

## ***THE "LENORE" SYMPHONY***

The complete title-page is:

### **FIRST PART.....THE JOY OF LOVE.**

*Allegro ; Andante quasi Larghetto.*

### **SECOND PART.....SEPARATION.**

*March ; Agitato.*

### **THIRD PART .... REUNION IN DEATH.**

Introduction and Ballad (after Burger's "Lenore").

*Allegro.*

One of the greatest flowers of the species "programme music,"—so ingeniously misunderstood,—the "Lenore" Symphony needs, for intelligent enjoyment, a knowledge of the romantic legend of Burger's poem and of the divisions of the composer's plan.

But "programme music" is like dangerous medicine. There ought always to be an accompanying warning, much like Beethoven's in the Pastoral Symphony—"rather an expression of feeling than a painting." So, to the "Lenore" listener we would say: Don't find the literal touches of the ghostly ride of the bride and spectral groom. Don't find the

"Tramp! tramp! along the land they rode.  
Splash! splash! along the sea,"

nor seek the "coffin'd guest," bidden to swell the nuptial song,—when "the shrouded corpse arose,"

" And hurry! hurry! all the train  
The thundering steed pursues,"—

nor where the felon

"Swings 'mid whistling rain,—  
The wasted form descends—  
e wild career attends."

Nothing is clearer than the composer's intention: to express the feelings kindled in the story in the free manner proper to the tonal art, unhampered by the detail of narrative. The simplest way to enjoy the symphony is to read Burger's poem or Scott's version ; then to resign oneself untrammelled to the musical treatment.

Three of the four movements are mere prelude to the story of the poem, but they are far the most important part of the symphony. The lovers' early happiness shines in the opening theme:



(Added woodwind and horns.)

A musical score for piano in G major, 4/4 time. The score shows the piano accompaniment and the entry of woodwind and horn instruments. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The woodwind and horn parts enter with a melodic line, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

bubbling with joy, breaking into the placid pure delight of the answering melody:

WOOD. STRINGS.

pizz. STRINGS.

A musical score for woodwind and strings. The woodwind part (WOOD.) is in the upper staff, and the strings part (STRINGS.) is in the lower staff. The strings are marked with a pizzicato (pizz.) instruction. The woodwind part has a melodic line, and the strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment.

The shadow of a sigh in the strings

STRINGS.

pp f

A musical score for strings. The score shows the piano accompaniment and the entry of string instruments. The piano part features a melodic line, and the strings enter with a dynamic of fortissimo (f). The dynamic changes from pianissimo (pp) to fortissimo (f).

mf p pp

A musical score for strings. The score shows the piano accompaniment and the entry of string instruments. The piano part features a melodic line, and the strings enter with a dynamic of mezzo-forte (mf). The dynamic changes from mezzo-forte (mf) to piano (p) and then to pianissimo (pp).

is hushed by a laugh in the wood:

CLARINETS. *dolcissimo.*

FLUTES. *pp*

(Accompanying strings *ppp*; bass an 8ve lower.)

Thus passes the opening *Allegro*, while the *Andante* seems but a more complete deepening of a perfect bliss:

*Andante quasi larghetto.*

STRINGS. *pp*

HORN. *pp*

Indeed, there is nowhere out of the range of songs, in pure tones, so loftily poetic an utterance of love's happiness.

It is Raff's freedom from an over-sensuous taint, of "emotional" fury (where feeling is falsely measured by the mere violence of passion), that has for the time obscured his music; it is the same trait that will bring it the more lasting place.

In the flow of melodies, with their general whim of interference and interruption, the first is full of a quiet, almost fearful ecstasy that slowly plays into the strong assurance, in the second, of absolute content.

(Strings, with clarinets and flutes.)

*Cantabile con espressione.*

This musical score is for strings, clarinets, and flutes. It is written in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two systems, each with two staves. The first system features a treble clef staff with a melodic line containing triplets and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic and accompanimental lines. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Cantabile con espressione'.

Separation comes first restrained by a patriotic, warlike mood. Nothing betokens sadness, unless it be the grave cast of the whole march.

*In march time.*  
**Pizzicati STRINGS AND CLARINET.**

This musical score is for pizzicati strings and clarinet. It is written in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two systems, each with two staves. The first system features a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic and accompanimental lines. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'In march time'.

But suddenly, out of the close ranks, the spirit breaks into tumultuous rebellion,



from which, after a sombre calm, it rejoins the war-march.

While hitherto all is of the clearest, the *Finale* is, by the nature of its text, restless, undefined, uncertain. There is no distinct melody or thought, save reminiscences of former ones, and these are all distorted into a hopeless wail. The wild pace of the basses knows no rest until, at last,

"Her soul is from her body reft;  
Her spirit be forgiven."

The soothing chorale ends the poem.

It is, perhaps, just to say that other interpretations have been current and even dominant. Many insist on finding in the third movement an approach of the army; in the *Agitato* a duet of the lovers (in the violins and cellos), Lenore pleading, Wilhelm resisting and finally joining the soldiers.

It must be admitted that the temptation is of the strongest, in the last movement, to find the actual incidents of the ride, funeral and nuptial in one. Nor is it well to cling blindly even to the best theory. At times it seems most clear to hear the whole story from the moment when to Lenore, despairing of her lover's return from the war,

"-slowly on the winding stair  
A heavy footstep sounded ;"

how he bids her ride with him

"O'er stock and stile, a hundred miles—  
Before the matin bells;

then the events of the furious ride, as the spectral guests join the nuptial throng, until

"Sudden at an open grave  
He checked the wondrous course.

"The falling gauntlet quits the rein  
Down drops the casque of steel,  
The cuirass leaves his shrinking side.  
The spur his gory heel.

"The eyes desert the naked skull,  
The mould'ring flesh the bone;  
Lenore's lily arms entwine  
A ghastly skeleton.

"The furious barb snorts fire and foam  
And, with a fearful bound.  
Dissolves at once in empty air  
And leaves her on the ground."

The strongest reason for the descriptive interpretation lies in the whole cast of the Finale; the reckless, ruthless discord of shrieking wood and clanging brass. In lieu of a musical reason it does seem natural to turn to a dramatic one.

The truth is that in a special subject like "Lenore," with its rapid chase of startling events, the line must be narrow between objective description and subjective utterance. Raff may have crossed it in momentary violence to artistic possibilities. When feeling is thus at the mercy of legend, emotional expression must bear strong resemblance to actual description; it will be a kind of negative of the picture.

But where there are two possible interpretations, the true lover of music will choose the one which lies within the natural sphere of the art.

---

Taken from *Symphonies and Their Meaning: Second Series* by Philip H Goepp (pp.257-267), published by the JB Lippincot Company of Philadelphia in 1902