

The Musical Gazette (London, 1856-1859)

Published weekly in London between 26 January 1856 and 5 March 1859, *The Musical Gazette: An Independent Journal of Musical Events and General Advertiser and Record of Public Amusements* [MUG] consists of forty-nine issues in 1856, fifty-two issues in both 1857 and 1858, and ten issues in 1859. Each issue is twelve pages in length beginning with two pages of advertisements. Published by John Smith from 1856 to 1858 and William Ivery Hays in 1859, the publisher's office moved frequently, from addresses in the Strand, Fleet Street, and Cheapside.

Although never named in the journal, the editor was George Handy Lake (1827-December 24, 1865).¹ Born in Uxbridge, he held various organ appointments in London. As a composer, he was best known for his oratorio *Daniel* (on text by Hannah More), premiered in Exeter Hall in 1852 and subsequently published by Addison & Hollier. He also composed part-songs, ballads, and dance music. He served as music critic for the *Sunday Times*² until his death at which point he was succeeded by Joseph Bennett.³

Other editors, writers and correspondents are likewise unidentified in MUG, though references can be found to Henry Smart, Dr. William Spark, and Henry Willis as contributors.⁴ In a letter to the editor, a reference is made to a Mr. Harris who may have been connected with the journal.⁵ No reason is given for the journal's sudden demise, though Lake apparently suffered from a lengthy and unidentified illness.⁶ Nearly all criticism in MUG is unsigned.

Noting that "amusements in London are now a serious matter,"⁷ the journal's writers chronicle musical performances in London, throughout England (the large industrial cities: Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Sheffield), and in the principal cities of Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh) and Ireland (Belfast and Dublin). The editors seek to establish an independent voice in criticism, one free from the influence of advertisers and the music industry.⁸ Referring to the state of writing on music in London, and assuming competition with other well-known journals such as *The Musical World* and *The Musical Times*, and with reports on musical activities in the daily newspapers, the editors remark that "we have not started this paper in the slightest spirit of opposition to any

¹ See James D. Brown, *British Musical Biography* (Birmingham: S. S. Stratton, 1897): 236. "Nouvelles," *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 33 no. 3 (21 janvier 1866): 22. He was father to George Ernest Lake (1854-1891), also an organist and composer.

² "Marriages." *The Musical Times* 27 no. 524 (1 October 1886): 616.

³ "Journalists on their holiday." *The Newspaper Press* 5 no. 60 (1 November 1871): 299.

⁴ John Watson Warman, "The Musical Gazette" in *The Organ: Writings and Other Utterances...* Part I. Thornton Heath, Surrey : J.W. Warman, 1898-1904: 250.

⁵ Harris was identified by William Lockyer as a potential collaborator when discussing the editor's attacks on the Vocal Association. William Lockyer, "The Vocal Association. To the Editor of the *Musical Gazette*." *The Musical Gazette* 3 no. 51 (December 18, 1851): 608.

⁶ See the obituary in *The Musical World*, 43 no. 52 (December 30, 1865): 819.

⁷ *The Musical Gazette* 1 no. 1 (26 January 1856): 2-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

musical publication existing, or the musical portion of any newspaper,” and note the precariousness of music journal publication in that during the seven years preceding the journal’s founding, two unnamed music journals had been established but soon ceased to exist.

Each issue begins with advertising, followed by an editorial concerning timely topics, frequently about recent and forthcoming performances. The much debated idea of musical performances on Sundays, the activities of musical associations, concerts at the Crystal Palace (organized by George Grove), and the nuisance of street musicians are frequently encountered topics. Moral and musical controversies surrounding the first performances of Verdi’s *La Traviata* in London figure prominently in 1856 and 1857. The much-debated state of English music, particularly English opera, and the activities of British musicians and professors of music are important among the subjects treated. These include reference to the appointment of William Sterndale Bennett as Professor of Music at Cambridge and the first performance and widespread repetitions of Michael Costa’s oratorio *Eli*. The activities of native British composers including a young Arthur Sullivan and two members of the older generation, Michael Balfe and Henry Bishop, are regularly discussed, as are composers from the Continent residing in Britain such as Giovanni Bottesini and Julius Benedict. The journal criticizes the “indiscriminate laudation” of Jenny Lind⁹ surrounding her participation in a performance of Schumann’s *Paradise and the Peri* conducted by Sterndale Bennett. The controversy concerning the adoption of equal temperament tuning and the French “diapason normal” is an important topic in the journal’s columns. Remarks concerning the history and construction of the bell “Big Ben” at the Houses of Parliament appear frequently. Following the weekly editorial, a regular column lists the command performance programs at Buckingham Palace without comment.

Reviews of concerts, both local and provincial, comprise the largest portion of each issue. Under the rubric “Metropolitan,” performances by both the Sacred Harmonic Society and the London Sacred Harmonic Society, the Amateur Musical Society, the Musical Union, the Classical Harmonists, Henry Leslie’s Choir, the London Polyhymnian Choir, the Saturday and Monday Popular Concerts, both the Philharmonic Society and the New Philharmonic Society, the Crystal Palace concerts, and the Royal Academy of Music faculty and student concerts are reviewed. Reports are given from the main musical festivals in Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Norwich, and those of the Festival Three Choirs given in Gloucester (1856), in Worcester (1857) and in Hereford (1858). Concerts by important British performers include those by the organist W. T. Best, the pedagogue and conductor John Hullah, the pianists Arabella Goddard, Charles Hallé and Walter Macfarren, the violinists William Carrodus and Wilma Norman Neruda, the clarinetist Henry Lazarus, the conductors August Manns and Alfred Mellon, and the singers Catherine Hayes, Charlotte Dolby, Wilbye Cooper, Sims Reeves and the vocalist sons of tenor John Braham. Reviews of performances by visiting musicians from the Continent include the pianists Clara Schumann, Anton Rubinstein and Karl Klindworth, the violinist Joseph Joachim, the conductors Louis-Antoine Jullien, and Otto Goldschmidt, the sopranos Angiolina Bosio, Guilia Grisi, Johanna Wagner and Maria Piccolomini, the mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot-Garcia, the contralto Marietta Alboni, the tenors Giovanni Mario de Candida and Antonio Giuglini and the bass Carl Formes.

⁹ *The Musical Gazette* 1 no. 42 (November 8, 1856): 494.

Reviews of operatic performances—given at Her Majesty’s Theatre, the Covent Garden Theatre (Royal Italian Opera), the Drury Lane Theatre and the Standard, Olympic, and Strand theatres—figure prominently. The work of impresarios Benjamin Lumley and Frederick Gye in their search for and engagement of Continental singers is regularly recorded. The operatic repertoires of the various theatres feature the operas of Auber, Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Rossini and Verdi and ballets, often sandwiched between the acts of the operas. English operas presented in London and in the Provinces by the English opera companies of Susan Pyne and William Harrison, Howard Glover among others, are well reported in the journal. The activities of important military bands, the Coldstream Guards’ Band, the Grenadier Guards’ Band and the Life Guards’ Band are regularly discussed.

Extensive reviews of musical performances in provincial cities, treated significantly in MUG, are drawn from the communications of unnamed correspondents. Foreign reports are largely copied from continental journals. Reviews of recently published music appear in the journal’s first two years. Correspondence and miscellaneous news conclude most issues with occasional serialized biographies of musicians past and present.

This RIPM publication is based on two copies of the journal. The British Library run, widely available on microfilm, is complete through Volume III, No. 34 (August 21, 1858). The remaining issues of 1858 and 1859 were found in a copy held by the Boston Public Library.