1969

Musical ideas of Sidney Lanier

Wanda Jean Criger

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation


This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mail.lib.umt.edu.
The author is indebted to Dr. Joseph A. Musselman for his supervision and kind assistance in the writing of this paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSICAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL CHARACTER AND PHILOSOPHIES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSICAL VIEWS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Ideas about music formed a major segment in the life of Sidney Lanier (1842-1889). Lanier was able to incorporate music into his poetry when he defined music in his poem, "The Symphony":

To follow Time's dying melodies through,
And never to lose the old in the new,
And ever to solve the discords true—
Love alone can do.
And ever Love hears the poor-folks' crying,
And ever Love hears the women's sighing,
And ever sweet knighthood's death-defying,
And ever wise childhood's deep implying,
But never a trader's glozing and lying.

"And yet shall Love himself be heard,
Though long deferred, though long deferred:
O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirred:
Music is Love in search of a word."

"This recognition of the relation of poetry and music is the keystone to the arch of all Lanier's life and work." Although he is better known for his poetry, "his views on music and his equipment as a musician are of great importance."^ His musical views in his essays and letters

---


were influenced from two sides: (1) his musical background and (2) his personal character and philosophies.
MUSICAL BACKGROUND

Sidney Lanier's inherent musical ability can be traced to the sixteenth century. John Lanier, who played the sackbut, was a Huguenot in London where he founded a line of musicians which won recognition at the English court for generations. "The family genius for music assumed its numerical climax when another scion accepted the appointment as a musician of Queen Elizabeth, and his six sons followed the paternal footsteps."¹ Perhaps Sidney's most recognized inheritance of musical ability comes from Nicholas Lanier, known as "Master of the King's Music" of 1604.² In this office Nicholas wrote the scores for masques by Ben Jonson and Thomas Campion. He was an advocate of greater freedom for music in the recitative, and like Sidney, he was a flutist. Sidney once said, "I feel a sense of gratitude to old Nicholas for restoring me, as it were, to the pure stock


²Ibid., p. 5.
of Laniers."

Sidney was mainly influenced by his mother, Mary Jane Anderson Lanier, who had a deep love for music and poetry. It was through her that Sidney derived direct encouragement into the arts. From early boyhood, he had a tendency to express his feelings for the beauty of nature through music. He later chose the flute as his instrument of expression.

His first efforts were made at seven years of age, upon an improvised reed, cut from the neighboring river-bank, a cork stopping the end and a mouth-hole and six finger-holes extemporized at the side. With this he sought the woods to emulate the trills and cadences of the song birds. Lanier once said,

The flute is the pure yet passionate voice of the trees, peculiarly a wood's instrument, expressing the natural magic of music breathing of wild plants that hid and oak fragrances that vanish, calling up the strange mosses moldering under the damp dead leaves.

His talent was so evident that two musicians in Macon, Georgia, his hometown, gave him a few free music lessons. Lanier's father, Robert Sampson Lanier, however, while condoning his son's talent for music, taught that music may be a pastime with a gentleman, but never a

---

3Ibid.
4Lorenz, Life, p. 9.
5Ibid.
profession. Because of this attitude, Sidney hesitated to devote himself to the art. This hesitation and his father's disapproval caused a major conflict in Sidney's life between his desire for music and poetry and the thought that he should have an "acceptable" occupation. While at college and during the Civil War, this conflict continued to haunt him. He stressed this in a letter from Oglethorpe College in which he discussed what he was "fit for." He knew that his "prime inclination" was to music, and that he "could rise as high as any composer." He had trouble believing that he "was intended for a musician, because it seems so small a business in comparison with other things" that he could do.

He then decided to adhere to his father's suggestion and study law. Following the War and several years as a lawyer, Sidney was still obsessed with music and poetry. He defended the two arts in a letter to his father. In it he stated that since he was still true to the arts of music and poetry after twenty years of poverty, pain, weariness, college, army, and business life, he should "begin to have the right to enroll myself among the devotees of these two sublime arts."

---

6Woolf, "Lanier Revealed," 351, Quoted from Ward's "Memorial."

It was after this, beginning in 1872, when Sidney realized that he had tuberculosis and did not have long to live. He then decided to devote his entire life to music. He visited and played recitals in various cities. Because of his illness, Sidney went to San Antonio, Texas, for a change of climate. His wife did not accompany him, but Lanier faithfully wrote to her. In these letters Sidney made frequent mention of the reactions of various people to his recitals, such as that of Herr Thielepape who "declared that he 'hat never heert de flude accompany itself pefore!'" On another occasion the audience was reigned by a "profound silence" while he was playing, after which "a simultaneous cry of congratulations" was bestowed on him. "

Lanier later became the first flutist of the Peabody Orchestra in Baltimore, Maryland. This position rated him as "the first native American to attain high rank as a professional flutist." 


9Ibid., p. 625.

By this time Sidney's life was so involved with music that he even described the day in musical terms: "If the years were an orchestra, today would be the calm-passionate, even, intense, quiet, full, ineffable flute therein. In this scene one is penetrated with flute-tones."\(^{11}\)

With all this good music revolving around him, Sidney was constantly evaluating and criticizing his own playing. In one letter to his wife he stated, "The instrument begins to feel me, to grow lithe under my fingers, to get warmed to life by my kiss, like Pygmalion's Stone, and to respond with perfect enthusiasm to my calls. It is like a soul made into silver."\(^{12}\) In another letter he wrote that he could "read far better than at first," and he was "greatly improved in the matter of keeping time in the orchestra." He felt that he was "not yet an artist, ... on the flute," but that in a year he "could do anything possible to the instrument."\(^{13}\)

His playing must have been magnificent for many well-known musicians and critics raved about it. According to Asgar Hamerik, the conductor of the Peabody Symphony, Sidney


\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 626.

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 745.
"would read at sight with great facility the most intricate music." He thought that Lanier's mastery of the instrument came from "his immense love for art in all its branches, supported by a faultless ear, and a thorough education as a gentleman." Hamerik wrote that when Lanier played the flute, it was "transformed into a voice that set heavenly harmonies into vibration." Lanier's playing would "magnetize the listener," but Sidney "felt in his performance the superiority of the momentary living inspiration to all the rules and shifts of mere technical scholarship. His art was not only the art of art, but an art above art." Roland McDonald, a music critic for the New York Times, wrote a review of one of Sidney's recitals. He said, "Mr. Lanier's peculiarities in flute-playing are his cultivation of the low tones, . . . he is a thorough master of florid styles, executing the most brilliant passages with the utmost ease and grace."

His playing seemed to involve the listener's

---


emotions to such an extent that a description of his performance written by a listener tended to be flowery. Starke wrote,

Lanier's flute-playing was like the breath of heaven; it made your heart palpitate with intimations of wider scope as if you were brought into the presence of nature's creative forces, had dawn-breakings or flower-openings. It was to his mind what color was to his eyes; what his wife was to his soul. Its tones were like the cadences in the voice of a beloved woman.  

Through all this professional playing and practicing, Sidney still had time for inventing and composing. Along the lines of invention he did some work on what is now called the alto flute. On Sept. 2, 1874, he wrote, "I think I have invented a flute which will go down to G below the staff, and which will entirely remedy the imperfections that now exist in that part of the flute that extendeth below D." On Sept. 7 he wrote, "The long flute is nearly done, and I think it will work. It hath revealed sundry hitches which have taxed my ingenuity severely, but I have managed to overcome them all, and the final prospect is now good." Although he is not known as the inventor of the alto flute, Lanier's work might

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\text{Starke, \textit{Sidney Lanier}, p. 162.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{18}}\text{Lanier, "Musical Impressions," p. 746.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{Ibid.}\]
have helped the inventor, Theobald Boehm.

His musical compositions were not numerous, nor were they well-known. He wrote several flute solos, all of which are descriptive. These compositions are presently out of print:

- Sacred Melodies, for flute solo (1868)
- Field-Larks and Blackbirds, for flute solo (1873)
- Swamp Robin, for flute solo (1873)
- Danse des Moucherons, for flute with piano (1873)
- Longing, for flute solo (1874)
- Wind-song, for flute solo (1874)

He also wrote several flute ensemble works:

- Trio for flute, pianoforte & violoncello
- Quartet for 3 flutes & bass flute
- Tuno Religioso for 2 flutes

He made several remarks about the composition of some of these solos in his letters to his wife. On Feb. 28, 1873, he wrote, "I have writ the most beautiful piece, 'Field-larks and Blackbirds,' wherein I have mirrored Mr. Field-lark's pretty eloquence so that I doubt he would know the difference betwixt the flute and his own voice."²⁰

On Nov. 17, 1873, he wrote,

My last piece was the "Swamp Robin" which I only ventured as an experiment. 'Twas a curious psychologic study to note how it puzzled most of the audience, and how the few who did get into it, began, as it were, to look around them and to say --like a man who has suddenly ridden into a strange and unexpected road--Heigh! heigh! what's this?"²¹

²⁰Starke, Sidney Lanier, p. 162.
He thought *Dance des Moucherons* was good enough to have as his Op. 1. He was inspired to write it one morning when he was "was walking in the upper part of the yard before breakfast, and saw a swarm of gnats, of whose strange evolutions" he told his wife. He then "put the grave oaks, the quiet shade, the sudden sunlight, the fantastic, contrariwise and ever-shifting midge-movements, the sweet hills afar off, . . . in the piece."\(^{22}\)

Although few musicians are acquainted with the name of Sidney Lanier and his musical compositions, at least one well-known musicologist of his time recognized him. Alice Fletcher, who was famous for her studies of American Indian music, said that Lanier "was not only the founder of a school of music, but the founder of American music."\(^{23}\) She stated that before Lanier, all American compositions were imitations of German music. She said that he "belonged to the Advance Guard, which must expect to struggle, but which could not fail to succeed, with a hundred other things."\(^{24}\)

There is ample evidence, according to Giroux, that Lanier's flute compositions anticipated a style apparent

\(^{22}\)Lanier, "Musical Impressions," p. 745.

\(^{23}\)Quoted by Starke, "Sidney Lanier as a Musician," p. 389.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 627.
in contemporary flute music. \(^{25}\) This style encompassed the
descriptive, bird-like solos produced shortly after Lanier's
death and the period of about fifty years following.
Giroux also said that "Lanier, both as flutist and writer,
contributed much to the establishment of a characteristic
flute tradition in the United States. It remained for
Georges Barrere in the present century to carry on Lanier's
work as protagonist on the flute."\(^{26}\)

Gilbert Chase called him "a stifled genius, perhaps
the most magnificent and tragic failure in the annals of
American music,"\(^{27}\) because he was never acknowledged for
his musical attempts during his lifetime. Since he died
young, he did not have a chance to prove whether or not
he really could be a great composer. He was "a precursor
in the long struggle for the recognition and encouragement
of native musical talent in the United States."\(^{28}\)

\(^{25}\)Giroux, "Flute," p. 72.

\(^{26}\)Ibid.


\(^{28}\)Ibid., p. 345.
PERSONAL CHARACTER AND PHILOSOPHIES

Most of the people who knew Sidney Lanier seemed to like him and to consider him friendly, but often aloof. Laurette Boykin wrote, "All the children loved him yet no one could be intimate with him, for there was an elusive quality about him that kept him out of reach of less fine clay."¹ This statement reveals Lanier's concept that an artist should be an individual. A line in one of his poems illustrates this:

The Artist: he
Who lonesome walks amid a thousand friends.²

He, like the artist was an individual. He had a "subtle individuality which threw an aroma over the net-work of his closest ties, found its natural expression in his art, so that his greatness of character was co-equal with and perfectly attuned to, his greatness in art."³

He had a cheerful, hopeful, confident nature, which always looked toward a higher goal. "Lanier had the

¹Boykin, Homelife, p. 10.
²Lanier, Poet-Lore, 19 (1908), 483.
³Boykin, Homelife, p. 5.
constructive imagination, he had adequate ideas, he had the quality, the note, and much of the best material of culture, though time for complete assimilation and full refining was denied him; he had also that final gift of the poet-temperament. Thus, "by his spirit and his life, not less than by his work, he predicts the art of the future and points the way to it."

It has often been said that one of Lanier's major qualities is his ability to do whatever he did, no matter how modest, well. He "wasted no time in reproaches, spent none of his energy on self-pity, but heroically accepted such tools as were put into his hands, worked with the highest conscience and the finest courage on the material within his reach, and has left a few poems of permanent value." "He was an optimist. His soul teemed with verse and music, and whatever he undertook to do was entered upon with enthusiasm born of ambition to give full scope to his constructive and critical faculties."

Sidney’s letters reveal that he was a man who

---

4 Hamilton W. Mabie, "Lanier," Outlook, 71 (May 24, 1902), 239.
5 Ibid.
"hated but forgave and loved, who was reviled and ridiculed, who labored greatly, suffered greatly, doubted and faltered, but who died victoriously in the certitude that the assurance of achievement gives."

In addition to those qualities, Sidney considered his family and home very important. He once wrote,

To make a home out of a household, given the raw material, to-wit: wife, children, a friend or two, and a house, two other things are necessary—these are a good fire and good music. And inasmuch as we can do without the fire for half the year, I may say music is the one essential; for music means harmony, harmony means love, love means God.

This statement not only reveals Sidney's view of a home, but also his obsession with music. It is also evident here that religion played a dominant role in his life.

It could be erroneously assumed that Lanier was effeminate, because of his appearance. The best single physical description of Lanier was given by his friend, H. Clay Wysham:

His eye, of bluish gray, was more spiritual than dreamy—except when he was suddenly aroused, and then it assumed a hawk-like fierceness. The transparent delicacy of his skin and complexion pleased the eye, and his fine-textured hair, which was soft and almost straight and of a light-brown color, was combed behind the ear in Southern style. His long beard, which was wavy and pointed, had even at an early age begun to show signs of turning

---

8 Starke, Sidney Lanier, p. 4.
9 Quoted by Boykin, Homelife, p. 9.
gray. His nose was aquiline, his bearing was distinguished, and his manners were stamped with a high breeding that befitted the 'Cavalier' lineage. His hands were delicate and white, by no means thin, and the fingers tapering. His gestures were not many, but swift, graceful, and expressive; the tone of his voice was low; his figure was willowy and lite; and in stature he seemed tall, but in reality he was a little below six feet—withal there was a native knightly grace which marked his every movement. 10

Mr. Wysham’s choice of words is probably the greatest factor in the misconception in Sidney’s masculinity. For Mims specifically states that Sidney was not effeminate:

Sweetness of disposition, depth of emotion, and absolute purity of life are frequently regarded as feminine traits. These Lanier had, but they were fused with the qualities of a virile and healthy manhood. He attracted strong and intellectual men as well as refined and cultivated women. 11

Lanier’s roommate in college, William LeConte, also made reference to this dichotomy in Sidney’s personality:

"Sid though thoroughly manly . . . was as sweet, gentle, and affectionate as woman." 12

Sidney had two methods with which he could express his emotions and sentimentalities.


11 Mims, Lanier, pp. 308-309.

12 Lorenz, Life, p. 17.
He had two pets whom he loved with all his heart, --his pen and his flute. What the pen would not write in so many stanzas, what thought or sentiment went beyond the limits of the English language, he would breathe in soft tones on the flute; and thus he had two languages at his command--a positive and an abstract one. . . . 13

According to Lanier, "Whatever turn I have for art, is purely musical; poetry being, with me a mere tangent into which I shoot sometimes." 14 Through this experience in music and poetry, Sidney formed an idea of an artist's attributes. He gave the following lecture to the students of Johns Hopkins University while he was teaching there:

He who has not yet perceived how artistic beauty and moral beauty are convergent lines which run back into a common ideal origin, and who therefore is not afire with moral beauty just as with artistic beauty, in short, he who has not come to that stage of quiet and eternal frenzy in which the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty mean one thing, burn as one fire, shine as one light within him; he is not yet the great artist. 15

In an additional article he wrote:

The artist shall put forth, humbly and lovingly, and without bitterness against opposition, the very best and highest that is in him, utterly regardless of contemporary criticism. 16

This quotation recalls Sidney's idea "that life, as well as

14 Quoted by Starke, Sidney Lanier, p. 164.
15 Lanier, Music and Poetry, pp. 21-22.
music, depends on the principle of opposition and antagonism." He illustrated this element of conflict in a poem, "Opposition," of which the first, second, and last stanzas are quoted here:

Of fret, of dark, of thorn, of chill,
Complain no more; for these, O heart,
Direct the random of the will
As rhymes direct the rage of art.

The lute's fixt fret, that runs athwart
The strain and purpose of the string,
For governance and nice consort
Doth bar his wilful wavering.

Of fret, of dark, of thorn, of chill,
Complain thou not, O heart; for these
Bank-in the current of the will
To uses, arts, and charities.

This poem illustrates Lanier's belief in a kind of fate. He is saying that no matter what happens, a person should not complain, because it would have happened anyway. This idea voices a conflict of the will, an opposition to one's desires. Lanier sustained this idea of opposition to such an extent in his poems and theories that he eventually defined man as "a soul and a sense linked together in order to fight each other more conveniently." 

17Starke, "Sidney Lanier as a Musician," p. 396.
Lanier's concept of opposition may have stemmed from his father's objection to art as a profession. "He might perhaps have become the greatest American composer and the founder of a new school of music instead of a poet who in his life and work united and interfused the sister arts if his father had not taught him that music was an unmanly art."

Against his father's wishes, Sidney went into art after an unhappy business life. He wrote:

It is of little consequence whether I fail; the "I" in the matter is a small business; "Que mon nom soit flétri, que la France soit libre!" quoth Danton; which is to say, interpreted by my environment: Let my name perish; the poetry is good poetry, and the music is good music; and beauty dieth not, and the heart that needs it will find it.21

As is shown, Lanier was not self-centered. He had high ideals which he expressed in religious terms. The following excerpts from poems illustrate his ideals of perfection and spirit:

from the Crystal:

But Thee, but Thee, 0 sovereign Seer of Time,-- But Thee, 0 poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,-- But Thee, 0 man's best Man, 0 love's best Love, 0 perfect life in perfect labor writ, 0 all men's Comrade, Servant, King or Priest,-- What if or yet, what mole or flaw or lapse, What least defect or shadow of defect, ...what lack of grace,

Even in torture’s grasp, or sleep’s or death’s
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal, Christ?22

from Centennial Cantata:

Long as Thine Art shall love true love,
Long as Thy Science truth shall know,
Long as Thine Eagle harms no Dove,
Long as Thy law by law shall grow,
Long as Thy God is God Above,
Thy brother ever man below,
So long, dear Land of all my love,
Thy name shall shine, Thy fame shall glow!23

The romantic nature shown in these poems reveals
Sidney's attitude toward his era. One time when he was
asked what age he preferred, he said, "the Present,"
because "it is often asserted that ours is a materialistic
age, and that romance is dead; but this is marvelously
untrue, and it may be counter-asserted with perfect con­
fidence that there was never an age of the world when art
was enthroned by so many hearth stones and intimate in so
many common houses as now."24

All these philosophies and characteristics show
Lanier's genius. Wilson enumerated it in three points:

1. He had an unfailing resource in imagination
and harmony. "He is always fertile, and he
is hemmed in by no limitations; he never

---

23Oliver Huckel, "The Genius of the Modern in
Lanier," Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine, XIV (Oct., 1925-
June, 1926), 495.
24Mims, Sidney Lanier, p. 311.
falls back on already used material for capital."

2. "There is a uniform music in the way in which his lines fall on the ear."

3. He was master of the vocabulary of his language.25

"His inspiration was genuine and never forced; his great and acute sensibility furnished an intensity of passion to his intellect, and because of these gifts he probably suffered many angled pains over his errors and mistakes."26

It was through his genuine inspiration, his musical gifts, and his artistic personality that Lanier was able to record certain beliefs he had concerning music.

26Ibid., p. 16.
Sidney Lanier had some unique views toward the music of his time. Because of his musical knowledge, "his allusions to matters musical are always pertinent, never exhibiting the ignorance which places some poets in a ridiculous light when they venture to use the technical terminology of music."¹

Since Lanier was a flutist, one of his favorite "allusions" involved the reference to his flute. He would often use it as an example when describing a situation. This was, of course, because he was so familiar with that instrument. One such instance is found in his essay, "The Orchestra of Today":

From the modern musical imagination we get, not fables about melody, but melodies; not unearthly speculations upon music, but actual unearthly harmonies; not a god playing a flute, but the orchestra.²

Lanier had the god mentioned play a flute. He could have played an aulos, pipes, or a harp. Since Sidney's mind was preoccupied with the flute, he pictured a god as

playing a flute. He did this in several other articles. For example, in his explanation of the three classes of instruments in an orchestra, he used the basic tone production and key system of the flute to demonstrate the wind instruments. He wrote:

Perhaps nothing is more perplexing to one unfamiliar with orchestras than the goings-on and general appearance of the wind-side of it; the shapes of the instruments seem grotesque, and the arrangement of the keys on a Boehm flute (for example) or a bassoon seems utterly lawless and bewildering.\(^3\)

Why did Lanier use the technical name for the key system of the flute and not the bassoon? He could have used a clarinet or an oboe. He continues this narrative with an explanation of the "common type" of wind instrument:

Let this common type, then be a straight tube of wood, closed at one end, say two feet in length and an inch in diameter, pierced with a hole at the distance of an inch from the closed end, after the manner of a flute embouchure.

Although Lanier never states that he is describing a flute structure, the last sentence gives him away. It is possible this reference was unconscious in Lanier's thoughts, because the flute structure was so natural to him. It could also have been from the fact that the flute is a basic wind instrument. He continued the explanation with flute tone production:

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 28.
Let the lips now be applied to this embouchure, and a stream of air constantly increasing in force be sent across it. The first tone heard will be the lowest tone of which the tube is capable. ... we will here assume it to be exactly that C \text{middle C}. ... As the breath increases in form, ... the tone first produced will grow louder and louder, until suddenly its octave will sound, and no management of the breath can be any possibility to bring out an intermediate tone between this normal C and its octave.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 29.}

In addition to these references to the flute, Lanier often stated his belief that "the time is not far distant when the twenty violins of a good orchestra will be balanced by twenty flutes."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 38.} In a letter to his wife, he assured her that this idea was "not of any foolish advocacy of the flute," because she knew that since he could also play the violin, he loved that instrument with his "whole soul." He was speaking "in advocacy of pure music." He further qualified his belief by saying that "no one can hear an orchestra constituted like Thomas's without being convinced that, with all its perfection of handling, its material is not perfect."\footnote{Lanier, "Musical Impressions," p. 746.}

It is then evident that if an orchestra is to have such an increased number of flutes, it must have an increased number of flute-players. This posed a problem.
Where would one find such a large number of new musicians? Lanier's answer to this problem is that the players should be women. He stated that "with the exception of the double-bass (violin) and the heavier brass,—indeed I am not sure that these exceptions are necessary,—there is no instrument of the orchestra which a woman cannot play successfully." He even goes so far as to imply that at times a woman could execute some of the instruments better than a man. One of these instruments is the flute. Lanier describes the qualities required in flute-playing which are available in most women and only some men:

A certain combination of delicacy with flexibility in the lips is absolutely necessary to bring fully out that passionate yet velvety tone hereinbefore alluded to; and many male players, of all requisite qualifications so far as manual execution is concerned, will be forever debarred from attaining it by reason of their intractable, rough lips, which will give nothing but a correspondingly intractable rough tone.

If Lanier's suggestion that women play flutes or any instrument in an orchestra were followed, which it was, it seems that there would be an increase in the number of women in the music profession. This is against Lanier's basic belief that women should stay in the home. He thought that women should stay away from

7Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 38.
8Ibid.
any profession. He gave the following address concerning women suffrage to the Furlow Masonic Female College:

On the instant, when this cause \[\text{women suffrage}\] shall have attained its accursed object, on that instant the prophetic agony of Othello's tortured soul will consummate itself in a million manly bosoms, on that instant we will love you not, on that instant chaos will come again. As voters, we could not love you, for you would be no whit different from men, and men do not love men. As lawyers, as ministers, as physicians, we can not possibly love you; we ourselves are all these, and we want something besides ourselves; we want two in one, and not one in two.°

Lanier was not alone in his thinking. This was an idea entertained by many, maybe even most, men. They held their women on a pedestal, in an ideal position as homemaker and happiness. Lanier exhibits this popular obsession with the men of the time in the following section of the same address previously quoted:

Women of my country, in a vision which is no dream, I see society kneeling at your feet, supplicating, with mournful voice, with imploring eyes, with clasped hands, for its one divine necessity.

Give me, 0 woman, that which you only can give, a Home; that society which keeps its homes pure is invulnerable to all those serpents, physical, moral, political, social, religious, that creep and crawl about the world and leave their slime upon what they can not poison. . . . I implore you to preserve for me this genuine Holy of Holies, whose soft name falls on the ear as a

°Lanier, "Commencement Address, Before the Furlow Masonic Female College, Delivered June 30, 1896," ed. by Jay B. Hubbell, American Literature, 2 (Jan., 1921), 390.
rose-pedal falls on the water this Heaven on Earth, which men call Home!  

The increased number of women in music performance is characteristic of the growth of the orchestral medium. Lanier supported this growth when he wrote:

In the judgment of the writer, although the improvements of the orchestra have been very great in modern times, it is yet in its infancy as an adequate exponent of those inward desires of man which find their best solace in music. No prudent person acquainted with the facts will now dare to set limits to the future expressive powers of this new and manifold voice which man has found.

He thought that "when Americans shall have learned the supreme value and glory of the orchestra," when the nation had advanced beyond the piano as the only instrument, and when the American woman realizes that she could play any orchestral instrument, America would be "the home of the orchestra."

It seems that Lanier almost predicted this outcome. The United States has more orchestras than any other country today. Lanier compared the development of the orchestra to the development from the stagecoach to the railway train. He said that some day

---

10Ibid., p. 39.
11Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 45.
12Ibid., p. 23.
13Ibid., p. 80.
The orchestral player can so exercise his office as to make it of far more dignity and worth than any political place in the gift of the people, and that the business of making orchestral music may one day become far higher in nobility than the ignoble sentinelship over men's pockets to which most lawyers are reduced, or the melancholy slaveries of the shop and the counting-room and the like "business" which is now paramount in esteem.  

The allusion to the politician in the above quotation was also made in another article:

It is, in truth, only of late years that one can announce, without being liable to a commission of lunacy, an estimate of the comparative value of music and statecraft so different from that of Themistocles and Bacon as that it affirms the approach of a time when the musician will become quite as substantial a figure in everyday life as the politician.  

It is possible that Lanier derived some of his views from those of Joseph Mazzini (1805-1872). Mazzini was an Italian patriot who predicted and led several revolutions for Italian nationalism during the 1840's and 50's. He wrote an unpublished essay concerning his musical ideas which Lanier interpreted in one of his articles. Mazzini believed as did Sidney that music would become "the initiatrix of some great idea or conception." He thought that composers should "prepare themselves as if ministers of a religion." They should

---


15 Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 2.
make music "a priesthood and ministry of moral regeneration . . . preserving it in their own hearts . . . pure and uncontaminated by the spirit of traffic . . .".\(^\text{16}\)

Lanier went further with this same idea when he wrote that music is "the gospel whereof the people are in great need."\(^\text{17}\) It helps "the emotions of man cross the immensity of the known into the boundaries of the Unknown" and has in it that "awful and mysterious power . . . to take up our yearnings toward the Infinite at the point where words and all articulate utterance fail."\(^\text{18}\) Man "may relate himself with the Infinite not only in the cognitive way, . . . but also in the emotional way. Just as persistently as our thought seeks the Infinite, does our emotion seek the Infinite. We do not wish to think it, we wish to love it; and as our love is not subject to the disabilities of our thought, the latter of these two wishes would seem to be capable of a more complete fulfillment than the former. It has been shown that we can only think towards the Infinite; it may be that on Love we can reach nearer its Object."\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{16}\text{Lanier, "Mazzini on Music," p. 4.}\)

\(^{17}\text{Phillip E. Graham, Lanier's Thought in Relation to That of His Age, Ph. D. Thesis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927), p. 62.}\)

\(^{18}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{19}\text{Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 17.}\)
In fact, there are some who think that "music is to be the Church of the future, wherein all creeds will unite like the tones of a chord."\(^{20}\)

It is possible that Mazzini's writing spurred Lanier to this idea of the divine in music, but it is more probable that he had the idea before. Graham pointed out the religious nature of Lanier when he wrote: "If Calvinism is responsible for his sometimes irritating reiteration of the moral theme, it is also responsible for the intense earnestness which, after his music, becomes the finest quality of his music."\(^{21}\)

Lanier stressed the moral theme in his commencement address to Furlow Masonic Female College. He said, "Art is genuine creation." Since God is the first Creator, he must be the first Artist. Love is creative while Hate is destructive. An artist must be creative so therefore full of love. "This love . . . is not a sentimentality; it is that grand overmastering passion for all that is noble in human life, and for all that is beautiful in natural organism."\(^{22}\) He restated the idea that an artist must love the beautiful in his essay,

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 19.
\(^{21}\)Graham, Thought, p. 37.
\(^{22}\)Lanier, "Commencement Address," p. 400.
"From Bacon to Beethoven." He said that when people say that art is isolated from good or bad, they are not really artists, because "the artist loves beauty supremely; because the good is beautiful, he will clamber continuously towards it, through all possible sloughs, over all possible obstacles, in spite of all possible falls."²³

Lanier, according to Gates, fulfilled these qualities of an artist.

By heredity, by endowment, by training, an artist in every fibre of his organism, and in every aspiration and impulse of his soul, Lanier yet kept in touch with the men of his time, in the science that interests the schools and in the social questions that color the life of our generation.²⁴

As an artist and musician, Lanier employed music and poetry in his philosophical beliefs. He enumerated his beliefs in his essay, "From Bacon to Beethoven":

That music is the characteristic art-form of the modern time, as sculpture is of the antique and painting is of the medieval time;
That this is necessarily so, in consequence of certain curious relations between unconventional musical tones and the human spirit,—particularly the human spirit at its present stage of growth.
That this growth indicates a time when the control of masses of men will be more and more

²³Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 21.
relegated to each unit thereof, when the law will be given from within the bosom of each individual,—not from without,—and will rely for its sanctions upon desire instead of repugnance;

That in intimate connection with this change in man's spirit there proceeds a change in man's relation to the Unknown, whereby (among other things) that relation becomes one of love rather than of terror;

That music appears to offer conditions most favorable to both these changes, and that it will therefore be the reigning art until they are accomplished, or at least greatly forwarded.

Lanier often discussed his philosophy concerning the arts. He did not want anyone to miss the glory of them. One example of this is in his Commencement Address to Furlow Masonic Female College:

In the midst of our hot attack upon the impurities and poverties of our new life, let us have an unremitting care lest our ears be so deafened that we cannot hear the noble voices of Poetry and of Music, singing to us through the battle; and lest our eyes be so blinded that we cannot see the fingers of Painting, of Sculpture, and of Architecture, beckoning upward through the dusty smoke . . .

Be warned in time; do not allow yourselves to be run away with by those perverse exaggerations of the dignity of labor which are so likely to catch the unwary spirit of a people suddenly concerned to unwonted manual work.

Lanier advanced his esthetic philosophy when he said that there would be a time when music would be "rightly developed to its now little foreseen grandeur."25

25 Lanier, Music and Poetry, p. 3.

26 Lanier, "Commencement Address," p. 399.

Part of this grandeur comes from the fact that whenever the human imagination turned toward music, it "addressed itself to gigantic speculations upon the power of it, rather than to the more satisfactory business of expressing itself immediately in terms of the musical art. Instead of making music, it made a great ado about music." This advance must take place though because, "art, like life, is progressive. Man advances, each generation being equipped at the beginning with all the acquisitions of its predecessor; this advance is toward a definite goal; and art, if it would maintain a living hole upon the heart of man, must advance with him toward the same point."^28

The development of program music created a controversy in which Lanier sided with Wagner, Liszt, and Berlioz, who led the movement. In fact, Lanier, on several occasions, was called upon to defend the cause. At one time he described program music as a technical term denoting a composition which has been "specialized and intellectualized by the employment of conventional words." He compares this use to the song, which does the same thing. In conclusion he states that "if programme-

^29 Lanier, "Mazzini," p. 3.
music is absurd, all songs are nonsense."\(^{30}\)

Lanier further defended program music with the philosophies of Spencer and Darwin. One said that "music is a species of language," while the other stated that "language is a species of music." Lanier naturally agreed with the latter. He wrote that

A language is a set of tones segregated from the great mass of musical sounds, and endowed, by agreement, with fixed meaning... the only method of affixing a definite meaning to a musical composition is to associate with the component tones of it either conventional words, intelligible gestures, or familiar events and places.\(^{31}\)

Lanier conversely places music out of the realm of the intellectual. Musical tones, no matter what the instrument producing them, are made intellectual only by the use of words. "In other words, the intellectual relations are not affected by pure tones,—not by the tones of the human voice any more than the tones of a violin."\(^{32}\) This was further enhanced when he wrote:

How absolutely non-intellectual is the effect of pure tone, insomuch, that if the composer wishes to carry anything like a cognition along with music he must do so either by employing words or associations, such as those suggested by imitative sounds which the mind has learned to connect with given phenomena.\(^{33}\)

\(^{30}\)Lanier, Music and Poetry, pp. 8-9.
\(^{31}\)Ibid., pp. 3-4.
\(^{32}\)Ibid., pp. 5-6.
\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 11.
At this point Lanier found it pertinent to criticize those who did not get involved in the dispute. In truth, one would wonder at the blindness of artists who persistently keep themselves in leading-strings for the purpose of avoiding purely fanciful dangers, if one did not remember how music is yet so young an art that we have not learned to make it, far less to understand it.

Lanier remained neutral when he wrote: "If descriptive music is a mistake, let it be: the mistake usually lies in the description only, not in the music, for much of it is wonderfully lovely." His opinions concerning program music and his other musical ideas show that Lanier definitely was "full of the spirit of progress, of prophecy, of things to be." However, his life encompassed much more. He summarized himself with his interests in life and art in the poem, "Life and Song":

If life were caught by a clarionet,  
And a wild heart, throbbing in the reed,  
Should thrill its joy and trill its fret  
And utter its heart in every deed,

Then would this breathing clarionet  
Type what the poet fain would be;  
For none o' the singers ever yet  
Has wholly lived his minstrelsy,

---

34Ibid., p. 10.  
Or clearly sung his true, true thought,
    Or utterly bodied forth his life,
Or out of Life and Song has wrought
    The perfect one of man and wife;

Or lived and sung, that Life and Song
    Might each express the other's all,
Careless if life or art were long
    Since both were one, to stand or fall:

So that the wonder struck the crowd,
    Who shouted it about the land:
**His song was only living aloud,**
    **His work a singing with his hand!**

---

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources


———. "Mazzini on Music," The Independent, XXXI (June 27, 1878), 3-4.


———. Article in Poet-Lore, 19 (1908), 482-487.


———. "Commencement Address Before the Furlow Masonic Female College, Delivered June 30, 1869," ed. by Jay B. Hubbell, American Literature, 2 (Jan., 1931), 385-404.

II. Secondary Sources

A. Books


**B. Periodicals**


Blanc, Mme. "Lanier," *Littell's Living Age*, 217 (May 7, 1898), 411-422.


Mabie, Hamilton W. "Lanier," Outlook, 71 (May 24, 1902), 236-239.


