

We have three styles of music: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic. The latter style embraces all the notes and, indeed, there are an indistinguishable number of notes between the note upon which you start and that on which you finish.

It is not always that the *glissando* is shown on the music so the player must use his own initiative and employ it where he thinks it will benefit the rendition. When the sign is shown, it usually takes the form of a wavy line from one note to another. Sometimes it is merely a straight line.

STACCATO STYLE

Now let us have a little talk on the *staccato* style of playing.

This, as I have already stated, is the opposite to the *legato*, inasmuch as it is all detached. (The greater part of the "Grasshopper Dance", mentioned in a previous article, is in this style.)

There are two kinds of *staccato*: tremolo *staccato* and striking *staccato*. In the former they may be long notes that must be played tremolo, but which are not tied, or they may be notes that have a short straight line above each. In striking *staccato*, the notes usually have a dot over them.

This latter method of marking notes can, at times, mean *pizzicato*, which is a more pronounced *staccato* and is denoted in violin music to indicate a plucking of the string instead of playing with the bow. In mandolin playing the effect would be produced by "damping" the string after each note has been played. To do this you would strike the note in the usual manner, but immediately release the string from the fret without taking the left-hand finger off the string. The sound must die immediately after playing the note.

The best kind of music to enhance the mandolin is a mixture of both *legato* and *staccato* style.

MANDOLIN IS MUSICAL

In most of the pieces I have recommended in these articles you will find that both *legato* and *staccato* playing will have to be used.

Many uninformed people refer to the mandolin as a "tinkly" instrument. This is because they have only heard the instrument played (!) by indifferent performers. If one's style is well studied you know when to tremolo; when to play *staccato*; when to play *pizzicato*; when to *glissando*; and then your hearers will form a different opinion of the "sil'vry-voiced mandolin".

I have often played to people who have remarked that they did not know that the mandolin was capable of such entrancing music, or that they had never heard the instrument played like it before. A musical performance on the instrument has often brought me pupils just because they had had their appetite whetted by a good rendition of the kind of music suitable to the mandolin.

The mandolin is a versatile instrument. On it, almost anything written for the violin can be played, but do not attempt music which is unsuitable for it.

THIS MONTH'S HINT

How are the D and G strings of your instrument? Are the outer coverings worn at the frets? If so, fit new strings; the improvement in tone will be worth it.

Do not put on a single string; always replace in pairs. In fact, I always change my D and G strings at the same time as, both being covered strings, they are closely related and it is better to have a perfect balance.

For this month's piece I advise my own arrangement of Brahms Hungarian Dances published by Clifford Essex under the title "Hungaria". The arrangement is not too difficult and contains some of the best of the Viennese composer's melodies and will be found to contain both the *legato* and *staccato* styles of playing.

(To be continued)

The Passing of Olly Oakley

By THE EDITOR

READERS of "B.M.G." everywhere will learn with regret of the passing of Olly Oakley, who died in the West London Hospital on January 4th last following an emergency operation.

Although Mr. Oakley was a victim of rheumatoid arthritis for the past twelve years (and for the last six years was unable to move without aid), those who knew him personally never thought for one moment that he would die so suddenly. Apparently he suffered from periodic twinges of "indigestion". On Sunday, January 3rd, he felt excruciating internal pains after his mid-day meal, which he thought was an extra-painful bout of digestive trouble. The pain did not yield to the usual treatment and upon

examination by his doctor immediate entry into hospital was advised. He was rushed to hospital late at night and was operated upon within an hour.

In the early hours of the following morning he passed away peaceably without ever gaining full consciousness.

A post mortem was held, and the coroner brought in a verdict of death due to a punctured peptic ulcer.

If Mr. Oakley had been in normal health there is little doubt he would have stood a chance of recovery, but his prolonged inactivity brought about by his incapacity was against recovery from an operation of the kind he had to undergo.

The funeral took place on Thursday, January 7th, when the body was cremated at the Mortlake Crematorium.

Widespread sympathy will be extended to his widow and her four sons; three of whom are serving in the Forces.

FIRST LESSONS

Olly Oakley was born in Birmingham on November 26th, 1877, and his first studies in music were on the violin at the age of ten. Although he made good progress on the instrument, it was discarded after only twelve months tuition.

About this time, young Oakley's brother bought a banjo, which Olly acquired (in exchange for the discarded violin) at the age of twelve, and he commenced to study the fretted instrument seriously under the tuition of Arthur J. Taylor, who kept a music shop in Birmingham. When Olly Oakley left school two years later he was offered (and accepted) a job in the Taylor shop, but within twelve months this situation came to an abrupt end as the proprietor went into partnership with A. O. Windsor, a musical instrument maker in the city.

Olly Oakley then accepted a position in the music store of Joseph Riley & Sons where, for a time, he sold instruments and gave lessons on the banjo. After two years of this the demand for private lessons had become so insistent that he finally opened his own teaching studio; giving lessons to between forty and fifty pupils every week.

All this by a young man of seventeen!

Despite this success, Olly Oakley's father still used to travel to London once a week to take his son to Alfred D. Cammeyer for lessons; and later to Surbiton for lessons from Arthur Tilley (composer of "Queen of the Burlesque").

Olly Oakley always said that it was his father's encouragement and insistence on advanced lessons, when he himself thought he was "doing nicely", that paved the way for any success he later enjoyed as a soloist.

MINSTREL TROUPE

In 1894 an amateur Minstrel Troupe was being formed in Birmingham, and the young Olly Oakley (whose prowess on the banjo was beginning to make itself heard) was asked to join as a banjo soloist . . . and this is where the name of "Olly Oakley" came into being; for this world-famous player's real name was Joseph Sharpe. (He officially changed it to Olly Oakley by deed poll in March, 1922.)

In Mr. Oakley's own words, this is how the change came about:

"At the first rehearsal of the troupe I was asked what name I was going to use. (It was *the* thing in amateur theatrical circles in those days to work under an assumed name.) Hitherto, the idea of a name other than my own had never entered my head, but as it seemed to be expected of me, I began to look around for a name that would be easy to remember and, at the same time, trip easily off the tongue.

"I was a follower of the Aston Villa football team, and one of the forwards was a player with the name Olly Wakeley. (I remember he was nicknamed 'the daisy clipper'). The name 'Olly Wakeley' seemed to come easy to the tongue, and I thought if I could strike a name something like it I would have the ideal 'nom de plume'.

"I started with 'Olly this' and 'Olly that' and, calling in 'alliteration's artful aid', began thinking of surnames beginning with an O. Suddenly I thought of my grandmother's name of Oakley. I repeated the name 'Olly Oakley' to myself several times, and it seemed to me to have the sound usually associated with people in the public eye . . . so 'Olly Oakley' I called myself for the Minstrel Troupe, and used it henceforth for all my public appearances."

CONCERT APPEARANCES

Following the Minstrels, Olly Oakley

appeared at more and more concerts (all for charity) and, in addition, he was featured soloist with Arthur Taylor's "Mexican Banjo Band", which frequently appeared in and around Birmingham.

It was about this period that John Alvey Turner published his first solo: his arrangement of the "Rokoczy March". Players of the banjo possessing this solo will remember the photograph of a very young-looking Olly



OLLY OAKLEY

(1924)

Oakley appearing on the cover . . . a photograph specially taken for this publication.

Olly Oakley's first professional engagement as a soloist was at one of the "Saturday Night Concerts", which were a regular feature at the Birmingham Temperance Hall. Soon, he became a regular player at these concerts. Other engagements quickly followed, taking him farther and far-

ther afield; even to London, where he appeared at a Clifford Essex concert at the old St. James' Hall.

CHANGE TO ZITHER-BANJO

Then came an offer of a regular job after Olly's own heart; testing banjos in the Windsor and Taylor factory, with a studio set aside to enable him to carry on with his teaching.

Hitherto the instrument Olly Oakley played was an open-back banjo, but coming into contact with so many zither-banjos (Windsor and Taylor were noted for their zither-banjos) he suddenly decided that the smaller-vellumed instrument was more suited to his style of playing. Henceforth Olly Oakley played a zither-banjo, although the tone he produced from the instrument was more akin to the gut-strung banjo than the wire strings usually associated with the closed-back instrument.

But the young player's fame was spreading. More and more concert engagements were being accepted, and soon the Windsor and Taylor factory saw little of him.

He appeared at all the large fretted instrument festivals all over the country (and at this period every town and city in England and Scotland gave at least one big fretted instrument concert—called a festival—each year), and throughout the summer months he was featured soloist at many of the larger seaside resorts; often appearing with famous municipal orchestras.

FIRST RECORDS

Olly Oakley's fame was due in no small part to the hundreds of gramophone records he made.

His recording career started in the old cylinder days, and readers will no doubt be interested to learn how he started making records.

At the age of seventeen, he travelled to London to play at a concert in the old Finsbury Barracks. After the show, a member of the audience called "back stage" and, introducing himself, said he was a representative of the Edison Bell Phonograph Company. He asked if he (Olly Oakley) would like to make a test record for his company, and an appointment was fixed.

Some days later a test wax was cut. Olly Oakley's forceful style of picking (acquired through playing in large concert halls) was found to be ideal for recording conditions in those days, when playing under the old acoustical conditions demanded a banjoist who could pick his notes with force and still be musical.

The "Edison Bell Records" of Oakley soon became "best sellers", and it was not long before he was approached by The Gramophone & Typewriter Co. (later to become "His Master's Voice"). He was put under a three-years contract, with a retaining fee of £50 per annum, and then began the period when the best of Olly Oakley's records were made. When this contract expired, it was renewed for another three years and the retaining fee raised to £90 per year.

Olly Oakley records were issued in batches of twelve, and many of these were later to be re-issued on the black label G. & T. Co. discs.

It is interesting to note that the piano accompaniments on many of these recordings were played by Landon Ronald, who was later knighted and became world-famous for his compositions and conducting of symphony orchestras.

MEETS FUTURE WIFE

At the age of twenty-seven, Oakley was appearing on the pier at Llandudno, when, after one of his shows, he was introduced to a young lady who was later to become his wife and stage partner. She came from Liverpool, and at the end of the seaside engagement young Olly decided to make Liverpool his home.

He resided in the Merseyside city for eight years and built up quite a large teaching connection, but his services were required in London so frequently that he seriously thought of moving to the capital.

All this time he was courting the young lady he had met at Llandudno, and on July 9th, 1908, they were married. For a time the Oakleys lived in the Queen's Drive district of Liverpool, but eventually moved to London.

MORE RECORDS

His contract with the Gramo-



OLLY OAKLEY
(1929)

phone & Typewriter Co. having expired, Olly Oakley decided not to renew it as his services were being sought by so many other recording companies. And it was at this period in his career that he made so many of the gramophone records that took his name to every part of the world.

Recording conditions in those days were different to that existing to-day. When a session was arranged (and a "date" was often fixed over a whiskey

in a City Road public house!) the artist rarely knew under which label his solos would appear. Studios were often rented by all kinds of individuals, who sold the resulting matrices to any company willing to press them.

This happy-go-lucky state of affairs proved highly profitable to the recording artists, but as some of the matrices were often sold to more than one record-selling company (and often a company would re-sell the matrix to another company when they had finished with it; removing the identifying matrix number in the process) the person who tries to trace every record made by any one artist undertakes a complicated job.

ENTERTAINING TROOPS

When war was declared in 1914, Olly Oakley was one of the first artists to be engaged for the famous Broadwood Concerts and, in addition to entertaining troops at home camps for three years, he travelled to France in 1917 and appeared in tin huts, town halls, tents, and every conceivable kind of place where troops would congregate for entertainment as a relief from front-line fighting.

For some years his own Concert Party ("The Humoresque") had been formed each summer to tour seaside resorts, and after the 1915 summer season, Olly Oakley took the party to South Africa where they toured all the principal towns in the Union; scoring an enormous success.

This tour lasted for six months, and when Olly Oakley returned to England, he carried on with his concert and recording engagements, still finding time to entertain the troops.

BROADCASTING

After the war, Olly Oakley formed a Trio which appeared all over the country, including the London Palladium Sunday Concerts. Then he formed a dance band (with George Morris and Jack Marshall playing banjos, in addition to himself) which appeared at Blackpool for a season.

He started broadcasting in 1924 in the old 2LO days, and was often engaged for a week at a time to tour the various stations of the British Broadcasting Company, and for six years



OLLY OAKLEY
(1942)

was a frequent broadcaster all over the British Isles. (In those days, an artist would play from each station in turn; visiting the town in which the studios were situated.)

Mr. Oakley always enjoyed telling of the time when he stepped up to the microphone to announce his first solo... and he had clean forgotten the title. The announcer, seeing his dilemma, held up the music for him, but Olly had taken off his spectacles and could not see the print. The pianist came to the rescue by shouting out the name of the solo!

WEMBLEY EXHIBITION

When the great Empire Exhibition was opened at Wembley in 1925, Olly Oakley had secured the coveted position of supplying the dance band to play in the huge Stadium Restaurant, and three times daily patrons could sit and listen to first-class dance music being led by a banjo soloist who, as an interlude to "hit" tunes of the day, would play typical banjo solos. (Olly Oakley led the band playing his banjo standing.)

LAST APPEARANCE

In 1930, Mr. Oakley cut six sides for the Parlophone label (his only records made by the electrical process), but the dread complaint that was to cripple him for the rest of his life was beginning to slow up the fingers that hitherto had made light work of the most intricate passages.

He last appeared in public on New Year's Day, 1931, at a concert in Haltwhistle (near Carlisle).

Olly Oakley could play the most difficult solos with consummate ease, but he will always be remembered for his playing of such solos as "Sweet Jasmine", "Poppies and Wheat", "Queen of the Burlesque", "Spirit of the Glen", "Schaeffer's Jig", "Gay Gossoon", "Kilties", "Oakleigh Quickstep", etc.... solos that were many player's first introduction to the banjo. Although 90 per cent. of his solos were numbers written for the banjo, his playing appealed to the "man in the street" for he only played tunes with melodic appeal.

In addition to his many hundreds of solo records (and his duet records with Cammeyer), Olly Oakley recorded with Peter Dawson, Ellaline Terris, Stanley Kirkby, George Berry, Alexander Prince, Chas. Bonheur, Jack Starr ("A Baritone and a Banjo"), The Plantation Singers, etc.

COMPOSITIONS

During his lifetime, Olly Oakley arranged many popular melodies for the banjo and composed a number of original solos for the instrument. What player of the banjo has not enjoyed playing his "Rugby Parade" (written in the train whilst journeying to a pupil living in Rugby), "Dashwood Quickstep", "Fernbank Quickstep", "Marche de Concert", "Oakleigh Quickstep", "Pastorale", "Revelers' March", "Winifred Mazurka" (his wife's name is Winifred), "Tony" (named after his youngest son), "Two Cameos", etc.?

Despite his affliction in the latter years of his life, Mr. Oakley always enjoyed living. He was an avid reader and a discerning listener to the radio. He seldom mentioned his unfortunate condition and preferred to talk of the good times the banjo had brought him throughout his life. He always played the banjo because playing the banjo made him happy. The instrument brought him fame beyond the wildest dreams of the thoughtful young man who sold an odd string or two in the little Birmingham music shop, but fame never turned his head.

He was always ready to tell the interested listener of the countless happy days he had enjoyed by playing the banjo, but no one would learn from his stories that he was anything but "just another banjo player".

With the passing of Olly Oakley, the banjo world loses a man who did more for the instrument than any other single person I know. It was he who induced many others to take up the study of the instrument. It was he who remained the inspiration for many a struggling player.

His name was known the world over, and to players and non-players alike the words "Olly Oakley" became synonymous with banjo playing.

It is no exaggeration to say that many thousands will mourn his passing.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!

"B.M.G." is anxious to print news of all public performers on the banjo, mandolin and guitar. Send the Editor details of your concert appearances immediately after taking place.

The Editor regrets

Whilst the Editor is only too pleased to give information on any matters connected with the fretted instruments he regrets that letters unaccompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope cannot be answered.

The Beginner and the Plectrum Guitar

By JACK WHITFIELD

28. "ODD" DANCES

A STUDENT who has ventured into the dance band has written a letter that convinces me I am justified in giving another chapter on that aspect of playing the plectrum guitar. His special problem is that of the "odd" dances—the military two-step; palais glide; and so forth.

He finds the standard dances fairly straightforward, but when the others come along he finds himself, he says, "ill at ease"; feeling that his guitar does not "fit in".

His problem is far from new, and while I agree that the guitar is not exactly the ideal instrument for the "military" rhythm, I do think it can be used effectively if the right approach is used.

MILITARY TWO-STEP

The first thing he must do when playing a military two-step is to get the idea of the four-in-a-bar "jazz" rhythm (and the way it is played) right out of his mind. If he is to retain any part of it, then it must only be the "bounce".

There is more than one way of playing the guitar for the military two-step, and there may be more ways than the three I suggest, but he must make his choice.

The first is a good, straight, "bouncy" four-in-a-bar with all the strokes of equal "weight", or without any one accented. The important thing here is the lilt. To play a "dead" monotonous "four-in-a-bar" is worse than useless. To play without damping at the end of each note is to lose half the effect.

If you enter into the spirit of the military two-step you should not need any advice on this point!

ANOTHER ROUTINE

Another routine for the same dance is to accent the first and third beats of the bar, brushing the off beats lightly to keep the swing of the thing. Yet a third method is to keep the rhythm moving all the time with up and down strokes on the dotted-crotchet principle. You can lift the fingers of the left hand at the end of each beat, getting in the up stroke on deadened strings if you wish, or you can keep the chords pressed down all the time.

The only argument against the latter procedure is that it tends to make the