the Roses romance premièred at Barcelona in 1895 (and sung in Italian), and persuaded his patron to use a Spanish novel for *Pepita Jiménez*, which travelled from Barcelona in 1896 to Prague, Paris and Brussels, and has recently been revived. He also wrote three unsuccessful *zarzuelas*, or Spanish operettas.

Albéniz, however, was not really an orchestral composer. He lacked the technique and the feeling for it. 'I am a Moor', he would proclaim, and the Moorish rhythms, harmonic traits and ornate decoration of Andalusian music was what he most loved to reflect in his own. It mainly took the guitar for its instrumental model and the piano for its means of expression. An association with Fauré and his circle in Paris, where Albéniz went to live in 1893, gave him loftier aspirations, and the piano hardly seems adequate to realise the full beauty of the 12 pieces that make up *Iberia*. They tax keyboard technique to the limit: Albéniz wrote that he came near to burning the music when he found much of it almost unplayable. They nevertheless remain unsurpassed as an idealisation of southern Spanish music and dance forms, and represent the last extravagance of the composer before his death on the 18th May 1909, after a short illness.

N.G.

ARNE, Thomas

(b. London, 12 March 1710;

d. London, 5 March 1778)

Thomas Augustine Arne was born at the Crown and Cushion, King Street, Covent Garden, where the Indian Kings had lodged during their visit to London in the reign of Queen Anne. His father (also Thomas) was by trade an upholsterer and coffin-maker. The young Thomas was sent to Eton College where he is said to have spent part of his spare time practising on a 'miserable, cracked, common-flute'. Burney described his passion for music as a young man.

He used to avail himself of the privilege of a servant, by borrowing livery and going into the upper gallery of the opera, which was then appropriated to domestics. At home he had contrived to secrete a spinet in his room, upon which, after muffling the strings with a handkerchief, he used to practise in the night while the rest of the family were asleep.

In addition, he took lessons in violin-playing and taught himself composition.

Thomas was not the only musician in the family. His sister, Susannah Maria, and younger brother, Michael, were both singers of distinction. Thanks to her elder brother's training, Susannah made a successful début at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket in 1733 in Lampe's 'English opera' *Amelia*; and a few months later their father unexpectedly produced Handel's *Acis and Galatea* as an 'English pastoral opera', also at the Little Theatre, with Susannah in the role of Galatea. Meanwhile, Thomas was engaged on a new setting of Addison's libretto for *Rosamund*, and this was most successful when brought out at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre (1733) with Susannah in the title role and Michael as the page.

In 1734 Susannah contracted what was to prove a disastrous marriage with Theophilus Cibber, the son of Colley Cibber, the actor, playwright and manager, and thereafter she was launched on a new career as an actress. In 1737 Thomas married Cecilia, one of three musical daughters of Anthony Young, the organist of All Hallows, Barking. A natural son, christened Michael like his uncle, was born in 1740 and in course of time became a composer too. Thomas had a strong streak of profligacy in his nature; and about 1755 his marriage seemed on the verge of collapse. Nevertheless, he and Cecilia came together again; and in his Will (dated 6th December

1777) he left all his estate to be divided equally between 'my beloved wife Cecilia and my only son Michael'.

Arne's reputation as a lyric composer was established in 1738 with his setting of Milton's *Comus*. Burney's opinion was that in this masque 'he introduced a light airy, original, and pleasing melody, wholly different from that of Purcell or Handel'. Arne himself is reported to have said that the test of a good melody was such a one as 'would grind about the streets on the organ'.

Arne was attracted by the masque as a theatrical form; and in the summer of 1740 he produced two further masques for a gala performance at Cliefden, Buckinghamshire – *The Judgment of Paris*, a setting of Congreve's original libretto, and *Alfred*, which contained a patriotic 'Ode in Honour of Great Britain'. The latter rapidly achieved independent popularity under the title 'Rule, Britannia!'



Arne.

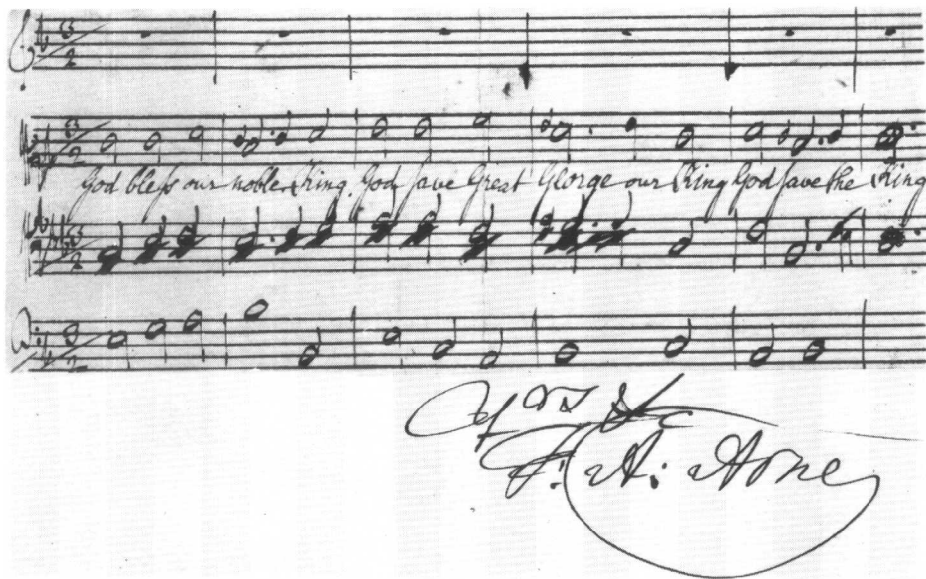
In the course of his life, he paid three separate visits to Dublin, where his music became very popular. Returning to London after his first visit (1742/4) he was appointed resident composer at Drury Lane; but the three comic operas he produced there in 1745 – *The Temple of Dullness*, *The Picture*, and *King Pepin's Campaign* – did not prove successful. Garrick now had the idea of commissioning an afterpiece each from Arne and Boyce (q.v.). *The Chaplet* (1749) by Boyce was much liked; but not so Arne's *Don Saverio* (1750). At this period he seems to have had more success with the numerous ballads, dialogues, duets and trios he wrote for the public gardens, particularly Vauxhall where his wife frequently performed, than with his music for the theatre.

Shortly after Handel's death in 1759, the University of Oxford conferred the degree of Doctor of Music on Arne, and in 1760 he had the good fortune to meet a first-class librettist, the young Isaac Bickerstaff, recently arrived in London from Ireland. Their first work of collaboration was the delightful little 'dramatic pastoral', *Thomas and Sally*, which was brought out at Covent Garden. Bickerstaff then provided Arne with the text of an oratorio, *Judith*, which was produced at Drury Lane in 1761, and the libretto of a comic opera, which was an altered version of the old ballad opera, *The Village Opera*. Arne selected, arranged, and scored music by seventeen different composers, including himself, to produce *Love in a Village*, as it was now called, one of the best pasticcio operas of the century (Covent Garden, 1762).

Shortly before *Love in a Village*, he decided to compose an English version of an Italian *opera seria* for Covent Garden, and his choice of libretto fell on Metastasio's *Artaserse*. In its English form *Artaxerxes* (1762) caught the public's taste and kept its position in the repertory until well into the 19th century. An attempt to repeat this success with *Olimpiade*, where Arne set Metastasio's original Italian libretto for the King's Theatre in the Haymarket (1765), was a failure.

In 1770 he set out to persuade Garrick to revive Purcell's *King Arthur* at Drury Lane in a new version where he himself would be responsible for the alterations and additions to the score. Some of the arguments in his correspondence with Garrick sound very arrogant.

The air 'Let not a moon-born elf' is after the two first bars of Purcell very bad. Hear mine. . . I wish you would only give me



Early version of 'God Save the King' by Dr Arne.

leave to doctor this performance. I would certainly make it pleasing to the public.

But when it came to the point, Arne seems to have behaved with considerable discretion and, according to Charles Dibdin, 'so far from mutilating Purcell . . . his whole study was to place his idolised predecessor in that conspicuous situation the brilliancy of his reputation demanded.'

Towards the end of his life Arne wrote a number of minor comic operas, including *The Guardian Outwitted* (1764), *The Cooper* (1772), *The Rose* (1772), *Achilles in Petticoats* (1773), and *May-Day* (1775). In *The Fairy Prince* (1771) he reverted to his earlier style of masque, choosing the text of Ben Jonson's *Oberon* for his setting. And in *The Golden Pippin* (1773) he imitated the example of the 'English burletta' *Midas*, which had been launched in Dublin in 1762 on an amazingly successful career. He died in Bow Street, Covent Garden.

E.W.W.

AUBER, Daniel

(b. Caen, 29 Jan 1782;

d. Paris, 12 May 1871)

Auber was one of the leading figures in that sophisticated world of French opera that lies between the grand and the light known as *opéra comique*. He was born in Normandy and came from an artistic and vaguely aristocratic family. His grandfather had gone to seek his fortune in Paris and became official artist and sculptor at the court of Louis XVI. His father was also a court official and passed on to his son a great love of music, horses and painting. Later making a modest fortune as a shop-keeper, he hoped that his son Daniel would be able to combine business and art and sent him to London in 1802 to learn the trade of selling paintings. In London he wrote several songs which had public performances and was gradually drawn more and more toward a career in music. He returned to France in 1804, settled in Paris, studied for a time with Cherubini, then gave himself wholly to composition.

He became friendly with a distinguished French cellist, Jacques La Marre (later spelt Lamare) who was much admired by Clementi. Auber wrote four 'cello concertos which were published under Lamare's name in 1804 and well received on the strength of his popularity. When it eventually became known that Auber was the composer it gave him a ready-made reputation and led to him writing a violin con-

certo for Jacques Mazas which was played with great success at the Conservatoire and afterwards in London by Sainton.

Auber was by nature a peculiarly timid person, modest and shy – so much so that he was said never to have attended the performance of any of his own works. His first attempt at opera was predictably modest, a setting of a libretto by Jacques Marie Boutet de Monville, *L'Erreur d'un moment*, which had previously been set by Dezède. It was given an amateur performance at the Salle Doyen in 1805 and another opera, *Couvin*, was privately performed in 1812. He also wrote a mass in that year from which he later extracted material for use in the opera *Masaniello*. His first public stage performance came with *Le Séjour militaire* at the Paris Opéra-Comique on the 27th February 1813. It was a failure and for the next six years Auber made no further assaults on the operatic stage but lived an obscure and perilous existence performing various menial musical tasks. In 1819 *Le Testament et les billets-doux* was equally unsuccessful but, by now, he was certain of his vocation and was rewarded by the general acclaim of his *La Bergère châtelaine* which opened at the Opéra-Comique on the 27th January 1820. This was two days before his thirty-eighth birthday – so it had been a long, hard road.

From now on he was to write a regular series of operatic successes, most of his best works being the result of his regular collaboration with Eugène Scribe, one of the finest librettists of the day. He was to write almost fifty operas, the last *Rêve d'amour* premièred at the Opéra-Comique in 1869. Auber, in spite of his fame, remained the quiet, gentle, epicurean Parisian gentleman who shunned publicity to such an extent that he never appeared in public as a conductor. With characteristic modesty he said that if he ever listened to one of his own works he would probably never write another note.

He became a member of the Académie in 1829 and received many awards both in France and abroad. He was appointed Director of the Conservatoire in 1842 and remained in this post until he died in 1871. In 1857 he was graced by Napoleon III with the title of 'maître de chapelle'. He wrote a modest number of songs, a few orchestral and chamber compositions, five piano works and a very successful ballet *Marco Spada*, based on the libretto of his opera of the same name which was written in 1852. The music for the 1857

ballet was not taken from the opera but adapted from many of his most popular works.

Auber's reputation might be said to rest firmly on his operatic writings though today very few of them are performed, and even the names that are known to all, *Le Cheval de bronze*, *Le Domino noir*, *Les Diamants de la couronne*, are remembered for their light, vivacious and tuneful overtures – as with so many of Rossini's works. At the time these works had tremendous esteem. *Les Diamants de la couronne* was a major success in Paris in 1841 and an even greater one in London three years later. In these *opéra comique* scores Auber epitomised the grace and elegance of the genre, combining vitality and the simple amorous grace of the popular French chanson, with a very careful and lucid setting of words. In this he followed in the steps of Boïeldieu and proved himself a strong rival of such contemporaries as Adam and Hérold. His orchestration was particularly apt and brilliant. The works of these composers were the intermediate step between the comic operas of Mozart, Rossini and Donizetti and the frivolous operettas of Offenbach, Lecocq and Messager. The *opéra comique* regularly introduced dialogue and was thus able to add extra strength to dramatic characters in the plot.

Auber had the depth of musical imagination to be able to step aside from his lighter works and write in more serious vein. The work that established his European reputation was the five-act opera *La Muette de Portici*, more commonly known abroad as *Masaniello* – the name of its leading character. The overture and much that follows owes a strong debt to Rossini, but it was rich enough in dramatic effects, subtle instrumentation and original harmonies to win high praise from no less a high-priest of opera than Wagner. Within twelve years of its premiere it had been performed a hundred times at the Paris Opéra and by 1880 had received 500 French performances. It was performed many times in New York and London in the 1800s and there was a successful Berlin revival in 1953. Another work to gain international favour was the three-act *opéra comique*, *Fra Diavolo* first produced in 1830, with a strong musical score and a well constructed plot. This also travelled the world in the 1800s and was revived in New York in 1910, Berlin in 1934, at La Scala, Milan in the same year, by the Sadler's Wells company in London in



Caricature of Auber by Gill.

1935, in Berlin in 1936 and in Stockholm in 1948. It remains popular in Germany and has provided a good tenor role for many singers including Bonci and Schipa.

There is a slight prejudice against French

opera abroad, in favour of the German and Italian schools, but there is always a probability that the delights of *opéra comique* will get a deserved and rewarding reassessment. The works of Auber will certainly stand revival when the climate is right, and then the merits of both his operatic and orchestral works will get their due appreciation.

P.G.

AURIC, Georges
(b. Lodève, 15 Feb 1899)

Composer, critic, administrator and elder statesman of French music, Georges Auric is the most prominent surviving member of *Les Six*, the group of lively young Paris-based musicians, who, animated by Jean Cocteau, caused such a stir in the 1920s. Born in Lodève in Hérault in 1899, he attended Montpellier Conservatoire and later, when his family moved to Montmartre, became a pupil of Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum and of Gédalge at the Conservatoire – like Durey, Tailleferre, Milhaud, Honegger and Auric's exact contemporary Poulenc. 1913 saw the introduction of this gifted, self-assured youth to Satie, who was to prove a major influence on his early development. That Cocteau should have dedicated his manifesto, *Coq et Arlequin* (1918) to him was significant. Auric became the standard bearer of *Les Six* in their spirited reaction against romantic rhetoric, portentiousness and also Impressionism.

An urbane, witty and fashionable iconoclast, he was taken up by Diaghilev for whom he wrote *Les Fâcheux* (1923) and *Les Matelots* (1924). Those scores, together with his *Sonatine*, *Pastorales* and *Impromptus* for piano and his song settings of Chalupe, Cocteau, de Nerval and Louise de Vilmorin gave the impression of a pragmatic musical personality, rather facile, and given to conciseness, irony and an appearance of artistic flippancy.

Beneath the elegant, impersonal mask however another Auric was emerging, as demonstrated in his lyrically powerful Piano Sonata in F (1932). This was a breakaway from the simplistic austerity advocated by the orthodox aesthetic of *Les Six* and even won the approval of Cortot, normally no friend to their activities. Unfortunately, the sonata's hostile critical reception discouraged Auric from pursuing 'pure' music systematically, and in general his orchestral and chamber music (including his trio for oboe, clarinet and bassoon and his violin sonata) is incidental to his major creative pre-occupation. This was to be music for the stage and especially for the screen. Between the early 1930s and the 1950s, his film scores, of which he claims to have lost count, set a new standard of professionalism, imagination and idiomatic agility. Once again however it was Cocteau who inspired the finest results, in *Le Sang d'un poète*, *l'Éternel Retour*, *la Belle et la Bête* and *Orphée*. Other outstanding scores included *A nous la liberté*, *Symphonie Pastorale* and *l'Aigle à deux têtes*.

(In *Moulin Rouge* he even managed to write a theme song which swept the world.)

Meanwhile Auric's ballet scores for *Le Peintre et son modèle* and *Phèdre* in 1949 and 1950 indicated the new dimensions of dramatic expression and even violence towards which he was gravitating. His perspectives had broadened to embrace serialism as well as other contemporary trends, proof of which came in his high-tension tripartite Partita for two pianos. The mock-dissonant grimaces and relaxed tunefulness of the 20s had been left far behind.

It remains to cite Auric's critical work for *Marianne*, *Paris-Soir*, *Les Nouvelles littéraires* and, during the war, the *Nouvelle Revue française*, his presidency of the Lamoureux concerts, his six years as General Administrator of the Paris Opéra and his election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts.

C.G.

BACH, Carl Philipp Emanuel
(b. Weimar, 8 March 1714;
d. Hamburg, 15 Dec 1788)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was the second surviving son of the great Johann Sebastian by his first wife Maria Barbara. Georg Philipp Telemann was one of his godparents. Carl Philipp was educated at St Thomas's School, Leipzig, and subsequently at the University of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. Here he was an active member of the Collegium Musicum, and on one occasion in 1737, performed some of his compositions before the Margrave and Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia, the tyrannical father of Frederick the Great, his future patron.

Carl Philipp was appointed cembalist in the *Kapelle* of Frederick the Great in 1740, claiming proudly in his autobiography that he 'had the honour of accompanying on the clavier, quite alone, at Charlottenburg, the first flute solo that Frederick played after becoming King'. Frederick's taste in music was conservative – although his repertoire included some three hundred concertos these were all either by himself or his flute-teacher Quantz. Quantz was held in high royal favour, as was the *Kapellmeister* Carl Heinrich Graun, a prolific composer of opera. Despite his close association with the royal flute playing Carl Philipp failed to achieve the importance at Court of either Quantz or Graun, whose

names, according to Dr Burney, were more sacred in Berlin than those of Luther and Clavin. The King's flute playing suffered from a certain instability of tempo with which the cembalist was obliged to comply; one imagines that a certain amount of Bach's unwillingness would have been apparent to the King. Bach, however, demonstrated his formal devotion in the dedication of his six *Prussian Sonatas* to Frederick. One of the most important products of Carl Philipp's service in the Prussian Court was his didactic work *Versuch über die Wahre Art das Klavier zu Spielen* published in two parts in 1753 and 1762 – the first methodical treatment of the subject. Both by this treatise on technique and through his keyboard compositions, Carl Philipp may be regarded as the founder of modern piano playing.

As early as 1750, Carl Philipp had applied for appointments elsewhere, signifying discontent with his conditions at the Prussian Court. He confided a wish to Dr Burney for a life of 'more tranquility and independence', and in 1767 this was fulfilled. Carl Philipp succeeded his godfather Telemann as music director of the five principal churches in Hamburg. Burney, who visited Hamburg in 1777, described Carl Philipp as 'rather short in stature, with black hair and eyes, and brown complexion, a very animated countenance, and of cheerful and lively disposition'. The composer spent the remaining years of his life respected as the principal musician of Hamburg. He died on the 15th December 1788, and although plans were formulated to erect monuments in his honour at Hamburg and Weimar, they were never carried out. News of his death did not spread far, and as late as 1795, Haydn visited Hamburg in the hope of meeting him.

Historically, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach is of the greatest importance standing in the transitionary period which separates the Baroque from the Classical, J. S. Bach from Haydn. In terms of musical style he rejected the contrapuntal manner of his father in favour of a more homophonic treatment of material, condemning canons, for instance, as 'dry and despicable pieces of pedantry that one might compose who would give his time to them'. Delicacy of workmanship and minute attention to musical expression are the hallmarks of Carl Philipp's style. A prolific composer whose output included oratorios, symphonies, songs and chamber music, his most important contribution was in the field

of keyboard music. The *Prussian Sonatas* of 1742 were in many respects revolutionary, a collection of *Württemberg Sonatas* followed two years later, and subsequently there were important collections of sonatas '*für Kenner und Liebhaber*'. Although his later sonatas were intended for the forte-piano, Carl Philipp's favourite instrument was the clavichord whose capacity for delicate dynamic shading enchanted him. The clavichord was the perfect medium for one whose works were to represent the essence of the *empfindsamer Stil*.

G.G.

BACH, Johann Christian

(b. Leipzig, 5 Sept 1735;

d. London, 1 Jan 1782)

Johann Christian Bach was the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach by his second wife, Anna Magdalena. His first musical instruction was from his father, but as the latter died in 1750 when Johann Christian was only fifteen, the boy was taken into the household of his half-brother Carl Philipp Emanuel, in Berlin, who forwarded the lad's musical education, until such time as Johann Christian found himself in Italy, under the patronage of a certain Count Agostino Litta, in Milan. It is said that he went there in the company of a female Italian opera singer though of this nothing is known for sure, but in 1754, brother Carl noted that Johann Christian had 'gone to Italy'. In Italy he certainly was, by the late 1750s, and there became a pupil (by post, it would seem) of the celebrated Padre Martini of Milan, who came to regard him like a son. Perhaps it was through Martini's influence, or merely to qualify for a job as an Italian church organist, but it is certain that in that country Johann Christian abandoned the Protestantism of his forefathers and became a Roman Catholic convert, which faith he henceforward adhered to, even later on in Protestant England. As a Roman Catholic, he became organist of Milan Cathedral, and even composed some splendid pieces of Latin church music, which are well worthy of revival. But church music was not to absorb him for long; Italy was full of opera houses and invitations to compose operas for them too appealing; Johann Christian's first Italian opera (a setting of Metastasio's *Artaserse*) was produced at Turin in the Carnival Season of 1761, and later the same year his *Catone in Utica* was produced very successfully in Naples, to be

followed the next year (1762) with a setting of Metastasio's very popular *Alessandro in Indie* libretto. Young Bach was obviously a rising star in the Italian operatic field. But then a strange thing happened, as it had happened to his great compatriot Handel, some fifty years before. Johann Christian found himself going to London, to compose an opera for the Italian opera house there. So he arrived in the English capital in the summer of 1762, as 'Mr John Bach, a Saxon Master of Musick . . .' At first he was disappointed with the voices placed at his disposal and so only attempted to direct comic operas and pasticcios – operas with music selected from the works of other composers – until he heard that singer Anna de' Amicis, whose voice charmed him, and he then composed for her the opera seria of *Orione ossia Diana Vendicata*, which took the town by storm, from the first notes of the splendid overture, in which Dr Burney stated that clarinets were used for the first time in the London opera. Actually, there is some doubt about his claim, since they are known to have been used by Handel, and Dr Arne certainly scored for them in some of his operas.

So young Bach was launched upon his English career. In a short time he passed from being a mere 'Saxon Master of Musick' to 'our trusty and well-beloved John Christian Bach, Gent'. He was appointed Music-Master to the young Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of King George the Third. Both monarchs were fond of music; the King played the flute quite well and could strum a tune on the harpsichord, whilst his Queen was quite a competent keyboard player, who is said to have consoled her suffering fellow-travellers on the stormy sea-crossing from Germany to England 'with her executions on the harpsichord': one can only hope that they were duly appreciative. Her first Music-Master in England had been the rather crotchety old Joseph Kelway, who was soon supplanted by the urbane and polished young Saxon, with whom the Queen could at least converse in her native tongue. John Bach, as he now was, became a great favourite in the Royal Household, dedicating to his royal patroness his own Op. 1, a set of very modern-sounding concertos. In a way, he stepped to some extent into the empty shoes of the dead Handel, who had died only a few years before, leaving a conspicuous void in English musical life, as there was no native composer of sufficient genius to occupy the great man's place. Not even Drs Boyce and Arne, gifted though they were, had sufficient

reputation to succeed the Beloved Saxon; it was left to another Saxon, who became 'the English Bach', to take over something of the great man's place, in due course. Young Bach was no great epic composer, like the departed Handel, but his music had something of the same consummate technical mastery as Handel's, albeit in an altogether different and more 'modern' style.

In London, Bach found some congenial spirits, some foreign, some British. Foremost among them was Carl Friedrich Abel, a celebrated viola da gamba virtuoso, who had once been a pupil of Bach's father Johann Sebastian. These two very kindred spirits now revived their old acquaintance and became close friends. They both played in the Queen's private chamber band, and actually set up house together and founded a long-popular series of concerts, known as the 'Bach-Abel Concerts' and later as the 'Hanover Square Concerts', devoted very largely to the performance of the 'modern' music of the day – among other things, Haydn's symphonies were played there, long before J. P. Salomon brought that great composer to London from Vienna. Another distinguished foreign musician resident in mid-18th-century London was Felice de' Giardini, brilliant violinist in the 'modern' style, who played for Bach, led the opera orchestra, and sometimes even tried his hand at the management, always a risky business. Then, later in the 1760s, they were joined by Johann Christian Fischer, the most distinguished oboist of the day, who also played Bach's music, and who later married one of Gainsborough's daughters. Gainsborough himself, of course, was a great music-lover and a close friend of both Bach and Abel, especially when he returned to London from Bath in the mid-1770s. He painted a remarkably fine portrait of John Christian, which still exists in two versions, one in Bologna, where Bach sent it at the request of his beloved old mentor Padre Martini, and one still in England.

London was a busy musical centre in the mid-18th century. Besides the Italian opera, there were two major English opera houses, and several smaller ones, as well as several series of indoor concerts, run by clubs and societies, and the open-air concerts at the various Pleasure Gardens, which provided music often of a very high standard in the summer months and were really the ancestors of the modern Promenade Concerts. Chief of these were Vauxhall and Ranelagh, at which