

**MUSICAL INTERPRETATION,
ITS LAWS AND PRINCIPLES,
AND THEIR APPLICATION IN
TEACHING AND PERFORMING**

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Musical Interpretation, Its Laws and Principles, and Their Application in Teaching and Performing by Tobias Matthay

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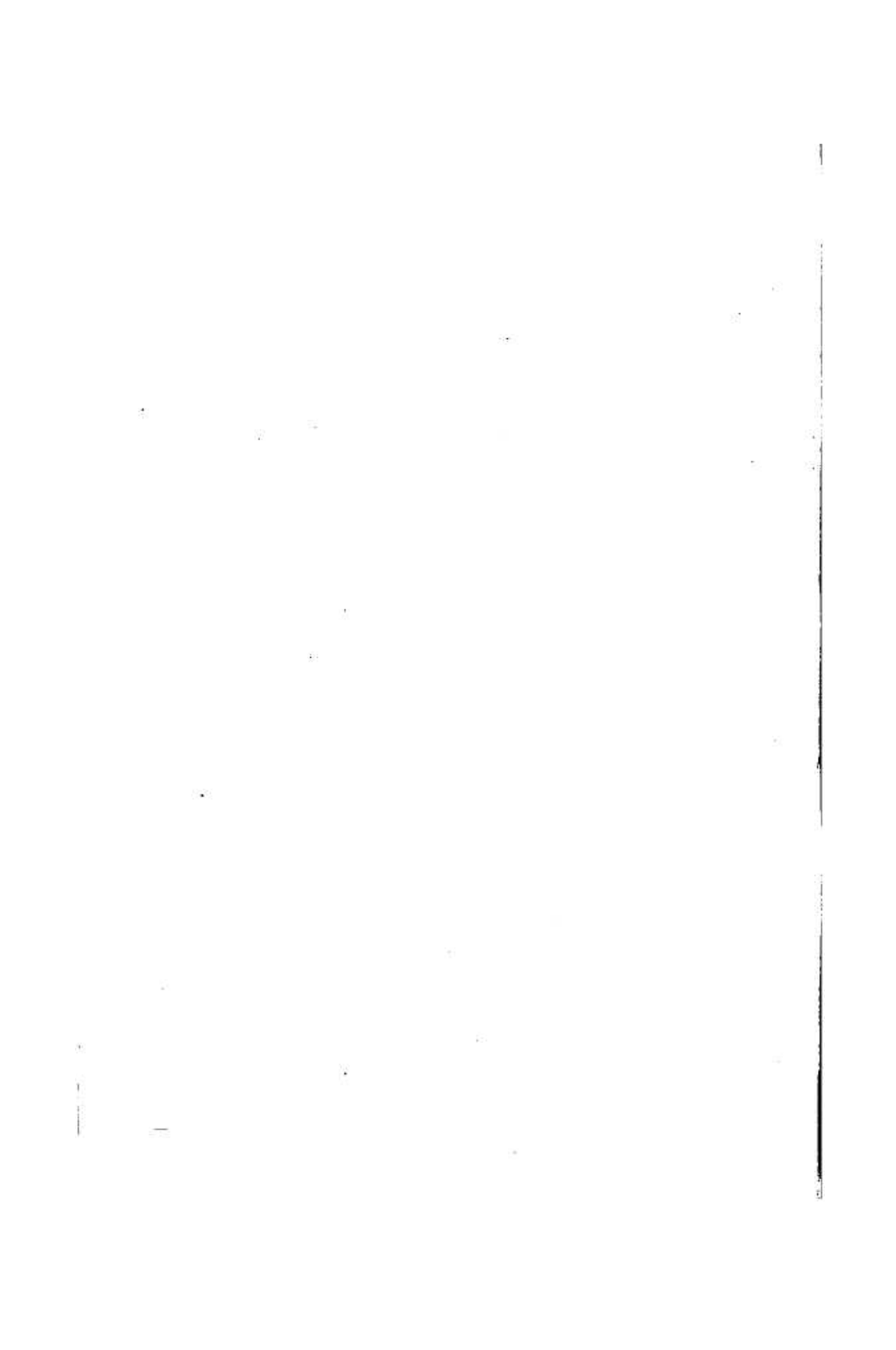
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TEACHING AND PERFORMING

BY

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PREFACE

FOR many years past I have been urged to put into a permanent and available form my enunciation of those Principles and Laws of Interpretation, knowledge of which has proved to be one of the main causes of the success of the army of teachers who have arisen from my school.

The first step towards this end was the preparation, in the year 1909, of a set of Lectures covering this ground. These I condensed later into a single lecture, and this was first delivered publicly in Manchester to Dr. Carroll's Association of Teachers during the season of 1909-10. Subsequently, it was repeated to the Edinburgh Musical Education Society, to the London Music Teachers' Association (in 1910) and its Branches; it was also given at the Royal Academy of Music in the same year, and at my own School, and elsewhere.

A full synopsis also appeared in the "Music Student" of April, 1911, and elsewhere. I, nevertheless, still delayed issuing the material in book form, as I felt, in view of the extreme importance of the matters dealt with, that I would like to expand it, but lack of time has prevented my doing so.

As, however, some of our more up-to-date theorists are now doing me the honor to apply, in their recent works, some of the ideas first enunciated in these lectures of mine (and in my "First Principles," 1905, and "Act of Touch," 1903) such, for instance, as the vital one of recognizing in *Progression* or *Movement* the actual basis of all Rhythm and Shape in Music, I feel compelled to issue these lectures now as originally delivered. Additional matter is given in the form of Notes; and I leave for later on, perhaps, the issue

of a Supplement giving further details and illustrative Examples.

It will be found, that while this work deals with the subject mainly from the pianist's point of view, nevertheless most of the principles here formulated apply with equal force to all other forms of musical performance. Many of the same laws of Interpretation which apply to Piano-forte playing also hold good whether we are players of stringed instruments or wind instruments, or are vocalists, organ-players or conductors. We cannot play even on a penny whistle without coming under the sway of such laws! Hence I hope that this little volume may prove helpful to all music-teachers and would-be performers, artists as well as students, whatever their specialty.¹

Some of the main points here dealt with are: (a) the difference between letting a pupil shift for himself and helping him to learn; (b) the difference between mere cramming and real teaching; (c) the difference between merely making a pupil "do things" and teaching him to think — to the end that he may know what to do, why to do it, and how to do it; (d) the exposition of the true nature of Rhythm and Shape in Music — as Progression or Movement towards definite landmarks; (e) the true nature of Rubato in all its forms, small and large, simple and compound, and the laws of its application; (f) consideration of the element of Duration, and, allied to this, rules as to the application of the damper-pedal; also, rules as to the application of Tone-variety, Fingering, Memorizing, etc., and some speculations as to the ultimate reason of the power that Music has over us.

To prevent misunderstanding, I must at once state that I do not claim that artists are "made" by the mere enun-

¹ Helpful even to the operators of mechanical pianos.

ciation and teaching of such laws and principles as here given, or by those of instrumental technique — although no success can be attained without obedience to these same laws and principles. No, the really great artist always has been, is now, and ever will be, a most rare phenomenon. His advent depends on so many things uniting in one single individual — the highest gifts of imagination and invention, therefore high mental powers (yes, the really great artist must also have high reasoning power), physical and mental endurance, extreme enthusiasm for his chosen art, good health, and the *opportunities* to acquire the requisite skill *to work in strict obedience to the laws of his art.*

Hence, it is not claimed that the truthful Analysis and Synthesis of art or its technique can transform dullards into poets and seers, but what *has been amply proven* is, that such teachings do inevitably help the ordinary student to succeed in attaining to far higher ideals than he could have reached without such help, and that the "heaven-born" Genius (when he does appear) has many years of useful life added to his career, years otherwise wasted in futile experiments, while his path towards still higher perfections is thus rendered possible and easy — and his appreciation of truth in art made more sound. Such teaching therefore makes for Progress, not only in Music but in Life itself.

In thanking the many who have encouraged me to undertake the publication of this little work, I must also again thank Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser, of Edinburgh, for her invaluable help with my proofs.

TOBIAS MATTHAY

HASLEMERE, September, 1912