

**A NEW, EASY, AND  
CORRECT SYSTEM  
OF VOCAL MUSIC**

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A New, Easy, and Correct System of Vocal Music by Robert Platt

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**ROBERT PLATT**

**A NEW, EASY, AND  
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A

NEW, EASY, AND CORRECT

SYSTEM OF VOCAL MUSIC,

IN WHICH

THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF THE SCIENCE ARE EXPLAINED  
AND ILLUSTRATED, AND MANY OF ITS APPARENT  
MYSTERIES CLEARLY SOLVED:

BEING

A PRACTICAL MANUAL

OF

THE ART OF SINGING AT SIGHT.

BY ROBERT PLATT.

LONDON:

AYLOTT AND JONES, 8, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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MDCCKLVII.

## PREFACE.

I CAN offer no better excuse for obtruding the following pages upon the public notice, than the great satisfaction which I experienced in pursuing the system contained therein in my own course of self-instruction twenty years ago, and the success with which I have subsequently followed the same plan in imparting a knowledge of music to several of my friends.

It is a matter of some surprise that such a system has not been more generally adopted in popular musical education, especially in the case of children and young persons, as it seems so well calculated to impart a correct notion of the formation of the musical scale, upon which, in the acquirement of music, so much really depends. For all writers on the science, both theoretical and practical, insist particularly on the facts that the scale consists of *eight* sounds, rising by degrees; and that this gradation is equal throughout, except in two instances, there being but half the distance in rising from the *third* to the *fourth*, and from the *seventh* to the *eighth*, that there is in the other places. One step more,—the theorist had but to advise his pupil to make a practical use of the description thus given of the scale,—and the business had been done.

The elder Dibdin has, among his numerous musical works, a simple method of teaching singing, namely, by the use of figures, similar to the plan adopted here. About ten or twelve (perhaps more) years ago, a worthy friend to musical education, Mr. Hickson, taught several children to sing by the use of figures. And, at this present writing, the Rev. J. J. Waite, a Dissenting Minister, labouring in Ilminster, is in the midst of the delivery of a course of Lectures in London upon congregational singing, in which a similar method is adopted.

The following circumstances have led to the publication of this book. Some friends who had heard Mr. Hickson's Lecture on Singing, in which he was assisted by the children whom he had instructed, were so desirous of learning, that, knowing I had a little knowledge of music, they requested me to teach them: I formed them into a class, and succeeded beyond my best hopes. From that time to the present I have occasionally instructed others, with the same success. But the

want of a book to which my pupils might refer between the periods of our meeting, has always been a great detriment to their progress. I therefore resolved to print a few progressive lessons, with explanations for their use. But, as "the snow-ball loses nothing by rolling," I found that my explanations and illustrations increased so fast upon me, that I concluded it would be better to draw an outline of the system for publication. The outline has been filled up, and has increased to its present extent, containing, I hope, every thing necessary for the learner, and many things useful for the student.

I have endeavoured to keep the work within reasonable bounds, as much as possible; but if I have been rather lengthy in my elucidations, it is because I thought too much explanation would be better than too little. I have given illustrations from secular as well as sacred music. This will be no real objection to the utility of the book; for it will be acknowledged that the too frequent repetition of sacred phraseology is calculated rather to injure than establish its solemn character in the estimation of young persons.

In the adoption of this system, there is no necessity to reorganize the present notation of music: it is intended to explain the musical character as it at present exists. In attempting this explanation I have endeavoured to use language and reasoning that may be understood by all classes of persons. I therefore venture to presume, that it will be found especially adapted, in the hands of the teacher, the parent, or the guardian, to the capacities of even young children; in particular, it might be effectually used for the instruction of the senior classes in Sabbath and week-day schools. Indeed, there seems no reason why almost infants may not be made to participate in the luxuries of a musical education, by the adoption of a method so simple, so efficacious, and so musically correct.

I now commit the work to the judgment of a generous and impartial public, hoping that they will find as much pleasure and satisfaction in its perusal and practice, as the writing and preparing of it have given anxiety and solicitude to

Their humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

*Hoxton,*  
*December 1st, 1847.*

## VOCAL MUSIC.

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### INTRODUCTION.

THIS earth of ours is a scene of misery. All of us are born to care and sorrow. From the peer to the peasant, all feel the weight of woe entailed upon us by our first parent, and certainly not lessened by the evil propensities and practices of his descendants. Yet God, in his mercy, has placed within our reach the means of happiness. Religion—the true, the Christian religion—offers to us her consolations and her moral power. And, to the man of clean hands and a pure heart, harassed though he be with carking cares, manifold are the minor sources of enjoyment that are ever open. His senses, if rightly employed, are but so many avenues for the entrance of joyous feelings, tending to alleviate his heaviness of heart, and to make him, for a time at least, forget his birthright of trouble. If he be so far favoured as to have his lot cast in the rural districts of our own fair land, his walks will present to his admiring eyes Nature in her chequered and changeful beauty of costume; his ears will be charmed with the sweet melody of sylvan sounds,—the shrill alto of the lark, the murmuring tenor of the pebbly brook, or the mellow bass of the lowing herd; and the fragrance of meadows and of woods will fill up the measure of his outward happiness,—all combining to refresh his spirit, and to raise it to pure and noble thoughts. But to those who are not thus privileged, who spend the greater part of the year within the gloomy walls of our metropolis, that wide-extending prison-house, or within the smoky precincts of our manufacturing towns; to these unfortunates, who inhale no sweeter odour than that of the nauseous cigar, whose only out-door music is that of thundering wheels or screaming chimney-sweeps, and whose eyes glance along a never-ending vista of brick and mortar, gloomily fore-short-



ened with smoke and fog;—to these hapless thousands there are yet accessible in-door enjoyments partially compensating for the loss of pure air and pleasant scenery.

Besides the numerous facilities for literary pursuits and pleasures now afforded to all, the arts and sciences offer their cheerful aid, as ministering spirits of fireside happiness. Among these, Music claims a distinguished place. The study of its theory is peculiarly attractive; so nicely mathematical, so beautifully adjusted are its parts, tempting the amateur farther and farther into the examination of its properties and powers. But the carrying out its scientific principles into practice by attempts at composition will be the ambition only of the few. The generality will content themselves with acquiring sufficient theoretic knowledge to enable them justly to appreciate the excellences of their favourite harmonies.

The principal charm of Music, however, lies not in its beauty as a science, but in its surpassing power to touch the inmost chords of the soul, and to wake them to thrilling ecstasy, when endued with vital expression by the melodious voice or well-strung instrument. Who has not felt the sweet and heavenly influence of Music?—whether wielded by the noble organ, as it peals forth its loud and lofty anthems; or by the friendly choral band around the Christmas hearth;—whether breathed by the gentle mother, as, with lute-like tones of simplest melody, she soothes her first-born to repose; or by the public singer, as she brings into play the full tide of her unbroken voice, and soars with perfect ease and nicest accuracy to the highest notes of the vocal scale, making the heart flutter and the limbs tremble with her penetrating trill.

In our joys what more welcome, in our sorrows what more soothing, than Music, as she dances along in some lively glee, or moves stately slow in some solemn full-chorded requiem?

But for us to pen the praises of Music would be loving labour lost. She needs no other appeal to the sympathy of our fellow-men than that which Nature has written on the heart of each. The fondness of the boy for his penny fife, of the young man for his soft-breathing flute, of the fairer sex for their piano-fortes; the enthusiasm which glows on the face of the Scotsman, as he hears the well-known bagpipe play; the attention with which the group of hardy sailors listen to their tuneful messmate's manly voice, as he sings, "Cease, rude

Boreas," or, "Ye Gentlemen of England," and the hearty good-will with which they swell the chorus; are all but so many proofs of the innate fondness for sweet sounds. Who has not been surprised at the taste and judgment displayed by little children in chanting their simple melodies, the nicety with which they imitate musical sounds, and their quickness in perceiving the least deviation from the principles of harmony? This taste, this discrimination, this enjoyment of music, are not peculiar to a favoured few: they are the attributes of the many; and the unmelodious, the earless, are the scanty exceptions to a general rule. But these fine perceptions of harmonic beauty are too often allowed to rust in youth, and are blunted by the busy pursuits of manhood. Yet often some lightsome lilt of former days will sweep over the soul of him immersed in cares, reminding him that his mental and bodily powers were not intended for unceasing drudgery in the acquisition of wealth.

The ancients felt and acknowledged this power divine of Music. Over them, less sophisticated as they were, the heavenly goddess appears to have exercised an electric influence scarcely credible to us comparatively unimpassioned moderns. Had it been in consistence with the scope of this little work, we might have attempted (with the aid of the additional light lately shed on this subject by the antiquarian decipherers of eastern hieroglyphics) to trace the career of Music through the nations of antiquity,—the Egyptians, the Hebrews, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, &c. Our Rubicon, however, must not now be passed. Should leisure favour us, at some future day we may hope, perhaps, to venture on the pleasing task. Meanwhile, let us proceed to the purpose of our present literary offering.

This little book, then, is designed to render plain the principles of this enchanting science, and to enable the learner, with but a little exercise of patience, to attain the faculty of singing correctly, at first sight, any series of musical notes, however difficult. And though (like young authors in general) we trust that our pages will not be altogether slighted by the higher and middle classes, yet the working man chiefly are our teachings intended to benefit. Kindly is it ordered by Divine Goodness that though the masses have now to labour more hardly for a livelihood than in bygone days, yet the highest enjoyments of which man is capable are brought much more within their

reach : and now the low-born youth may for a few pence purchase those sparkling gems or sterling treasures of literature, which, in times that are past, cost many a worthier coin, and which were not to be obtained by the pale thirster after knowledge but at the loss of many a comfort. So is it with Music : she who has long lightened the chains of the free-aspiring Italian, and sweetened the bondage of the serfs of Austria, now offers her cheerful aid to the unshackled thousands of Britain, —not to help them to forget their civil rights,—God forbid !— but to accompany them in their hours of toil, to brighten their day of rest, to refine their tastes, to feed their souls with angels' food. For a small weekly sum a man may possess himself of the glorious early English songs, of Handel's and Haydn's noblest compositions, or of modern instrumental and vocal chefs-d'œuvre. We think, then, that our pages place within the reach of all a method that shall enable any one possessed of the average amount of intellectual and harmonic perception to avail himself of the lofty enjoyments now so accessible in respect of price. And if, by the instrumentality of the following pages, the working man shall acquire a taste for higher pleasures than those of the public house and the licentious newspaper ; if a new charm shall be added to the homestead of the toiling tradesman ; if the student shall hereby be provided with a harmless and cheerful means of recreation, when wearied with his intellectual labour ; if a fuller strain of praise shall rise to heaven in thrilling harmony from many a village-school and many a house of prayer, attracting irresistibly him who on the sabbath seeks relief from the monotony of a working week ; if, in fine, this little manual shall lessen the sum of human misery ; its author's pains will be more than compensated, his highest hopes most joyfully fulfilled.