

**THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF
MUSICAL FORM: ON THE
BASIS OF LUDWIG BUSSLER'S
"MUSIKALISCHE FORMENLEHRE"**

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The Theory and Practice of Musical Form: On the Basis of Ludwig Bussler's "Musikalische Formenlehre" by J. H. Cornell

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J. H. CORNELL

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THE
THEORY AND PRACTICE ·
OF
MUSICAL FORM:

ON THE BASIS OF
LUDWIG BUSSLER'S
"MUSIKALISCHE FORMENLEHRE."

FOR INSTRUCTION IN COMPOSITION BOTH IN PRIVATE AND IN CLASSES.

BY
J. H. CORNELL.

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P R E F A C E.

FORM, in art, may be comprehensively defined as the external shape and order in which artistic conceptions are presented,—in other words, as the outward expression of the subject-matter or import of the art-work. Accordingly, there may be as many forms as art-works, although numbers of these individual forms may and actually do agree in certain essential features. Now, the summary of the principal features in which a number of art-works agree, is called Art-form.

The necessity of form to the special art of music is, perhaps, not so immediately obvious as in the case of the other arts; yet it is certain that without an adherence to the laws of form a coherent, intelligible musical composition is as inconceivable as—for example—a picture, a sculpture, or a building, without plan or design. A piece of music (if indeed music it should be called) without a determinate tonality or key-relationship, without harmonic, melodic, rhythmic order and symmetry—in a word, without *form*,—is nothing else than a tonal chaos. Hence the absolute necessity to the would-be musical composer of the study of the laws of musical form,—a necessity from which no natural gifts, not even the possession of genius, can dispense him. “Form,”—says ECKERMANN (Beiträge zur Poesie)—“is the result of the efforts, through thousands of years, of the most excellent masters, which every one cannot too soon appropriate to himself. It

were a most insane delusion of misconceived originality, if each one were to go about on his own account fumbling for that which is already on hand in great perfection. Form is handed down, learned, imitated, otherwise progress in art would be out of the question,—every one would have to begin anew," etc., etc. And GOETHE, speaking of the strict requirements of the laws of art-form, says that it is "precisely genius, natural talent, that is the first to understand them, and that pays them the readiest obedience." The study of musical form, however, of course presupposes the knowledge of the laws of *Harmony* and *Counterpoint*, as an indispensable preliminary condition; which knowledge, accordingly, is in this work assumed as part of the student's equipment.

In view of the fact that the *means* or *organs* by which musical tones are produced are either *natural* (the human voice), or *artificial* (musical instruments), music is either 1. purely VOCAL; or, 2. purely INSTRUMENTAL; or, 3. MIXED—i. e., at once *vocal and instrumental*. To one or the other of these three grand divisions of musical forms every musical composition must be assigned. Further, each one of these form-genera, as embracing compositions having either but a *single movement*, or *many movements*, is, accordingly, either SIMPLE, or COMPOSITE (CYCLICAL).

Again, each one of the three form-genera has its various SPECIES, as follow.—**A. VOCAL FORMS.**—(a) For a *solo voice*: Recitative, Air, Arioso, Arietta, Ballad, Canzone, Canzonetta, Cavatina, Romance, Song, Scena, etc.—(b) For *several solo voices*: Duet, Terzet (Trio), Quartet, Quintet, Sextet, etc.—(c) For *chorus à cappella* (with or without solo): Chorus, Mass, Psalm, Madrigal, Motet, Glee, etc.—**B. INSTRUMENTAL FORMS.** (a) In *one movement (simple)*: the various Dances and Marches; Pianoforte pieces, such as Etude, Song without words, Fantasia, Nocturne, etc; Orchestral Overture (Opera-overture, Concert-overture), etc.—(b) With *many movements (Cyclical)*: Duo, Trio, Quatnor, Sextet, Septuor, etc.; Concerto, Suite, Serenata, Sonata, Symphony, etc.—**C. MIXED VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL FORMS.** (a) The various *choral compositions* with organ or orchestral accompaniment, viz: Mass, Litany, Te Deum laudamus,

Stabat Mater, Service, Anthem, Hymn, Psalm, Choral, Cantata, Oratorio, Passion, etc.—(b) Represented on the *Stage*: Opera, Operetta, Melodrama, Vaudeville, etc.

The forms chiefly treated of in this book, as constituting the basis of the greater part of the instrumental compositions of HAYDN, MOZART, BÉETHOVEN, WEBER, SCHUBERT, MENDELSSOHN, SCHUMANN, etc., and of most living composers, are called the FORMS OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC. Here music is free from external restraints (such as are imposed by the *text*, etc., in *vocal* music), and rules according to the laws of its own nature. The influence of these forms, however, on vocal music—especially that of the above-mentioned composers—is great, and easy of demonstration.

The present book is substantially a translation of LUDWIG BUSSLER'S "Musikalische Formenlehre," a work much to be recommended for its clearness and thoroughness, to which, in its present English dress, I have made considerable additions. Within the last few years much has undeniably been done in our country (thanks to the greater number of thorough and conscientious teachers) in the direction of a more solid musical education; and among other results, the importance of the subject of musical form is beginning to be appreciated, not only by the professional student of music but also by the rapidly increasing class of advanced amateurs desirous of an *intelligent* enjoyment of the masterpieces of composition. The present addition to the meagre vernacular literature of the subject will therefore, as I hope and believe, be welcomed by all interested in the cause of this beautiful art.

The *aim* of the work is, in one word, to teach *musical construction*, and its *plan* is perfectly simple. Each form, beginning with the very smallest of the elementary ones, is clearly explained and copiously exemplified; the student is then required to originate a musical thought in the given form. As repeatedly stated in the Exercises, the first compositions—those of small extent—are to be utilized for constructing the succeeding ones, of larger form; this will facilitate class-instruction in musical form, as but few pupils are able to continually furnish new material for these Exercises without becoming superficial and careless.

For valuable matter gathered for this book from GROVE'S Dictionary, DR. STAINER'S "Composition," ARREY VON DOMMER'S "Musikalisches Lexicon," F. J. KUNKEL'S "Melodiebildungslehre," BENEDICT WIDMANN'S "Formenlehre," HERMANN KÜSTER'S "Populäre Vorträge," etc., I hereby acknowledge my obligations.

J. H. CORNELL.

NEW YORK, JANUARY, 1888.

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