

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THE VARIOUS KINDS OF ARTICULATION,
BRILLIANT EXECUTION, SIGHT-READING
AND STYLE.

§817. ARTICULATION.—818. DOUBLE-TONGUEING.—823. TRIPLE-TONGUEING.—824. COMBINATIONS OF DOUBLE-TONGUEING AND SLURRING.—825. THE METHOD OF ACQUIRING BRILLIANT EXECUTION.—827. GRACES OR EMBELLISHMENTS.—828. SIGHT-READING.—829. STYLE.

817. Articulation. The perfect articulation of musical sounds is an accomplishment possessed by vocalists and wind-instrumentalists only. When judiciously regulated it forms one of the most valuable aids to expression, but when employed in a manner opposed to good taste it becomes one of the greatest vices to which the interpretation of music is liable. The proper action of the tongue in articulation is explained in §§737 to 744, and this action should, of course, be always applied in accordance with the intentions of the composer, as far as they can be divined; indeed, there are occasions on which it is as important to observe the correct articulation as to play the indicated notes. It is so easy to pay attention to the *staccato* and *legato* signs with which modern flute-music is generally furnished, that there is absolutely no excuse for disregarding them. In the rendering of music which is destitute of such indications, the player must exercise his judgment to the best of his ability, and careful observation, with a little experience, will soon lead to the discovery of the style of articulation best suited to the character of the music. It is not necessary to enter into the details of the almost innumerable combinations of *legato* and *staccato*; examples of mixed articulation occur in almost all flute-music, and the modes of rendering them are obvious.

818. Double-tongueing is a term used to denote the alternate application of two different parts of the tongue to the palate; by this means an oscillation is set up which is greatly conducive to the rapidity of the action of the tongue. Rapidity being the only object of double-tongueing, the ordinary "single-tongueing" should be used in slow or moderately fast passages, but beyond a certain rate of speed single-tongueing, though it may be practicable, is not desirable, as it is liable to cause the betrayal of signs of exertion and fatigue.

Various pairs of syllables have been employed in order to induce rapidity in the action of the tongue; perhaps the earliest was that suggested by Louis Hotteterre (1699), namely *tu-ru*, but this method is not necessarily double-tongueing, because, in articulating these syllables, the tip of the tongue may be caused to touch the same part of the palate at each stroke, the rapidity being gained by the rebound, which is similar to that which occurs in saying *too-doo'* quickly. If the syllables be pronounced with different parts of the tongue, as they may be, then double-tongueing occurs, but not otherwise.

This system is almost the same as that so successfully adopted by Drouet, who used *de-re* (of course with French pronunciation), but very few persons have been able to attain anything like rapidity in the equal and continued utterance of these syllables. For such passages as the following they are, however, invaluable, and no other syllables can approach them in efficacy.



It is expedient to make the slight change in the vowels, indicated above, for the reasons given in §739. Should the dotted notes require to be played *staccatissimo*, the syllables must be

altered to *toot'-too-root'*, pronouncing the *oo* as in *foot*. Should a *mezzo staccato* be desired, *doo'-doo-roo'* must be used.

819. For many years the syllables *too'-tle*, or others which caused a similar action of the tongue, were frequently employed, particularly in England and Germany. There is nothing to be said in their favour excepting that they can be used with great speed, and that they do not obstruct the tone of the lower notes, but it is almost impossible, by their means, to produce a clear *staccato*. The double-tongueing of Charles Nicholson, who always used these syllables, was notoriously defective. Joseph Richardson was the only player, that I ever heard, who used them quite neatly, and even his double-tongueing was invariably *mezzo staccato*. *Too-tle* may now be considered out of date, and almost out of mind.

820. During the last century, the syllables *dou'-gou*, *deu'-gue*, *te'-que* (all with French pronunciation), and others of similar effect, came into vogue in France. I am unable to give the date of their introduction or the name of him who first used them, but from the time of Wunderlich (1755-1819) they have been generally adopted by the French players, and their use has now become almost universal. For the reasons previously explained, I prefer to use the vowels *oo*, therefore I should recommend *too'-coo* for ordinary *staccato* passages, and *took'-coot* for the extreme *staccato*, with modification of the abruptness of the consonants and the length of the vowels, as occasion may require. For the *mezzo staccato* it will be found convenient to employ *doo'-goo*.

821. Double-tongueing, being simply a means for the attainment of a particular end, should never be perceptible to the hearer, the greatest perfection that can possibly be attained in its employment lies in its complete disguise. It should at first be practised very slowly on one note, an easy one to sound, and not until the second syllable can be obtained with the same distinctness as the first, should the speed be increased. The accents of the syllables may, from time to time, be reversed; it is even useful, for practice only, to use the *coo* alone, in order to gain distinctness in its utterance. When both syllables can be

pronounced equally well on one note, a scale may be practised, each note being played four times; then a scale with each note played twice, and afterwards any *staccato* scales, passages or studies may be attempted, but no "running" passage should be practised, with double-tongueing, that cannot be played with facility *legato*. Without this precaution it would be hopeless to expect the tongue and the fingers to be able to move together.

While practising double-tongueing, extreme care should be exercised to prevent the tip of the tongue falling to the floor of the mouth, or touching the teeth. If the tongue be made to strike the palate with its *tip* at each repetition of the syllable *too* or *doo*, these grave errors will be avoided.

822. In double-tongueing with *too-coo* the *too* should be caused to fall on the accented notes, therefore, in playing passages which begin with unaccented notes, the first note must generally be struck with *coo*. This rule is equally applicable to passages in which the accented note is altogether omitted, as in the first bar of the example, and to those in which it is joined to a previous note by a slur or a tie, as in the second bar.



The occurrence of *too* twice in immediate succession should be avoided, if possible, except in such cases as the examples in §818; the second example in §824, and the following:



but under no circumstances is it permissible for *coo* to follow directly on *coo* in actual performance.

In using *too-roo* the accented note is generally struck with the second syllable, thus, in starting with an accented note, the order of the syllables would be *too'-too-roo'-too-roo'*, but, as before stated, I do not recommend this kind of articulation for even notes.

823. Triple-tongueing. In the execution of a succession of rapid *staccato* triplets, the employment of *too'-coo-too*, *too'-coo-too* is not uncommon, but it is objectionable on account of the undue separation of the groups which it is likely to cause. The alternate use of the groups of syllables, *too'-coo-too*, *coo'-too-coo*, gives excellent results, and has, besides, the merit of being perfectly easy. The practice of triplets on this system is extremely useful as an exercise, on account of the change in the accented syllables.

Single triplets, whether followed immediately or not by another note, may be rapidly and brilliantly articulated by means of the syllables *too'-too-coo*, the following note, if any, taking *too*. The same method may be adopted in playing any three quick *staccato* notes. Sometimes a single triplet with a following note may be effectively executed by *coo'-too-coo-too'*.

Some persons are able to play exceedingly rapid triplets with the syllables *too'-tle-too*, *too'-tle-too*, but very few can execute neatly, and no one evenly, by this means.

824. Combinations of Double-tongueing and Slurring. The only kind of mixed articulation which demands special notice is that in which the last note of an otherwise *legato* group is to be played *staccato*. The placing of the syllable *coo* on the final note of such passages as the following, affords great facility in execution.



Richardson's "Les Montagnards et les Bergers."



Idem.



825. The Method of acquiring brilliant Execution. An instrumentalist who is not a brilliant executant is held in little estimation at the present time, and whatever may have been said to the contrary, it by no means follows that the more important qualities, tone and expression, need be sacrificed in order that executive skill may be obtained. William Hopkins (1833) says that the number of notes played in a second "probably never exceeds ten or twelve." Even half a century ago this must have been somewhat short of the truth, but now it is not uncommon for double that rate of speed to be attained. Not even those gifted with the greatest musical talent and the most flexible fingers can hope to gain the rapid execution expected from every flute-player, without assiduous practice, and, as it is of the highest importance that this practice should be well directed and thoroughly methodical, I offer a few simple rules for the guidance of those who wish to become skilful executants. To some of the uninitiated these rules will perhaps seem like platitudes, but those who have been well taught will appreciate their value, and those who have been engaged in conscientious teaching will know how necessary it is for these almost self-evident truths to be kept constantly before the student.

826. I. Practise all kinds of passages slowly at first. If you stumble, it will be because you are playing too fast. Having succeeded in playing a passage slowly and well, increase the rate, by the smallest possible degrees, until you gain the requisite speed.

II. Practise constantly, in all the major and minor keys, scales; arpeggios on the principal chords; sequences, such as passages of thirds and sixths, and, above all, the chromatic scale. Play all such exercises with regularly placed accents and with the most rigid equality. Should one part of a passage be more difficult than another, practise the difficult part by itself until it becomes as easy as the other part; thus you may save much time and trouble.

III. Watch constantly against errors of all kinds, and never leave uncorrected a single one of which you are aware, or you will incur the risk of vitiating your ear and becoming callous to faults that should be obvious. Stop, therefore, at the moment that any mistake occurs; practise a few notes on each side of the point of error, and then begin again some distance further back. If you can pass smoothly over the place where the fault occurred, well and good; if not, repeat the process again and again until you have thoroughly mastered the difficulty. Never commit the indiscretion of beginning to practise at the precise place where the mistake occurred. The more often you do so, the more certain you will be to stumble at the same place the next time you attempt to play the passage.

IV. When, after repeated attempts, you have succeeded in once playing a difficult passage at the proper rate, do not imagine that you have permanently conquered it; you have but succeeded in getting it ready for practice. The greater the number of times that you repeat a passage, *after* you can play it correctly, the less likely you will be to fail on a future occasion.

V. Do not be discouraged if you should be unable to play a difficult passage that you may have mastered at your previous practice. It is not to be expected that you would be able to play to-day, at the first attempt, that which you only succeeded in playing yesterday after twenty failures. Be happy if you succeed after ten trials; to-morrow five may suffice, and in a week you may be certain of success.

827. Graces, or Embellishments. The interpretation of the ordinary musical graces appertains to the subject of notation and is therefore outside the scope of this work. The graces are mostly easy of execution, and, with the exception of the shake, demand no special practice when they are thoroughly understood. To execute a regular and brilliant shake with a well-balanced accent is, however, a real mechanical difficulty to many persons, and this is most easily surmounted by practising the scales with shakes on all the notes. The shakes may be sometimes long and sometimes short, but throughout each scale they

must be perfectly equal in length, and even in rate. Long shakes should always end with turns; short ones may be practised both with and without. As a rule, a shake should begin with the principal, or lower, note and the accent should be equally posed on that note throughout the shake. Every shake *must* end with the principal note, whether followed or not by a turn. Regularity in a shake should be regarded as a greater virtue than speed.

828. Sight-reading. The practice of reading at first sight should be conducted on a plan diametrically opposite to that recommended for the acquirement of perfect execution, that is to say, the student should stay for nothing, but keep his time regardless of all errors in the notes. If he miss a passage altogether, let him go on counting the time and take up the lost thread as soon as he can.

The main points to be observed in sight-reading are to look well in advance of the notes that are being played, and never to lose the place. It will require some energy of purpose to follow the directions given in the last paragraph, but the result, supposing them to be carried out thoroughly, is certain: the student who at first may be only able to play a few notes here and there, will soon be able to read music with facility, and at the next step he will be able to play what he reads. Of course the practice of scales, chords and sequences will be an invaluable aid, inasmuch as it will cause many passages to be recognised at once, like familiar words, instead of having to be spelled over, note by note, as simple letters.

It would be hardly necessary to caution any one aspiring to become a sight-reader against the careless habit of beginning to play a piece without having fixed the signature firmly in his mind, were it not that this is an extremely common vice amongst young players. The result of the error is tolerably certain: after having played some wrong notes the player will get flurried; he will look back at the signature that he ought to have noticed before he began to play; he will probably lose his place in so doing, and then will accrue disaster and collapse!

Nothing is more conducive to fluent reading than practising flute-duets, trios and quartets, and there is no more delightful amusement. Fortunately there are numerous excellent compositions of this class which can easily be obtained.

829. Style, or the appropriate interpretation of musical ideas, is a subject so wide in its scope, and so intricate in its ramifications, that any attempt to render justice to it, in the space at my disposal, would be futile; moreover, correct style cannot be taught by words; he who would become an adept in the art of musical elocution must study from living models, and seize every opportunity for so doing. The following rules may nevertheless be useful in assisting the untaught student to avoid the errors into which he would be most likely to fall:

I. Endeavour to understand the meaning of the composer, and in every note you play strive to give effect to his intentions. If you carry out this direction you will, of course, never omit to observe every mark of articulation, slurring and expression, and you will never make random variations in the tone or in the duration of the notes.

II. The incidence of notes must, as a rule, be regulated by strict time, but the characters of musical notation do not always give exact indications of composers' ideas with regard to the proportions of sound and silence, though the regulation of these affords one of the most fruitful sources of musical expression. It will only be by entering into the spirit of the music that you will be able to discover whether you should hold a note to its legitimate ending for the sake of smoothness, or shorten it for the sake of lightness, abruptness, or other reasons.

III. When a passage of notes of equal (supposititious) value, consists of slurred notes followed by one or more *staccato* notes, let the last note of the slur be as short as the *staccato* note which follows, and never mix up the different varieties of *staccato*.

IV. Let all inflections of tone be in good taste, and do not commit the extravagance of rendering a *forzando* (or other mark of similar meaning), which occurs in a *pianissimo*, by a sudden *fortissimo*. On the contrary; let your general rule be to play such

a *forzando* as a *piano*. Only a *forzando* in a *forte*, should be rendered as a *fortissimo*.

V. Never cause a sudden accession of strength immediately after the beginning of an articulated note. Nothing gives a more ugly effect, unless it be the forcing of a syncopated note in the middle.

VI. In every performance there must be a generally rigid observance of the mechanical conditions essential to all music, therefore let your aspirations be bounded by your powers of maintaining time, tune, tone, etc., and attempt no expression which is likely to lead you beyond your resources.

VII. Always keep expression within reasonable bounds, even when you have obtained perfect command over your instrument and while avoiding the error of being "too tame," never "tear a passion to tatters."

"Virtus est medium vitiorum et utrinque reductum."