MUSIC AND ITS STORY

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by

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PREFACE

This book should be regarded rather as an introduction to the study of Musical History than as a history in itself. There seems to be a demand for a small manual dealing in a simple way with the growth and development of Music as an art. The advanced student will find all the information he needs in many excellent modern text-books, and the connoisseur is also well provided for. But almost all of these books are too detailed and statistical for the average student, and still more so for that large and growing section of the public which desires to be conversant with musical matters, but is not prepared to wade through volumes that deal with musical works which are never likely to be heard again.

I have endeavoured to treat the subject concisely, as well as from a broad standpoint; hence the reader must expect to find that the names of many worthy musicians whose work was of more interest to their contemporaries than to posterity are omitted. Mere biographical details are but sparingly introduced; my chief aim has been to deal with music rather than with musicians, most of whom were very ordinary mortals in mundane affairs. Within the limits prescribed, it has

been impossible to discuss at all fully the developments which have taken place during the last fifty years; I have therefore preferred to indicate the general trend of modern music.

No apology is needed for the insertion of a list of gramophone records, chosen not so much from a recreative as from a historical point of view. Even so, such a list must be very incomplete, since the process of recording is being rapidly improved, and manufacturers of records are becoming more and more enterprising, especially in the reproduction of long instrumental works without "cuts." It is hardly conceivable that anyone will attempt in future to teach musical history without availing himself to the full of the great assistance afforded by the gramophone, player-piano and "wireless."

Hearty thanks are due to Professor Raymont, M.A. and to Mr Forbes Milne, M.A., Mus.Bac. for the kind assistance they have given in the preparation of this book. Also I desire to thank Messrs Hawkes and Son, of Piccadilly Circus, for their kind permission to include illustrations from their catalogue of Wind Instruments.

R. T. W.

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October, 1924.

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CHAPTER I

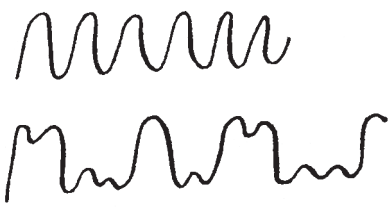
THE BEGINNINGS OF MUSIC

IN ordinary speech we often use words to which everyone attaches a definite meaning; and yet if we are asked to state exactly what their meaning is, we find it difficult to frame a satisfactory answer. Such terms, for instance, as "beauty," "truth," "colour," "electricity," are hard to define, yet they have a real meaning for everybody who uses them. The use of the term "Music" is common enough, but nobody has yet found a satisfactory reply to the question "What *is* Music?" At any rate, such definitions as have been given are not very intelligible to ordinary folk. But it is quite possible to say a good deal about the material out of which Music—as the term is commonly used—is made.

Musical Material. This material is *Sound,* but out of the multitude of sounds which can be made, only a very few are used for musical purposes. Sound is the result of vibration: if one strikes a low note on the pianoforte, the string can be seen in a state of violent agitation. Also if a drum be struck, and the fingers placed lightly on the parchment, the vibrations can easily be felt. These vibrations give rise to corresponding vibrations in the surrounding air; thus air-waves are produced, just as

water-waves are formed when a stone is thrown into a pond, and æther-waves are produced by an electric discharge, as in "wireless." These air-waves spread outwards in all directions, and when they reach the ear they give rise to a sensation known as *sound*. The human ear is not sensitive enough to appreciate all sounds. If the vibrations are fewer than about twenty per second, or more rapid than about thirty-eight thousand per second, the ear in most cases does not respond. It is interesting to note that some animals, especially dogs, can detect sounds which are too high in pitch for us to distinguish.

Scientific instruments have been invented which make it possible to *see* the vibrations of sounding bodies. In the case of a certain class of sounds it is seen that the vibrations are perfectly regular; whilst in other cases the vibrations are irregular. This difference may be shown thus:



The sounds produced by regular vibrations are called by the scientist "musical" sounds; the others he terms "noises." The ordinary person, however, has to rely on his ear, not on his eye, to decide whether a sound shall be called a "musical note" or a "noise"; he generally regards a musical note as a pleasant sound; a noise as an unpleasant sound. Even so, much difference of opinion

manifests itself; what some people term beautiful music, others will decry as a disagreeable noise.

The most important fact to be remembered about a musical note is that however long it may be held on, it remains at the same *pitch,* i.e. "height" or "depth," all the time. Strike a note on the pianoforte; it begins to die away at once, but does not get higher or lower. Going from one note to another means ascending or descending by definite steps; we may compare it to going up and down stairs by using the steps, not by gliding, as when using a lift[1].

Musical sounds differ from one another in four ways:

(1) in pitch,

(2) in duration,

(3) in loudness, or intensity,

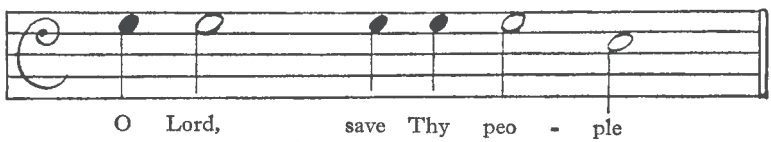
(4) in quality.

The pitch of any note is determined by the frequency of the vibrations; the more rapid the vibrations, the higher the note. Generally speaking, the longer the string or pipe, the lower the note, although other factors have to be taken into account. The loudness is determined by the "amplitude of vibration"; i.e. the amount of space passed over by the sounding body as it vibrates backwards and forwards or up and down;

[1] Strictly speaking, it is hardly possible to produce a musical note without a noise as well, except perhaps in the case of some wind instruments. The thud of the hammer on the pianoforte string, the scrape of the violin-bow, the buzzing of the reed of a bassoon illustrate this fact.

the greater the space, the louder the note. The word "quality" has a special meaning in music. If a note of definite pitch, say "middle C," be played successively on a flute, a violin, a cornet, and a clarinet, and held on for, say, five seconds—the intensity of the sound being the same in each case—a certain difference of effect will be noticed, although the pitch, duration and intensity are constant. This difference is called a difference of "quality." A great deal of the pleasure obtained from listening to an orchestra is due to the fact that every class of instruments has its own peculiar "quality" or "tone-colour." One of the commonest effects in orchestral music is obtained by making use of the variety of tone-colour produced when a little phrase is played first, say, by the flute, and then repeated by an instrument of different tone-colour, e.g. the oboe.

Melody. When did Music come into being? Probably before speech. If a human being produces a sound like "ah" or "oh" and holds it on *at the same pitch,* even if only for a fraction of a second, he really makes a musical note; the first sounds made by man were most likely musical interjections of this kind. Out of only two such sounds tunes of a kind can be made. For instance, in the English Church Service we have:



Out of three sounds quite respectable tunes can be made

especially if Rhythm be added. The word "Rhythm"[2] will have to be used so often that it must be explained now.

Rhythm and Metre. Read these two lines in a sing-song fashion:

> Mount on your pony this Midsummer Day,
> Gallop and gallop and gallop away!

One cannot help feeling that there is a certain "swing" about the lines, especially if one taps *regularly* on the table while they are recited. Moreover, the taps will have a tendency to become grouped into threes; thus:

> 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3
> Mount on your pony this Midsummer Day—

What was tapped was the *Metre* of the lines. Tap the tune of "God save the King" (not regularly, but once for each note), emphasising the taps which correspond with the accented syllables. What was heard was the *Rhythm* of this tune. Note that Rhythm can be used as a language: in Africa the tribesmen transmit news by means of different groups of drum-taps on the principle of the Morse code as used in telegraphy.

It is a matter of common knowledge that savage tribes have always been fond of dancing. Now dancing is so dependent upon music that it is difficult to imagine dancing apart from music of some sort. If a simple

[2] The term "Rhythm" is of wide significance—it is often used in connection not only with Music but with other arts, e.g. Painting and Sculpture. In order to avoid vagueness, the term is used in this book in a strictly limited sense.

tune, comprising perhaps only two or three notes, be used to accompany a dance, then this tune will take to itself the rhythm of the dance. Thus, suppose the dance is something like a march, the rhythm will become "*one* two, *one* two," and so on. This applies not only to dancing, but to every form of movement, provided that the movements are sufficiently regular. Long ago it was found that it is much less tiring to do work which involves regular movements if music is going on at the same time. For example, in uncivilised countries, and not in these alone, men rowing a boat nearly always sing; just as sailors, when hauling up the anchor, used to sing their "Shanties." All soldiers know how much less exhausting it is to march when the regimental band is playing than when there is no music. Think, again, of the "Cradle Songs" which are found in the musical literature of almost every country. Thus melody, i.e. a series of musical notes rising and falling in pitch, has become allied with rhythm; and the alliance is so strong that melody apart from rhythm of some kind is hardly thinkable.

Nevertheless, it is of course possible to have music which is not necessarily accompanied by movements of the limbs. This is especially the case if the music is very slow. For instance, in singing a stately hymn-tune one does not feel impelled to move one's hand, feet or head. Thus, in course of time, mankind has developed a sense of "Rhythm by hearing," independent of "Rhythm by movement"; i.e. we can feel that certain music is really rhythmical, although we do not want to perform bodily movements when we listen to it.

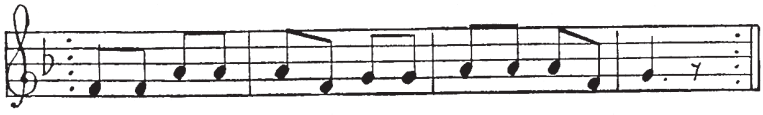
Form. So far, we have spoken only of two ingredients of a tune,[3] viz. Melody and Rhythm. There is another factor, and a very important one, called "Form." The meaning of the word "Form" should be clearly grasped at the outset, as it will have to be used very frequently. Suppose that you were going to weave an ornamental carpet. First of all, you would probably draw a rough sketch, and into this sketch you would introduce some designs or patterns. But you would not use them in any haphazard fashion. Some of the designs would be used several times, and unless you were simply going to make a crazy quilt, these repetitions would be carried out according to some scheme which when completed would satisfy the eye. (The architect, of course, has a similar problem to solve when designing a building[4].) Now in carrying out such a process you would be attending to the "Form" of the carpet. In the same way, when one is speaking about the "Form" of a tune, one is referring to the arrangement of its separate sections—how they are related to one another and to the tune as a whole. In long pieces of instrumental music, especially, the composer has to give much consideration to Form; otherwise the listener finds it very difficult to keep his attention fixed. This matter of Form will be dealt with more fully later on.

[3] Throughout this book, the term "tune" will be reserved for melody *plus* rhythm. The word "melody" is often used loosely in the same sense.

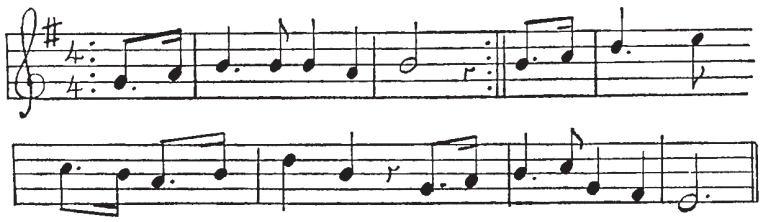
[4] Cf. this statement by Goethe: "A distinguished philosopher spoke of Architecture as 'Frozen Music.' . . . We believe this really beautiful idea could not better be re-introduced than by calling Architecture 'Silent Music.' "

Primitive Tunes. The earliest tunes were undoubtedly very short, like those sung in uncivilised countries to-day. Here are three tunes, still used; how old they are, nobody knows. Notice that in Nos. 1and 3 only three notes are employed. No. 2 seems almost modern in character, but as a matter of fact it is never sung in anything like strict time, nor are the notes sung absolutely "in tune" as we should say. To us such tunes sound very tame, but that is not the effect upon the natives who sing them. Even the educated Chinaman or Hindoo prefers his native music to ours. The complexities of our modern music leave him cold; whereas he may be deeply affected by a native tune which to us seems too crude to be called a tune at all.

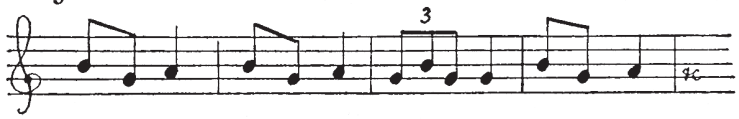
1. NIGERIAN LULLABY



2. DERVISH TUNE



3. WEST AFRICAN BATTLE SONG



CHAPTER II

EARLY STAGES OF MUSIC

WHEN any attempt is made to discover the type of music performed in the earliest ages of civilisation a difficulty is at once encountered; no written records of the actual music are available—at least none that we can decipher. Music seems to have been learnt entirely "by ear," not from books; just in the same way that most children of to-day learn their Nursery Rhymes. Musical notation of a kind was certainly used by the Greeks, but it was very incomplete, and the system adopted even so late as the eleventh century A.D. was of a rough and ready character, hardly at all intelligible to us. We shall be justified in assuming that the music of the earliest ages must have been something like that of those tribes of the present day who are just emerging from barbarism, when it is remembered that the human voice of to-day, regarded as an instrument of speech and song, is not really different from that of primitive man. Moreover, the number of ways in which musical instruments can be constructed is not great, and we do happen to have pictures and sculptured representations of primitive instruments; from these we can get a fair notion of the sounds which were produced.

Primitive Instruments. There are only four practicable methods of producing musical sounds:

(a) by striking certain elastic materials which are thereby set into regular vibration;

(b) by plucking a string stretched more or less tightly;

(c) by setting a column of air into vibration;

(d) by rubbing together two particular substances, the sound being produced by friction.

Instruments of the first class are called "instruments of percussion," and are the most primitive of all; e.g. drums, cymbals, gongs, bells, etc. The Chinese have an instrument called the "King," in which a number of slabs of metal or stone of different sizes are suspended in a frame and struck by a kind of hammer.

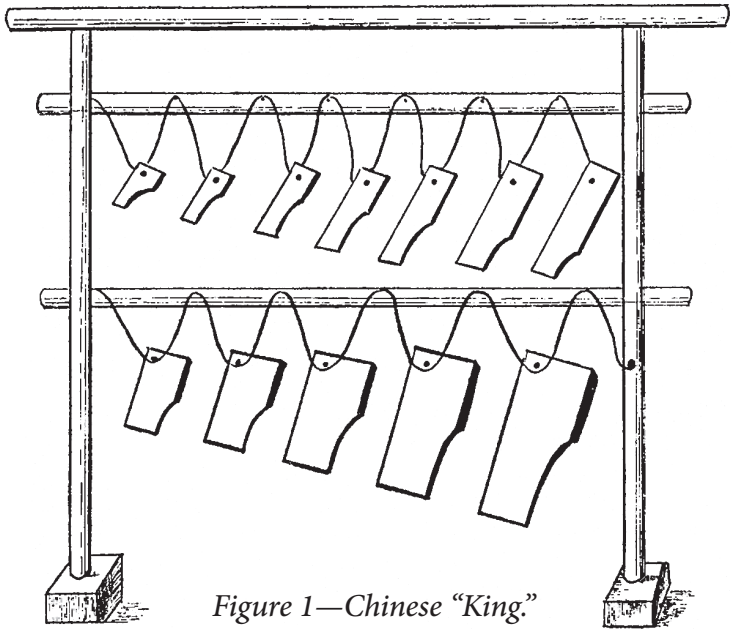


Figure 1—Chinese "King."

The larger the slab, the lower the note. The natives of South Africa use a similar instrument; in this case hard wood is used instead of metal or stone. The child of to-day has a kindred instrument—the "Harmonicon." Class *(b)* is represented by the harp, lute, lyre, guitar, banjo, etc. There are many varieties of class *(c)*, such as the flute, trumpet, horn, and all wind instruments. Class *(d)* comprises instruments of the violin type which are played by drawing a roughened bow across the strings. Such instruments are comparatively modern.

The earliest civilisation of which we possess an abundance of records is that of the Egyptians. Five thousand years ago the dwellers by the Nile made use of music; but, for the reason given above, we cannot reproduce this. We do know, however, something about the instruments which were used by the Egyptians in the time of the Pharaohs, because these frequently figure in the sculptures and drawings which have been preserved.

Stringed Instruments. The harp was in use in very early times. The hunter's bow is really a one-stringed harp, giving a distinct musical note when the string is twanged. It needed no genius to discover that notes of different pitch could be obtained by varying *(a)* the length of the string, *(b)* its tension, and *(c)* the thickness of the string employed. By attaching a set of strings to a triangular wooden framework a harp was at once obtained. The Egyptians had also instruments of the lute family; in shape these were much like the modern mandoline. Several notes in succession could be obtained from one string by "stopping" with the

fingers of the left hand, just as the violinist or mandoline player does to-day.

Wind Instruments. It was discovered quite early that if one takes a hollow tube of any material, closes one end, and blows across the top, a musical note can be obtained; also that the pitch of the note depends upon the length of the tube. Hence it was easily possible to construct a wind-instrument on which several notes could be played in succession; all that had to be done was to take a number of such tubes and group them in some convenient way. Pan-pipes, an instrument which was in use until quite recently in Punch and Judy shows, is perhaps the most primitive of all wind instruments. The modern Organ is, of course, constructed on the same principle.

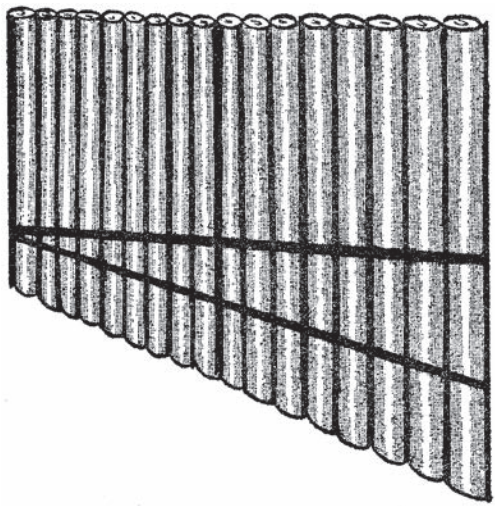


Figure 2—Pan-pipes.

Then it was found possible to get several different notes from one pipe by boring holes at different places in the tube and covering or uncovering the holes with the

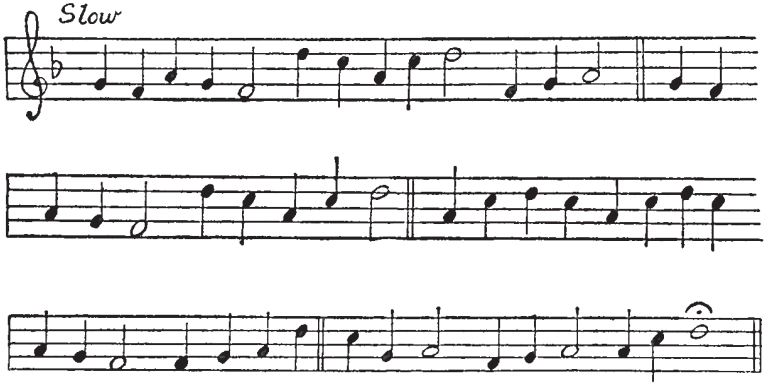
fingers. The modern tin-whistle, flageolet, and flute are constructed on this basis. Also by taking a tube fitted with a cup-shaped mouthpiece and blowing in a particular way we have a rudimentary trumpet, from which it is possible to obtain a limited number of notes without boring holes in the tube[5].

Harps, lutes, flutes and trumpets, then, were the instruments chiefly used by the Egyptians. Of the tunes played we have no records whatever. However, we do know that in civic and religious life music was very largely used, especially in connection with the latter. All through the ages Music and Religion have been allies; in fact, the history of music for the first thousand years of the Christian era is almost exclusively the history of Church music.

Chinese Music. Before proceeding to say something about the music of the Assyrians, Babylonians and Hebrews it will be advisable to deal briefly with the music of China. Of all civilised nations, the Chinese are the most conservative and have been affected least by the course of Western civilisation. One would therefore expect to find that Chinese music is a thing apart, as indeed it is. To us it sounds extraordinarily crude and monotonous, but the Chinaman prefers it to anything we can offer him. Here is a Chinese vocal melody of great age, but still popular. (The example given should be played in "free" time.)

You will notice that only five different notes are employed: F, G, A, C, D. This series of notes is called

[5] See Appendix I.



the "Pentatonic Scale."[6] Many Chinese tunes are constructed on this economical scale. Great use is made of "instruments of percussion": gongs, bells, and drums figure largely in Chinese ceremonial music. A favourite instrument is the Shêng, of which an illustration is given on the opposite page. Inserted in the bottom of each tube is a thin brass tongue and a hole is bored in the tube just above it. The player *sucks* air through the mouthpiece, and uncovers the hole of any tube which he wishes to sound. The modern American Organ is constructed on a somewhat similar principle.

Anyone who has listened to the music in a Chinese theatre will realise what a gulf separates the music of this people from Western music. Although some of their instruments, as well as their voices, are not much unlike those of Westerners, yet the use to which they are put is very different. In a Chinese band-performance everyone seems to be playing with little reference to

[6] See p. 25.

what his neighbour is doing. To us it sounds like a perfect muddle. Some instruments are holding on one or two notes all the time (*cf.* our bagpipe); others are playing snatches of tune, apparently in a different key from that adopted by the leader; the instruments of percussion seem to be used quite unsystematically; while the melody, such as it is, being founded on scales unfamiliar to us, sounds very weird. In fact, Harmony[7], as we understand the term, never has had, and has not now, a place in Oriental music.

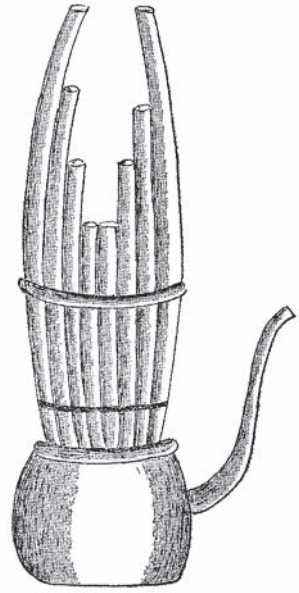


Figure 3—Chinese Shêng.

It should be remembered that in dealing with this music we are not concerned with a dead art; actually it is very much alive and plays no inconsiderable part in social life. The one great difference between Oriental and Western music is that the latter has changed in character at a very rapid pace—at any rate since the fifteenth century A.D., while the former has altered but little, and its practitioners are strongly against any change being made. It is not therefore correct to say that our music is *better* than that of the Orientals; it is *different*.

[7] See Chapter VI.

Early Oriental Music. The information we possess about the actual music of the Assyrians and Babylonians is not more extensive than that concerning Egyptian music. These peoples seem to have adopted and improved upon the ancient Egyptian instruments, which appear to have been constantly in use in ceremonial observances.

The musical system of the Hindoos and Arabians is very complicated and, like that of the Chinese, has changed little in the course of centuries. Both of these races possess a very elaborate series of scales from which their tunes are made; while we are content with two for general use, viz. the major and minor, the Hindoos have well over fifty and the Arabians even more. These are obtained by elaborate methods of tuning the instruments. Naturally the performance of music based on such complicated principles is only possible for the most accomplished native musicians; but simplified versions of the tunes are available for the ordinary folk. When a modern Hindoo or Bengali choir performs vocal music, all the singers sing the melody, most of the time very loudly, not to say roughly. The instrumentalists play the same melody—sometimes in octaves—but with many "runs and trills," while the drums and other instruments of percussion give forth a rhythm that corresponds more or less to the rhythm of the melody. Harmony is not employed.

Hebrew Music. The music of the Hebrews was largely influenced by that of the Egyptians; this was only natural, considering that the Hebrews made a long sojourn in Egypt and came into close contact with Egyptian

civilisation in all its forms. From the sacred writings of the Hebrews, especially from the Old Testament, we learn that music, both vocal and instrumental, was a great feature of religious ceremonial. (In reading the Bible in its English version, especially the "Authorised Version," one must not forget that the translators knew very little about the musical instruments of antiquity. When, therefore, they encountered the Hebrew name of an instrument with which they were unfamiliar they could only guess at its meaning, and substitute the name of any English instrument which occurred to them.) Nearly all that we know of early Hebrew music has reference to that employed in connection with religion, although in I Samuel xvi. 23 there is an interesting instance of the power of music to soothe the ravings of a man distracted. The instruments used in early Hebrew times were not essentially different from those used by the Egyptians, except that the Shofar, a kind of trumpet made from the horn of some animal, was largely employed—it is still in use at Jewish synagogues.

During the reigns of David and Solomon the Jewish nation reached its highest point of development. Both of these monarchs did their utmost to make the religious services in the Temple as magnificent and imposing as possible, and since music helps greatly towards such an end, it is not surprising to find that it figured largely in all Jewish religious ceremonial. The tribe of Levites had to provide no less than four thousand musicians, who were accompanied by a band consisting chiefly of trumpets, harps, drums and flutes. Although we

have no records left of the sacred chants sung in the Temple, it is possible to discover from the Bible some interesting features of the choral singing. The words of many of the sacred choruses are still preserved in the Book of Psalms. This Book contains many references to the music of the Temple; e.g.

> The singers go before,
> The minstrels follow after:
> In the midst are the damsels
> Playing with the timbrels. (Ps. lxviii.)

Psalm cl is entirely concerned with music. The word "Selah" which so often occurs in the Bible version of the Psalms probably denotes a pause in the singing while the band played an interlude.

Judging from the poetical form of some of the Psalms these must have been sung by *groups* of singers; e.g. Psalm cxxxvi is evidently a song for a soloist (or small choir) with a refrain "For His mercy endureth for ever" for the whole chorus. Again, Psalm xxiv is obviously for two choirs:

> *1st Choir.* Who is the King of Glory?
>
> *2nd Choir.* The Lord strong and mighty. . . .

One of the very earliest, and certainly one of the most beautiful, songs preserved to us is the "Song of the Bow[8]," the lament of David over Saul and Jonathan slain in battle on the same day. Notice the repetition of the refrain "How are the mighty fallen!"

[8] See II Samuel i. 17.

Although, as stated above, no written copies of the Temple music have been preserved, it is possible to get a vague idea of its probable nature by listening to "Gregorian" music as sung in Catholic churches to-day. The Synagogue music of modern times has incorporated many elements from secular sources. In the larger Synagogues a "Cantor" is employed to sing the ritual music. While preserving the main outlines of the traditional chant, he adorns this with improvised embellishments of a highly elaborate kind. The Chorus occupies a subordinate position. It is more than likely that the early Christians, requiring music for their services, borrowed a good deal from the Jews, and some of this music is preserved, no doubt in a modified form, in the Gregorian Chant. But in making this comparison one should remember that an organ accompaniment, often added to-day, finds no place whatever in the music of early Christian times. Neither instrumental nor vocal harmony was developed until hundreds of years later.

CHAPTER III

GREEK AND ROMAN MUSIC

IN the fifth century B.C., when our islands were peopled by a race, or rather a mixture of races, now called "Ancient Britons," the Greek nation had arrived at its highest development. In many branches of culture, e.g. architecture, sculpture, and some forms of literature, the achievements of the Greeks have never been surpassed; but as regards Music the same cannot be said by any means. As Mr. William Wallace says[9]: "We might take an Athenian of olden days to the British Museum or to the Louvre, and he would find himself in understanding and sympathy with what he saw, but at a concert of modern orchestral music he would be dazed." Again, "What Music has accomplished it has done in the last two centuries; Sculpture, on the other hand, is not far from where it stood in the Golden Age of Pericles."

Up to a certain point it is possible to find out from written records and from sculpture a good deal about Greek music; but the old difficulty again arises—it is impossible to reproduce the music actually played

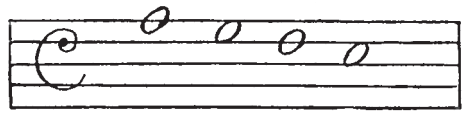
[9] *The Threshold of Music.*

and sung, because it was not written down; or rather the few fragments of written music which have been preserved cannot now be deciphered with any certainty. This, however, is known: the Greeks rated music very highly indeed amongst the arts. An immense amount of thought was expended upon the problems of musical theory; in fact, for the Greek philosopher, the theoretical or scientific aspects of music were more interesting than the artistic. Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that music exercised a powerful effect upon the emotions. The legend of Orpheus has been used by Shakespeare as the theme of one of his best-known lyrics:

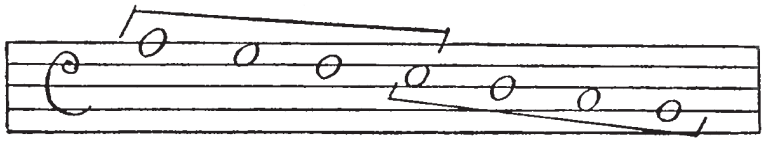
> Orpheus with his lute made trees,
> And the mountain tops that freeze,
> Bow themselves when he did sing. . . .

Again, there is the story of the Sirens, whose fascinating music lured many a sailor to destruction. In Greek education music was looked upon as a very important subject; while it occupied a prominent place not only in religious and ceremonial rites but also in theatrical performances. At the great public games a favourite item was a musical contest between players on the lyre or flute.

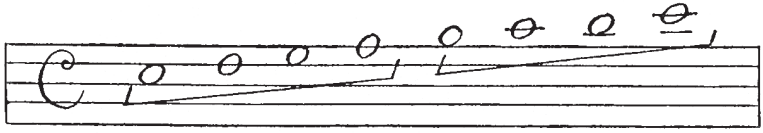
So far as we can learn, the most primitive Greek tunes comprised two notes only, A below "middle C" and the E below that. In course of time the gap between these two notes was filled up, by adding G and F so that four notes were available:



Considering that any of these notes could be repeated as often as desired, and that the boundless resources of rhythm could be applied, it was possible to construct from this apparently slender material a large number of different tunes. As we shall see later, out of five notes very expressive tunes can be made. The group of notes shown above was called a "Tetrachord." Later, it was felt advisable to obtain more variety and another tetrachord was formed below the first, thus:



In course of time the A below was added and also two more tetrachords above, reaching to A (second space, Treble stave). Thus a complete series of notes extending over two octaves was made available. When two tetrachords were placed together after this fashion:



a "Mode," or as we should say a "Scale" of eight notes, resulted. It is not necessary here to explain the whole of the Greek Modal system, but, as any note of the series could be taken as the starting-point of a Mode, it can be seen that seven Modes were available, each differing from any other in the position of the semitones. This sounds rather complicated; but we, to-day, have our Modes[10], "major" and "minor." In a subsequent chapter

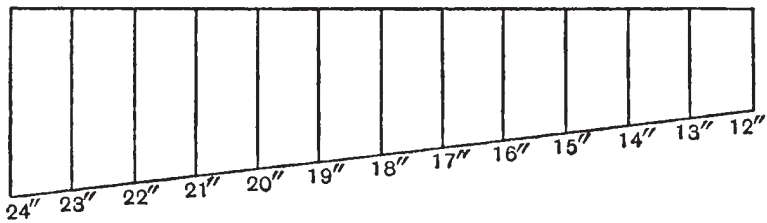
[10] There are points of difference between a modern "Scale"

the Modal system, as it was applied to the music of the early Christian Church, will be more fully explained. The important point to notice here is that the Greeks had a scientific musical system of great complexity, whose basis was the Tetrachord. When a Greek composer wished to invent a tune, he had to decide first of all what Mode he should employ, just as a modern composer has to make up his mind whether he is going to write a "major" or a "minor" tune. The Greek musician, however, had seven Modes to choose from. To the Greeks each Mode possessed a certain "flavour": even we can feel the difference between a major and a minor tune. But we should not go so far as the Greeks, who forbade the boys of Sparta to sing any tune not constructed out of the Mode beginning on E, because that Mode was supposed to possess manly and vigorous qualities (see p. 39).

Musical Intervals and Scales. One point of musical theory ought to be explained here because it underlies all Modes and Scales. If two pipes, one double the length of the other, be made to sound together, the two notes seem to merge, so that it is not easy to hear that more than one note is produced. (If the longer pipe be four or eight times the length of the smaller, nearly the same effect results.) In the first case the two notes are said to comprise the "interval of an octave," and other notes not exactly one, two, three etc. octaves apart do not have this effect of merging into one another. Now the pitch of the note produced from any pipe depends upon the length of the pipe; the shorter the pipe, the

and a "Greek Mode," but the analogy is nearly correct.

higher the note. If, therefore, we take two pipes, one of which is two feet long and the other is a foot in length, the sounds given will be an octave apart; but between a pipe two feet in length and another one foot long it is theoretically possible, of course, to make an infinite number of pipes, all more than one foot and less than two feet in length. In that manner we can obtain an infinite number of notes of different pitch between one note and its octave. Suppose that between the two pipes in question we introduce eleven others, each being one inch longer or shorter than its neighbour, thus:



In this way we obtain a series of thirteen notes corresponding to the sounds obtained from a pianoforte by playing the thirteen consecutive notes beginning with middle C and ending on the C above. This series of notes constitutes the "chromatic scale," and the difference in pitch between any two adjacent notes is called a "semitone." Thus, a semitone is the twelfth part of an octave. This is only one of the innumerable ways of dividing up the octave. We might divide the octave into, say, fifty parts, but the difference in pitch between two adjacent notes would then be so small as to become unrecognisable. It is not even necessary to divide the octave into twelve *equal* parts, and this is only done when the chromatic or whole-tone scale is required. For

instance, if from the above series we wish to obtain our major scale, it will be necessary to utilise the first, third, fifth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth and thirteenth pipes. The Arabians, Persians and Hindoos divide the octave into many more than twelve parts, and this makes their music very complicated. On the other hand, most other nations are content with a smaller number of notes than twelve within the octave, usually eight; which eight depends upon the particular scale required[11]. To obtain the "Pentatonic Scale" already mentioned on p. 14, one takes the first, third, fifth, eighth and tenth pipes of the octave series. (In "Sol-Fa" language, the scale reads *doh, ray, me, soh, lah.*) This, the favourite scale of the Chinese, contains no *fah* and no *te*. The natives of some parts of Africa use a similar scale and it is interesting to find that missionaries have great difficulty in these districts in teaching any European tunes which contain *fah* and *te,* but no trouble is experienced with a tune like "Auld Lang Syne," in which only the notes of the Pentatonic scale are used. Although a clear understanding of the nature of Modes and Scales is helpful, it is necessary to be clear on this one point: people did not first of all invent scales and then make tunes out of them, any more than they invented "parts of speech" before they began to talk. Tunes were made first of all; afterwards, the sounds used in making the tunes were classified into scales. But when once scales were accepted and had

[11] Make a few experiments with a 'cello. An "open" string corresponds to the long pipe of the series given above; "stop" the string at the halfway point and the note produced is an octave higher. By stopping the string at various intermediate points, a large number of different scales can be played.

become familiar it was found convenient to adhere to one or other of the scales when composing a new tune.

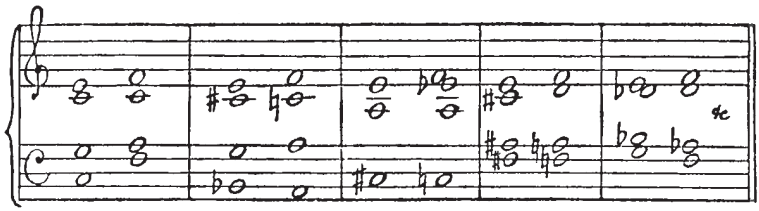
The semitonal principle as developed by the Greeks has formed the basis of the whole of the music of Western Europe. All keyboard instruments are constructed on this principle. Instruments of the violin family are of course not limited to semitones, but intervals smaller than a semitone are practically not used, unless the violinist or singer plays or sings "out of tune," or glides from one note to another.

Greek Music. The art of Poetry was especially favoured amongst the Greeks, and a great deal of their poetry was intended to be sung. The rhythm of Greek poetry is extremely complicated, and consequently the rhythm of Greek vocal music must have been very varied; to us it would sound almost irregular. But this can hardly have been the case with dance-music, which demands regularity of accent. The instruments mostly used by the Greeks were the lyre, the syrinx (Pan-pipes[12]), the aulos (a kind of flute), together with the trumpet and other instruments handed down from earlier times.

How is it that with all the time, thought and energy expended upon music by the Greeks little real progress was made? Centuries passed, and Greek music changed but slightly. The truth is that so long as notes are played *singly,* the number of different tunes with any pretension to beauty which can be invented is limited. Although the Greeks liked to experiment with semitones—e.g. using F sharp instead of F natural, this did not carry them

[12] See illustration on p. 12.

much further. But when once the principle of *combining* notes is admitted, so that "Harmony" is produced, the resources are almost unlimited. E.g. two notes like E, F played in succession do not sound very suggestive, but this simple progression can be harmonised in dozens of ways, producing a different effect each time; e.g.



But, as we have already remarked, Harmony as an ingredient of music finds no place until about 1000 A.D., centuries after the Greek domination had disappeared.

Roman Music. There is little need to say much about music as it was practised amongst the Romans. These people were not artistic at all—or, rather, the Romans were not, as a race, creative artists. They borrowed their art from other nations—chiefly from the Greeks. They hired Greek architects and sculptors, and their literature was modelled upon that of Greece. The Romans were first and foremost a military nation; consequently the only advance made in music was the invention of a few musical instruments for use in the army. Otherwise, Roman music differs little from that of Greece. Public musical contests were very popular, and even the notorious Emperor Nero condescended to compete—successfully, of course[13].

[13] The short tale entitled "The Contest" in Conan Doyle's *Lost Galley* may here be read.

Before the Roman Empire fell to pieces in the fifth century A.D. the Christian religion had gained a strong footing, and for several centuries thereafter the progress of music as a branch of Art is bound up with that of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

FOLK-MUSIC

THE history of any art is of necessity more concerned with the doings of professionals than with the efforts of amateurs, but the latter cannot be left out of account. This is especially true in connection with Music. Everybody who has a voice can make music for himself without a great deal of training, but comparatively few can paint a picture worth looking at, or fashion a good specimen of sculpture. One would therefore expect to find that, in addition to the enormous amount of music written by professionals who made it their life's work to extend the bounds of music, there would also be much music created by amateurs who had no other thought than that of satisfying their own musical instinct and affording pleasure to their narrow circle of friends. It has to be remembered that, in early days, when travelling was difficult and expensive, very few of the country-folk ever visited a town; and, consequently, they had little chance of hearing music made by professionals. Indeed, even at the present day, modern music is a sealed book to probably the majority of the population.

The Amateur Composer. But, for all that, the humble musical amateurs of the countryside were always active; they made their own music and ballads, the most popular of which were handed down not by means of printed copies, but by "word of mouth." Such music is generally known as "Folk-music," the "folk" here meaning the peasantry, or dwellers in country districts. Any well-known Nursery Rhyme is a good example of Folk-music. Take, for instance, "Baa, baa, black sheep." Who made this tune? Nobody knows. It was sung long before anyone thought of writing it down; most people have learnt it by hearing it sung when they were in the nursery, not by playing it from a printed copy. Now one would expect that under such circumstances there would be many different versions of the tune; although, perhaps, in course of time one particular version would be that most generally used. Such is the case with all Folk-music. It is not necessary to assume that any particular Folk-tune is a patchwork of small phrases each being invented by a different individual. It is much more likely that someone more musically gifted than his neighbours invented a tune which his friends admired; these learnt it by imitation, but either through inability to repeat it exactly, or because they thought that they could improve it, the original tune in course of time became more or less altered. In that sense, a Folk-song may be said to have "grown," and to be the work of many minds.

Folk- v. *Art-music.* We have, then, to think of Music as an art travelling along two parallel lines; urged

forward in one case by professionals who, beginning with a little fragment of melody, have evolved musical works of the most complicated order, such as Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger,* which demands an array of accomplished soloists as well as a large orchestra and chorus and takes nearly five hours to perform. Wagner would never have been able to write this work had he not been thoroughly acquainted with the works of his predecessors. But in the other case, that of Folk-music, the authors had little opportunity of getting to know the music of other communities; theirs was home-made music in the strictest sense, and they had no desire to make it more complicated. Hence, Folk-music changed its character very slowly indeed. Just as the makers of Folk-music had little acquaintance with what we may call "Art-music," so the professional musicians of bygone days regarded Folk-music as of little account, or perhaps one ought to say that they made little use of it. It is only within the last hundred years or so that an intelligent interest has been taken in the music of the peasantry. Now that a very large number of Folk-tunes have been collected and printed it is recognised that, while some are dull, and interesting only to the historian, there still remains a large mass of Folk-music which is, in its way, as fine as anything composed by a professional. In late years, the people amongst whom Folk-music originated have, except in remote country districts, lost interest in it, just as they have largely given up their old sports and pastimes, and even their distinctive dress. They prefer to take their cue from townsfolk, and the old-fashioned Folk-song no longer

appeals to them[14]. Some attempts are now being made to get the country-folk interested in their own Folk-music, but not with much success so far.

But this refers, chiefly, to populous countries like England and France. All countries have their Folk-music, and in sparsely inhabited regions it still flourishes; the peasantry, having little or no other music, jealously preserves its Folk-tunes. Just as the possession of a common language tends to unite those that use it, so does Folk-song help members of a community to realise that in a sense they are one. Especially in times of national distress does the comforting and encouraging aspect of Folk-music appear; this was noticeably the case with the Russians in the early days of the Great War. Englishmen, who have largely forgotten their Folk-music, can have little notion how much this means to those who have little experience of music of any other kind.

Folk-music and Nationality. It is often said that the Folk-music of any nation is influenced by the national character. This is true in the sense that the Folk-music of any particular country has certain features which distinguish it from that of any other. Thus, German Folk-songs are on the whole somewhat square and solemn; many of the melodies would make good hymn-tunes without alteration. English Folk-songs are more varied; those of Hungary have very striking rhythm, while Russian Folk-songs are on the whole gloomy. The finest Folk-music is Irish. While that of some other nations is often monotonous, the phrases being short

[14] Nursery Rhymes—real Folk-music—are an exception.

and too often repeated, so that few opportunities occur of "putting expression into it," the Irish tunes are extremely varied and are so expressive that they can be effectively used as instrumental pieces. Indeed, most of the traditional Irish song-tunes are instrumental in their origin. Compare the Irish and Swedish Folk-tunes quoted below.

Characteristics. The literature of instrumental Folk-music is not so rich as that of Folk-song. For a hundred singers in a village one would find perhaps only one instrumentalist; besides, the old instruments were very coarse and clumsy. However, dance-music has always been in request, and most instrumental Folk-music consists of dance-tunes. (Cf. our Country-dance tunes and most of the Scottish bagpipe tunes.) Many dance-tunes have been set to words, and are better known as songs than as instrumental pieces; e.g. "Haste to the Maypole."

The facts about Folk-music may be summed up as follows:

(1) It is the music of the peasantry, and has remained almost unaffected by "Art-music."

(2) It is the product of amateurs; or, at any rate, of unlearned men.

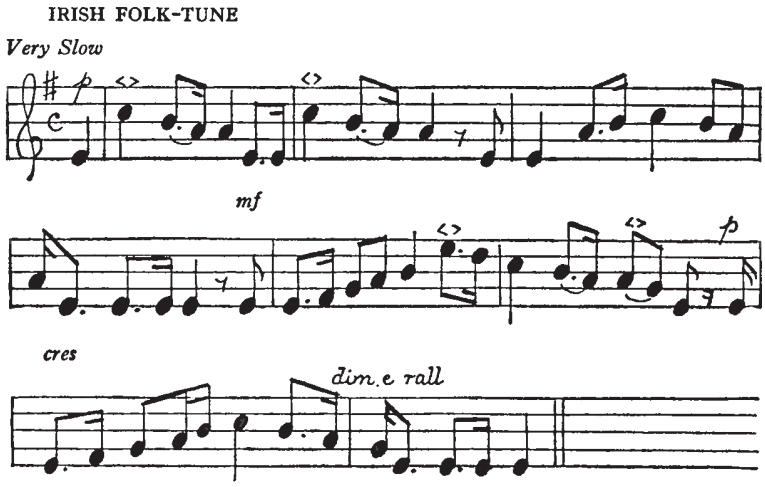
(3) Folk-song is independent of Harmony, and is complete without any accompaniment.

(4) It was not at first written down, but learnt "by ear"; therefore the modern versions usually differ much from the earlier.

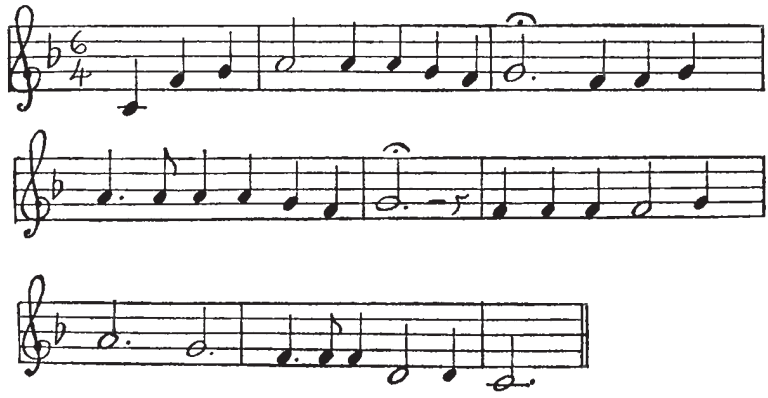
(5) Whereas most modern music is made out of the notes of either the major or minor scale, Folk-music is not so restricted.

(6) In many civilised countries Folk-tunes were becoming forgotten until some enthusiasts in the later part of the last century began to rescue them and put them into print. The best of them are now better known by townsfolk than by villagers.

It is now easy to obtain copies of a large number of British and Irish Folk-songs; some collections are named below. Meanwhile, the following five specimens are interesting. The peculiar effect of the third song is due to the fact that it is based on a scale which is strange to us, although it is the first scale to be taught to the children of Southern India. The scale is G, A flat, B, C, D, E flat, F sharp, G. This is as near to the scale as we can get on a pianoforte: as a matter of fact, the Hindoos do not tune their instruments as we do, and they use intervals smaller than a semitone (see p. 24).

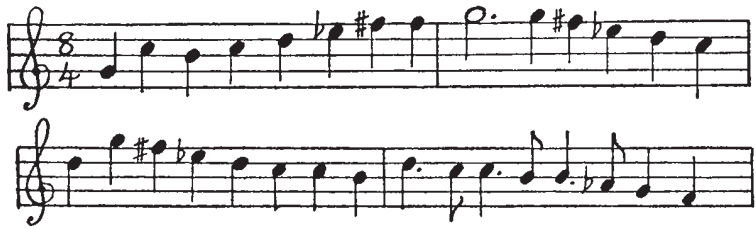


NORTH AMERICAN LULLABY

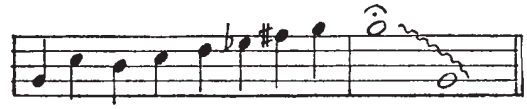


HINDOO SONG

Rather slow

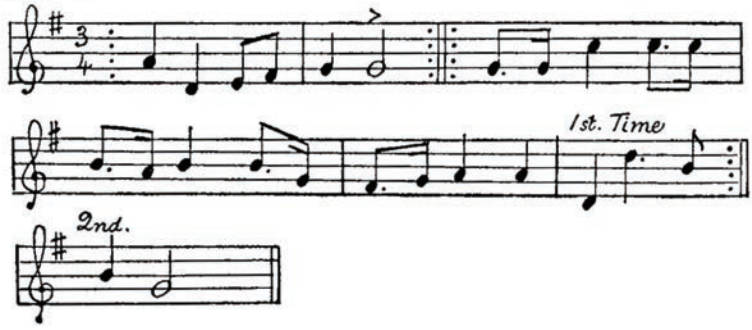


etc. ending thus:

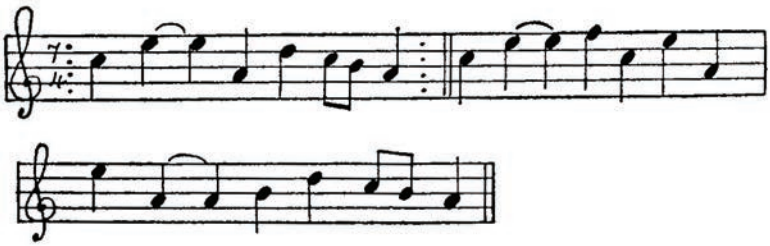


SWEDISH FOLK-TUNE

Moderato



POLISH FOLK-TUNE



"National" Songs. There is a class of tunes, viz. "National" songs, which have some features common also to Folk-songs; e.g. "John Peel," "The Bay of Biscay," etc. In so far as these songs have become known all over the country, and are therefore common property, they are akin to Folk-songs. But these are not songs made by the peasantry; they have been written by someone familiar with Art-music, and are, as a rule, printed and published as soon as composed. Moreover, the name of the author is usually known—this is never the case with Folk-songs[15]. The tune of "God save the King" is peculiar; it certainly is not a peasant-song: it seems to be a patchwork production of phrases taken from other tunes. It was first sung in 1740.

[15] Gramophone Records 115, 116, 117 (Folk-Songs): 119, 120 (National Songs).