

**THE BASIS OF MUSICAL
PLEASURE, TOGETHER WITH A
CONSIDERATION OF THE OPERA
PROBLEM AND THE EXPRESSION
OF EMOTIONS IN MUSIC**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649181285

The basis of musical pleasure, together with a consideration of the opera problem and the expression of emotions in music by Albert Gehring

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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ALBERT GEHRING

**THE BASIS OF MUSICAL
PLEASURE, TOGETHER WITH A
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OF EMOTIONS IN MUSIC**

To

MY FRIEND AND TEACHER

HUGO MÜNSTERBERG *Senior*

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The Basis of Musical Pleasure

PREFACE

THE following chapters grew out of a series of lectures delivered at the College for Women, Western Reserve University, during the autumn of 1900. Many changes have since been made in the plan of the work. The original intention was to elucidate the nature of a single and supreme fountain of musical pleasure. While the author still believes that there is such a unique source of delight—or it may be a unique combination of sources—where the pleasure aroused by the art is genuine and intense, the determination of this element is hopeless in the present state of knowledge. Hence an adherence to the original plan would be largely negative in character, one theory after another being rejected and no positive conclusion being established. It was deemed better, accordingly, to confine the inquiry to an enumeration and description of the actual sources of musical pleasure, reserving a determination

of what is secondary and what is essential to later insight.

In considering the theories which have been offered to explain the musical mystery, there is no pretension to be exhaustive ; however, the more familiar and representative views are included.

In the essay on *The Expression of Emotions in Music*, the author believes he has solved a controversy which for half a century has vexed the thoughts and stirred the passions of musical theorists. As the question involved in this controversy is a simple one, it seems plausible that the irreconcilable divergences of opinion which we find are due, as indicated in the text, to differences in the way of conceiving the subject. The article is reprinted from the *Philosophical Review* with the kind permission of the editor.

The Basis of Musical Pleasure

I

THE POWER OF TONE

WHEREIN lies the peculiar power and charm of music? What is its innermost nature and meaning? What enables it to lift us out of the prosaic atmosphere of everyday life and carry us into purer, ideal realms of being?

When we are moved by the events of a tragedy or admire a beautiful statue, it is not difficult to give a proximate explanation of our emotion. What we see represents aspects of life which, if experienced directly, would produce the same effects. It moves us by imitating what would move us in real life. The enchanting tones of the pianist,

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however, are without apparent relation to the world of experience. They are as devoid of significance as the puddle of water which Mr. Lindsey, in Hawthorne's *Snow Image*, finds before the stove: but the puddle contained a merry, elfish figure; and the tones are capable of bearing us aloft, to the home of beauty and inspiration. What is the secret of their power, the explanation of their appealing charm?

This is the problem to be examined in the following pages. It will be our purpose to consider some of the more important theories which have been proposed for its solution, exposing what is faulty in them and retaining what is valuable. These theories may be subsumed under five headings, according to the principles they invoke in explanation. We may seek for the charm of music in its elementary effect, its formal elaboration, its associations, its symbolistic properties, and its agreement with the operations of the mind. Although all of these factors contribute to the result, we are not as yet able to unite them into a complete system. Like the diggers of a tunnel, we may approach the question from various sides and burrow a little into its