

**NOVELLO'S 'NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT':
1883, FRANCIS HUEFFER AND *THE MUSICAL REVIEW***

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Despite digitisation, physical shelf space remains a precious commodity in modern libraries. Readers and researchers still want and need hard copies of books and journals. Offsite storage can provide one solution for expanding collections, although the choice of what to consign there presents another challenge. Age and condition of library stock, low use or, in the case of defunct periodicals, length of run and perceived reputation may help collection managers decide where to place things, implicitly valuing or de-centring them. Since even the most august nineteenth-century journals seem to require miles of shelving, moreover, pressure to relegate the minor titles, of which there were many, must be irresistible.

In fact short-run music periodicals were the rule, not the exception, in nineteenth-century Britain, as a glance at the first 208 titles listed under 'Great Britain' in *New Grove 2*, Appendix F, will show.¹ That's hardly surprising for an open market in which cheaper and quicker print could aid any cause. Commercial publishers, instrument makers, private individuals and music amateurs, educational bodies and special interests naturally sought or created public outlets to proselytize, influence opinion, boost careers or generate sales. We need only reflect on the comparable revolution wrought in our own time by the Internet, including web-based journalism and marketing, to grasp the sense of excitement at the new possibilities offered by Victorian 'journalizing'.

Of course some observers will insist that the periodicals market grew uncontrollably, each new launch advancing the vulgarization of music through relentless competition. Yet success was never guaranteed; risks were high and it often took a long time to build up a loyal reading audience. Then as now, every journal entrepreneur had to produce a product that not only looked or sounded distinctive but offered something people really wanted to buy, and keep buying, stimulating a genuine readership—doubtless the reason so many nineteenth-century music titles ceased after only a year or less.²

¹ *The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians*, 2nd edn, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2001, vol.28, Appendix F: 'Periodicals, §2(i): Europe: Great Britain', p.394–7.

² From 1800 to 1845 the average lifespan of an English music journal was about two years and four months; most lasted a year or less and died from financial distress. For more background and a notable exception, see Leanne Langley, 'The life and death of *The Harmonicon*: an analysis', *Research chronicle of the Royal Musical Association* 22 (1989), p.137–63.

So librarians may well argue that the many journals which failed, unrepresentative of public thought and activity, are rightly downgraded to the library outhouse. Some were obviously ill-conceived and poorly executed; their value and interest to modern readers remains marginal, or at best unproven. But it is also true that intriguing items have been buried under the pile, as it were, forgotten or unread since their death day. Like medieval manuscripts, they require reconstruction of time and context to be understood as anything other than artefacts of a vanished culture we might prefer to forget.

One of these happens to rest in pieces within a large envelope in the British Library. It lasted barely six months in early 1883 and was unquestionably the most disastrous journal speculation of the venerable house of Novello. On inspection, and with some investigation, it turns out to be less medieval manuscript than lost goldmine. Its title was simply *The musical review: a weekly musical journal*.³ Reading it is salutary, for it sheds light on a potential direction for music publishing at a crucial moment in late nineteenth-century Britain, as well as on how the nation's musical 'rebirth' was once predicated. The irony is that this failed journal—alike excellent, provocative and unpopular—provides a much-needed refresher on the competing social and artistic forces at work in Victorian England. For that, like a recovered time capsule, it deserves a place on the main library shelf.

Rationale and founding

The *Musical review*'s first number burst forth fully formed on launch day, Saturday, 6 January 1883. It showed every sign of having been well planned and generously funded. A large folio of 24 (later 16) pages, using good paper and clear printing, it cost a reasonable 4*d.* weekly or 19*s.* 6*d.* annually, slightly undercutting its main rival, the weekly *Musical world*.⁴ Its address was direct, tone high-minded, and the essays, some with music examples, thoughtful and coherent. Letters and reports, clearly pre-commissioned and signed by such notable writers as Edward Dannreuther ('Liszt's pianoforte works'), Filippo Filippi ('A visit to Wagner') and George Grove ('Words and music'), supported the aims in the opening editorial, which by convention was

³ Shelfmark P.P.1947.g. According to *The British union catalogue of music periodicals*, 2nd edn, ed. John Wagstaff (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), a further eight UK libraries hold copies: Central Public Library, Birmingham; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Reid Music Library, University of Edinburgh; Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Royal College of Music, London; Senate House Library, University of London; Henry Watson Music Library, Manchester Public Library; and Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁴ No.1 of the *Musical review* unusually contained 24 pages. The *Musical world*, begun in 1836 as Novello's original house journal, also cost 4*d.* weekly for 16 pages but 20*s.* for an annual subscription; in 1883 its editor was the aging J. W. Davison and its owner and publisher Davison's brother, William Duncan Davison.

unsigned:

THE MUSICAL REVIEW is started for the purpose of supplying the want long felt not only in England, but in the musical world generally, of a comprehensive weekly record of the progress of musical art in all its branches. The recent development and the extensive spread of English musical taste, and the amount and variety of music performed every year amongst us to supply that taste, have made London one of the musical centres of the world, where the currents of the art, as represented by the leading talent of all countries, converge; [...] The MUSICAL REVIEW will accordingly be free from the narrowness of national or party prejudice. While giving due prominence to English music, it will consider that music as a part of the great artistic movement which is not confined to one country, and of which the separate developments in France, or Germany, or Italy, or Russia, are only so many subdivisions, to be judged by the same standard of absolute merit.

THE MUSICAL REVIEW will not be made the organ of a party, much less of commercial interest of any kind. For this the editor holds himself personally responsible.

In furthering the interests of art and artists for the sake of art alone, in combining due reverence for the classical models with ready appreciation of all that is hopeful and truthful in modern music, THE MUSICAL REVIEW will endeavour to follow the example of Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Like that model of periodical literature, it will also endeavour to attract the interest of cultured musical amateurs, no less than that of professors, by avoiding abstruseness of treatment as far as a thorough discussion of the subject will allow.

The contents of THE MUSICAL REVIEW will consist of leading articles and shorter notes on topics of the day, full accounts of musical performances in London, and summaries of the more important events in the provinces. Foreign intelligence will be a special feature of the journal, and correspondents of ability in the musical capitals of Europe and America have been secured. All important musical publications and books on music will be treated by competent writers, and independent essays and articles on musical subjects will be contributed by leading musicians and critics both in this country and abroad. [...] The unflinching truth will be spoken, but in no instance will personal susceptibilities be hurt without need. Only in the repression of incompetence and arrogant mediocrity will it be thought necessary to have recourse to the severer modes of criticism. (p.13)

This was high standard-bearing, promising a coverage, level of integrity, expertise and literary skill rare in the English musical press. The model of Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift* is eye-catching, and presumably flagged an erudition distinct from anything in the *Musical world*, *Musical times*, *Tonic Sol-Fa reporter*, *Musical standard*, *Orchestra*, *Monthly musical record* or *Musical opinion*, to name only the best-known contemporaries. But that flag was also meant to prepare readers for something more—

frank promotion of modern music and of aesthetic reform through hard-hitting critique—the hallmarks of Schumann’s magazine.⁵

The text continued, articulating a specific goal suggested by recent developments. Chief among these was the great cultural advance of 1882 shown by the premières of Wagner’s *Parsifal* and Gounod’s *Redemption*—two European works that offered fresh hope for England through their probable undermining, respectively, of Italian opera and Mendelssohnian oratorio. Those mantles, according to the writer, had long been detrimental to indigenous growth of the most important English music institution of all, still lacking, ‘a national music-drama’. The approaching season might ‘witness a decisive stroke’ (p.14). On that expectant note, the editor closed his address and gave way to contributors championing change. Here and in successive numbers, they lauded progress wherever they found it (mostly Europe and America) and exposed weaknesses at home, from the absurdity of spoken dialogue in English opera and the scandal of the royalty ballad system to the mediocre poetry of most English songs, the poor musical standards at most English theatres, and the lack of English chamber music at Chappell’s ‘Pops’. Touches of dry humour and attempts to spark curiosity about the *Review*’s appeal in high places were offered as light relief, often in a slightly arch column, ‘What might be—or should be’.⁶

Clearly the first task in assessing the significance of the *Musical review* is to identify its editor—nowhere named as such in the publication—and the publisher’s motive. Given that Novello was already publishing the single most successful and widely distributed British music periodical of the age (*Musical times*) and had previously launched, then closed, a weekly arts review at a more elevated ‘aesthetic’ level in the mid-1870s (*Concordia*, 1875–6, edited by Joseph Bennett),⁷ we might guess they were again trying to tap or create an up-market, cosmopolitan readership for a new strand in their business. After 1867, with the acquisition of Ewer & Co., Henry Littleton and his son Alfred (successors to the Novello family) had indeed begun to venture increasingly into secular music, vocal scores of operas, scholarly and educational book production and concert promotion. A sustainable, complementary house journal reflecting such

⁵ See further, in the numbers for April, a four-part series entitled ‘Musical criticism: a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution. By a Musical Critic’, p.219–20, 235–6, 251–2, 267–8, in which Schumann’s purpose and methods are described (esp. 251).

⁶ A number of readers failed to detect the satire in this column and it sometimes backfired, as when ‘Mr. Gladstone’ purportedly sent a postcard confirming his commitment to full government subsidy for the RCM (the card is supposedly quoted on p.11). The journal had to give repeated explanations of this ‘joke’ and spell out the value of humour (p.143)—an early sign of trouble.

⁷ For a description of *Concordia*, see Joseph Bennett, *Forty years of music, 1865–1905* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908), p.225–9, in which the magazine’s failure is blamed on Novello’s impatience in developing a new readership. In 1911 the firm itself cited *Concordia*’s difficulty as addressing many arts in one magazine; see ‘The Novello Centenary, 1811–1911’, Supplement to *Musical times* 52 (1911), p.5–20 (16). The same in-house history makes no mention of the *Musical review*.

interests would have made good sense around 1882–3, not least because so many new, variegated activities attracting serious amateurs and professionals were in evidence. High repute for the London Richter Concerts and Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts, for example; solid take-up of Novello's own Music Primers and of Macmillan's *Dictionary of music and musicians*; the proposed establishment of a national conservatory in South Kensington; enterprising seasons of the Carl Rosa Opera Company (including Wagner, Bizet and Verdi in English); D'Oyly Carte's remarkable success at the Savoy Theatre; and of course the marked advance of British Wagnerism shown in 1882 by successful stagings of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Her Majesty's, Anton Seidl) and *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde* (Drury Lane, Hans Richter): all these signs augured well for an engaging journal with a clear voice that could build on the new musical mood and test new Novello products.

As it soon became clear, the key product on test here (scheduled for publication in March 1883) was an English opera along Wagnerian lines—one that was expected to be the first of a new genre, 'national English music-drama', and thus a progenitor of future scores. The work in question was Alexander Mackenzie's *Colomba*, to be staged by the Carl Rosa Co. at Drury Lane in early April 1883. Its libretto was created by the London-based German scholar and writer Dr Francis Hueffer (1843–1889), who also happened to be, simultaneously, music critic on *The Times*, programme-note writer for the Philharmonic Society and none other than our said anonymous editor of the *Musical review* (see Fig.1).⁸ Exactly when Hueffer joined Novello's in the journal project is not clear; but from internal references, a few extant letters and later memoirs, we can make some informed guesses.

⁸ On his death six years later, the *Musical times* confirmed Hueffer's role as editor of the *Musical review*. See 'Obituary', *Musical times* 30 (1889), p.88–9 (89), whose author may have been W. A. Barrett, then editor of *MT* and a former contributor to the *Musical review*. Hueffer wrote programme notes for the Philharmonic Society from 1881 to mid-March 1885, when he had a row with the Directors (and possibly with Sullivan, the new conductor) over their 'censorship' of his material. See Hueffer to Francesco Berger, 6 March 1885, British Library, RPS MS 349, f.75–6.

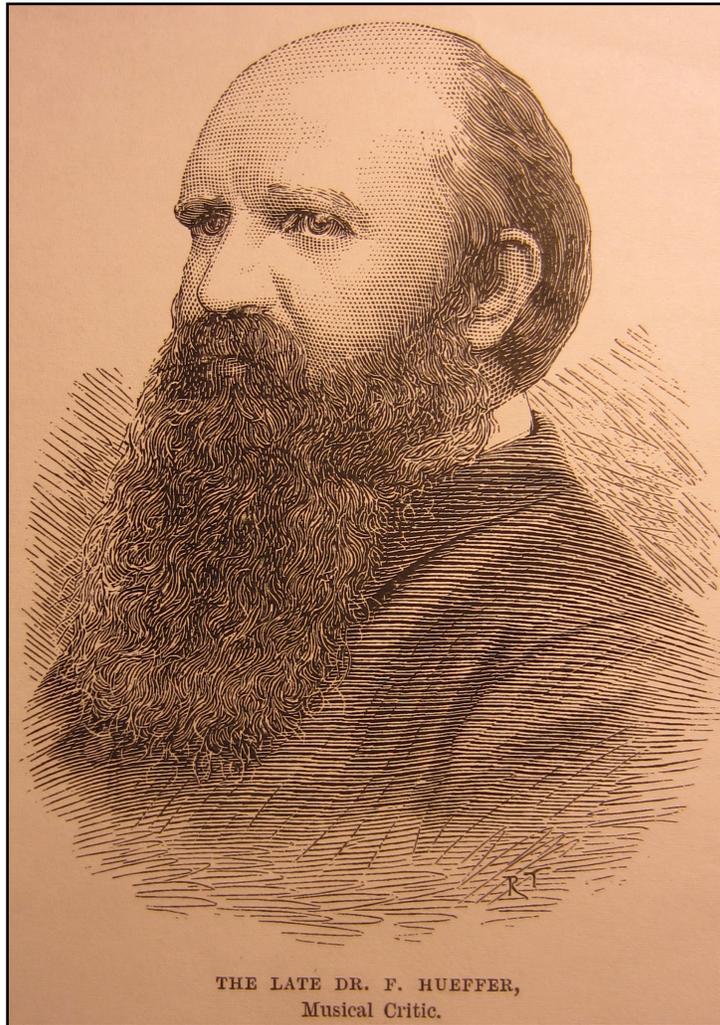


Fig.1. Portrait engraving of Francis Hueffer, Illustrated London news, 2 February 1889. Reproduced by courtesy of Senate House Library, University of London.

Alfred H. Littleton (1845–1914), educated partly in Germany and an early convert to Wagner, was, like his father Henry, an astute businessman, fastidious art and book collector, and from 1881 a friend and strong advocate of Alexander Mackenzie;⁹ personally shy and retiring, he was nevertheless in sufficient touch with a range of bright people and trends to have sensed prospects ahead, and to be open to them. Hueffer, connected by marriage and affinity to the Pre-Raphaelites—his father-in-law was the painter Ford Madox Brown, his brother-in-law the art critic W. M. Rossetti—was a hard-working, ambitious journalist and a critic and translator interested in

⁹ [W. G. McNaught], 'Alfred Henry Littleton', *Musical times* 52 (1911), p.365–8, and 'Alfred Henry Littleton' [obit], *Musical times* 55 (1914), p.685–6. See also Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, *A musician's narrative*. London: Cassell & Co., 1927, p.110.

history, languages and art. He knew something of music and composed a few songs (some of them issued by Novello in 1880). But above all he sought literary standing; he published Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poetry and wrote dictionary and journal articles, biography, criticism and, from 1882, librettos. With his unswerving commitment to Wagner, he naturally promulgated the composer's achievement early on, from at least 1872, gaining attention as an advanced disciple; and through connection with *The Times*, from 1878, he was considered influential. Yet as a critic, though knowledgeable, he was apt to make Wagner his absolute standard and to interpret any English resistance as ignorance or backwardness: this was a personal blindspot, not a sign of precociousness (as modern views of Hueffer would have it, comparing him favourably with previous English critics). Although his independence and authority made him an asset to the journalistic profession, musical colleagues would later remember him as narrow, autocratic and selfish.¹⁰ Hubert Parry went further, from 1885 noting Hueffer's manipulative tactics to get his own works performed, his 'doctrinaire' yet inept dramatic sense and his musical stupidity.¹¹

This background and the known facts now suggest a likely scenario for the *Musical review's* founding. Once Hueffer's idea for *Colomba* (based on a Mérimée play, like *Carmen*) had been accepted by Carl Rosa, the eager librettist approached Mackenzie, and Rosa then commissioned the opera; Mackenzie composed it in Italy in the late spring and summer of 1882.¹² By autumn, Hueffer and Littleton appear to have concocted the journal to promote the opera, among much else, Hueffer perhaps making the original suggestion. Early contributors must have been involved by November 1882. We know that Hueffer invited Littleton to dine with him on 25 November, after which they attended the première of Arthur Sullivan's *Iolanthe* at the Savoy ('which lasted till one in the morning and rather bored me, the jokes and tunes being always the same'); by 20 December, Hueffer was 'very busy with the new paper'.¹³ The possibility that he may even have put some of his own money behind the *Review* is worth considering. Certainly this is suggested by the second paragraph of his opening

¹⁰ A basic biography is contained in Louisa M. Middleton, 'Hueffer, Francis', *Grove's dictionary of music and musicians*, ed. J. A. Fuller Maitland. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1904–10, vol.2 (1906), p.439–40. For recollections of colleagues, see [W. A. Barrett, prob.], 'Obituary', *Musical times* 30 (1889), p.88–9 (89); Hermann Klein, *Thirty years of musical life in London, 1870–1900* (London: William Heinemann, 1903), p.145; and the letter from George Grove to Edith Oldham, 18 September 1895, quoted in Percy M. Young, *George Grove, 1820–1900: a biography* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.252.

¹¹ See Parry's diary entries for 24 February 1885, 8 June 1886 and 24 July 1888, quoted in Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert H. Parry: his life and music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p.232, 238, 268.

¹² Mackenzie, *A musician's narrative*, p.110–11.

¹³ Hueffer to his wife Catherine Brown Hueffer, 25 November 1882 and 20 December 1882, Violet Hunt Papers, series I, box 4, folders 6-a and 6-b, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library (Ithaca, New York). I am grateful to Ana Guimaraes, Head of Reference Services, for providing me with copies of these letters. For Hueffer's obtuseness in grasping any merit in Gilbert & Sullivan, even in *The Mikado* (March 1885), see Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: a Victorian musician*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, corrected paperback edn, 1986, p.206–7.

address (above), by a complete shift in the journal's tone after April (when the opera was staged), and by his documented takeover, editorially and financially, of the *Musical world* exactly three years later, notably in the run-up to the première of his second opera with Mackenzie (not published by Novello), *The troubadour*.¹⁴ Whatever the exact arrangement, the *Musical review* came to life impressively and still commands attention.

Content and contributors

One of the journal's most intriguing aspects is its multi-authorship, seen through the mix of contributors' names from January to June. Many of these people were well-known writers—musicians, scholars, academics, critics—who had long contributed to the general and specialized music press, or to Grove's *Dictionary*.¹⁵ Hueffer and Littleton apparently spared no effort to attract them. Some were genuine respondents reacting to previous articles. J. S. Shedlock and C. K. Salaman took up Liszt, for example, explored in the ongoing series by Dannreuther; William Pole decried the use of organ pedals for accompanying church choral music, in response to J. Kendrick Pyne's 'A few remarks on organs'; W. S. Rockstro and A. J. Ellis both gave their views on a mooted Handel commemoration that might recreate the composer's original performing forces, proposed in another letter from George Grove. Still other correspondents posted news from foreign or provincial cities. Leonard Incedon wrote on orchestral music in Lille; Henry Sutherland Edwards sent 'Opera and drama at Brussels' and 'The Brussels Conservatoire of Music'; and Filippi, regular music critic on *La perseveranza* of Milan, continued his reports from Italy, some of them lengthy and most from a Wagnerian viewpoint ('A visit to Wagner' [in Venice], 'Wagnerism in Italy'). Anonymous local reports from Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Bristol and Oxford, some of them clearly commissioned ('From our own correspondent'), add to the impression of growing regional coverage.

'Epitome of opinion' columns were a fairly standard way to fill weekly space and to second a journal's point of view on recent concerts or books. In this case, Hueffer

¹⁴ Hueffer edited and held a proprietary interest in the *Musical world* from January 1886 to August 1888: see Louisa M. Middleton, 'Musical periodicals', *A dictionary of music and musicians*, ed. George Grove (London: Macmillan & Co., 1879–89), vol.4 (1889), p.726; and 'Obituary', *Musical times* 30 (1889), p.89. *The troubadour* was produced by the Rosa Co. in June 1886; for Mackenzie's account of this second collaboration with Hueffer, see *A musician's narrative*, p.142–4. My attempts to find information on the ownership, finance or print runs of the *Musical review* in the British Library's Novello Business Archive have been unsuccessful, although records for *Colomba* are available there in Add. MSS 69521 and 69555.

¹⁵ Prepared and issued in parts since 1879, the *Dictionary* was still in progress; by early 1883 the double fascicle 'Sketches—Sumer is icumen in' had gone to press. See Leanne Langley, 'Roots of a tradition: the first *Dictionary of music and musicians*', in *George Grove, music and Victorian culture*, ed. Michael Musgrave. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.168–215 (Table 8.1, p.190).

often selected long quotations from *The Times* (of course), *Daily news*, *Athenaeum* or *Pall Mall gazette*. More original, and more impressive, are the major poets' names, with individual poems, that leap off the page here, from D. G. Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, Arthur O'Shaughnessy and A. C. Swinburne to Mathilde Blind and a young Mary Frances Robinson (later Duclaux). This circle of thoughtful and fashionable writers would have lent a distinctive character to the *Musical review*. Whether pointing its theme of cultural change or proposing a higher lyrical vein than had been customary in much English song, Hueffer made an effective choice in this aspect of content.

Given the journal's target readership, it is particularly apt that signed essays with a proto-musicological flavour featured strongly. Among the most striking pieces are these: 'The musical instruments in Rossetti's pictures', an exhibition-cum-organological review by A. J. Hipkins; 'The original version of *Mefistofele*', on Boito's opera, by Giannandrea Mazzucato; 'Chopiniana', by Frederick Niecks; 'The "oldest Wagnerite"', on Richard Pohl, by C. A. Barry; 'The musical instruments in Mr. Alma Tadema's pictures at the Grosvenor Gallery', by Hipkins; 'Russian coronation music', on current appropriation of Glinka in that country, by Sutherland Edwards; ' "Amen" ', a generously exemplified series by W. A. Barrett; 'Originality in music', by Frederick Corder; 'Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII*', by Charles Gounod (translated from a recent issue of the *Nouvelle revue*); 'Schubert's Unfinished Symphony in E, no.7', recently finished, and discussed by John Francis Barnett; 'A father of music', on William Byrd, by W. Barclay Squire; 'Berlioz's *Grand messe des morts*', by C. A. Barry; and ' "Dies irae" ', by J. A. Fuller Maitland. A better snapshot of 1883 research themes would be hard to imagine.

At the same time, a large proportion of the *Review*'s material appeared without signature: anonymity as a time-honoured English press convention was still pervasive in the 1880s.¹⁶ A fascinating piece in this category is the two-part 'Music for the people' (10 and 17 March). In tone sober and direct, it raises a serious point about social access to music that at first seems far from the journal's focus. Yet in critique of English cultural norms, the burden is not so very different. By comparing the effectiveness of four current initiatives—the People's Concert Society in suburban London, the 'temperance music-hall movement' at the Old Vic, the Bow and Bromley Institute and the Birmingham Musical Association—the essay argues for separation of music from philanthropy (and religion), so that ordinary people might enjoy the best art for its own sake, entirely on their own terms. This prescient essay was the work of a 26-year-old whose name would have meant little at the time—George Bernard Shaw.

¹⁶ For a classic statement of the rationale behind anonymity, its prevalence in Victorian periodicals and gradual erosion, see Walter E. Houghton's Introduction to *The Wellesley index to Victorian periodicals, 1824–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966–89), now accessible online at http://wellesley.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/well_intro.jsp.

It was his first ‘legitimate’ music assignment after working surreptitiously on the *Hornet* in 1876–7. Luckily for a modern researcher, references to Shaw’s encounter with Hueffer in January 1883 and a copy of his piece are held in the G. B. Shaw Papers of the British Library.¹⁷

By another great stroke of luck, we can penetrate the anonymity of further items in the *Review* through consulting the bound copy in the Royal College of Music Library. This was none other than Novello’s in-house file, marked with contributors’ names for the purposes of payment.¹⁸ From it we can see that for much of the run, Hueffer had a reliable deputy, Henry Frederick Frost (1848–1901; also assistant to Ebenezer Prout on the *Athenaeum*), and that together they depended on several regulars. The Paris correspondent signing ‘Louis Sigismond’, for example, was really, between January and April, the minor Belgian composer Léon Husson (who also contributed a review of *Mefistofele* at Brussels under his own name); by June, the ‘Sigismond’ column was being written by Peter Benoit, the Antwerp-based composer and proponent of Flemish music. Similarly, Hueffer’s Berlin reporter, sometimes signing ‘M. R.’, was the composer Martin Roeder; the Manchester correspondent was the organist J. K. Pyne; and a clear Edinburgh source was Herbert Oakeley. Reviews of printed music appeared only occasionally but were treated with care and were all published anonymously. C. A. Barry wrote one of the first, on Hermann Goetz’s four-hand Piano Sonata in G minor, op.17, of 1878. More remarkable is the discovery that Hubert Parry contributed substantial reviews, musically illustrated, of four big works—Dvořák’s *Stabat mater* (newly issued in vocal score by Novello and given in London in March), Raff’s Symphony no.10 in F minor (‘Zur Herbstzeit’, published in 1882), Brahms’s *Gesang der Parzen* (‘Song of the fates’) for chorus and orchestra (just published by Simrock in Berlin), and Liszt’s *Années de pèlerinage, troisième année* (just issued by Schott in Mainz).¹⁹ No lack of competence here.

¹⁷ *Musical review* 1 (1883), p.157–8, 173–4. Shaw had approached Hueffer in January at the suggestion of his mentor George John Vandeleur Lee: ‘I have just seen Hueffer. [...] He will give you a regular engagement to contribute if he likes the style. [...] Perhaps he might like a series of articles on eminent musicians? Write soon as possible before the ground is taken’ (G. J. V. Lee to Shaw, 5 January 1883, G. B. Shaw Papers, BL Add. MS 50510, f.2). Shaw sketched some ideas on opera, but after meeting Hueffer at Novello’s discarded them; his next idea, and his submitted draft, had this reply: ‘Your article on Music for the People contains together with some good writing various gimmicks to which I should not like to commit the Review. If you think it worth while to rewrite parts of it [...] I have no doubt we can easily agree about the necessary alterations’ (Francis Hueffer to Shaw, 17 January 1883, G. B. Shaw Papers, BL Add. MS 50510, f.5). They met again on 18 January and Shaw revised the piece (‘Music for the people’, G. B. Shaw Papers, BL Add. MS 50693, f.109–117).

¹⁸ I am grateful to Peter Horton, Deputy Librarian (Reference and Research), for making this copy available to me. It went to the College in connection with the Novello Library that arrived there in 1964, and is inscribed inside the front cover: ‘This Volume is the property of Novello, Ewer & Co., 1 Berners St, W’. Names are noted in abbreviated form, usually surname only, or for Hueffer, ‘Ed.’.

¹⁹ See the numbers for 27 January (p.65–7), 3 March (p.145–6), 24 March (p.194–5), and 31 March (p.205–6). Parry’s stint as sub-editor and music adviser to Grove’s *Dictionary* had come to an end by this time but he was still writing entries commissioned long before, including ‘Suite’ and ‘Symphony’ (Langley, ‘Roots of a tradition’, p.181–2).

The marked file reveals other secrets. It was Frost who planted the six-part series ‘Music in theatres’, for example, tearing into individual London managers for the ‘general badness’ of music at their establishments.²⁰ And besides writing most of the untitled leading opinion columns to the end of April, Hueffer himself masqueraded as ‘A Pessimist’, playing devil’s advocate to (his own) attempts to maintain the journal’s high tone. He crafted most of the ‘What might be’ features,²¹ and, with Frost—who covered London choral, organ, St James’s Hall and Musical Association matters—compiled the ‘Occasional notes’ and ‘Notes and news’ columns, thick with pointed comment. The marked file confirms, too, that the four-part ‘Musical criticism: a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution’, spread across April, was indeed Hueffer’s work. In reality he had given the lecture at Trinity College, London, not the Royal Institution: it had already been fully reported by *The Times* in November 1880.

Demise

We come at last to the nub of what happened to the *Review*, trying to see why, for all its manifest quality and integrity, it did not last. The best clue is not far to seek, given events indelibly associated with spring 1883—Wagner’s death in February, the opening of the RCM in May (with related knighthoods for Grove, George Macfarren and Sullivan), and, in-between, the founding of a ‘national English music-drama’ in April. All three events generated acres of coverage in the *Musical review*; a reader from Mars might be forgiven for thinking they were of equal, earth-shattering importance. But in fact, performances of the much-vaunted *Colomba*, though reasonably successful, were not to mark a major epoch in cultural history. On the contrary, they drew the curtain down on Novello’s ‘Neue Zeitschrift’ and its self-seeking editor. Hueffer’s mediocre libretto attracted such consistent derision and unpalatable criticism elsewhere in the press (unlike Mackenzie’s music), that he had to respond.²² Staunchly defending the opera’s artistic breakthrough, he unwisely called

²⁰ Appearing in January–February, starting with an Introduction on p.9–10. Theatres covered were the Lyceum (p.29–30), Princess’s and Gaiety (p.50–51), Strand and Adelphi (p.67–8), Haymarket and St James’s (p.81), and Court (p.97). At least one celebrated manager, John Hollingshead of the Gaiety, responded in anger, eliciting an editorial comment that in turn confirms the growing gap between serious music and light dramatic entertainment in the 1880s (‘Music in theatres: *To the editor of The musical review*’, p.67).

²¹ A notable exception is that for 27 January (p.65) on a supposed declaration by an eminent firm, ‘Messrs. B. & Co.’, who plan to abstain from publishing royalty songs, dispose of all works hitherto printed by them not having real artistic merit, and appoint a board of eminent musical examiners to take the decisions. The author was Alfred Littleton, the target surely Boosey’s.

²² For a moderately critical reaction to Hueffer’s libretto, taking issue with his prefatory remarks on Alfred Bunn and lamenting changes to Mérimée’s plot and a dramatic construction requiring ‘certain passages inordinately spun out, and others essentially dry’, see the critique of *Colomba* in the *Graphic*, reprinted in *Musical world* 61 (1883), p.235.

for ‘our critical Beckmessers’ to recant. When no one did, a serious re-think of the journal was inevitable, probably at Littleton’s behest.

Again the RCM marked file is helpful, showing changes in editorial management from late April. Hueffer literally disappeared for a while, or gave way, as adjustments in tone and topic were gradually introduced. Frederick Corder, a younger Wagnerian who had contributed under his own name the satiric ‘How to compose’, was installed as temporary editor.²³ Simultaneously, from 28 April the young Hermann Klein replaced Frost as reviewer of concerts and, at last, the Royal Italian Opera. Klein’s fresh voice showed real enthusiasm for the Richter and Philharmonic concerts, the Bach Choir and Charles Hallé’s concerts at the Grosvenor Gallery, not to mention Italian opera performances. He was joined in concert reviewing by William Barclay Squire, who also provided research material on Byrd and other topics (derived from his work on Grove’s *Dictionary Appendix*). Agreeable filler came to hand for a series on ‘The voice’ by Albert Visetti, a newly appointed professor at the RCM, while leader columns on a miscellany of current topics were shared among Corder, Squire, Mrs Walter Carr (another *Dictionary* hand) and latterly Hueffer again. The tone was less haranguing, the focus on recognizably ‘English’ subjects such as festivals, choral singing and church music.

If this shift was meant to reach out to readers, regaining old friends or attracting new ones, it was too little, too late. A disconnect between the journal’s original character and its later shape, its continued mix of satire with scholarly ambition, always confusing, and ultimately its haughty tone and reluctance to treat all readers as intelligent were nails in the coffin of the *Musical review*. Whatever healthy support it had once enjoyed probably plummeted after April. How far the conductors actually believed in a rescue, or were merely trying to save face, is unknown. Hueffer’s closing address shows he had perceived the ‘difficulties’ in advance. But dogged self-justification was his final refrain:

THE twenty-sixth number of this journal, published to-day, will also be its last. This announcement will not be a matter for surprise to those who know how many causes contend against the establishment of an organ of independent and serious criticism in this as in any other country. Musicians, as a rule, do not care to read about their art, and cultured amateurs are not easily reached by a class [specialist] journal. Of these difficulties we were fully aware when starting THE MUSICAL REVIEW. In one of its earliest numbers we said: “Whether a public for

²³ Corder’s most audaciously tongue-in-cheek leader was that for 12 May (p.304–5), exposing knighthoods as no substitute for real pensions (referring to Grove, Macfarren and Sullivan). Echoing Hueffer’s position, Corder aimed less at the lack of tangible government support for musicians, however, than at Sullivan in particular, who as a knight should be expected to write more ‘serious’ music.

the class of journal we refer to exists at present is doubtful; whether it can be formed by staunch and serious endeavour the result must show.” The result has shown that such a task would involve a sacrifice of time and money which the Editor and the Publishers cannot be fairly expected to incur; it has shown that, although the REVIEW has fairly established its position as an independent critical organ and has attracted attention in circles where few musical journals penetrate, years would probably have to elapse before commercial success could be hoped for, unless, indeed, the tone of its articles were lowered to meet a broader popular taste. Such a proceeding would have frustrated the very aim and essence of this journal, which as long as it lasted has at least strictly adhered to the programme prefixed to its first number. That its days should not have been longer in the land may perhaps cause some regret to those who have the serious interest of music at heart. (p.416)

* * *

This brief glance at an old periodical raises more questions than it answers, given the vastness of journalism, publishing, the music profession and audience development as intersecting subjects in nineteenth-century England. And though much further work is needed on entrepreneurial strategies that cultivated new markets (successfully or not), at least Novello’s ‘Neue Zeitschrift’ offers one place to begin. We might well ask, for example, why this particular journal seized on opera rather than chamber or orchestral music—the real growth areas for serious music, musicians, composers and paying audiences in Britain by the 1880s. Hueffer’s involvement provides a good answer.

But then Hueffer and his milieu need deep investigation as well—not only the ideological and critical battles he fought personally with J. W. Davison, Joseph Bennett and especially Sullivan, his *bête noire*, but his later construction of the whole course of music in Victorian Britain, widely circulated to this day, which attributed the nation’s cultural salvation to Victoria’s personal patronage of German composers.²⁴ In light of Hueffer’s imperceptive handling of the *Review* and his thirst for recognition, some questioning of that historical angle, and who actually believed it, is now due.

In this light, reading the *Musical review* and assimilating its failure is useful, even reassuring. The journal didn’t fail because it was provocative or too advanced for a ‘conservative’ readership. It failed because it was pointlessly provocative. Hueffer was no Robert Schumann. Ordinary English readers could see perfectly well that Hueffer’s own work was the very embodiment of that ‘arrogant mediocrity’ he had attacked in

²⁴*Half a century of music in England, 1837–1887: essays towards a history*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1889. This book, which originated in a provincial lecture tour on Wagner, Berlioz and Liszt undertaken for the impresario Hermann Franke in late 1885, was published posthumously. Hueffer had secured his dedication to the Queen in April 1887 through the offices of W. G. Cusins.

his opening address, and that the journal was not genuinely responsive to them. George Grove had said of Hueffer privately in 1880, ‘there never was a better illustration of the beggar on horseback’, referring to his inadequacy as a music critic yet elevated stature on *The Times*.²⁵ Fifteen years later, the same observer described Hueffer as ‘a coarse selfish creature’—possibly recalling how he had misused a promising organ of English musical advancement for his own ends. Grove was in a position to know, and had warmly supported the *Musical review* on several occasions.²⁶

Back in the modern library stacks, at least three reputable Victorian periodicals contain alternative views of Hueffer that ought to be consulted—the *Star*, the *Illustrated London news* and the *Musical world*. Each reported his premature death (aged just 45) in January 1889 with decorum and respect, the *Musical world* defending his sincerity and ‘high sense of artistic loyalty’ despite the ‘outer crust to his character’,²⁷ the *ILN* publishing an engraving (reproduced here). The *Star*’s notice, most affectionate of all, was written by Shaw, Hueffer’s comrade in many ways:

The unexpected death of Dr Hueffer is a loss to the best interests of music in London. Fortunately, his warfare was accomplished before he fell. The critics who formerly opposed him on the ground that Wagner’s music had no form and no melody, that it was noisy and wrong, and never ought to have been written, and could never be popular, came at last to be only too grateful to Hueffer for his willingness to forget their folly. He was a thorough and industrious worker in many departments, and much better equipped for his work both by his capacity and acquirements than many of his colleagues who were by no means so modest.

Personally he was an amiable man, shy and even timid; but he did not look so, and he often produced the most erroneous impressions on those who were only slightly acquainted with him. His long, golden-red beard, shining forehead, and accentuated nostrils made him

²⁵ Grove to Arthur Sullivan, 19 October 1880, after reading Hueffer’s *Times* review of *The martyr of Antioch* at the Leeds Festival; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan*, op. cit., p.146. The origin of the phrase ‘a beggar on horseback’ is unclear, but it seems to suggest someone originally poor who has been made arrogant or corrupt through achieving wealth. Put another way, an undeserving person who gains an advantage will misuse it.

²⁶ See Young, *George Grove*, p.252 (letter to Edith Oldham of 18 September 1895). Grove’s own contributions to the *Review* included ‘Words and music’ (6 January, p.15), ‘The Silvestri collection’ (20 January, p.49), and ‘Handel commemoration’ (7 April, p.225–6). He encouraged Squire to contribute (British Library, Add. MS 39679, f.92), and may well have suggested other helpers, notably Mrs Carr, in the journal’s later stage.

²⁷ See S. R. T., ‘Dr. Francis Hueffer’, *Musical world* 69 (1889), p.54; and Sidney R. Thompson, ‘Recollections of Dr. Hueffer’, *ibid.*, p.132–3, 165, 198, 253–4 (165).

a remarkable figure at musical performances.²⁸

Historians may regret that none of these sources mentions the *Musical review*, perhaps only a tiny battle embraced in Shaw's reference to warfare. We now understand why, and why Hueffer lost this particular fight. More important is that in accessing the journal's pages afresh, we have a new way in to the English reading and listening audiences whose vitality and diversity tell the greater story behind progressive Victorian musical culture. 'Failure' in this case has been a revealing teacher.

Abstract

The *Musical review*, a serious and impressive weekly journal published by Novello from January to June 1883, appears to have been a disastrous failure with English readers. Deliberately modelled on Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and designed to promote radical change as well as modern music in Britain, it was edited anonymously by the well-known progressive critic of *The Times*, Francis Hueffer. In exploring its background, content, contributors and rationale, the article shows that the journal ultimately failed through Hueffer's conflicted association with it, not through public reluctance to embrace change or challenging music.

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²⁸ 'Dr Francis Hueffer', unsigned notice in the *Star*, 23 January 1889; reprinted in *Shaw's music: the complete musical criticism in three volumes*, ed. Dan H. Laurence. London: The Bodley Head, 1981; 2nd rev. edn, 1989, vol.1, p.547.

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