

***The Musical Gazette* (1854-1855)**

The Musical Gazette [MGA] was published weekly on Saturdays in New York City by the Mason Brothers from 11 November 1854 until 5 May 1855, and comprised twenty-six weekly numbers, the first two containing sixteen pages each, the remainder eight pages each. The issues are numbered from 1 through 26 and the pages are numbered consecutively from 1 through 208.

In 1851 Daniel Gregory Mason (1820-1869) and his brother Lowell Mason (1823-1885)—sons of music educator and composer Lowell Mason—united with Henry W. Law to create the Mason & Law publishing firm. Daniel Gregory and Lowell Mason, Junior established in 1853 their own firm, the Mason Brothers, publishers of secular and religious music, school textbooks, histories, English and French dictionaries and music periodicals.¹ In 1854 they undertook publication of *The Choral Advocate and Singing-Class Journal*, and began two new musical periodicals in November of that year, *The Musical Gazette* (edited by Lowell Mason, Junior) and *The Musical Review*. After 5 May 1855 MGA was absorbed into another music journal published by the Mason Brothers, *The New-York Musical Review and Choral Advocate* which was then renamed *The New-York Musical Review and Gazette*.² The Mason Brothers' principal goal for MGA was publication of a journal "devoted to the higher departments of musical literature and criticism; ... Musical news from all parts of the world, where music is cultivated, will be promptly and regularly given."³

Each page of MGA is printed in a two-column format and issues are organized in three main parts. The first comprises a miscellaneous collection of contemporary musical news entitled "Musical Gossip" (forthcoming and current musical events in the United States and Europe), followed by three to five articles and/or reviews. The articles treated well-known European and American musicians, musical organizations, musical critics, and compositions; the reviews treat operatic, symphonic and chamber music performances.

The second, a review section, contains several parts: an extensive weekly two-part review entitled "Our Musical Correspondence," that is reviews from the journal's correspondents. This is divided into: "Domestic," which chronicles and reviews concerts and operas in the major mid-century American cities (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Albany), and, "Foreign," which offers reports about musical activities in European cities (London, Paris, Leipzig, Berlin, Vienna and Cologne). A multi-sectioned column of reviews and news entitled "Foreign Musical

¹ In 1869 following the death of Daniel Gregory Mason, Lowell and Henry Mason sold the Mason Brothers publications to the Oliver Ditson Company. In addition to *The Musical Gazette* and *The Choral Advocate and Singing-Class Journal*, the Mason Brothers began publishing *The New York Musical Gazette* in 1866. The publishers Biglow & Main assumed publication in 1869 following the closure of Mason Brothers.

² These journals were part of the larger Mason Brothers publication, *The Choral Advocate and Singing-Class Journal*, which was published in New York from 1850 to 1873 (and underwent several subsequent title changes including the *New-York Musical Review and Gazette*) to be eventually known in 1867 as the *New York Weekly Review*. *The Choral Advocate* also absorbed other publications including *The Message Bird*, *Saroni's Musical Times*, and the *New York Musical World*.

³ MGA, No. 2 (18 November 1854): 16.

Intelligence” (drawn from other American and European publications), an occasional independent article, and a column entitled “New Musical Publications Abroad” are included sporadically. Third, a large section entitled “Miscellany,” includes articles dealing with various aspects of the history of music (the works of Mozart, Clementi, Beethoven, Hummel, Weber, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, and Henry Litolff) and reviews of pianoforte and song sheet-music. Each issue concludes with one page of advertisements for music and instrument sales.

Much of MGA’s attention focused on extensive reviews of operatic performances in New York, Boston and Philadelphia by five opera troupes: the Grisi and Mario Opera Company, the Pyne and Harrison English Opera Company, Niblo’s English Opera Company, the German Opera Company, and a troupe at the New York Academy of Music directed by Ole Bull and Max Maretzek. The repertory of the first and last of these troupes was predominantly made up of Italian operas by composers of the bel canto age: Rossini (*Semiramide*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Guillaume Tell*), Bellini (*Norma* and *I Puritani*), Donizetti (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Favorita*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Don Pasquale* and *Maria di Rohan*) and Verdi (*Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*). The English-language troupes performed Auber’s *La Syren* and *Crown Diamonds*, William Vincent Wallace’s *Maritana*, Donizetti’s *Lucy of Lammermoor* and Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*, while the German company featured Weber’s *Der Freischütz*, Flotow’s *Martha* and *Alessandro Stradella*, and Bellini’s *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*. The singers were of variable quality: soprano Giulia Grisi and tenor Mario were found disappointing owing to their frequent indispositions and the general decline of their voices, while baritone Cesare Badialli’s voice (and stage presence) and the voices of tenor Pasquale Brignoli and soprano Signora Steffenone were greatly lauded at the New York Academy of Music. The English soprano Louisa Pyne received generous tribute to the excellence of her singing, but her co-performer, tenor William Harrison was found to be of harsh voice and manner. The reviews demonstrate an extensive and deep knowledge of Italian, French, English and German opera, their languages and the art of singing on the part of the journal’s correspondents. The reviewers do not hesitate to remark also on the lack of attendance and resultant financial problems that beset the various troupes.

In each of the three principal American cities, vocal and instrumental concerts receive thorough reviews from critics who discuss both the repertory and the accomplishments of the vocal soloists and instrumentalists. Choral music performed by the Boston Handel and Haydn Society, the Musical Education Society and the Mendelssohn Choral Society; the Philadelphia Harmonia Sacred Music Society; and the New York Harmonic Society was an important feature of American musical life in the 1850s. These ensembles presented Handel’s *Messiah*, Haydn’s *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, Lindpaintner’s *The Widow of Nain*, Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, American composers C. C. Perkins’s *The Pilgrims* and George F. Root’s *The Flower Queen* and *The Pilgrim Fathers*, and Rossini’s *Moses in Egypt*. The journal’s correspondents discuss the merits of each oratorio and evaluate the work of the conductors H. Eckhardt and Carl Zerrahn, and the vocal soloists featuring resident singers Arthurson (tenor), Aiken and Wetherbee (basses), Miss Bothalmy and Mrs. Wentworth (sopranos), Anna Griswold and Caroline Lehman (mezzo-sopranos), and Miss Twichell (contralto).

The conductor and pianist Theodore Eisfeld was active in New York in two important capacities. First, he conducted the New York Philharmonic Society’s four orchestral concerts given in 1854-1855 at Niblo’s Garden. These concerts presented reviewers with a fairly conventional repertory:

Niels W. Gade's *The Echoes of Ossian*, Wallace's Overture to *Maritana* and Weber's Overture from the incidental music to Wolff's drama *Preciosa*, Mendelssohn's Symphony no. 4, Mozart's Symphony in G minor, Beethoven's Symphonies nos. 3 and 7, and Wagner's Overture to *Tannhäuser*. Pianist William Mason performed Weber's Concertstück at the final concert. Second, Eisfeld presented six vocal and instrumental soirées at Dodsworth's Academy at which string quartets by Haydn, Beethoven, Ferdinand Ries and Schubert; pianoforte trios by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schubert, and Spohr's Nonetto formed the main parts of the programmes. Pianoforte solos by William Mason and Richard Hoffmann (a recent English immigrant), and vocal selections by Mme Wallace-Bouchelle, Georgina Stuart and Anna Griswold filled out the concert offerings.

The many activities of William Mason, an important American pupil of Franz Liszt, are discussed in numerous concert reviews dealing with Mason's piano-forte virtuosity, opinions on composition and piano-forte performance,⁴ New York and Western concert tours⁵ and improvisatory skills.⁶

Philadelphia's concert life receives little attention from the journal's local correspondent, who limits his reports to news about pianists Thornbecke and Wolfsohn's soirées of chamber music. The proposed building of the Philadelphia Academy of Music is announced in the journal. Boston, on the other hand exhibits an active concert life in its several venues including the newly-built Boston Music Hall, piano manufacturer Jonas Chickering's Rooms, Hallett and Davis's Rooms, the Boston Melodeon, Tremont Temple and the Boston Theater. Important Boston ensembles, the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, the Orchestral Union, the Musical Fund Society, and the Musical Education Society are the focus of the review columns. Soirées by individual singers and musicians, among them tenor Harrison Millard (recently returned from Italian vocal training), pianists J. C. D. Parker, Gabrielle de La Motte and William Mason, the Bostonians Pianoforte Trio, clarinetist Thomas Ryan and violoncellist August Fries, presented concerts of a considerable but conventional concert repertory.

Many reports deal with the current state of musical life in Europe. These are extracted from major German journals, the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitschrift*, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Music* and the *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, the French *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* and the London *Musical World*. Of interest are the activities of Franz Liszt, in particular his so-called "Society of Murls"—made up of the many musicians associated with him in Weimar⁷—and Liszt's role as an advocator of modern music.⁸ There are also numerous reports of concert and operatic performances of eminent musicians such as the violinists Antonio Bazzini, Joseph Joachim and Wilhelm Ernst, pianists Clara Schumann and Arabella Goddard, soprano Sophie Cruvelli, tenors Sims Reeves and Roger, and an early biographical note about the young composer Johannes Brahms.

⁴ "William Mason: His Ideas on Musical Composition and Piano-forte Playing," MGA 1 (11 November 1854): 6-7.

⁵ "Wm. Mason's Concert Tour," MGA 2 (18 November 1854): 16. The 1854-1855 tour took the pianist to nine states.

⁶ "What Sometimes Happens to Concert-givers," MGA 15 (17 February 1855): 124-25.

⁷ William Mason (1829-1908), younger brother of Daniel Gregory and Lowell Mason studied with Liszt in Weimar in 1853 and 1854, and was associated with the "Society of Murls." See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); 228, for a description of the Society.

⁸ "Liszt and the Modern Music of Germany," MGA 2 (18 November 1854): 9-10.

Articles on the state of English opera, republished from *Dwight's Journal of Music* and the London *Musical World* deal with the lack of quality in works by English composers. The journal's London correspondent and the anonymous author of the journal's "Musical Gossip" column report on the English public's reaction to the London Philharmonic Society's decision to engage Richard Wagner as their new conductor, as well as Wagner's initial appearances in that role. A biographical sketch of Wagner is also offered, discussing, among other things the literary works *Die Revolution und die Musik*, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, and *Oper und Drama*, as well as the operas *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and the then unfinished tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Reports of European concerts deal with the Leipzig Gewandhaus concert series, Liebig's orchestral concerts in Berlin and Jullien's promenade concerts in London. In its role as an educator of the American public, the journal gives biographical sketches of well-known European musicians including singers Cruvelli, Clara Novello, Reeves and Rosine Stolz, and composers Bellini, Brahms, Clementi, Flotow, Meyerbeer and Anton Rubinstein.

Several selections of the writings of the eminent American music historian Alexander Wheelock Thayer, who signed his articles with initials (A. W. T.) or the pseudonym "The Diarist," are found in MGA: a report on Beethoven's youthful years spent in Bonn,⁹ a three-part article on the musical life in Berlin,¹⁰ and reports about the German periodical the *Leipziger musikalisches Zeitung*¹¹ and the performance styles of Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann.¹² The Boston music periodical *Dwight's Journal of Music* (with which Thayer was intimately connected as a contributor and later a correspondent) is excerpted for articles about American psalmody,¹³ musical journalism,¹⁴ the necessity for audibility of English-language texts in operatic performances,¹⁵ non-copyrighted and copyrighted publications of sheet music,¹⁶ the requirements for making Americans a musical people,¹⁷ and the editor John Sullivan Dwight's stand against the London *Musical World*'s appropriation of his editorials and translations by other journals without attribution.¹⁸

Several articles discuss the controversy surrounding the setting of retail sales prices for sheet music in and out of copyright: "American Sheet Music,"¹⁹ "War among the Music-Dealers,"²⁰ and "Another Musical Congress—The Publishers in Convention."²¹ A response to the copyright issue is found in a letter to the Editor.²² Prominent among topics treated in the miscellaneous

⁹ A. W. T., "Bonn," MGA 2 (18 November 1854): 14.

¹⁰ A. W. T., "Berlin," MGA 14 (10 February 1855): 108-09; 15 (17 February 1855): 113; and A. W. T., "Berlin," MGA 25 (28 April 1855): 197-98.

¹¹ The Diarist., "What Was—What Is," MGA 20 (24 March 1855): 156-57.

¹² The Diarist, "Joachim and Clara Schumann," MGA 21 (31 March 1855): 167-68.

¹³ "Dwight's Journal and American Psalmody," MGA 5 (9 December 1855): 36.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John Sullivan Dwight, "English Opera," MGA 5 (9 December 1854): 62.

¹⁶ "War Among the Music-dealers," MGA 12 (27 January 1855): 91.

¹⁷ John Sullivan Dwight, "On Bringing Out New Works," MGA 20 (24 March 1855): 149-50.

¹⁸ "Musical Gossip, MGA 21 (31 March 1855): 162.

¹⁹ "American Sheet Music," MGA 6 (16 December 1854): 48.

²⁰ "War among the Music-dealers," MGA 12 (27 January 1855): 91.

²¹ "Another Musical Congress—The Publishers in Convention," MUG 10 (13 January 1854 [1855]): 75.

²² Wm. Hall & Son, "Editors of the *Musical Gazette*," MGA 11 (20 January 1855): 83.

articles are the decline of negro minstrelsy,²³ the sale of five hundred American grand pianos to the Chinese (a commercial undertaking which is questioned owing to the lack of musical instruction in China²⁴), a history of German opera at its origin,²⁵ the birth of opera,²⁶ German criticism of the lack of progress in American music and musical life,²⁷ a history of the first music sellers and publishers in New York,²⁸ the advancement of music education in the United States,²⁹ and the authenticity of Mozart's Requiem.³⁰

The majority of articles found in *The Musical Gazette* are unsigned. Signed articles—by Beethoven, François-Joseph and Edward Fétis, Christoph von Gluck, Theodore Hagen, Heinrich Heine, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Franz Liszt, William Mason, Gioacchino Rossini, Robert Schumann and Paul Scudo—are reprinted from foreign journals. The writers of “Our Musical Correspondence” and “Foreign Musical Intelligence” columns are usually signed with pseudonyms, initials, or typographical signs.

²³ “Obituary, Non Eulogistic,” MGA 1 (11 November 1854): 11-12.

²⁴ “The Music-master Abroad,” MGA 1 (11 November 1854): 7.

²⁵ M. E. O. Linder, “The First Established German Opera,” MGA 4 (2 December 1854): 30.

²⁶ “The First Opera and the First Orchestra,” MGA 14 (10 February 1855): 115-16.

²⁷ “Go Ahead,” MGA 6 (16 December 1854): 41-42.

²⁸ “The Music Trade of New-York,” MGA 15 (17 February 1855): 124.

²⁹ “Music in Schools—Sings of the Times,” MGA 18 (10 March 1855): 139.

³⁰ “Mozart's Requiem,” MGA 20 (24 March 1855): 157-57.