

I. Telemann: The Man and His Music

By ROMAIN ROLLAND

THREE is no dust so dry as that of Telemann, whom posterity has forced to pay for the insolent victory which he won over Bach in his lifetime. This man, whose music was admired in every country in Europe from France to Russia, and whom Schubert called "the peerless master," whom the austere Mattheson declared to be the only musician who was above all praise, is today forgotten. No one attempts to make his acquaintance. He is judged by hearsay, by sayings that are attributed to him but whose meaning no one takes the trouble to understand. He has been immolated by the pious zeal of the Bach enthusiasts, such as Bitter, Wolfrum, and Albert Schweitzer, who did not realize that Bach transcribed whole cantatas by Telemann with his own hand. It is possible not to realize this; but if one admires Bach, the mere fact that his opinion of Telemann was so high should give us food for reflection. Georg Philipp Telemann was born at Magdeburg on March 14, 1681. He was the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors. He was not yet four years old when he lost his father. At an early age he displayed a remarkable facility in all subjects: Greek, Latin, music. The neighbors diverted themselves by listening to the little fellow, who played on the violin, the zither, and the flute. He had a great love of German poetry—an exceptional characteristic in the German musicians of his time. While still quite young—one of the youngest students in the college—he was chosen by the cantor as his assistant in the teaching of singing. He took some lessons on the clavier but was lacking in patience; his master was an organist with a somewhat archaic style. Little Telemann had no respect for the past. "The most joyful music," he says, "was already running in my head. After a fortnight's martyrdom I left my master, and since then I have learned nothing as regards music." (He means, of course, that he learned nothing from a teacher, for he learned a great deal by himself, from books.)

He was not yet twelve years of age when he began to compose. The cantor whom he assisted wrote music. The child did not fail to read his scores in secret; and he used to think how glorious it was to make up such beautiful things. He, too, began to write music, without confiding the fact to anyone; he had his compositions submitted to the cantor under a pseudonym and had the joy of hearing them praised—and, better still, sung—in church and even in the streets. He grew bolder. An operatic libretto

came his way; he set it to music. O happiness! The opera was performed in a theater and the young author even filled one of the parts!

"Ah! but what a storm I drew upon my head with my opera!" he writes. "The enemies of music came in a host to see my mother and represented to her that I should become a charlatan, a tightrope walker, a mummer, a trainer of monkeys, etc. . . . if music were not prohibited! No sooner said than done; they took from me my notes, my instruments, and with them half my life."

To punish him further he was sent to a distant school in the Harz mountains, at Zellerfeld. There he did extremely well in geometry. But the devil did not abandon his rights over him. It happened that the master who was to have written a cantata for a popular fête in the mountains fell ill. The child profited by the opportunity. He wrote the composition and conducted the orchestra. He was thirteen years of age, and he was so small that a little bench had to be made for him, to lift him up, so that the members of the orchestra could see him. "The worthy mountaineers," says Telemann, "touched by my appearance rather than my harmonies, carried me in triumph on their shoulders."

When about seventeen years of age he proceeded to the gymnasium at Hildesheim, where he studied logic; and although he could not endure the *Barbara Celarent*, he acquitted himself brilliantly. But above all he made great progress in his musical education. He was always composing. Not a day went by *sine linea*. He wrote church and instrumental music principally. His models were Steffani, Rosenmüller, Corelli, and Caldara. He acquired a taste for the style of the new

German and Italian masters, "for their manner, full of invention, cantabile, and at the same time closely wrought."

Their works confirmed his instinctive preference for expressive melody and his antipathy for the old contrapuntal style. A lucky chance favored him. He was not far distant from Hanover and Wolfenbüttel, whose famous chapels were centers of the new style. He went thither often. In Hanover he learned the French manner; at Wolfenbüttel the theatrical style of Venice. The two courts had excellent orchestras, and Telemann zealously investigated the character of the various instruments. "I should perhaps have become a more skilful instrumentalist," he says, "if I had not felt such a burning eagerness to learn, in addition to the clavier, violin, and flute, the oboe, the German flute, the reedpipe, the viola da gamba, etc. . . . down to the bass viol and the *quint-posaune* (bass trombone)." This is a modern characteristic; the composer does not seek to become a skilled performer on one instrument, as Bach and Handel on the organ and clavier, but to learn the resources of all the instruments. And Telemann insists on the necessity of this study for the composer.

However, he was twenty years of age; and his mother (like Handel's father) would not hear of his becoming a musician. Telemann (like Handel) did not rebel against the will of the family. In 1701 he went to Leipzig with the firm intention of studying law there. Why should it have befallen that he had to pass through Halle, where he very fittingly made the acquaintance of Handel, aged sixteen, who, although he was supposed to be following the lectures in the Faculty of Law, had contrived to get himself appointed organist and had acquired in the city a musical reputation astonishing in one of his age? The two boys struck up a friendship. But they had to part. Telemann's heart was heavy as he continued his journey. However, he adhered to his purpose and arrived in Leipzig. But the poor boy fell into temptation after temptation. He had hired a room in common with another student. The first thing he saw on entering was that musical instruments were hanging on all the walls, in every corner of the room. His companion was a melomaniac, and every day he inflicted upon Telemann the torture of playing to him; and Telemann heroically concealed the fact that he was a musician. The end was inevitable. One day Telemann could not refrain from showing one of his compositions, a psalm, to his roommate. (To tell the truth, he protests that his friend found the composition in his trunk.) The friend found nothing better to do than to divulge the secret. The psalm was played in St. Thomas's Church. The burgomaster, enraptured, sent for Telemann.

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Romain Rolland—prophetic words.

II. The Recorded Literature of Telemann

By RICHARD FREED

OF THE MAJOR baroque composers "rediscovered" via the phonograph, Georg Philipp Telemann has enjoyed a singularly well-balanced renascence. Until now, his music has escaped the record companies' passion for the complete (which might have given us his complete Passions—only one of the forty-four has been recorded so far), and barely more than a handful of his works may be found in more than a single recorded version.

But sooner or later there was bound to be duplication with a vengeance, plus hefty servings of *The Compleat Telemann*. Earlier this year Helma Elsner's recordings of the three dozen fantasias for harpsichord were made available on the Dover label, and it seemed peculiar that no one up to now had come forth with a complete recording of the ingratiating collection of suites, concertos and chamber music known as the *Tafelmusik*. Just say the word. . . . In the latest batch of recorded Telemann, in addition to two more versions of the Suite in A minor for Recorder and Strings (both of them exceptional), are not one but *three* recordings of the *Tafelmusik*—all eighteen parts of it—with individual sections continuing to turn up on single discs here and there.

The *Tafelmusik*, or, as Telemann himself titled it, *Musique de Table*, shows the diversity one may expect from this composer, even within a single published collection. It is divided into three "Productions," each comprising an orchestral suite (French overture), a quartet for wind and string instruments, a concerto, a trio, a solo sonata, and, finally, a "Conclusion" for the same forces as the overture.

The works within a single "Production" are not related in key (except for the Suite and the Conclusion, the latter being actually the delayed finale of the former), and the instrumental combinations called for in the respective segments differ from one Production to the next. The First Production's Suite, in E minor, is scored for two flutes and strings, with a series of dances following the overture. In the Second Production, the Suite is in D, for oboe, trumpet, and strings, and the overture is followed by four "airs." In the Third, the Suite is in B flat, for two oboes and strings, with another series of dances attached to the overture (repeating none of the forms represented in the First).

The smaller works within the three Productions show even more variety. The Quartet in the First, in G, is a splendid piece for flute, oboe, violin,

and continuo; in the Second, it is for two flutes, recorder, and continuo in D minor; in the Third, for flute, violin, cello, and continuo in E minor. The solo instruments in the three concertos are, respectively, flute and violin in I (A major), three violins in II (F major), and two horns in III (E flat). The three trios call for two violins and continuo (I, E flat), flute, oboe, and continuo (II, E minor), and two flutes and continuo (III, in D). The solo sonatas are for flute (I, B minor), violin (II, A major), and oboe (III, in G), each with continuo.

The collection was published in Hamburg in 1733. Handel ("Mr. Hendel, Docteur en Musique, Londres") was one of the subscribers, and borrowed the *Postillons* of the B-flat Suite for his own

Alexander's Feast, which followed the *Tafelmusik* by three years. Max Reger later based one of his gargantuan sets of variations on the minuet of the same suite.

We are told Telemann intended this music for use at actual state banquets, hence not only its title but the variety of the components in the three Productions, each of which is just about banquet length (an hour and a half or so), fitting snugly on four record sides.

Both Deutsche Grammophon, in its Archive series, and Telefunken, in its series called "Das alte Werk," offer the *Tafelmusik* complete in three two-disc sets, each containing one Production in full. Telefunken also offers its six records in a single de luxe package. August Wenzinger directs the concert group of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis on DGG; Frans Brüggen, the young Dutch

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Choice Items Among Recent Telemann Releases

(Stereo numbers in italics)

The *Tafelmusik* (*Musique de Table*), complete

- a. Concerto Amsterdam, Frans Brüggen conducting. Telefunken: Production I, SAWT-9449/50-B or AWT-9449/50-C; Production II, SAWT-9451/52-B or AWT-9451/52-C; Production III, SAWT-9453/54-B or AWT-9453/54-C; \$11.96 per two-disc set, or \$35.88 for the six records boxed.
- b. Schola Contorum Basiliensis, August Wenzinger conducting. DGG Archive: Production I, ARC-73234/35 or ARC-3234/35; Production II, ARC-73236/37 or ARC-3236/37; Production III, ARC-73238/39 or ARC-3238/39; \$11.96 per two-disc set.
- c. Austrian Tonkünstler Orchestra, Vienna, under Dietfried Bernet. Musical Heritage Society (1991 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023): Production I, MHS-629/630-S or MHS-629/630; Production II, MHS-637/638-S or MHS-637/638; Production III, MHS-641/642-S or MHS-641/642. \$5.00 per two-disc set, plus 35 cents for shipping.

Suite in A minor for Recorder and Strings; Suite in D major for Viola da gamba and strings. Hans-Martin Linde, alto recorder; Johannes Koch, viola da gamba; Rolf Reinhardt conducting the Collegium Aureum. Harmonia Mundi S-530618 or 30618, \$6.98.

Suite in A minor. Frans Brüggen, recorder, with Friedrich Tilegant conducting the Southwest German Chamber Orchestra; Concerto in E minor. Brüggen, re-

corder; Frans Vester, flute; André Rieu conducting Amsterdam Chamber Orchestra; *Ouverture des Nations anciens et modernes* in G. Rieu, orchestra. Telefunken SAWT-9413-B or AWT-9413-C, \$5.98.

Suite in C (*Hamburg Water Music*); Concerto in B-flat for Three Oboes, Three Violins and Strings; Oboe Concerto in F minor. Rudolf Barshai conducting the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, with Pierre Pierlot, first oboe, and Barshai, first violin. Angel S-36264, \$5.98, or 36264, \$4.98.

Concerto in E flat for Two Horns and Strings; Trumpet Concerto in D; Concerto for Oboe d'amore in A; Violin Concerto in G. Georges Barboteu and Gilbert Coursier, horns; Albert Calvayrac, trumpet; Robert Casier, oboe d'amore; George Armand, violin; Louis Auriacombe conducting the Chamber Orchestra of Toulouse. Nonesuch H-71066 or H-1066, \$2.50.

Sonata in D minor and Trios in E minor and D major, all for flute, oboe and continuo; Trio Sonata in E flat for Oboe, Harpsichord and Continuo. Maxence Larrieu Quartet. Nonesuch H-71061 or H-1061, \$2.50.

Sonatas for Recorder and Continuo in C major and F minor; Trio Sonata in D minor for Recorder, Violin and Continuo; Trio Sonata in E minor for Recorder, Oboe and Continuo; *Concerto a tre* in F for Recorder, Horn and Continuo. Concentus Musicus of Denmark. Nonesuch H-71065 or H-1065, \$2.50.