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PRIMITIVE MUSIC: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races. By RICHARD WALLASCHECK. London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co.

The object of the book now under consideration, is to give a general survey of the whole field of primitive music as it now appears, to sum up the results already gained as regards the accumulation of material, and to generalize the laws which govern the production of folk-music, a process which the author evidently thinks justifiable from the amount of material already available.

The tone and spirit of the book are admirable. The author has consulted an enormous number of authorities, of varying degrees of value, and gives, together with a full bibliography, an admirable summary of the results achieved, so far as they were known to him at the time his book was written (his preface is dated April, 1893). Since that time, however, valuable material, gathered within the past few years, has been published in this country, and has been the subject of serious discussion.

The subjects considered by Mr. Wallascheck are as follows: "General Character of the Music of Primitive Peoples;" "Singers and Composers in Primitive Times;" "Instruments;" "The Basis of our Musical System;" "Physical and Psychical Influence of Music;" "Text and Music;" "Dance and Music;" "Primitive Drama and Pantomime;" "Origin of Music;" "Heredity and Development." All of them are treated with great ability and thoroughness, and the whole book is extremely interesting and instructive.

The most important of Mr. Wallascheck's conclusions, at least from the musician's point of view, are those relating to the origin and function of music and the relations of key, harmony, and scale. On the first of these points, he says (Summary, p. 294): "From the character of primitive music, as exhibited in the musical practice of savages, I venture to conclude that the origin of music is to be sought in a general desire for rhythmical exercise, and that the 'time-sense' is the psychical source from which it arises. The rhythm through itself leads us to certain tones (and consequently tunes) by which rhythmical periods are better marked, and the whole movement becomes more distinct." He dissents from the theories of Darwin and Spencer; holding that the ear has little or nothing to do with the beginnings of music, rhythm being the all-important factor. As regards the question of the origin of our discriminative pleasure in musical intervals, he says (p. 232): "Rhythm and sonant rhythm coincide. Try to play first on a stretched and then on an unstretched drum or kettle-drum, such as savages use, and you will see that rhythm brings us in and by itself to sound and certain tones, owing to the fact that the rhythmical movement becomes much more distinct and better marked on the former than on the latter instrument." Thus, he thinks, "a rhythmical design, in and by itself, brings us to musical tones, and, by way of these, to the appreciation of intervals and melody." He says, further (p. 233): "Rhythm teaches us the appreciation of intervals, both as to their order and grouping. An interval, as such, has no musical value for us without rhythmical order in time." And on page 235 he says: "Men do not come to music

by way of tones, but they come to tones and tunes by way of the rhythmical impulse." Rhythm, he holds, is very essence of music, and he even goes so far as to say (p. 230): "We do not meet with a single instance among savages of melody, fixed according to musical principles." What he can possibly mean by this last assertion I do not know. The statement as it stands is certainly a gross exaggeration. It is within my own personal knowledge that there are hundreds of such melodies.

That rhythm is the first æsthetic element of music to be developed, I think no thoughtful observer will doubt; but Mr. Wallascheck is the first, I believe, to attribute to rhythm exclusively the determination of musical intervals. His idea is new, and suggests important questions which must be decided before it can be accepted without qualification. How does it happen that certain intervals prove to be favorable to the accentuation of rhythm, while others are less favorable, or perhaps wholly unfavorable? On his theory, this must be so; and it would seem that there must be something in the natural constitution of the ear, or of the vocal organs, or of both as correlated with each other and with the physical laws of acoustics, which determines the choice of certain intervals and makes them preponderant in all primitive rhythmical music-making.

That certain intervals *are* preponderant in all folk-music is a fact which I believe to be unquestionable, a fact which I was, so far as I know, the first to discover. How I came to discover it need not take up any space here; it is fully set forth in "A Study of Omaha Indian Music," the joint production of Miss Alice C. Fletcher, Mr. Francis La Flesche, and myself, published by the Peabody Museum of American Archæology and Ethnology of Harvard University, late in the summer of 1893, too late for Mr. Wallascheck to make use of the rich and valuable collection of folk-music embodied in it by the self-sacrificing labors of Miss Fletcher. The important fact, to the discovery of which I came through a pregnant suggestion of Miss Fletcher's, is, *that all folk-music runs on the line of a tonic chord, either major or minor, or else on the line of the tonic and some of its nearest related chords.* This conclusion, announced in the brochure referred to, has been so strongly confirmed by my studies during the past year, that it has become a settled conviction in my mind. When the collection of Kwakiutl songs recorded on phonographic cylinders by Dr. Franz Boas and that of Navajo songs recorded by Dr. Washington Matthews (both of which are now in my hands for study) shall have been transcribed and published, all persons interested will have opportunity to judge for themselves how far my conclusions are justified. Not only the published version, but also the original records, will, I trust, be accessible to students. I cannot but think that such students will be surprised to find how large a percentage of these songs runs directly along the line of a single major or minor chord, and how, almost invariably, such tones as do not belong to the tonic chord belong to the dominant, the subdominant or the relative minor chord.

Admitting, therefore, all that Mr. Wallascheck says about the preference for sonant rhythm on the part of primitive men, it would still be necessary, as it seems to me, to account for the fact that, when rhythm becomes sonant, it always follows a distinctly harmonic line. What is there in the

tones of a chord, more than in tones not harmonically related, to determine rhythmic emphasis along a harmonic line? The line actually followed must be, of course, the line of least resistance, where the musical activity is spontaneous, as it is in primitive music-making. And since this line is plainly a harmonic line, does it not seem clear that the correlations of the ear and of the voice with the natural laws of acoustics, what we sometimes call the harmonic sense, must play the primary part in the forms assumed by primitive melody? Change from a monotone may, indeed, be induced by the rhythmical impulse; but that impulse must necessarily be guided and its direction must be determined by the natural laws on which harmony is based in order to produce any such results as are actually to be found in the numerous folk-songs which have come under my observation. I cannot believe that the enormous preponderance of harmonic tones which I find in all the folk-music I have ever studied (and I have studied a good deal of it) is due to mere accident; nor can I think it a merely accidental circumstance without significance that the Indians whom I have known insist that natural harmonies be added to their own songs (which they themselves always sing in unison), before they will accept any piano version of them as satisfactory. These facts seem to me to point clearly to harmonic perception; undeveloped, to be sure, and never brought clearly forward into consciousness; but nevertheless unmistakably present in the Indian mind. Miss Fletcher once remarked to me that she had observed a change in the overtones when the Indians changed vowels on a single tone; she thought that the Indians themselves perceived a marked change in tone-quality due to the change in the preponderance of certain overtones when the vowels were changed, and that they made use of different unmeaning syllables employing different vowels for the sake of the variety of harmonic effect. The avowed object of the change was euphony; but the very essence of the euphonic changes consisted in alterations of tone-quality, which every acoustician knows to be due to a shifting of the relative preponderance of the overtones.

Mr. Wallascheck's theory then needs to be supplemented by the one I have suggested. The rhythmical impulse may lead to *tone*, but not to *tune*; tune is always harmonic; and the harmonic sense is, consequently, the guiding force which determines the direction taken by the voice when it is set going by the rhythmical impulse.

But there is another reason for thinking it an exaggeration to say, as Mr. Wallascheck does (p. 235): "Men do not come to music by way of tones; but they come to tones and tunes by way of the rhythmical impulse." Our author insists as strongly as anybody (see p. 250 *et seq.*) that music is the expression of emotion. Now, emotional excitement does, indeed, beget rhythmic movement and is increased and intensified by it; but it also finds expression in articulate vocal sounds, not always rhythmic. An infant suffering pain, or pleasurably excited, utters inarticulate sounds which express and convey unmistakably the condition of its sensibility, even to those who are where they cannot see it. Adults do the same. These vocal expressions of feeling do not become music until they assume definite rhythmic and melodic shape. I have now in my possession some Navajo

songs which very instructively illustrate the transition from excited shouting to excited singing. One of them has this phrase, many times repeated:—



The record of it is one furnished by Dr. Washington Matthews. The Indian is shouting and howling in the most excited way and with a most vigorous rhythm; but he is doing it unmistakably *along the line of the major chord*. How does this happen, if the rhythmic element alone is to be taken into the account?

The truth is, I believe, that men come to music *both* by way of tones and of the rhythmic sense. We owe thanks to Mr. Wallascheck for calling our attention to the fact that sonant rhythm is more effective than rhythm without resonance and thus pointing out to us how rhythm may possibly beget tone. But it is surely going much too far to affirm that tone, and especially musical tone, is begotten in no other way. Indeed, it is doubtful, to say the least, whether the harmonic and the rhythmic sense must not always work together to produce any result which can properly be called musical.

The only remaining point for which I have time or space in this review is Mr. Wallascheck's treatment of the subjects of Harmony and Scale (chap. iv.). He cites some examples of part-singing among savages which were previously unknown to me. They go to emphasize still more strongly the opinion I had previously formed, that the harmonic sense is universal and is the same for all races of men.

His conclusions on this subject are, I believe, sound. He says (pp. 142, 143): "Thus neither harmony nor the germs of counterpoint are entirely unknown in primitive nations, and it would seem from all the examples I was able to collect that the principle of tonality is in most cases unmistakable." The American collections to which I have referred afford overwhelming evidence in corroboration of this position; although there is no part-singing among our Indians. Again he says (p. 145): "The most primitive germ of harmony and counterpoint is the continuation of the key-note throughout the piece; the same method, but intended only instead of actually sung, gives the principle of tonality: the essence of melody." This is sound; but the surprising fact to me is, that the predominance not only of the key-note, but of the *chord* of the key-note in primitive melody should have been so long overlooked. Not *scale*, but *the tonic and its chord* constitute the fundamental fact in tonality; and this fundamental fact is so striking in primitive music that I am continually astonished when I think that I was the first observer to discover and point it out.

Mr. Wallascheck successfully combats the opinion of Helmholtz that our diatonic scale, whether pentatonic or heptatonic, major or minor, is an artificial and not a natural product. But he continues to treat the scale in the traditional fashion, as a fundamental fact, and not as a mere incident as it

really is. The fundamental fact in tonality, I repeat, is the tonic (or key-note) and its chord. The tones of the tonic chord stand in the nearest relation to the key-note; then come those of the dominant and subdominant chords; and these tones, when arranged in consecutive order, make the major scale. The very same set of tones produces minor tonality when the centre of gravity is shifted to the relative minor chord of the original major tonic. The relative minors of the dominant and subdominant respectively furnish a new minor dominant and subdominant for the new minor tonic. Let me illustrate by the following scheme of chords:—

Key of A minor: Subdom. Tonic. Dominant.
 $\overbrace{D-F-A-C-E-G-B-D}$
 Key of C major: Subdom. Tonic. Dominant.

When the tones of which these chords are composed are arranged in the diatonic order C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C, they produce the scale of C major; when they are so arranged as to make A the key-note and the chord of A minor the tonic chord, they produce the scale of A minor, thus: A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A. This form of minor, without the leading-tone (G sharp) is very old, and its natural close is with the subdominant chord immediately preceding the tonic (what is technically known as a "plagal" cadence). But I have also found the upward leading-tone, implying a major dominant chord, many times in primitive music. In many songs, both the G and G sharp occur. Both the major and the minor scales, the latter in both forms, with and without the upward leading-tone, are inevitable results of the natural harmonic relations which govern primitive music-making and are therefore natural, not artificial.

John Comfort Fillmore.

A STUDY OF OMAHA INDIAN MUSIC. By ALICE C. FLETCHER, aided by FRANCIS LA FLESCHÉ. With a Report on the Structural Peculiarities of the Music by JOHN COMFORT FILLMORE. Archæological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. Vol. I., No. 5. Cambridge, Mass. June, 1893. Pp. vi, 152.

The present collection of songs and tunes of the Omaha Indians is a most valuable contribution to our knowledge of the music and poetry of primitive people. Miss Fletcher happily combines a thorough knowledge of the Indian with a fine appreciation of poetry and music. Any one who has attempted to investigate the melodies which are hidden behind the apparently barbarous noise of Indian chorus-singing will appreciate the difficulties of her work, and the value of the results which she has obtained.

Miss Fletcher says: "Among the Indians, music envelopes like an atmosphere every religious, tribal, and social ceremony, as well as every personal experience. There is not a phase of life that does not find expression in song. Religious rituals are embodied in it; the reverend recognition of the creation of the corn, of the food-giving animals, of the powers of the air, of the fructifying sun, is passed from one generation to another