

RAFF'S SYMPHONY "IM WALDE"

We have shown how Raff's genius lies happily within the extremes of programme music; how he may be said to have solved its problems successfully as to symphonies, achieving here what Mendelssohn reached only in the overture. Indeed, without the symphonies of Raff, it might be held, for lack of supporting examples, that the true symphony cannot be burdened with a special title. More happily than Beethoven in his Sixth Symphony, Raff found the right relation of subject and utterance in the main by a predominance of the mood over mere description. The graphic aim was not pre-eminent, merely the suggestive. The two may approach each other so near as to be well-nigh indistinguishable. But the right attitude of the composer is clear, can never be actual delineation, but merely an utterance of the feelings aroused by the subject, whatever it be. As in negative and positive of a picture, there may be the closest correspondence of mood and of event, even in detail. And yet a true musical poem is never more than an utterance of feeling.

The division of the symphony is novel; there are three parts, of which the first, in Allegro, is entitled "Daytime, Thoughts and Impressions;" the second, "At Dusk," comprises first a "Revery," second, "Dance of the Dryads;" the third, all in one movement, is headed "At Night. Quiet Reign of Night in the Forest. Coming and Going of the Wild Hunt with Frau Holle (Hulda) and Wotan. Break of Day."

The poetic design fits perfectly with the traditional order of symphonic movement and rhythm, and this harmony is a symbol of the fine touch with which Raff uttered his special sense of nature, of the great outer elements of life. His tonal schemes, with all their novel warmth of color and harmony and their objective realism, do not fail of a masterly grasp of the art in its highest reaches, of profound polyphony and of complete breadth of formal design. Indeed, there is no doubt that some of the melodic, harmonic, and chromatic manner that is all attributed to Wagner is quite distinctively Raff's own; that with him it is allied with a true mastery of the art, independent of dramatic illustration; that it is the sensational quality of Wagner's style, his constant reiteration of the same idea on the largest dramatic scale (lacking the economy of highest art), helped, too, by the attraction of visible story, that has stamped his name unduly upon much of modern musical discovery, of which he was not the only pioneer. This symphony of Raff was finished seven years before the first hearing of the Nibelungen Cycle.

Daytime is, after all, the prelude of the real life of the forest. The climax is night, of which the day is the mere dusk.

The first notes of the forest are a deep, sombre humming of low basses (in wood and strings), through which, at intervals, resounds the cry of the horn :



one of the chief elements of this bit of complex beauty. Presently appears the second, where the basses find a tune in their dim groping:



And then, third, the moving answer of higher strings, the motto of the forest:



In lighter pace the high woodwind join, the phrase of the basses grows to a fuller melody, into which all the woodwind and horns enter in chorus. The low brass are first heard, on a sudden hush, in a new harmonic light, preceding another burst of the melody of the basses. In the silence of the rest, the strings sing softly and tenderly their former strain, in lower key, so that all the first seemed but a prelude to this, the heart of the movement, the sighing legend of the woods. The song is extended by a new verse sung in close rejoinder, the woodwind taking part. Presently the horns, sacred to the forest, take up the song, joined by the higher strings. The cadence has sudden brighter gleams of cheer as the last of the themal elements sounds in this epic of day in the forest. At the very close it steals in (among bassoons) so subtly as to be easily lost:



It stands a lighter symbol of the sparkling joy, the sunlight of the forest, clear of the dread and danger, and quaintly lifts the whole mood at the very end of the beautifully sad song, which is the principal theme of the woods. Though a mere phrase in a close, it flows along in the constant cycle of its return, new voices ever joining,—growing to a whole song of praise into which the full band have at last been enticed. The motive has extended here and there, and now has almost the symmetry of full-blown melody. But the source, the tissue, is always the simple, sprightly, rollicking phrase. In its very last note, as it has simmered down to bassoons and lowest strings, is an interval of the fourth by pure chance, the first cry that we heard from the horns. Innocently the bassoon has awakened the sombrero horn to its old motto, which it now sounds again and again, while lowest basses are rumbling away through most solemn changes, at each step, of tonal hue, like huge kaleidoscope of deepest colors. The depth, the changing shades, the dim uncertainty of the forest are there.

For a moment lighter sprites interrupt with a tune that seems new, but is merely a friendlier verse of the old theme of the basses,—singing for cheer, while the dragons growl almost within sound.

And now we have the whole life of the forest, ever in blending of these moods, where dim dread is never quite absent. A lighter motion soon begins and pervades until near the end. But it is the motion, not of birds and humming bees, rather of gnomes and fearsome elves. Much of their doing is of a strain of the song of the basses:



(Strings and wood with *pizz.* Bases and Violas.)

with a dancing kind of step or skip in the high wind. Presently comes a wailing cry from on high, which we hardly know as the beautiful legend of the strings, so distorted is the expression, so changed to a touch of anguish.

But now, with all the light dancing figures about, sounds a comforting bit of the rollicking strain, though it is not enough for the old joviality. All through flit shadowy figures of lightest motion, but uncertain of mood; a kind of secret hovering between the beauty and the terror. Nothing is quite clear; all the former melodies, of quiet beauty and cheer, are perverted; now two are singing together, distorted in form and feeling. Wilder grows the mad whirl, louder the chorus of all, when at the very top of the climax sounds the friendly song of the basses, now noisy with glad acclaim, where all are singing not in unison, but each with a different end of the tune,—later joining in a simpler, united hymn of a kind of deliverance.

Here we are in the same chorus which the basses had first enticed on their original melody, and now follows the same career of lesser strains, of the principal legend, of the rollicking phrase with its climax. Again comes the changing hue of low bass sounds, with the horn call above. There is still a lesser phase of uncertain humor; but the distorted melodies are absent. There is a sense of coming cheer, and soon the song of the basses bursts forth with utmost brightness in final climax of the rollicking phrase. At the very end is once again the solemn call of the horn through the changing choir of lowest sounds.

At Dusk. Revery. In the cool air of evening, in uncertain light, the strings grope through searching tones, the clarinet trills a strain seeking a clear utterance. Presently the strings (aided by bassoons) fall into a melody of great beauty and pathos:



STRINGS AND BASSOON.

which is really the burden of the whole, in pure lyric vein. Between the verses the clarinet sends forth its vaguer rhapsodies, much as a bird, stirred to carolling by song, vainly tries to echo the melody. Other voices, flute and oboe, join in answering snatches. And now the

horns send out the golden notes of the tune, while the flute, instead of listening, continues its carolling in sweet accord.

In the midst is a madrigal of forest voices, started by the first strain of the main melody. But in the graceful interweaving (with new color of tonal hue) there is missing the human note which comes with new force in the final verses of the melody.

The Dance of the Dryads, still in the twilight, tells its own story, unless we refuse to take the title with literal fidelity. The dryads cannot be a very distant kin to the fairies, who seem more at home in the northern forest. They are creatures of the same kind of humor; indeed, their humor is the best of them. But these dryads or elves have a way of varying their guise in the midst of the dance. The fairies of the first tune are more impish:

Allegro assai. FLUTES.

STRINGS.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system is for Flutes, with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system is for Strings, with a bass clef and the same key signature and time signature. It features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, with some measures containing rests marked with an 'x'.

in the slower second they are almost human. At the end the poet has the lyric mood of the reverie blended with the humor of the fairies, whose dance hovers about the song of the *Largo* in the strings.

The Wild Hunt of the raging host — *das Wutende Heer*—of Wotan and *Frau Holle* belongs

Poco meno mosso. FLUTES.

FAGOTS. CLARINETS.

(Waving strings in $\frac{1}{8}$ notes : horns.)

The image shows a musical score for Flutes, with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (D major), and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The melody is composed of eighth notes. The score is divided into two parts: 'FAGOTS.' and 'CLARINETS.'. Below the score, a note indicates '(Waving strings in $\frac{1}{8}$ notes : horns.)'.



to the ruder world of German folk-tales rather than to storied legend. In oldest saying *Frau Holle* lived in high mountains, in lakes or in the sky, and was good to mortals, as her name *Hulda* shows. Indeed, she probably had a mistier past as *Erda*, or Mother Earth herself. She was even later ever a motherly sort of goddess. She certainly made the snow when she shook the feathers of her bed. Says Grimm, she is cross "only when she sees discord in the household." The home, spinning, marriage were her special interest; but, like Diana, she had a hand in the chase as well. In the strange tale of the raging host we see *Frau Holle* in a later time, when Christian cult was degrading heathen creed before killing it. The good dame never became savage and ugly—she was once white and fair—until the Christians came and displaced her with Mary. It was the natural way that the very kindest of the gods—strongest in the people's heart—must be specially attacked. So gradually *Wotan* and *Hulda* sank to a sort of devil and his grandmother. They had a quaint kind of place, too, in the Christian world. The gods die hard; they do not vanish in a day. For a time they are doomed, like a conquered race, to a nether sphere of evil spirits; and they were, in a way, not without their use. To *Wotan* were sent the spirits of men who had died of violence, and *Frau Holle* was given charge of the babes that died unbaptized. And thus the mighty march of worthy gods and heroes became the wild hunt of the wasting host of lost souls and devils.

A whole of the three divisions is of Night, the real element of the forest; or perhaps the forest is her home. Day, after all, the clear sun, never really reaches it. The darker the night the deeper the forest,—which is equally true reversed; and so the darkest depth of the forest must be at midnight.

In the "*Stilles Weben*" of the title is a clue that seems obstinately to refuse utterance other than in its native figure. It means a fulness of life and motion with the least of sound. And so Raff takes a theme from his magic bag of tunes, that fits this humming woof of night in the forest, tingling with the pulsing throb that is busiest when most still:



Raff's fugal themes are rare, almost unique in being melodies. And so the course of these gently murmuring voices on one tuneful motive is a most poetical utterance of the busy sway of night in the woods, as true whether we read as child or naturalist. Above the strings presently sings the horn (the new voice stealing in ever before it is expected), and, too, the bassoon in softest humming.

Then a new throb is felt in steady ascent, while horns are sounding a distant rhythmic call. Now the approach of the wild hunt of the gods is clear with the new pace of galloping steeds:

mf

STRINGS, CLARINETS AND WOOD.

rising higher and louder as it nears. Suddenly the band is upon us, the thud of the hoofs ringing all about. And now a more measured hunting chorus breaks out in the strings with supporting brass, only to return, later, to ruder clangor alternating with the hunting chorus song.

Now comes the maddest whirl of clash and din, where the one thing clear is the unceasing thud of clattering hoofs, though, at times, strains of the (second) hunting chorus are heard. But presently even that is distorted out of all guise.

(Full brass and strings.)

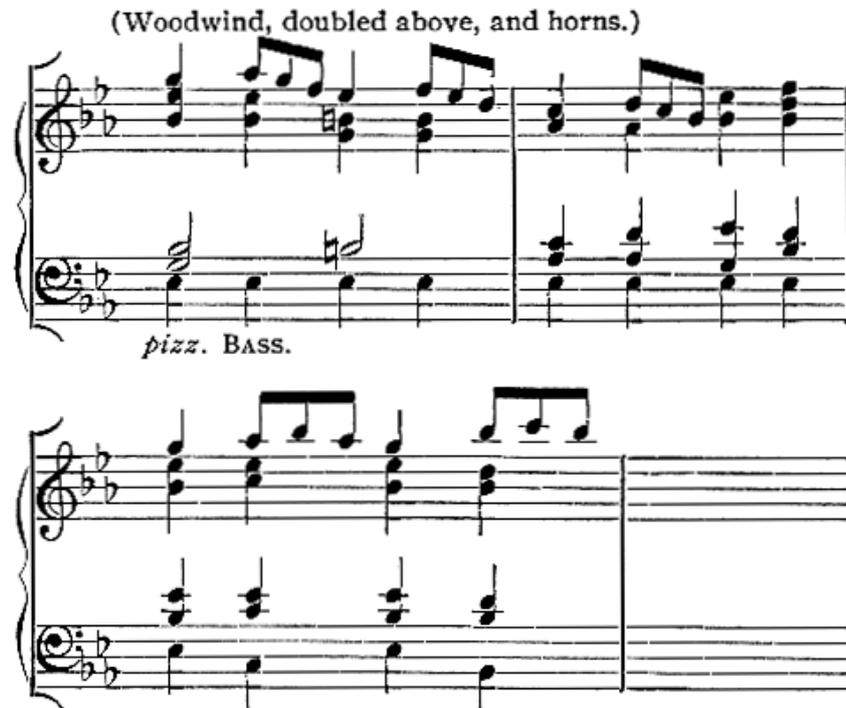
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The answering cries of horns run ever higher; but all is disorder, with no sign of common

(Reinforced with full harmony of whole orchestra.)

ff

(tonal) plan. A vague sort of march time seems patched from shadowy snatches of the hunting songs. Suddenly out of the worst of the din a clear strain pours forth, joyous and festive, without the terror, the brute noise, sweetened and lightened, without loss of pace or freedom:



And still one melody sings out of the night, most human of all, but is presently lost in the renew turmoil of wildest hunt. At one time when the sounds, uncertain still, have hushed for the moment, the first motto of the night can be heard dimly struggling through the incongruous elements. Through the cycle of all the strains the wild course continues, but reversed, so that when



the last hoof has died away, the *Waldesweben* is heard in its original stillness. At the end, in climax of the whole symphony, the united chorus returns, with break of day, to the legend of the first movement.