

Clairvoyance, Spiritism and Occultism in Music

Written expressly for THE ETUDE by the Noted English Composer

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Since the great war no subject has created a greater interest than that of the possibility of human beings communicating in some occult manner with life after death. The serious interest taken in the subject by Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Sir William Crookes, indicates that men of science and understanding in Great Britain are inclined to believe—if indeed they are not entirely convinced—that we are upon the verge of some great revelation. THE ETUDE takes an entirely neutral attitude in the matter, as usual, offering its columns to the exposition of new ideas from eminent men, whether it is convinced of their correctness or not. This is certainly one of the most "thought provoking" articles we have ever printed, and we have no doubt that it will result in hundreds of discussions.

SINCE the great world-conflict, the interest in esoteric philosophies, and the occult generally, or to put it more colloquially, the *hidden side of things*, has grown to proportions greater than has ever, I think, been experienced in the western world hitherto. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that proof (rather than mere belief) respecting the unseen spheres and the all-important question of immortality can afford the only efficient solace at a time when millions of human beings have sustained bereavements on an almost unprecedented scale. But although scientists like Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge and others have dealt with and proved to their own satisfaction this burning question of *post mortem* existence, yet the many other matters which go hand in hand therewith have not been popularized to the same extent. In other words, although the hidden side of death has come before the public at large, the equally hidden side of literature, painting and music has not received the attention which is its due; though the one exists with as much certainty (to those who will only investigate the subject) as does the other. Many, for instance, have read Sir Conan Doyle's and Sir Oliver Lodge's books, but comparatively few have studied the works of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, that remarkable psychic investigator who has laid bare the occult side of scores of subjects, and shown that practically everything of importance possesses such a side.

Latent Powers

Now I propose in the present article to deal with music from the occult point of view; but to that end I must first to some extent show how the occult side of things is perceived; for only by this means can I hope to carry any iota of conviction to my readers. There are in the brain two mysterious glands called the *pituitary gland* and the *pituitary body*; glands which for many years have considerably puzzled doctors, though some of them are now beginning to get an inkling of their significance. These glands in fact are nothing less than the organs of psychical perception in the physical brain. But although they certainly exist in all of us, their powers are merely latent and can only be brought to function by the aid of highly specialized exercises acquired under a competent teacher. It is true that a goodly number of people are born with a tendency to become psychic, which simply means these glands already show signs of functioning naturally, so to speak; but training, even for such people, is necessary, otherwise their powers will be unreliable and often associated with hysteria and other undesirable qualities. One may find this type of unscientific psychism in almost any species of person from a gypsy to a rushing society woman, though the gypsy shows usually the better of the two, as I have reason to know. I may, in fact, here relate how I was once accosted and not a little embarrassed by a "psychic" society lady in a hotel who made my life a burden to me through the schemes I was obliged to contrive in order to avoid her: for she literally persecuted me; though in all charity I will say she probably thought she was doing quite

the reverse. Anyhow, after telling me she was so musical, she had been, to use her own metaphor, "born at the piano," she proceeded to inform me I did not look like what her knowledge of my music had led her to imagine. This would have been distinctly disconcerting had she not gone on to say, she expected me to look of a sad cast of countenance; but as it is both unphilosophical and unpleasant to look and hence be sad, I was somewhat pleased that her expectations had not been fulfilled.

After this unflattering display of disappointment on her part, she told me how she had heard I was interested in occultism, and on my stating that she had heard correctly, she sprung upon me that she herself possessed *second sight*. This, she said, was "the real thing," and she had given up everything for it—she only ate enough to keep her body alive, and had no longer any material desires of any sort—and so on and so forth. She talked at great length all about herself, and the wonderful person she was; though I feel sure she was blissfully innocent of her egotism. When, however, asked, were her psychic faculties under her control, and could they be turned on or off at will,

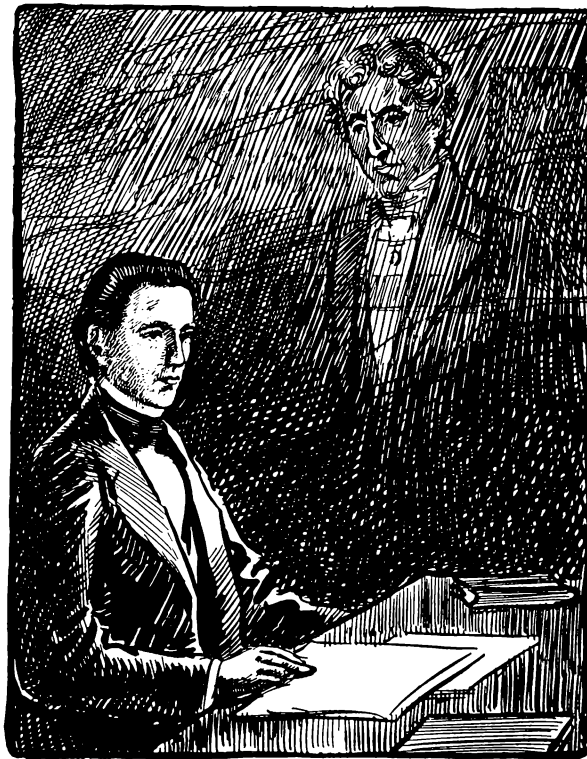
she admitted they could *not*, and inferred that faculties over which one had no control were of a higher order than otherwise. And here from the scientific occultist's point of view she stamped herself at once:—but of that anon, for I must finish my anecdote first. After having shown her admiration for herself at great length, she then gave me a specimen of her clairvoyant powers; she told me a lady named Isabel would come into my life, but she could not tell me whether the said lady would appear in the guise of an amour, a friend, or an enemy; she could tell me, however what colored dress she would wear when the wonderful event came to pass which should bring us together. For the rest I am still waiting for Isabel; and as there are several thousands of "Isabels" in the world, the chances are I may meet one sooner or later, either as a mere passing acquaintance, friend or enemy; but with all these alternatives whether she will be *the* Isabel, who can say?

When the Spirit of Cherubini Came

We have here, then, one of those types of either spurious or very primitive *second sight*, which as it serves no purpose whatever, cannot come under the head of scientific occultism at all; for I need hardly mention that the information offered me by the said lady was utterly valueless to me, and moreover I am getting beyond the age (a fact of which her clairvoyant faculties failed to apprise her) when I can look forward with any very intense excitement to the arrival of romantic figures in my life. No, real clairvoyance must firstly be reliable; and secondly under the control of the will:—nor does the true psychic ever exhibit his or her powers uselessly for the mere purpose of showing them off; and above all to absolute strangers who do not request such an exhibition.

Thus in relating of the hidden side of music, I need hardly say that I am not bringing psychics of the aforementioned type to our aid, but such as have had special training under a teacher, and so have developed the physical organs of psychical perception already alluded to.

But I shall not have narrated my psychical experiences (connected with music) to the full, if I fail to make mention of my friend the late Mrs. Milligan-Fox, who did so much in connection with Irish folk-song, and who lectured some years ago in the States. This lady, in fact, was extremely psychic, and I had many interesting adventures with her along that particular line. For Mrs. Fox was certainly both clairvoyant and clairaudient, that is, she could both see spirits and sense what they said. I remember on one occasion, how the "spirit" of the late Swami Vivekananda came into my room—though I myself could not see him—and how he sent me a certain message connected with Indian philosophy, which although Mrs. Fox repeated it to me, she herself was unable to comprehend. Now, this may, of course, seem strange, but the fact is I had studied Indian metaphysics for a number of years, while she on her part was totally ignorant of the subject. Thus she delivered me the message, but added, "I really haven't the



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faintest idea what it means, have you?" I, then of course, explained it to her as best I could; for to me the message was perfectly clear and very illuminating. This, however, is only by the way, since it was not connected with music in any sense. But on one occasion we had the visit, not of an Indian Swami, but of the composer Cherubini. A fact we ascertained through purchasing a picture of that departed musician, seeing the gentleman did not tell us his name, but led us to conclude who he might be by the language he spoke and the type of dress he presented himself to us in.

We were sitting conversing on quite ordinary topics one evening at my house, when Mrs. Fox suddenly remarked, though without evincing any surprise—"A funny self-effacing sort of little man has just come into the room."

"What does he want, I wonder," I said, also without much surprise, for I, too, was somewhat used to these visitations.

"Well, he talks a language I can't properly understand," she said. "I think it's Italian of a sort."

"Ask him if he speaks French?" I suggested.

And it turned out he did speak French, though rather brokenly. Well, the long and short of the matter was, he had two requests to make; one was that I should write a requiem for the soldiers killed in the war, and the other was that I should leave one of my orchestral scores open on my desk all night (darkness seemed to be no obstacle to his vision) as he wanted to study it. He was, in fact, desirous of keeping in touch with modern music, and especially looking at modern orchestration. As to the latter request, I, of course, complied with it, deeming it very kind of him to take an interest in my "poor strains," but as to the former—well, I confess that the requiem is not written (may the souls of the heroic soldiers rest in peace without it) for if I paid attention to all the requests from the *other side* for me to do one thing or another, I should have my work cut out. I have had requests to write a mass, a ballet, a cinema, a play, an opera and several books; and so far, well, though I am the author of some literary works and poems, as regards the other things, only the opera has been composed.

Of course, my readers may deem me to be over-credulous in believing that Cherubini really visited me in the spirit, and I sympathize with them. But the fact is I am not so convinced of the matter as they may suppose, for I know too well how easy it is for "spirits" on the other side to masquerade as people they are *not*—therefore, there is no proof in this instance—I only give the story for what it is worth and no further. I confess to never having read a life of Cherubini, and hence I know nothing of his character, and whether he was the self-effacing little man that Mrs. Milligan-Fox described, I have, however, truthfully related exactly what happened, and must leave it at that; this article being merely a narration of some of my occult experiences connected with music.

Whether I shall have succeeded in awakening or furthering an interest in occultism and music through this very inadequate sketch, I cannot say, but if so, I strongly advise my readers to study a book called "Thought Forms," by Mrs. Annie Besant and Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, for in this book they will see admirably set forth the far-reaching effects music has, not only on its actual hearers, but on people far beyond its actual range of sound. Such a powerful work as Wagner's *Overture to the Meistersinger*, for instance, or the *Prelude to Tristan and Isolde* sends out radiations in form and color which purify the mental and emotional atmosphere for, I might almost say, miles around. Indeed, I can hardly do better in conclusion than quote a paragraph from the book just referred to. For it runs, "It is well for us ever to bear in mind that there is a hidden side to life—that each act and word and thought has its consequence in the unseen world which is always so near to us, and that these unseen results are of infinitely greater importance than those which are visible to all upon the physical plane." Thus may it come to us musicians as a beautiful and comforting thought that our efforts are not only giving pleasure to those of our listeners who really love music, but that we are doing a further-reaching good in the world than perhaps many of us are aware.