composition with his spirited Lord Ullin's Daughter, I solemnly warned all whom it might concern that the feat, once invented, was an extremely easy one, and was likely to be extensively imitated if it were made too much of. And now in due course comes Mr Allon, tackling another ballad as solemnly as if it were the Mass, and spinning it out with wearisome interludes and repetitions beyond all patience. If Mr Allon will revise his score, and make a point of going straight through as quickly, concisely, and imaginatively as Mr MacCunn went through the better half of Lord Ullin's Daughter, I am prepared to deliver judgment on it; but as it stands I should only waste my time in attempting to pick the raisins out of the suet. Why Miss Liza Lehmann, with her very German intonation, should have been chosen to sing a Celtic ballad remains to be explained. With the utmost stretch of the high consideration which all musicians owe her, I cannot pretend that the effect was agreeable. At the same concert young Otto Hegner played a sort of glockenspiel *obbligato* to a bustling orchestral piece by Huber, the last movement of which was a rather barefaced attempt to make a *finale* by spinning a few barren figures out into sequences and rosalias. The work was announced as a pianoforte concerto. I did not hear the rest of the concert, a retouch of influenza having crippled my powers of endurance last week. It prevented me from hearing more than a portion of the last item in the concert of the Laistner Choir, the said last item being Schumann's Pilgrimage of the Rose, a work full of that original and expressive harmony which is so charming in Schumann when he is using it poetically instead of pedantically. What I heard of the performance gave me a highly favorable opinion of Herr Laistner's capacity as a choirmaster and conductor.

The most notable pianoforte recital has been that of

Louis Diémer, a remarkably clever, self-reliant, and brilliant pianist, artistically rather stale, and quite breath-bereavingly unscrupulous in using the works of the great composers as stalking horses for his own powers. The mere recollection of his version of the Zauberflöte overture causes the pen to drop from my hand.

FORM AND DESIGN IN MUSIC

The World, 31 May 1893

Whitsuntide brought me a week's ticket-of-leave from St James's Hall. By way of setting me a holiday task, Messrs Chapman & Hall sent me Mr H. Heathcote Statham's Form and Design in Music to study. I always enjoy Mr Statham's essays on Music, because, as he is a thorough architect, and writes about music like one, I get the benefit of a sidelight on the art. This particular essay is only a chapter from his Thoughts on Music and Musicians. It contains his five famous examples of melody, taken from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, followed by a sixth example of which he says: "As an instructive contrast the reader may take this cacophonous string of notes, which is put forth as a melody, but has no analogy in structure with those quoted above except in the mere fact that it consists of a succession of notes; these, however, have neither a common law of rhythm nor of tonal relation, nor any definite form or balance as a whole; the passage has, so to speak, neither beginning, middle, nor ending, in any organic sense, and there seems no reason why it should not wriggle on in the same fashion indefinitely: it is a formless thing."

After this, what do you suppose the "cacophonous string of notes" is? Obviously (to those who know Mr

Statham) something out of Wagner. And in fact it is the mother motive from Parsifal, that haunting theme that gives you *Herzeleide* merely to think of it. Mr Statham, having thus squarely confronted you with the dilemma that either Wagner was a cacophonous humbug or he himself hopelessly out of the question as an authority on form or design or any other artistic element in music, takes it for granted that you will throw over Wagner at once, and proceeds to kill time by making an "analysis" of Mozart's G minor symphony, which he parses in the most edifying academic manner.

Here is the sort of thing: "The principal subject, hitherto only heard in the treble, is transferred to the bass (Ex. 28), the violins playing a new counterpoint to it instead of the original mere accompaniment figure of the first part. Then the parts are reversed, the violins taking the subject and the basses the counterpoint figure, and so on till we come to a close on the dominant of D minor, a nearly related key (commencement of Ex. 29), and then comes the passage by which we return to the first subject in its original form and key."

How succulent this is; and how full of Mesopotamian words* like "the dominant of D minor"! I will now, ladies and gentlemen, give you my celebrated "analysis" of Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide, in the same scientific style. "Shakespear, dispensing with the customary exordium, announces his subject at once in the infinitive, in which mood it is presently repeated after a short connecting passage in which, brief as it is, we recognize the alternative and negative forms on which so much of the significance of repetition depends. Here we reach a colon; and a pointed pository phrase, in which the accent falls decisively on the relative pronoun, brings us to the first full stop."

* See I, 483n.

I break off here, because, to confess the truth, my grammar is giving out. But I want to know whether it is just that a literary critic should be forbidden to make his living in this way on pain of being interviewed by two doctors and a magistrate, and haled off to Bedlam forthwith; whilst the more a musical critic does it, the deeper the veneration he inspires. By systematically neglecting it I have lost caste as a critic even in the eyes of those who hail my abstinence with the greatest relief; and I should be tempted to eke out these columns in the Mesopotamian manner if I were not the slave of a commercial necessity and a vulgar ambition to have my articles read, this being indeed the main reason why I write them, and the secret of the constant "straining after effect" observable in my style.

I remember once in bygone years accepting a commission as musical critic from a distinguished editor [T. P. O'Connor] who had been described by Atlas* as a Chinese gentleman, he being a native of that part of Cathay which lies on the west coast of Ireland. He placed himself in my hands with one reservation only. "Say what you like" he said; "but for—[here I omit a pathetic Oriental adjuration]—dont tell us anything about Bach in B minor." It was a bold speech, considering the superstitious terror in which the man who has the abracadabra of musical technology at his fingers' ends holds the uninitiated editor; but it conveyed a golden rule. The truth is that "Bach in B minor" is not criticism, not good sense, not interesting to the general reader, not useful to the student—very much the reverse, in fact, and consequently exceedingly out of place in "a brief outline of the esthetic conditions of the art," as Mr Statham calls his essay, which would be quite unreadable by ordinary mortals if it were not for the fact that the

* Pseudonym of Edmund Yates, editor of The World.

author is a clever man, who knows and likes a great deal of good music (notably organ music, on which I always read him with pleasure), and therefore cannot help occasionally writing about it in an interesting way.

If Mr Statham will study the work of a modern experienced practical critic, and compare it with the work of an amateur like, let us say, the late Edmund Gurney, he will be struck by the fact that the expert carefully avoids "Bach in B minor," whilst the amateur is full of it; and the amateur, when he dislikes a piece of music, invariably enters into an elaborate demonstration that the composer's proceedings are "wrong," his melody not being "true melody," nor his harmony "scientific harmony," wheras the expert gives you his personal opinion for what it is worth. Mr Statham evidently thinks that it would not be criticism to say that he finds Wagner an offensive charlatan and his themes cacophonous strings of notes. He feels bound to *prove* him so by laying down the first principles of character and composition, and shewing that Wagner's conduct and his works are incompatible with these principles.

I wonder what Mr Statham would think of me if I objected to Brahms's Requiem, not on the ground that it bores me to distraction, but as a violation of the laws of nature.

Miss Martha Möller, who gave a concert at Prince's Hall last week, was clever enough to appear in a national costume, the most notable feature of which was a white tablecloth spread above her head by some ingenious contrivance. One gets so desperately tired of fashionable modes and materials that a stroke of this kind tells effectively at the height of the season. It gives Miss Möller a a Swedish Nightingale air, raising expectations which are heightened by her intelligent face and interesting demeanor. But when the singing begins it becomes apparent that though Miss Möller has the

strong natural feeling and quietly fervid expression which belong to the national costume and the silver ornaments, and can give an exceptionally able reading of anything from a folk song to an aria by Meyerbeer, she has not been altogether successful in teaching herself to sing. Her voice is naturally a clear free soprano of normal quality; but she has been fascinated by the richer, stronger, more sympathetic tone natural to some contraltos, and has imitated it, much as if Madame Melba had taught herself to sing by imitating Miss Alice Gomez. The imitation has unfortunately involved a constrained action of the lower jaw and retraction of the tongue which are fatal to good singing. Her tone is dry and artificial, and her execution forced and uneasy; so the verdict for the present must be that though Miss Möller imitates good singing with remarkable talent she does not sing well. She was assisted by Miss Yrrac, who plays the violin with a trenchant, well-resined bow, and knocks a good deal of exhilarating noise out of it; also by a young pianist [Jules Hollander] who gave a presentable performance of Chopin's Berceuse, but made only a poor business of Rubinstein's Valse Caprice, which requires a degree of power admitting of immense abandonment on the part of the player.

We have had a casual orchestral concert at St James's Hall from Hans Wessely, one of the professors of the R.A.M. There was certainly no lack of masterpieces for our souls to adventure among. The overture (Le Nozze) was followed by Brahms's and Mendelssohn's violin concertos, with Beethoven's pianoforte concerto in E flat between them. Wessely was not altogether successful with Mendelssohn. There is a certain quality in the style of that fastidious and carefully reared composer which can only be described as his gentility; and Wessely, who is a sincere, unreserved, original player, made rather short work of some of Mendelssohn's more decorous

measures. Even with Brahms he once or twice sounded a little brusque; but the fault is a refreshing one at St James's Hall, and it weighed very lightly against the qualities he revealed, chief among them being a considerable degree of that prime requisite of the concerto player, a sympathetic comprehension of the whole score, instead of a mere readiness to give a verbatim report, so to speak, of the solo part. This stood him in good stead in the first movement of the Brahms concerto. Thanks to it and to his smart execution, his excellent intonation, and a *cantabile* which proclaimed the natural musician, he won ovations which were by no means confined to the Academy students in the gallery. The pianist, Mr Isidor Cohn, did not venture to approach the first movement of the great Beethoven concerto in the spirit of a masterplayer—indeed, he made less than nothing of the exordium; and he missed (in my judgment) the indicated treatment of the accompaniment in the second half of the slow movement. Still, his performance was conscientiously thought out and not uninteresting, which is more than could be said for some older and more eminent pianists than Mr Cohn. The band, a Philharmonic contingent under Dr Mackenzie, who is beginning to take advantage of his great opportunities as an orchestral conductor, played the Figaro overture in a little under four and a half minutes, a great improvement on the silly tradition of scampering through it in three and a half. I should add, by the way, that some songs were sung with exceptional skill and delicacy by Miss Schidrowitz, who, though her light agile soprano voice was the worse for a cold, shewed herself an accomplished vocalist and a clever interpreter. She has only one habit which I dislike; and that is the preparation of a minor trill by a slow alteration of the notes of the major trill. The effect of the change is not pleasant to my ear.

A CONCERT OF NEARLY REASONABLE LENGTH

The World, 7 June 1893

I have to congratulate the Philharmonic Society on having at last made a resolute and fairly successful effort to give a concert of nearly reasonable length. Instead of the usual two or three concertos, five or six symphonies, selection of overtures, suite from the latest "incidental music" composed for the theatres by one of our professors, and a march or so, besides the vocal pieces, we had only about two hours' music; and though that is a good half-hour too much, still, it is better than two hours and forty or fifty minutes. We also had the orchestra under the command of conductors who, as their own works were in hand, were strongly interested in making the most of the occasion; and the result was instructive.

Saint-Saëns' Rouet d'Omphale is trivial enough to satisfy even the weariest of the unhappy persons who go to the Philharmonic for the sake of culture, under compulsion of fashion or their parents, and who invariably betray themselves by the rapture with which they greet any of those bogus concertos or symphonies which are really only very slightly developed *suites de ballet,* with episodical barcarolles disguised as "second subjects." But it afforded the relief of contemplating a broad expanse of finely graded sound between the *fortissimo* of the band as Saint-Saëns handled it and its *pianissimo.* There were ten degrees of color and force in the gradation where there is usually only one; and even these did not exhaust the possible range of effect, for the orchestra is capable of a much more powerful *fortissimo* than Saint-Saëns required from it.