A General History of Music, from the earliest ages to the present period
Charles Burney (1726–1814)
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The Source: Published in four volumes between 1776 and 1789, Charles Burney’s A General History of Music is the result of the author’s years traveling throughout Europe, researching the music of each destination’s past and present. This book provides a comprehensive guide to performers, instruments, and other musical elements prominent in different parts of Europe at different times up to the eighteenth century.

Though this collection is titled as a general history, Burney occasionally let his preferences guide what material was included, and what was left out. For instance, Antonio Sacchini and Niccolo Piccinni were featured after Burney heard them in concert, but the already widely known young Wolfgang Mozart did not interest Burney enough to make it into his book. It is biases such as these, as well as praise and criticism aimed at certain composers that make this book of value to those who wish to understand music in the late eighteenth-century.

Critical Reception and Significance: Each volume met with success as it was published, possibly causing the delay that occurred between the printing of each. The books continued to be successful long after their author had died. Nearly 160 years after the first volume was published, a new edition was published in 1935 in both London and in the United States. Scott Goddard, a reviewer, stated: “It was time that a fresh edition of Burney’s classic was brought out.” Even today, we can gain valuable insight into the musical world of late eighteenth-century England through the history it produced. These volumes are especially significant as some of the first music histories originally written and published in the English language.

Translations/Modern Editions:
*First volume available in Morgan Library Stacks ML159 .B96 1957 v. 1
A GENERAL HISTORY OF MUSIC,
FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE PRESENT PERIOD.
BY CHARLES BURNLEY, Mus. D. F. R. S.
VOLUME THE FIRST.

LONDON,
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F.R.S.
Published in the 4th Decem. 1744.
TO THE

QUEEN.

MADAM,

THE condescension with which your Majesty has been pleased to permit your name to stand before the following History, may justly reconcile the author to his favourite study, and convince him, that whatever may be said by the professors of severer wisdom, the hours which he has bestowed upon Music have been neither dishonourably, nor unprofitably spent.

The science of musical sounds, though it may have been depreciated, as appealing only to the ear,
with, in which I can, however, boast no peculiarity of reverence or zeal; for the virtues of your Majesty are universally confessed; and however the inhabitants of the British empire may differ in their opinions upon other questions, they all behold your excellences with the same eye, and celebrate them with the same voice; and to that name which one nation is echoing to another, nothing can be added by the respectful admiration, and humble gratitude of,

MADAM,

your Majesty's

most obedient

and most devoted Servant,

CHARLES BURNLEY.
CONTENTS of the DISSERTATION.

SECT.

I. Of the Notation or Tablature of ancient Music, including its Scales, Intervals, Systems, and Diagrams. Page 1.

II. Of the three Genera, Diatonic, Chromatic, and Enharmonic. P. 23.

III. Of the Modes. P. 40.

IV. Of Mutations. P. 54.

V. Of Melopoëia. P. 57.

VI. Of Rhythm. P. 62.

VII. Of the Practice of Melopoëia, with Examples, P. 83.

VIII. Whether the Ancients had Counterpoint, or Music in Parts? P. 108.

IX. Of Dramatic Music. P. 145.

X. Of the Effects attributed to the Music of the Ancients. P. 166.

CONTENTS of the HISTORY, beginning Page 187.


Of Greek Music.

CHAP.

I. Of Music in Greece during the Residence of Pagan Divinities of the first Order upon Earth. P. 258.

II. Of
ON IV.

To the Genera and Modes of Mutations, \( \text{μεταξολο\ı̄} \), or which, in modern music, we should call modulation. However, the terms are used to modulate, and to sing, this modulation with them signifies the moderns more frequently kind of change in melody or harmony. For modulation may be brought to melody is stationary.
SECTION IV.

Of Mutations.

The next subject of enquiry to the Genera and Modes of ancient music, is that of the Mutations, μετακολω, or changes incident to melody; which, in modern music, we should call, upon some occasions, modulation. However, the terms are not exactly synonymous; for though to modulate, and to sing, are in ancient authors equivalent, as modulation with them signified merely a change in melody, yet the moderns more frequently apply the term modulation to that kind of change in melody or harmony, which introduces a new key. For modulation may be brought about by changes in harmony, while melody is stationary.

In the system of solmisation established upon the hexachords of Guido, mutations mean such changes only as are occasioned in the names of the notes by accidental flats and sharps.

The ancients however had four several kinds of accidents in their music that were distinguished by the name of mutations. These might have happened in the genus, system, mode, or melopoeia. In the Genus, when the melody passed from one genus to another, from the chromatic, for instance, to the diatonic, or enharmonic, and the contrary. In the System, when the modulation passed from a conjunct to a disjunct tetrachord; that is, from one that was united to another by some one found in common to both;
next subject of enquiry to incident music, is that of the incident to melody; which, in some occasions, modulation is only synonymous; for though ancient authors equivalent, as by a change in melody, yet the term modulation to that kind which introduces a new key. For changes in harmony, while a
Such was the manner in which the ancients marked the measure in their written music; but to make it still more sensible in the execution, they beat time in several different ways. The most common was by the motion of the foot, which was lifted up and beat down alternately, according to what we call common, or triple time. To regulate the time was generally the office of the music master or director, called μεσοχόρος and κουφανικός, coryphaeus, because he was placed in the middle of the orchestra, among the musicians, and in an exalted and conspicuous situation, in order to be seen and heard the more easily by the whole band.

The directors of the time were likewise called in Greek ποδιστικός and ποδοσφόρος, from the noise of their feet. In Latin they were called pedarrii, podarrii, and pedicularii, for the same reason. Their feet were generally furnished with wooden or iron sandals, in order to mark the time in a more distinct manner: these implements the Greeks called κρυτεία, κρυπτα, κρυτεύα; and the Latins pedicula, scabella, or scabilla, because they resembled little pattens or clogs.

But it was not only with the feet that the ancients beat the time, but with all the fingers of the right hand upon the hollow part of the left; and he who marked the time or rhythm in this manner, was called manu-ductor. For this purpose they sometimes used oyster-shells, and the shells of other fish, as well as the bones of animals, in beating time, as we do of castanets, tabors, &c. Both Hesychius, and the scholiast of Aristophanes, furnish passages to confirm this assertion. What a noisv and barbarous music! All rhythm, and no sound. The drums and sistra of the Idæi Dactyli could not have been more savage.

Many ancient instruments were monotonous, and of little use; but to mark the measure; such were the cymbalum and sistrum. But it would afford us no very favourable idea of the abilities of modern musicians, if they required so much parade and noise in keeping together. The more time is beaten, says M. Rousseau, the less it is kept; and, in general, bad music, and bad musicians, stand in most need of such noisy assistance.
MUSIC OF THE ANCIENTS.

However, if any thing like the power which ancient music is said to have had over the passions can be credited, it must have derived this power chiefly from the energy and accentuation of the rhythm. Aristides Quintilianus (1) gives a long list of different metres, with their several properties of calming or agitating the mind, according to the nature of the syllables, or feet of the verses, as well as the sentiments which they were intended to express; and as it will afford the reader an opportunity of seeing how much fire was laid on this part of music, and how fanciful and ideal many of the distinctions seem to have been, I shall give the whole passage in English.

"Measure, which begins by a down part of the metrical division, is calm and gentle; whereas that which begins by an up part, expresses trouble and agitation. Full time, that is, composed of entire feet, is noble in its effect; and that arising from catalectic verses, deficient in a syllable or note, if it be supplied by a short rest or pause, has more simplicity, but is less noble. Time of equal proportions, is graceful; and that of odd numbers, or felquialterate proportion, is more proper to excite commotion (2). Double time is a kind of mean betwixt the graceful and the turbulent. Among the movements of two even notes, if they are short, their effect is lively, impetuous, and proper for military dances, called Pyrrhics, in which the dancers are armed; and time, of which the movement is regulated by poetic feet composed of long syllables, is more grave, serious, and fit for hymns which are sung in honour of the gods, at festivals, and in sacrifices: the measure composed of a mixture of long and short notes, participates of the qualities of both these last mentioned."

(2) The reader should here be informed, that, besides our common and triple time, they had measures of 5, and of 7 equal notes in a bar; circumstances which must appear very extraordinary to modern musicians. By double time, Arist. Quint. means triple time, that is, in which the down part of the bar was to the up, as 2 to 1; or in which one time of the bar was double to the other. So common time they called equal, because the bars admitted a division into two equal parts. In the same manner, the measure of 5 notes in a bar, was called Septimal, that is, of 2 to 3; and that of 7 notes, Epistrius, or of 3 to 4, from the bars being divided into those proportions.
The short foot already mentioned.

---

The Daecyl.

---

One short.
IX. To face p. 257.

CHANT of the German Jews to

(V.)

Melody to the Title of the Ll. Psalm, or Lamnatzeach,

Notation of some of the Hebrew Musical Accents, in the manner wa

Pharoh
Karne
Katon
Pazer

Legorniah
Zarka
HEBREW CHANTS.


Another, to Psalm XVI. (Lat. XV.)

Chant of the Spanish Jews, to Psalm XVII. (Lat. XVI.)

Another, to Psalm XVIII. (Lat. XVII.)

Chant of the German Jews, to Psalm XXII. (Lat. XXI.)

Another, to Psalm XXIII. (Lat. XXII.)

Melody to the Title of the 1st Psalm, or Lamnatzeach, as sung by the Spanish Jews.

Notation of some of the Hebrew Musical Accents, in the manner which Kircher pretended they were sung during his time in the Italian and German Synagogues, at the end of a verse in the Psalms, or close of a sentence in the Prophets.
THE HISTORY OF

benefits they have conferred on mankind: however, as to the existence of these personages, the whole is doubtful now. New systems of mythology are but a series of new conjectures, as difficult to ascertain and believe as the old legends. And as these legends have been long received by the wisest men, and greatest writers of antiquity, and are at least as probable as the hypotheses of modern mythologists, I shall adhere to them, not only as being more amusing and ingenious than fancied analogies and etymologies, drawn from Phoenician and Hebrew roots by Bochart, the Abbé de la Pluche, and others; but, because the minds of most readers will have accommodated themselves by long habit to classic opinions, imbibed during their tender years of education and credulity (d).

(d) The bishop of Gloucester has a passage so replete with wit, humour, and satire, that I shall make no apology for inserting it at full length. In speaking of l'Histoire du Ciel, by de la Pluche, he asks, “on what then, is this author’s paradox supported?” On the common foundation of most modern philologic systems, Etymologies; which, like fungous excrescences, spring up from old Hebrew roots, mythologically cultivated. To be let into this new method of improving barren fens, we are to understand, that in the ancient Oriental tongues, the few primitive words must needs bear many different significations, and the numerous derivations be infinitely equivocal. Hence anything may be made of Greek proper names, by turning them to Oriental sounds, so as to suit every system, past, present, and to come. To render this familiar to the reader, by example, M. Pluche’s system is, that the Gentile Gods came from agriculture: all he wants, then, is to pick out, (consonant to the Greek proper names) Hebrew words which signify a plough, tillage, or ear of corn; and so his business is done. Another comes, let it be Fourmont, and he brings news that the Greek Gods were Mofes or Abraham, and the same ductile sounds produce from the same primitive words, a chief, a leader, or a true believer; and then, to use his words, Nier qu’il s’agit ici du seul Abraham, c’est être aveugle d’esprit, & d’un aveuglement irremediable. A third and fourth appear upon the scene, suppose them Le Clerc and Bainer; who, prompted by the learned Bochart, say that the Greek Gods were only Phenicians voyagers; and then, from the same ready sources, flow navigation, ships, and negociators; and when any one is at a loss in this game of crinio, which can never happen but by being dullest than ordinary, the kindred dialects of the Chaldee and Arabic lie always ready to make up deficiencies. To give an infall of all this in the case of poor distressed Oliris, whom hortile critics have driven from his family and friends, and reduced to a mere vagabond upon earth, M. Pluche derives his name from Ochfores, domaine de la Terre: M. Fourmont from Hofbeide, habitant de Seir, the dwelling of Etnan, who is his Oliris. And Voffius from Schieber or Siur, one of the Scripture names for the Nile. I have heard of an old humourist, and great dealer in etymologies, who boasted That he not only knew whence words came, but whither they were going. And indeed, on any system-maker’s telling me his scheme, I will undertake to shew whither all his old words are going; for in strict propriety of speech, they cannot be said to be coming from, but going to, some old Hebrew root. There are certain follies, of which this seems to be in the number, whose ridicule strikes so strongly, that it is felt even by those who are most subject to commit them. Who that has read M. Huet’s Demonstratio Evangelica, would have expected to have seen him fair and wise so much spirit the very nonsense with which
For
cities have a particular symbol. The city of Rhegium, for instance, on one side, and on the reverse a Lyre. In a medal incised by Caleno, the Minotaur is seen, with the addition of the Lyre. Thespianso had one of the Muses and a Lyre; the Lapithæ, a Diana, and on the reverse a Lyre; the isle of Chios, Homer on one side

(l) Μουσ θεῶν Ἐκάτως ο ὅρων ἐγα, 
Ουδ' αὐ τι θυμιν, οὐδ' επιστενδών λαβοῖς, 
Ουδ' εἰ σί βαμος, οὐδ' ἀπαίνεται.

(m) Archæologia Græca, vol. II. ix.

Z z 2
without vocal, there does not appear in the writings of Homer. Even the wind, according to the following lines:

Then to the dance they come,
Till Hesperus leads forth.

It seems as if nothing were to be said of the just and clear idea of the state of war, or at least of Homer's mentioned in the original; the syrinx (h). The lyre has
INDEX.

Game, Olympic, 365, 370.
Garrick, 165.
Gaudenius, 45, 128, 364.
Greeks, Abbé, 486.
Genera, 2, 13, 25.
Generalist's, like Cokes, 359.
Grazzioli, 141.
Gladiators, peculiar to the Roman theft of blood, 485.
Glaucus, 110.
Golden age, 314.
Greek, 164.
Spanish hopper, 183. One supplies the place of a broken string, 287.
Greek church, 417.
Greeks, 1, 258.
---, Theogony of, 259.
---, slate of, 423, 430, 874.
Eis none but freemen cultivate the liberal arts, 480.

HALDE, Du, 31.
Hammers of Pythagoras, 431.
Handel, 50, 56.
Harmanian air, 386, 412.
Harmonia, Scoria in honour of, 458.
Harmonia, 262.
Harmonides, 371.
Harmonies, 262.
Harmony, 100.
---, natural, what, 187.
---, ancient, 139, 311.
Harp, Theban, 215.
Harris, Mr. 78.
Hebrew language, 254.
---, musical characters, 256.
---, music, 224.
Hellenistic, 364.
Hephaestus, 65, 71.
Hephaestus, 398.
Heracleides of Pontus, 42, 52, 364.
Herald's, 338, 370.
Hermes, 159, 201.
Hermes, 458.
Hercules, 250.
---, institutes games, 251.
Herodorus, trumpet, 175, 371.
Herodotus, 193, 194, 203.
Heresy and heroic times, 310.
Herod, account of his death, 185, 293, 374.
Hesiodus, 66.
Hexachord, 3, 54.
Hexameter, 397.
Hera, 373, 374.

Jupiter, born in Crete, 256.
Hieroglyphics, 218.
Hymn, 408.
Homer, 70, 170, 179, 309, 334, 361, 375.
Horn, 202, 227.
Hymn, 275, 279.
Hydraulicon, 487.
Hydrophobia, 83.
---, authors of, 95.
---, melody of, 95.
---, rhythm of, 97.
---, excellence of, 100.
--- to Apollo, 290.
--- to Mercury, 362.
--- to Hercules, 392.
---, religious, 454.
Hymn, Apollo and Hypo, explained, 15.
Hymn, religious, 285.
Hymn, Hebrews, what, 152.
Hymn, sacred, 428.

JACKSON, 82.
Lambic feet and verses, 69, 72, 151.
Lambic, 61.
Lais Dàkylis, 66, 261, 266.
Loeb's daughter, 228.
Loricbo, 106.
Jewish priests encourage the soldiers in battle, 245.
---, music, its cause and decline, 246.
---, nation, captives in Egypt and Syria, 250.
---, fanatical music, 253.
Jews fabricated by Pompey, 250.
Imitation, or mimicry, 307.
Innovators, 229, 230.
---, origin of, 464.
Influence of a state, music not then cultivated, 227.
Innovations, 400.
Instrumental contests, 375.
---, music more licentious than vocal, 425.
Instruments of the Egyptians, 194.
--- of the Abyssinians, 207.
--- of the Jews, mentioned in the psalms, 236.
Intermezzi, or Interludes, 154.
Job, 252.
Ion of Chios, 399.
Iphigenia, 415.
Isthmian games, 404.
Jubal, 225.
reputation, and have you not confessed that Frescobaldi, who is still living, has often surprised and affected you by his performance? There are many," continues Della Valle, "who played the organ in his manner, that I could name." And as for other instruments, he asks his friend if he does not remember "Gregorio del Violino, a great contrapuntist as well as performer; another who played wonderfully on the spinet; and Gio. Francesco de Leuto who all played in his cart." After these, he mentions a performer on the cornet, and the first violin of the bishop of Padua, Marco Fratelli on the viol da gamba, Kapfsberger on the theorbo, Orazio on the harp, Michael Angelo on the violin, and others of equal reputation, who had all surpassed the performers of anterior times (m).

These were solo players, but with respect to the art of accompanying others, he says it was brought to such perfection that he could not imagine it ever had been or could be surpassed.

He supposes that there had been at all times musicians who could lead a band well; but believes that at no time there ever was a person who discovered more judgment and abilities in this station than Signor Pietro Fesidi, in the church of Jesus, where, though Music is not his profession, he frequently plays for his devotion (n).

He then comes to singing, as the last thing he has to discuss; and this he considers in solo songs, and in Music of many parts. His friend, among the sopranos, or treble voices, of his youth, had greatly praised the falsett of a who used to sing in the Pope's chapel, and elsewhere; and Della Valle says he remembered one of them, Gio. Luca Falsetto, who had great execution, and went up to the clouds (o); and mentions Orazietto, a very good singer, either in a falset or tenor; Ottaviuiscio and Verovio, famous tenors, who all three sung in his cart. "However, these," he adds, "trills, graces, and a good

(m) In speaking of the great improvement in taste which these last had introduced on their several instruments, he tells us, in the Musical Technicon, of the times, that these excellent modern musicians had joined to all the abilities of counterpoint, a thousand graces in their performance, di trilli, fiaccetti, fiacchi, di tremoli, di fante, di piano, e di forte, e di finiti galantissimi, which were wholly unknown to past times.

(n) Protestants would perhaps mistake it for diversion. Tartini dedicated himself, and his violin to the service of St. Anthony of Padua, and during the last years of his life would play no where else, in public, but at the church of that saint.

(o) Gran cantore di gorghe, e di paesaggi, che andava alto alle stelle.
ERRATA.

Page 1, line 16, for unfit for, read unfavourable to.  P. 5, note (c) r. Steff.  P. 20, l. 17, for it, r. is.
P. 24, l. 12, for change, r. is changed.  P. 26, l. 13, r. tells.  Ib. l. 7 from the bottom, r. 1615, at Venice.
P. 31, l. 12, r. unapproposition.  P. 51, l. 15, r. Franceschini.  Ib. l. penultima, r. reasonably.  P. 52,
l. antepenultima, r. Comena.  P. 63, l. 19, for Vienna, r. Venice.  P. 64, l. laft, after Mr. add John.
P. 87, l. 1, r. Amoldo.  P. 87, l. 1, r. Monteverde.  Ib l. 6, r. Satira.  P. 97, in the line of Music, place a

P. 116, l. 15, after of, add the.  P. 123, note (f) l. 2, for to, r. from.  P. 132,

P. 133, at the end, r. Tartare.  P. 139, l. 18, r. excellent.  P. 140, l penult. after

P. 176, l. 9, r. riposta.  P. 184, l. 19, r. Biographia.  P. 197, l. 22, for uncommen, r. common.  P. 207, l. 19, r. Offitio.  P. 221, at the end of note (e) r. Stampiglia.  P. 258,

l. 18, for Cola, r. Coke.  P. 260, l. 17, r. lieue.  P. 266, l. 3, r. 1766.  P. 279, l. 4 from the bottom, r.
P. 288, l. 15, for This, r. It; and l. 16, dele to this opera.  Ib l. 25, r. instrument.  P. 297,

l. 7 from the bottom, r. proceeding.  Ib. note (n) before him, add to.  P. 298, l. 10, r. It is.  Ib. note (g)

calumniis.  P. 333, l. 15, r. out the.  P. 382, first col. l. 25, for that, r. and.  P. 403, dele note (s).  P.

448, l. 20, r. man.  P. 460, l. 4, r. negligent.  P. 468, l. 7, r. Francesco.  P. 511, l. 20, r. Dilettanti.

P. 578, l. 15, after opera, add for Naples.  P. 579, note (a) l. 3, r. bed, he.  P. 600, at the end of note (f),

for above, r. below.  P. 612, l. 6 from the bottom, r. calling.  P. 635, l. 6, r. after his, dele other.  P. 638,

l. 10, r. limmus.  P. 650, l. penult. for the, r. his.  P. 659, note (b) r. musicians.  P. 673, l. 16, for all, r.

note of.  Ib. l. 10 from the bottom, r. analyzed.
Chronological List of the principal Books published on
the Subject of Music in England, during the present Century.

Holder of the natural Grounds and Principles of Harmony, 1701
BESFORD on Temple Music,
A Comparison between the French and Italian Music and Operas, 1706
BESFORD on the great Abuse of Music,
MACCULLOCH's Treatise on Music, 1709
TANSEY's Sound anatomized,
DE LA FOND's System of Music,
Mechanical Essay on Singing, Music, and Dancing, 1711
BROWN's Medicina Musica,
PEPUSCH's Treatise on Harmony, 1724
LAMPE's Treatise on Thorough-bass, 1725
Art of Music,
GRASSEINEL's Musical Dictionary,
GALLIARD's Translation of Toi on florid Song,
GEMINIANI's Guida Armonica,
Treatise on Good Taste.
——— Art of Accompaniment.
HARRIS's three Treatises on Art, Music, and Happines, 1742
DU VERNAY's Treatise on the Ear, translated, 1743
SMITH's Harmonics,
RAMEAU's Treatise on Music, translated, 1744
AVISON on Musical Expression,
HAYES's Remarks on Ditto, and Arison's Reply, 1745
Memoirs of the Life of Handel,
ANTONIOTTO's Treatise on Composition,
BROWN's Dissertation on the Rise and Declension of Music, 1746
Observations on Ditto, 1747
ALGAROTTI's Essay on the Opera, translated, 1748
Lyric Muse revived,
WEBB on the Correspondence between Poetry and Music, 1749
BAILEY's Collection of Anthems used in the Chapel Royal and most Cathedrals in England,
Account of the Academy of Ancient Music,
HOLDEN's Essay towards a rational System of Music,
NARES's Treatise on Singing,
BAILEY's Treatise on Singing and Playing,
STILLINGFLEET's Principles and Power of Harmony,
MORLEY's Introduction, republished,
BUREN's Musical Tour through France and Italy,
Ditto through the Netherlands, Germany, and Holland,
        Vol. IV. — 1773
        M

STEEL