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**The Music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875 – 1912):
A Critical and Analytical Study**

Catherine Carr

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

**University of Durham
Music Department**

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Volume 1 of 2

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ABSTRACT

Catherine Carr

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912):
A Critical and Analytical Study

Discussions of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and his music have, to date, focused predominantly, indeed primarily on his choral work, *Hiawatha*, and on the black cultural elements of his work. Whilst not ignoring the African aspect of his writing or personality, this thesis uniquely argues a different approach to the man and his music in that it seeks to fill the lacuna by examining the *significance* of his worth as a *composer* through the musical substance itself, aside from external features. In consequence, the essence of this study is concerned with questions of structure, tonality, style, influences, musical reception and context within the larger framework of contemporary Britain and its so-called ‘musical renaissance’.

The main thrust of the thesis focuses on those substantial works in Coleridge-Taylor’s output where these elements of craftsmanship are most conspicuous, and in order to best facilitate this, each separate chapter within the main corpus of the thesis (Chapters 2 – 6) discusses a different genre of Coleridge-Taylor’s music – namely chamber music, large-scale choral music and orchestral music – where selected works are examined. The exception to this is the opening chapter, a biographical sketch that outlines the main points of reference and contextualizes the composer’s works, and the concluding chapter, which discusses two of his final works in different genres – a cantata, *A Tale of Old Japan*, and the recently revived Violin Concerto. In addition, the study draws attention to other neglected works, most significantly, Coleridge-Taylor’s ‘missing’ opera that was unearthed as a result of this research. The opera is central to this reassessment of Coleridge-Taylor, and the thesis presents, for the first time, a critical examination of the work through a thorough investigation of the discovered manuscripts. A fully indexed source catalogue comprising details of all of Coleridge-Taylor’s music forms an extensive and important appendix.

Declaration

I confirm that material from the work of others has been acknowledged and that quotations and paraphrases have been appropriately indicated.

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List of Sigla

| | |
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| <i>GB-BCa</i> | Black Cultural Archives, Brixton |
| <i>GB-Bhl</i> | Boosey & Hawkes Hire Library |
| <i>GB-BRu(D)</i> | Bristol University, Drama Department |
| <i>GB-Bu</i> | Birmingham University |
| <i>GB-ClS</i> | Croydon Local Studies Library |
| <i>GB-EBm</i> | Elgar Birthplace Museum, Worcester |
| <i>GB-Lam</i> | Royal Academy of Music, London |
| <i>GB-Lbl</i> | British Library |
| <i>GB-Lcm</i> | Royal College of Music, London |
| <i>GB-LEbc</i> | Brotherton Library, University of Leeds |
| <i>GB-Lpro</i> | Public Record Office, Kew |
| <i>GB-Na</i> | Novello Archives |
| <i>GB-Ob</i> | Bodleian Library, Oxford |
| <i>GB-Sca</i> | Sheffield City Archives |
| <i>US-BEm</i> | Bancroft Library, University of California |
| <i>US-MPs</i> | Maud Powell Society, Virginia |
| <i>US-NH</i> | Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University, Connecticut |
| <i>US-NYp</i> | Lincoln Center, Music Division, New York Public Library |
| <i>US-NYpm</i> | Pierpont Morgan Library, New York |
| <i>US-NYpsc</i> | Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library |
| <i>US-OHs</i> | Ohio Historical Society, Columbus |
| <i>US-PROu</i> | John Hay Library, Brown University Library, Rhode Island |
| <i>US-Whu</i> | Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington D.C. |

For my grandfather, John William Parkinson

“I want to be nothing in the world except what I am – a musician.”

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Quoted in *Norwood News* (7 Sept. 1912), 5.

Preface and Acknowledgements

When I die, the critics will call me a Creole.¹

My initial interest in the life and music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was sparked whilst undertaking research for an entirely different project – the history and development of Jamaican reggae music, with particular reference to the music of Bob Marley. Biographically separated by seventy years, Coleridge-Taylor's name nonetheless appeared alongside Marley's in many secondary sources, in the context that they were both 'black musicians'. For me, however, the main similarity lay in the fact that they had both died at an early age (Marley was 36, Coleridge-Taylor just turned 37), and I was intrigued to find out more about the music from the pen of one so young. I also found it striking that aside from *Hiawatha*, with which his name was synonymous in every publication, there seemed to be very little serious study of Coleridge-Taylor's other works.

Coleridge-Taylor's first biographer was his friend W. C. Berwick Sayers, a Croydon librarian, who published *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Man and Musician: His Life and Letters*, in 1915. He dedicated the account to the composer's wife and children, and to an early benefactor – 'Colonel Herbert A. Walters, V. D. to whom the world owes the discovery of Coleridge-Taylor'. Some of the facts in Berwick Sayers' account, particularly relating to the early part of Coleridge-Taylor's life, were manipulated or assumed, although he was also able to provide many first hand memories and anecdotes about the composer's later life. The author clarified, in the

¹ Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, cited by his wife, in Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London 1942/3), 59. She notes that he said this, during the last few days of his illness, because he 'was always amused at the varied nationalities to which the critics considered he belonged'. See also W. C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 306.

preface to the second edition, that his purpose had 'not been to produce a technical study of the composer. It is a personal story written by a friend'. Coleridge-Taylor's wife, Jessie, left *A Memory Sketch or Personal Reminiscences of my Husband* (1942), furnishing, in random order, details of their life together. His daughter, Avril, published *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* in 1979 which, in addition to examining her father's music, also discusses her own life and career, and further 'first-hand' memories of Coleridge-Taylor were provided by his half-sister Marjorie Evans, when she was well into her eighties.²

The main focus of nearly all other critical writings, to date, tends to centre on Coleridge-Taylor as a black composer, thus concentrating principally on the African ethos and black issues of his music (immediately reflected, for instance, in titles such as 'The Atavism of Coleridge-Taylor' and 'The Apostle of Colour'). This generally proved to be the case not only in previous dissertations about the composer (for example, Batchman, 'Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: An Analysis of Selected Piano Works and an Examination of his Influence on Black American Musicians', PhD diss., Washington University, 1977, and to some extent in Carter, 'Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: His Life and Works', DMA thesis, Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1984), but also in numerous journal or newspaper articles (*teste* 'Turning the Tide of the Classical Establishment's Apartheid',³ 'Hiawatha & Pan-Africanism',⁴ 'The Black Dvorak [*sic*]',⁵ 'Coleridge-Taylor lives: the legendary Anglo-African enriches European classical music posthumously')⁶. Since even the more substantial critiques omitted, or at best glossed over, Coleridge-Taylor's chamber music and his

² See 'I Remember Coleridge: Recollections of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor', in Rainer Lotz & Ian Pegg, (eds.), *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780 – 1950* (Crawley, 1986), 32 – 41.

³ Mikey Massive, *CT incorporating African Times*, 17 Aug. 1993, 26.

⁴ George Revill, *Ecumene* vol. 2/3, Jul. 1995, 247-66.

⁵ Stuart Jeffries, *The Guardian*, 3 Jan. 2003, 5.

⁶ Ian Hall, *West Africa*, Jul./Aug. 1993, 1304 – 5.

symphonic works, it became clear that there was a dearth of thorough investigation into the musical substance itself.

Whilst it is, of course, vitally important not to disregard the African aspect of Coleridge-Taylor's writing or personality, a lacuna was evident in that much of the fascination for Coleridge-Taylor seemed to be, ultimately, that he was a 'black' composer, and a lot of light was shed on him because the black population took him to their hearts. He is without doubt, a fascinating figure in British history and music, but the significance of his worth as a composer, over and above such extraneous elements as colour, gender or even height, has, to a large extent, been obscured. I therefore wanted to devote the focus of this thesis to examining the musical craftsmanship, and to assessing the subtlety and artifice of Coleridge-Taylor as a composer, aside from external features that are, in some ways, a distraction. In doing this, I have felt it proper to concentrate on those substantial works in his output where the merits (and the flaws) of his craftsmanship are most conspicuous. Therefore, the main part of the thesis (Chapters 2 – 6) is structured so that each chapter deals with a separate genre of Coleridge-Taylor's music (chamber works, choral works, opera and orchestral music), and selected works are then discussed within this context. However, given that Coleridge-Taylor's songs and piano music are the least substantial, I have accordingly felt it largely appropriate to ignore these. A biographical sketch is provided in the opening chapter, but, since historical research into Coleridge-Taylor's life is already well documented, I have only produced a fairly brief outline, in order to contextualize his works. The last chapter is reserved for the composer's final works, *A Tale of Old Japan* and his Violin Concerto.

Coleridge-Taylor's instrumental music forms quite a substantial corpus of his compositions. Charles Villiers Stanford, who was a springboard for the flowering of

English music in this period, taught Coleridge-Taylor at the Royal College of Music, and it is clear that the generative intellectual processes, particularly evident in Coleridge-Taylor's instrumental works, are firmly rooted in the English romantic tradition. Therefore, in discussing works such as Coleridge-Taylor's *African Air Variations*, whilst not ignoring the fact that the work is based upon an African theme, I have appraised Coleridge-Taylor's use of the material over and above the fact that it is an African air. Similarly, it is revealing that, although Coleridge-Taylor's original intention for his Violin Concerto was to write a work based on characteristic African melodies, he effectively rewrote the whole concerto, abandoning the use of the folk songs in the process. Even his 'African' piano pieces (the slighter works in Coleridge-Taylor's output), are still Western in all but their themes.

Aside from *Hiawatha*, Coleridge-Taylor was not particularly successful with the rest of his choral endeavours; however, there was a rehabilitation that occurred ultimately with his opera *Thelma*. He regarded the work as his biggest achievement, although it was never performed, and the manuscript disappeared. After searching for, and finally uncovering, both the full score and vocal score in 2003, I have been able to assess the full work through a thorough investigation of the manuscripts, providing the first academic study of Coleridge-Taylor's only opera. This has been central to this reassessment of Coleridge-Taylor as a composer, and accordingly has a chapter devoted to itself. Yet again, in spite of the fact that so much emphasis has been placed, in the past, on the "Africanicity" of Coleridge-Taylor's works, it is interesting that this newly discovered opera, which arguably contains some of Coleridge-Taylor's most outstanding music, is Anglo-Saxon in content. *Thelma* is indexed for the first time in the source catalogue of Coleridge-Taylor's music that forms an important appendix to this thesis.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Trustees of the Sir Samuel Osborn Memorial Scholarship & Deed of Gift Fund, for their generous awards of bursaries towards the cost of my research. Thanks also go to the Trustees of *Musica Britannica* for their financial assistance in granting me the Louise Dyer Award in 1999, and to Durham University, for help from the Music Department's Postgraduate Fund.

In researching this work, I am grateful for the assistance provided by the staff members of various libraries and academic institutions, societies and museums. My thanks go to people at the Boston Public Library; the British Library; Bromley Local Studies & Archives Library; Croydon Local Studies Library; Durham University Library at Palace Green; the Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library at Harvard University; the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre; the Oliver Wendell Holmes Library, Andover; the Ohio Historical Society; Birmingham University Library; Birmingham Local Studies Library; the Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library; Sheffield City Archives; Westminster Libraries & Archives; and Yale University Music Library. I would also like to thank Peter Horton and Timothy Eggington at the Royal College of Music; Oliver Davies and Paul Collen of the Portraits Department at the Royal College of Music; Mary-Jo Kline, American History Specialist at Brown University Library, Providence; David Kessler of the Bancroft Library, University of California; Sue Liptrot at Cheltenham Local Studies Library; Sam Walker, of the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton; Jo Elsworth, Bristol University Drama Department; Margaret Sanders and Christopher Bennett at the Elgar Birthplace Museum; Pam Blevins of the Maud Powell Society in Virginia; and Marian Dawes of the Birmingham Choral Union.

I am indebted to William Thomas at the Phillips Academy Music Department in Andover, Massachusetts, a founder and director of the Coleridge Ensemble, and Music Director of the Cambridge Community Chorus and Chamber Orchestra. I extend special thanks to him for his advice and help concerning Coleridge-Taylor's music, and will always remember the warm welcome and generous hospitality shown to me by him and other members of the Cambridge Community Chorus during my stay in the US. I must also thank Daniel Labonne (artistic director of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society, Croydon, until it folded in 2002), for his enthusiasm and hospitality.

My gratitude to Lewis Foreman and Philip Lancaster for their help; thanks also to members of Hanover Methodist Church, Sheffield, and I should mention Laura, Ceris, and Ilma. Others who deserve special thanks are my friends Sheena, Steve and Katherine, who gave me support throughout and were always willing to lend an ear. My appreciation goes to all those who offered me words of encouragement when it really mattered.

Above all, I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Professor Jeremy Dibble, not only for his patience and guidance, but also for his knowledgeable advice and his unfailing ability throughout his supervision to motivate and enthuse me.

None of this would have been possible without the practical help so generously given by my mother and my parents-in-law. Thanks go to them, to my husband Andrew, and of course to my precious children Melanie, Louise and Hannah. It must be said that my family have been infinitely patient and selfless in giving me their unerring support and I have appreciated their faith in me. Finally, I wish to pay tribute to my late grandfather, John William Parkinson, to whom this is dedicated.

Chapter 1

A biographical sketch

Our character is not so much the product of race and heredity as of those circumstances by which nature forms our habits, by which we are nurtured and live. ¹

A poem is like a person. Though it has a family tree, it is important not because of its ancestors, but because of its individuality. ²

Many biographies are able to begin with the plain facts surrounding parentage and lineage through the generations, relating to the ancestry and marriage of the subject's parents, the birth of siblings, subsequent upbringing, nuclear and extended family. The first biography of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, by W.C. Berwick Sayers, (published 1915, revised 1927), used for many years as the main source work on Coleridge-Taylor's life by standard reference books, presents the 'facts' in precisely such a conventional way. Unfortunately this necessitated many misconceptions and several deliberate deceptions about the composer's early family life, which have served to obfuscate the truth; the composer's widow, Jessie, writing thirty years after his death, diplomatically refers to such 'fairy-tales' in the 'Memory Sketch' of her husband. ³

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in Holborn, central London, on 15 August 1875. His father, a native of Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, was Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor (b. 1849), who studied medicine in England from 1869, firstly at Wesley College, Taunton, and then at King's College, London, qualifying as a

¹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Speeches of Cicero*, trans. by John Henry Freese (London, 1930), 471 (phrase 95).

² Donald Stauffer, *The Nature of Poetry* (New York, 1946), Chap. 5.

³ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/3), 14.



Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1874. Founded in 1787, by former West Indian slaves and white English settlers, Freetown was the recipient of an estimated 40,000 captives freed from slave ships along West Africa's coast during the early part of the nineteenth century. Taylor returned to Sierra Leone almost immediately after gaining his professional status; he filed a petition from there on 18 February 1875 (six months before Coleridge-Taylor was born) to take up an appointment in Public Service.⁴ On 16 September 1875 he made a further application for "Post of Asst. Coll. Surgeon at Sherbro"⁵ situated some 120 kilometres from Freetown, on the low-lying south-western coast of Sierra Leone, and a note is made that a copy of accompanying testimonials had been forwarded. His appointment at this post is recorded on 24 Jan 1876, with a 'recommendation submitted that the appointment should for a time be considered to be temporary'⁶ (although who actually made this recommendation is not stated). The documentation clearly verifies that Dr. Taylor had returned to Sierra Leone at least seven months before his son was born; it is difficult to ascertain whether or not Dr. Taylor perhaps returned home as a means of escape due to his inability to cope with the domestic situation, but from the dates of the information above, there is also a distinct possibility that perhaps he did not even know, at this point, that he had fathered a child in England. Whatever the case, it would appear that he was not, in fact, married to Alice Hare Martin (although she was named as *Alice Taylor*, formerly Holmans, on Samuel's birth certificate) the young English mother of the unborn baby, and he was not a presence in the child's life from the outset.

Alice had been born in 1856 in Dover to Emily Ann Martin; aged just eighteen at the time of Samuel's birth, she was living in London and then Croydon, not with her mother, but with Benjamin Holman (who was possibly her father) and his

⁴ *GB-Lpro*, Colonial Office file CO 368/9.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

wife Sarah.⁷ They formed Samuel's family unit for the next six years until, in the early 1880's Alice married George Evans, a railway store man. The story invented by Berwick Sayers concocts the notion that after a "secret marriage" to Alice, Coleridge-Taylor's father lived with her until the child was a year old, during which time he was working as an assistant at a Croydon medical practice.⁸ Whilst this conveniently covered up any shameful disgrace of illegitimacy (a running stigma throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras), Alice's subsequent marriage to George ironically opened up the possibility of bigamy! This predicament was surmounted in the biography by implying that Dr. Taylor had died before Alice remarried, reporting that racism had precipitated Dr. Taylor's sudden return back to Africa, and alluding vaguely that he died there 'some years later'.⁹ Coleridge-Taylor's own daughter records that 'it is said that his health rapidly deteriorated and that he died prematurely'.¹⁰ In fact he did not die until 1904,¹¹ when the son he had never seen or contacted was twenty-nine, with two children of his own.

Alice and George had three more children; by the time his youngest half-sister was born in 1897 'Coleridge', as he was familiarly called, was already in his final year at the Royal College of Music. He had entered the College in 1890, at the age of fifteen, after receiving a general education at the British School for Boys, Tamworth Road, Croydon; his musical involvement is noted in the school log book: – 'On

⁷ See P. McGilchrist & J. Green, 'Some Recent Findings on Samuel Coleridge-Taylor', *The Black Perspective in Music* vol. 13/2 (1985), 153 and J. Green, 'Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: The Early Years', *Black Music Research Journal* vol. 10 no. 2 (Fall 1990), 136.

⁸ W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 2-3.

⁹ *Ibid.* 3-4.

¹⁰ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 16.

¹¹ His tombstone in Banjul (formerly Bathurst), Gambia, bears the inscription "Sacred to the memory of Dr. D. P. Hughes Taylor MRCS, LRCP Medical Practitioner of this colony who died at Bathurst 25 Augst. 1904 aged 57 years. All his pain and grief is over, Every restless tossing passed, He is now at peace forever, Safely home in heaven at last. Erected by his daughter". See photograph & information at *GB-BCa*, courtesy Christopher Fyfe, Centre for African Studies, Edinburgh. See also Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London, 1962), 406 – 7.

Wednesday Mrs. Binyon kindly undertook to distribute the remainder of certificates (about three hundred) and two or three prizes of a private character to some very deserving boys. The school sang a selection of songs with pleasing effect to which was added a couple of solos by Coleridge-Taylor on the violin'.¹² His musical ability soon became apparent to the headmaster and to a governor of the school, Colonel Herbert A. Walters. The latter, a London silk merchant, was also choirmaster of St. George's Presbyterian Church. Coleridge-Taylor shortly became soloist here, and made his first public appearances in the fundraising concerts for the choir, as a chorister and a violinist. The local paper reviews of one such concert, which took place at the Public Hall on 16 April 1888, describe how his violin solos were 'listened to, as usual, with evident admiration', and 'received an irresistible encore' (in spite of the fact that 'Mr. Walters, the conductor... had pointed out that the length of the programme would not admit of encores'); 'Mr. Beckwith's orchestra had been engaged'.¹³ Coleridge-Taylor's violin teacher throughout these earliest formative years (from the age of six to thirteen) was Joseph Beckwith, although the 'first teacher in music was my maternal grandfather, Benjamin Holman, who gave me lessons on the violin when I was quite a child.'¹⁴ Writing at the age of seventeen, in a letter published in the *Croydon Advertiser* of April 1893, Coleridge-Taylor attributes much of his success at the college to Beckwith.¹⁵ However, it was Walters who was influential in the young man's enrolment at the Royal College of Music, guaranteeing his fees and taking on the role of guardian for the next few years. Coleridge-Taylor showed his gratitude to Walters in dedicating a *Te Deum* (c. 1890), to him. Two

¹² *School Archives, Croydon British Boys School Log Book*, entry for Wednesday 16 December (n.y.)

¹³ 'St. George's Presbyterian Church', *Croydon Guardian*, (21 Apr. 1888), 5; 'St. George's Presbyterian Church Choir Concert', *Croydon Chronicle*, (21 Apr. 1888), 5; 'A Concert', *Croydon Review*, (May 1888), 32.

¹⁴ S. Coleridge-Taylor, *Musical Times*, (1 Mar. 1909), 153.

¹⁵ 'Palman, qui meruit, ferat', *Croydon Advertiser*, (1 Apr. 1893), 7.

hymns, 'At early dawn' and 'O Jesus, Thou art standing' (both of which are unpublished - see Appendix 1) also date from around this period (the manuscripts bear the inscription 'composed by S. Coleridge-Taylor, chorister of St. Mary Magdalene's, Addiscombe' – Coleridge-Taylor sang here from 1889 when Walters moved to this church from St. George's, and continued to sing in the choir until 1900). Novello published his anthem 'In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust' in 1891, followed by four more (with one again dedicated to Walters) in 1892. This was the year in which Coleridge-Taylor began studying composition with Charles Villiers Stanford, and by early 1893 he was awarded an open scholarship for composition.

Stanford was Coleridge-Taylor's most crucial influence from now on. He obviously thought highly of the young student, and of Coleridge-Taylor's friend and colleague William Yeats Hurlstone (1876 -1906), but there were also other notable contemporaries – Vaughan Williams, Holst, John Ireland, Thomas Dunhill and Fritz Hart – none of whom at that time showed anything approaching Coleridge-Taylor's or Hurlstone's prodigious talents. Aside from both sharing middle names after romantic poets (the former's family name was Taylor, his two Christian names were Samuel Coleridge, and the hyphen appeared later on; Taylor's half-sister Marjorie recalls that this was due to a mistake by music publishers around 1899/1900, then perpetuated by Samuel)¹⁶, the friendship of Coleridge-Taylor and Hurlstone was based on common ground. Both their works of this period strongly reflect Stanford's teaching and his concept of 'absolute music', and as 'favourites' of Stanford, both fellow students were writing very similar things at the same sort of time. Hurlstone died at a young age, and Coleridge-Taylor's concise tribute to his close friend, in June 1906, reveals how they matured together throughout their college days:

¹⁶ Marjorie Evans, 'I Remember Coleridge: Recollections of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912)', in Rainer Lotz & Ian Pegg (eds.), *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780 – 1950* (Crawley, 1986), 34.

I think there were very few branches of composition in which Mr. Hurlstone was not successful. So far as I know, he never published any choral work, and I well remember how, in our college days, we used to despise this form of music, and how, only six months ago, we laughed over our youthful prejudices. It was in chamber music (which, after all, is the highest form of composition, in spite of the present-day fashion) that Mr. Hurlstone shone so conspicuously, and in his college days he had an extraordinary passion for writing for out-of-the-way combinations of instruments. To me his works were quite matured as long as ten years ago, when I first knew him at college, and all of his early works show exceedingly fine workmanship. I don't suppose he wrote half a dozen bars of slipshod stuff in his life. I recall that in our student days we each had a musical god. His was Brahms; mine was the lesser known Dvořák.¹⁷

Coleridge-Taylor was a punctual and industrious student, although his attendance records during his seven years at the college indicate a general increase in his number of absences due to ill health. Seven missed lessons during the Easter term of 1895 led the director Hubert Parry to comment that he was 'sorry so many lessons had to be missed – in other respects quite a brilliant report'.¹⁸ The following term was hardly any better, with another six lessons missed because of illness.

Another close friendship forged during the latter half of Coleridge-Taylor's time at the RCM, was that with the violinist William J. Read, who recalled that 'as a young impressionable student I came to the Royal College in 1894, and it was when I went up to Mr. Algernon Ashton's room for my first piano lesson that I first saw Coleridge-Taylor'; his account of their first meeting paints a telling portrait of the college student:

He was then seated at the piano playing Schumann's *Carnival*. Coleridge-Taylor played it in an engrossed manner, with a complete absence of self-consciousness. I remember vividly the slender figure, and the large dark head of the young musician as he sat there, playing with accuracy and mastery, and with a serious intensity which then seemed to me remarkable. What particularly impressed me was the absence of any of the bodily contortions or excitement which so often mark fine players. He held his body quite still, and, throughout his playing, even in the more florid passages, which he played easily, seemed to be mental rather than merely emotional. Emotion, however, was there undoubtedly, and he brought a complete *understanding* to bear upon the matter before him.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Norwood News*, (9 June 1906), 8.

¹⁸ Music Report (Easter term), Royal College of Music, Portraits Dept.

¹⁹ William J. Read, in Berwick Sayers, 23.

The two were to remain lifelong friends, attested by the large body of letters (along with postcards and telegrams) that has survived, particularly from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, as he was in frequent consultation with his friend regarding work (teaching, conducting and adjudicating), concert arrangements, amendments and revisions to various scores, works in hand and the reception that his compositions received.

Stanford's high opinion of Coleridge-Taylor's early chamber works led him to introduce Coleridge-Taylor's newly composed Clarinet Quintet of 1895 to the violinist-composer Josef Joachim in Berlin, who rehearsed it with his quartet. A significant proportion of his student works are for chamber forces (in addition to the Clarinet Quintet the corpus includes a Piano Quintet, *Fantasiestücke* for String Quartet, Nonet, Trio in E minor and *Suite de pieces, Hiawathan Sketches* and *Sonata* for violin and piano) but during his time at the Royal College of Music he also produced *Zara's Earrings* (a ballad for soprano and orchestra), the orchestral *Ballade in D minor*, a Symphony in A minor, and, in his final year there (1897), *Legend* for violin and orchestra.

At around the same time that his college education came to an end, Coleridge-Taylor's significant and newly formed acquaintance with the African American writer Paul Laurence Dunbar led to two joint recitals of their individual and collaborative pieces; indeed the composer was inspired to set several of the poet's lyrics during this period (in pieces which, for the first time, were no longer based exclusively on his thoroughly Western training but also exploited his African heritage), culminating in a short operetta, *Dream Lovers*, which received its first performance at the end of 1898, a watershed year for Coleridge-Taylor. This was the year of Coleridge-Taylor's first festival commission (Three Choirs, Gloucester), which was secured through Elgar's

patronage, who was aware of Coleridge-Taylor's music through correspondence with August J. Jaeger,²⁰ one of the music editors with Novello, and a regular critic for the *Musical Times* (Coleridge-Taylor was a frequent visitor to the Jaeger's house at this time)²¹; the work that marked such a fruitful launch into the public arena and Coleridge-Taylor's consequent meteoric rise to fame, was an orchestral *Ballade in A minor*. His renown was almost immediately sealed with a choral composition that had been embarked upon during the last stages of his college studies, and would become his most famous work, the remarkably successful cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. It was followed in successive years by *The Death of Minnehaha* and then *Hiawatha's Departure*, which formed the concluding part of Coleridge-Taylor's trilogy *Scenes from the Song of Hiawatha*. Both Jaeger and Elgar's assistance was short-lived, as their mounting disappointment with each of Coleridge-Taylor's post-*Hiawatha* compositions saw the gradual withdrawal of their support.

In 1899, at the height of his fame, Coleridge-Taylor married Jessie Sarah Fleetwood Walmisley, the niece of the musician Thomas Attwood Walmisley. A fellow student at the RCM, they had known each other since 1893, often meeting at one of the many musical soirées hosted by her parents (she had accompanied Coleridge-Taylor in his *Legend* for violin at one of these). Their first child, who was born in the same year as the trilogy's first performance, was appropriately named: 'In post haste I write to tell you that my wife presented me with a very fine baby boy yesterday morning – whose name shall be "Hiawatha".'²² Their two children, Hiawatha Bryan (*b.* Oct. 1900, *d.* Mar. 1980) and Avril (*b.* Mar 1903, *d.* Dec. 1998) both pursued notable musical careers. Avril, originally christened Gwendolen,

²⁰ Elgar began corresponding with Jaeger on 15 June 1897.

²¹ Berwick Sayers, 63.

²² Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Kilburn, 'Sunday', 14 Oct. 1900, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

composed more than 90 works, and was the first woman to conduct His Majesty's Royal Marines.

The enormous success of *Hiawatha* spawned a series of choral works, including *The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuille* and *Meg Blane*, both produced in 1901, and *The Atonement* (1903). However, Coleridge-Taylor was fundamentally unable to attain the same level of inspiration in any of these, with the exception of the cantata *Kubla Khan* (1905), which marked a return to his natural symphonic instincts that had been intensified through his training at the Royal College of Music, and his final choral work, *A Tale of Old Japan*. The rehabilitation ultimately occurred with a work to which Coleridge-Taylor devoted the largest proportion of his time and energy, the most substantial work in his output, his opera *Thelma*, on which he worked steadily from 1907 to its completion in March 1909.

In Washington D. C., *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* inspired the establishment of the Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society (1901), who sponsored the first of his visits to the US three years later. He also made two further successful visits to conduct performances of his music there in 1906 and 1910 (Washington Festival, and Litchfield Festival, Norfolk, Connecticut). Coleridge-Taylor was a proficient conductor; his appointment as conductor of the Westmorland Festival in 1901 (he held the appointment until 1904), which included a performance of *The Death of Minnehaha*, was a contributory factor in the delay of his initial visit to the US. His first conducting posts were with the Brahms (ladies) Choir (1897) and the Croydon Orchestral Society (1898); in 1903, Coleridge-Taylor decided to change the name of the latter to the Coleridge-Taylor Orchestral Concerts, and laid out the guidelines in a circular:

Coleridge-Taylor Orchestral Concerts
(SEASON 1903 – 1904)
CONDUCTOR – S. COLERIDGE-TAYLOR

The Croydon Orchestral Society having been dissolved, a new series of first-class Orchestral Concerts is now being organised, of which I shall have entire control.

The season will begin in October and end in April. There will be three concerts – one in December, one in February, and one in April. The Concerts will be given at the Large Public Hall, Croydon, and the assistance of professional wind-instrument players and an eminent vocalist will be secured on each occasion.

A limited number of Amateur String Players will be admitted to the Orchestra; all such players must submit themselves to an examination.

The subscription for accepted members will be one guinea per annum inclusive. Each member must attend at least five-sixths of the weekly rehearsals, and will receive one reserved seat for each Concert.

The subscription for ordinary non-playing members will also be one guinea, entitling the subscriber to two reserved seats for each concert; this being at the extremely low rate of 3/6 per Concert.

Names of applicants desirous of becoming playing- members should be sent (by letter only) to me, as soon as possible, mentioning instrument. Other subscribers are earnestly requested to send their names by September 21st.

*All subscriptions must be paid before the first rehearsal.*²³

The Coleridge-Taylor Orchestra continued until the 1905/6 season, but when this, in turn, broke up, Coleridge-Taylor started up a String Players Club, over which he presided from 1906 until his death. He also conducted the Rochester Choral Society (1902 – 7) and the Handel Society (1904 - 1912). In contrast to the definition of the clichéd ‘stunt conductor’ (referred to by a member of the Munich Orchestra regarding Richard Strauss),²⁴ the description of Coleridge-Taylor’s ‘arresting personality’²⁵ when on the rostrum was borne out by many observers. Carl Stoeckel (president of

²³ Standard typed letter from Coleridge-Taylor. 20 Aug. 1903, *GB-Lcm 6916*.

²⁴ ‘At mezzo, his coat, shirt and collar were dripping,
At forte, the stick from his fingers was slipping;
But there’s one I sat under I’ll never forget –
The conductor was dry and the orchestra wet.’

Emil Wagner, quoted in A. H. Fox Strangways, *Music Observed* (London 1936), 41.

²⁵ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 Oct. 1902, 10. Referring to the first performance of Coleridge-Taylor’s cantata *Meg Blane*, under the composer.

the Litchfield Festival, who commissioned both Coleridge-Taylor's *Bamboula*:

Rhapsodic Dance and his last work, the *Violin Concerto*) noted that:

One of his personal attributes was his graceful attitude when on the conductor's stand. This has been commented upon by great numbers of persons who saw him conduct here. It was quite different to see him on the conductors stand where he presented all the appearances of a well restrained warhorse panting for the fray, as when he stood up to be introduced at his first recital here when he almost shrank within himself.....He brought to this county what he termed a conductor's jacket, and was very particular about changing from street attire into this jacket, although many of the orchestra and most of our conductors at season of the year at least, worked at rehearsals without coats. I told him that it would be entirely good form if he chose to work without this coat at rehearsals, but he always went at once to his dressing room and donned his conductor's jacket.²⁶

Stoeckel also commented that the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, during rehearsals of the *Bamboula* (1910) coined the phrase 'African' or 'black Mahler' with reference to Coleridge-Taylor. He enjoyed his time in America immensely (often sending Jessie humorous postcards signed in music)²⁷, where he was lionised:

Coleridge-Taylor's modesty and dignity and his skill as a conductor and composer made such a striking impression in this country that a new image of the serious Negro musician gradually began to evolve for the first time in American history. His "Hiawatha" had become one of the most popular works with American and English choral groups in the first decade of the twentieth century, and with this masterpiece he proved to a race-conscious America, and to the world, that no one ethnic group held a monopoly upon musical genius. But more than this, his visits were a symbol of hope to aspiring Negro American composers struggling to assert their individuality in the face of almost insurmountable racial prejudice.²⁸

During his first visit to the US in 1904 he was received at the White House (invited by Theodore Roosevelt). He met Booker T. Washington during this same visit, and was aware of his autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901). (For further details of Coleridge-Taylor's American tours, refer to Appendix 2, Vol. 2). Coleridge-Taylor was also familiar with the writings of Frederick Douglas and W. E. B. Dubois. Regarded as an

²⁶ Carl Stoeckel, 'Coleridge-Taylor', typescript, Stoeckel Family Papers, *US-NH, MS247*.

²⁷ Postcard from Coleridge-Taylor to Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 26 Nov. 1904, from Philadelphia (Land Title Building and Fairmount Park), *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Department. Signed with two C's (treble and bass clefs).

²⁸ Ellsworth Janifer, 'Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in Washington', *Phylon* 28 no. 2 (Summer 1967), 195-6

icon by Pan-Africanists, Coleridge-Taylor's interest in the connection with the African side of his heritage, prompted by his collaboration with Dunbar, and crystallised with his participation in the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London, was explored further in later orchestral works such as the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*, *Bamboula*, *Toussaint L'Ouverture* and *Ethiopia Saluting the Colours*, and several of these compositions coincided with his American visits. Also stemming from Coleridge-Taylor's success in America is his piano work *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*.

Coleridge-Taylor's anger at the ignorance expressed in a local newspaper report of a debating society meeting, held in Purley, on 'The Negro Problem in North America', compelled him to speak out on the subject of 'black and white' in the form of a missive to the editor of the *Croydon Guardian*. Shortly after this, he agreed to contribute to the first issue of the *African Times and Orient Review*,²⁹ a political and cultural journal, published in London, advocating Pan-African nationalism (correspondence between Coleridge-Taylor and the publication's editor, Duse Mohamed, reveals that the composer had also taken out a year's subscription.³⁰)

Coleridge-Taylor first began teaching violin in the evenings to augment his income, at the Croydon Conservatoire, whilst he was still studying at college; his instrumental teaching work remained limited to Croydon and the surrounding area throughout his career. He later held the position of Professor of Composition at the Trinity College of Music from 1903, the Crystal Palace School of Music & Art from 1905 and the Guildhall School of Music from 1910. In addition to teaching, conducting and accompanying, adjudicating at music festivals claimed an equally

²⁹ 'Symposium - Mr. S. Coleridge-Taylor: The World-Famous Composer and Professor of Music', *African Times and Orient Review* (Jul. 1912), 26 – 7.

³⁰ Letter from Duse Mohamed to Coleridge-Taylor, 29 Aug. 1912, *GB-Lcm*. Portraits Dept. – 'Thanks so much for your kind letter and the enclosed cheque for one year's subscription...I am glad you like the Review and I shall try to continue to deserve your rich opinion'.

large proportion of his time, and he accepted many engagements to adjudicate at the Welsh Eisteddfodau in particular and at Mary Wakefield's renowned Westmorland Festival at Kendal.

Besides the cantatas, chamber music and orchestral music, Coleridge-Taylor was a prolific songwriter, wrote many short piano pieces, and also produced a considerable amount of incidental music for the stage (*Herod, Ulysses, Nero, Faust, The Forest of Wild Thyme* and *Othello*). He embraced populism, to some extent, with his light music (which tends to fluctuate widely between banality and sophistication), including such pieces as *The Bamboula* and *Petite Suite de Concert*. The latter still receives the occasional performance today.

By the time of his death in 1912, Coleridge-Taylor had produced a copious amount of works. In broad terms, the chamber music of his early career promised an auspicious future, but the middle phase of his career proved more of a wilderness. However, revival occurred with his later works, notably *Thelma*, a work into which he poured probably the greatest amount of his creative energy, but also in *The Tale of Old Japan*, and particularly in the Violin Concerto where he returned to the arena of instrumental music, a genre which ultimately served his compositional instincts most innately.

Coleridge-Taylor did not keep a journal or diary, and much of the vast volume of his extant correspondence concerns itself, necessarily, with the basic details of everyday life (indeed, it is often the corpus of letters between second and third parties - such as those between Jaeger and Elgar- which provide the most detailed information). Considered a courteous, dignified, modest and patient gentleman, Coleridge-Taylor's significance lay not only in his music, but also in the way that he conducted his life. A tolerant individual, and devoid of bitterness, he seems to have

abhorred egotism and self-exhibitionism, even at the height of his reputation. A letter revealing this side of his personality, and of his desire for people to think well of him and of his sincerity, reads as follows:

And will you ask your mother to accept my thanks for a most delightful evening? It was ever so nice – the only blur was my incessant talk about myself.

And I want you and Mrs. Carr to believe me when I tell you that my “outlook” on life is just as wholesome and beautiful as it was when I first knew you years ago.

I love the best in music, pictures and literature a thousand times more than I did when I was twenty.

I mention this because I had an idea on Friday that both you and your mother doubted this, and I hate to think of anyone (much less you two) being shaken in their belief of me...³¹

Never a wealthy man, he had to depend throughout his professional career on supplementing what royalties he received with extensive bouts of teaching, both private and public. Had he received a royalty from *Hiawatha* (and the rest of the popular trilogy), he might well have been a man of means (see Chapter 3 for further details), but overwork and consequent exhaustion, which hardly enhanced a delicate constitution, more than likely contributed to the double pneumonia that ultimately brought about his premature death. Indeed, aware of his family’s impecunious predicament, his teachers and contemporaries were eager to stage a benefit concert in November 1912 in order to provide for the wife and two children. It is evident that Coleridge-Taylor was hugely admired not only by his contemporaries but also by his seniors, particularly Parry and Stanford, who always ‘believed’ in him. That Parry was shaken by Coleridge-Taylor’s death can be seen in his panegyric:

There will be thousands who will feel a sense of saddening loss when, in surroundings in which it had become familiar, they miss the arresting face in which gentleness, humour and modesty were so strangely combined with authoritative decision when matters of art were in question.

It is to the general credit that people accepted command and criticism from one whose appearance was so strikingly unoccidental. The racial combination could not leave people quite indifferent any more than it could be indifferent in the artistic product. But when Coleridge-Taylor came to the Royal College of Music he was accepted on terms of full equality, and soon won the affection of every one with whom he came into contact.³²

³¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Edith Carr, 22 July 1912 (dated ‘Monday’), *GB-Lcm 6924*.

³² ‘A Tribute from Sir Hubert Parry’, *Musical Times*, (1 Oct. 1912), 638.

Stanford's unfailing protectiveness towards Coleridge-Taylor is borne out in an anecdote, related by Coleridge-Taylor's daughter, of an unpleasant incident that occurred at the RCM. when an older student directed a racial insult towards the young composer:

Stanford, passing by at the critical moment, overheard the insult. Placing his arm around Coleridge-Taylor's shoulder he led him away and took him to his own room, where he spoke kindly to him, endeavouring to erase the terrible hurt of the older student's sneers. His consoling words ended by assuring the boy that he had 'more music in his little finger than [the offending student] in the whole of his body'.³³

In her recollections of Coleridge-Taylor's sensitivity to racial taunts in later years, Avril noted that 'there were lads in Croydon who sometimes laughed at him because of his dark skin, and what they said to him caused him great pain. When he saw them approaching along the street he held my hand more tightly, gripping it until it almost hurt. He seemed to anticipate the rude behaviour and insults shouted at him.'³⁴

Coleridge-Taylor's wife cited an instance of such ignorance and prejudice in their own home, when a Church of England Canon visited to take tea with them: 'Leaning forward across the table and gazing at Coleridge he remarked "It really is surprising; you eat like we do, dress like we do and talk as we do". This was too much for me, especially as Coleridge seemed too flabbergasted to make any reply'.³⁵

After his first trip to America, Coleridge-Taylor imparted his observations of bigotry and segregation there:

I met a young coloured lady of great educational attainments and of refined tastes. She was travelling south of Washington and was turned out of the car. Coloured and white are separated when travelling on the other side of a line drawn south of Washington. In the car for coloured passengers a hulking loungeer wiped his feet on the hair of her head. Other indignities, too, were perpetrated, for which there was absolutely no redress.³⁶

³³ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 24.

³⁴ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 96. Berwick Sayers, 259, records just one instance where Coleridge-Taylor retaliated physically to an insult hurled by a lad in the street, seizing the perpetrator by the scruff of the neck before beating him with his walking stick.

³⁵ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 37. See also Berwick Sayers, 97.

³⁶ Coleridge-Taylor, quoted in Berwick Sayers, 167.

However, in a world largely unaccustomed to black people writing music, Coleridge-Taylor's compositional abilities, for Stanford and Parry, transcended the colour of his skin in an age when race and ethnocentrism formed a central part of scientific and artistic perception, and his talent essentially rose above the entrenched prejudices of the time. Inspirational in his time, he was also a model beyond his time.

Chapter 2

From Student to Composer: the Chamber Works

Invariable, indefatigable, indisputable.¹

Coleridge-Taylor was fifteen when, in 1890, Sir George Grove admitted him to the Royal College of Music. The college files contain termly reports which display that he was a diligent student in all areas, with the exception of his studies on the organ under Walter Parratt, whose “music class” witnessed his deterioration from ‘fair’ (Easter Term ending March 25, 1891) to ‘irregular’ (Midsummer Term ending July 29, 1891) and ‘very irregular’ (Christmas Term ending December 23, 1891). This unsatisfactory sequence of events prompted Grove to comment on the report: “Why this irregularity at the Music Class? Please let me never have to complain again. The rest is very gratifying.” However, with the bald statement ‘bad’, the following term (Easter Term ending April 2, 1892) the class was dropped from then onwards. The reason for the young student’s antipathy to this class is not spelled out categorically, but it is likely that he had little sympathy with the world of the organ; rather, as a capable violinist, his attentions were naturally drawn to instrumental polyphony and the genres of chamber and orchestral music. His harmony class also proved the antithesis of this experience, with such comments by his tutor Charles Wood as ‘his

¹ Charles Villiers Stanford’s comments on Coleridge-Taylor’s student report of March 1895 (composition), referring to ‘regularity and punctuality’, ‘industry’ and ‘progress’ respectively.

work has been in every respect excellent'²; yet Coleridge-Taylor relinquished this class too at the end of the academic year in 1892, confirming that he had exceeded the pedagogical parameters normally required by the RCM for composers.³

He continued with his principal study, the violin, until the end of the next term, but then, from September 1892, just weeks after his seventeenth birthday, he began studying composition with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, with piano remaining as his second study. By the following year he was awarded an open scholarship from the College to study composition, which was reported in the press:

A plucky, persevering, and painstaking young Croydon musician, with whom I have some slight acquaintance, has just met the welcome reward of his labours. One of the nine open scholarships at the Royal College of Music has just been awarded to Mr. S. Coleridge-Taylor for composition. The distinction is the more honourable, as I understand these scholarships are open to all competitors throughout the country.⁴

By the standards of both time and place, this shift was indeed remarkable, especially when viewed in the light of the experience of Coleridge-Taylor's college colleague, Ralph Vaughan Williams, born in 1872, and a student at the college after studying history at Cambridge University. Vaughan Williams' compositions were eventually to attract an international reputation, yet, since students were not allowed to begin composition until enough harmony was known, Stanford insisted that he take the harmony class for an extra year until he passed Grade 5, in accordance with College policy, before he would take him for composition⁵. In comparison, Coleridge-Taylor's musical abilities were in evidence from the first months at Groves' institution.

² Music Reports all held at the Royal College of Music, Portraits Department.

³ The short time Coleridge-Taylor spent in Wood's harmony class indicates the considerable facility he already possessed in this province of musical proficiency, one which was in marked contrast to his contemporary, Ralph Vaughan Williams, who spent several terms labouring under the yoke of Gladstone's tuition at the RCM on the basis that he demonstrated little refinement in this area.

⁴ 'Musical Notes – Scholarship', *Croydon Advertiser*, 14 Oct. 1893, 8.

⁵ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music and other Essays* (London, 1963), 181.

The young student developed rapidly as a composer, showing remarkable assurance and craftsmanship, and his student chamber works form a well-delineated chapter of his output. During the four years that Coleridge-Taylor studied under Stanford, he produced eleven chamber works, for various combinations of instruments. In contrast, throughout his professional musical life (from 1897 when he left the college, to his death in 1912), he produced only four more works in this genre. This decrease was no doubt due to the continued absence of a commercial market for chamber music in England (unlike Germany) at this time, and one that had remained since the mid nineteenth century (as demonstrated by the Leipzig publications of chamber works by Parry, Stanford and Mackenzie). All four professional works were written in duet form - three for violin and piano (*Four African Dances* op.58, 1904; *Romance* op.59 no.2, 1904; *Ballade in C minor* op.73, 1907) and one for 'cello and piano (*Variations in B minor*, 1907) - rather than as small group works.

Stanford actively advocated the educative and formative reasons for writing chamber music, a genre that had recently been enriched by the appearance of chamber works by Brahms and Dvořák, such as the latter's Piano Quintet in A op.81 (1887), and the former's Clarinet Quintet in B minor op.115 and Clarinet Sonatas op.120 in F minor and E-flat (1891 and 1894). Stanford's own compositions embodied a considerable corpus of chamber music, including his Piano Quintet of 1886 and two string quintets; it was no accident that Stanford encouraged his students to produce work in this genre. The vital concepts, for Stanford, were 'Brahmsian intellectualism' and 'music which exists by virtue of its own sounds alone, which we term "absolute music".'⁶ Chamber music employs slender means, but having fewer forces with which to work does not necessarily mean that it is easier to write. Such 'absolute music' was

⁶ Charles V. Stanford & Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (London, 1916), 232.

considered a major challenge, and the two students who passed Stanford's exacting and ultimate test were William Yeates Hurlstone and Coleridge-Taylor, who both followed the same ethos in their output. Hurlstone was awarded the first Cobbett prize for his *Fantasy* string quartet in A minor, in 1906.⁷ A posthumous Cobbett Prize for distinguished chamber music works was given in 1917 to Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Sonata in D minor op.28.⁸ This was a matter of no little consequence – the Cobbett Prize had sixty-seven entrants in 1906, and saw Joseph Holbrooke, a well-regarded graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, win a consolation prize.⁹

Stanford's enthusiasm for chamber music, fired by Brahms and evinced by his own considerable output in the genre, had a profound impact on both Coleridge-Taylor and Hurlstone. Of Coleridge-Taylor's significant corpus of student works during this important period at the Royal College of Music, this influence can be notably seen in the Piano Quintet in G minor op.1 (1893); Nonet in F minor op.2 (1893); *Fantasiestucke* for String Quartet op.5 (1895); and Clarinet Quintet in F-sharp minor op.10 (1895).

The Piano Quintet is Coleridge-Taylor's earliest extant chamber work. He had also written a Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in F minor (which actually predates the two by Brahms) in the same year (unfortunately the sonata manuscript is missing, along with the String Quartet in D minor op.13, which Coleridge-Taylor wrote in 1896, the year before he left the Royal College of Music); although the entire three-movement clarinet sonata was scheduled for performance, along with the piano quintet, at the Public Hall in his hometown of Croydon, on 9 October 1893, the audience was instead presented with only its middle movement and the minuet and trio from another sonata (piano) by Coleridge-Taylor in C minor:

⁷ Katharine Hurlstone, *William Hurlstone, musician: memories & records* (London, 1947), 24.

⁸ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*

There was a fairly large attendance at the Croydon Public Hall.... Mr. Taylor has succeeded in gaining an open scholarship for the Royal College of Music, and he has paid his attention to composition with so much success that he was able to put before his patrons a programme, which consisted, with two exceptions, of his own pieces. The programme opened with a Clarinet Quintet in A (Mozart).....After Miss Ethel Winn had sang the song entitled 'Solitude' (Coleridge-Taylor), Miss Jessie Grimson delighted the audience with her beautiful rendering of the violin solo 'Notturmo' (Hans Sitt), Mr. Coleridge-Taylor presiding at the pianoforte. At the last moment he decided to substitute the Minuet and Trio from his Sonata in C minor in place of the first and last movements of his Clarinet Sonata.....The audience seemed already gratified with Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's ability, but were astonished when his Pianoforte Quintet in G minor was presented, at the close of which he had to come forward and give his acknowledgements of the most enthusiastic reception accorded to him. Mr. Coleridge-Taylor seems most original in his ideas, the work being full of beautiful characters. Indeed, one could not help being pleasantly astonished at the work of a young man of but few years' experience in the musical art, the minuet being full of beautiful melody.¹⁰

There is no information explaining the programme change, but one reason could be unfamiliarity with the newly minted work. His clarinetist, Charles Draper, was confident and able, playing Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A to open the recital, and, as 'the foremost clarinetist [*sic.*] of his time'¹¹, surely capable of playing the new work in its entirety.

Fellow students delivered the first performance of the Piano Quintet from the College, with Coleridge-Taylor playing the piano. Stanford had seen the composition; the semibreves marked in the 'development' section of the first movement on the manuscript are in his hand. In common with Coleridge-Taylor's other student chamber works, this piano quintet is harmonically quite bold. Even at this very early stage, there are prophetic signs of the chromatic and harmonic nuances of much of his later professional music. Indeed, to describe the music created during his college years as 'student works' suggests that the pieces written after 1897 are mature works – and this choice of words implies a distinction that does not exist.

¹⁰ 'Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's Concert', *Croydon Advertiser*, 14 Oct. 1893, 8.

¹¹ Robert Elkin, *Royal Philharmonic: the annals of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (London, 1946), 98.

The Piano Quintet evinces a considerable understanding of tonal dialectics and the syntax of nineteenth-century harmony, as well as an impressive contrapuntal fluency. There is perhaps a lack of sophistication in the way he handles much of the material and in the integration of thematic motifs (by 1895, in the Clarinet Quintet, he had thoroughly mastered these techniques) notably in the way that cellular ideas are not given the same amount of room to expand and transform, but his technical assurance and comprehension of the larger architecture is impressive; as the *Croydon Advertiser* commented, Coleridge-Taylor was 'still on the bright side of twenty years of age'.¹²

The student works show conventional practices in terms of form - first and second group ideas, organization of thematic material and thematic displacement, developmental process and scoring, and the Piano Quintet is, in this sense, no exception. The sonata movements, for example, are clear-cut, and throughout the student chamber works it becomes apparent that it is the internal detail within the formal structures that is noteworthy. The first movement of the piano quintet, in sonata form, begins, after two declamatory G minor chords, with the first main theme, played by the string quartet in octaves:

¹² *Croydon Advertiser*, 14 Oct. 1893, 8.

Music example 1: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement I, bb. 1 - 5

Allegro con moto

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Piano

In Coleridge-Taylor's manuscript, the first violin part in bars 2 and 4 is notated thus:

Vln. I

The second theme appears in the relative major key of B flat, a conventional, classical choice, as is its more tuneful and less rigorous approach, which contrasts well with the first theme's rhythmic and potentially more dynamic elements. The interesting aspect is the way that Coleridge-Taylor takes the listener obliquely through to the second theme, applying his distinctive personal stamp; the modal bridge passage to the second-group begins at bar twelve; ten bars later the music has reached the tonal area of C minor, with a snippet of first-subject material. The composer's use of the lower register of the violins here shows both his skill and natural affinity for string sonority and his ability to 'hear' (just as Elgar could) in terms of instrumental timbre and idiom. From C minor the piece moves to F major (bar 25), which is the dominant of B flat major, the key of the second theme (bar 26).

Of course Coleridge-Taylor was using the vocabulary of the Romantics; but although he used the typical compositional procedures of the late nineteenth century (namely the protracted delay of tonicisation and definite cadences, extended pedal points, thematic displacement, and above all, organicism), he displayed a sense of innate craftsmanship over and above that of normal students. This is seen in his confident, indeed prodigious technical approach, in the signs and hints of his distinctive harmonic vocabulary shining through even at this early stage, and in the self-assurance with which he handles individual forms. For instance, his adept reworking of the recapitulation, and use of thematic displacement is evident from bar 95 where he holds a long (and unexpected) C minor pedal rather than progressing immediately into the key of G minor for the recapitulation, giving a strong impression of a subdominant restatement. The key of the bridge passage is then altered, with the use of an interrupted cadence (to facilitate a new key for the second subject) from the original key of G minor to E-flat major (bar 117). The E flat then becomes an

enharmonic D-sharp, which then changes to the key of E major, resolving to the new and unconventional key of A minor (bar 125). These technical skills were not new, but such harmonic wizardry and boldness reveal Coleridge-Taylor's awareness and abilities. The piano, in parts of this passage, whilst reminiscent of Dvořákian modally-inspired harmonies, also reveals an undeveloped hint of the characteristic harmonies inherent in Coleridge-Taylor's later works:

Music example 2: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement I, bb. 119-120

The manuscript markings show that Coleridge-Taylor had originally intended to repeat the development and recapitulation (not an unusual practice), but then decided against it, crossing out the two bars leading up to what would have been the repeat. Instead, the movement ends abruptly – indeed much too abruptly – after a very short coda of only eight bars.

Of the Piano Quintet's four movements, the second, *Larghetto*, in E flat major, is the most successful. In ternary form, it is a substantial movement conceived in much more extensive lyrical paragraphs, and is imaginatively constructed. The enormous arching melodic paragraph of the opening subject in the example below (played by the 'cello) may have drawn its inspiration from the *Andante* of Brahms' Piano Quartet in C minor, op.60, 1875 (where the opening 'cello melody is considered to be Brahms' reluctant farewell to Clara); another precedent can be found in the 'cello solo of Dvořák's Piano Quintet in A major, 1887 :

Music example 3: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement II, bb. 3 – 11

3 [Larghetto]

mf < > < > *cresc.* *dim.* *p*

The boldness of Coleridge-Taylor's harmonic language is evidenced in the early stages of the movement:

Music example 4: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement II, bb. 15 – 22

15 [Larghetto]

f *mf* *sf* *sf* *ff sf* *ff sf* *ff sf*

19

mf *sf*

The composer's *modus operandi* of deflecting the cadence, seen here at bar 18 and resolved by bar 22 (in the above example) is not only rehearsed at length in his student chamber music but also in his more mature orchestral works and opera, a technique which he largely abandoned in favour of the more slavish phraseological and cadential repetition that tends negatively to characterise and blight so many of Coleridge-Taylor's choral essays.

The first paragraph does not draw to a close until bar 42, (two bars before this, the B natural from the fourth note of the first subject at beginning of the movement is converted this time to modulate to the relative minor) when the second subject is presented (C minor):

Music example 5: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement II, bb. 42 – 49

42 [Larghetto]
 ff sf sf

48
 dim.

In a manner much favoured by Beethoven and Brahms, this material is not strictly repeated during the recapitulation, although (unlike the complete absence of a statement of the second subject in the recapitulation during the final movement) there is a tangible memory of it, though in a rather different guise and context from its expositional occurrence:

Music example 6: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement II, bb. 128–32

The third movement (scherzo), in G minor, is not a traditional extended symphonic movement as one would normally find in late nineteenth-century precedents, but is, rather, a brief and terse dance movement, with a trio (in the tonic major) that later becomes the basis of the fugue in the final movement (see Movement IV b. 53). In fact, this movement appears to be an experiment in its attempt to function as an extended *introduction* to the finale, or at least it may have been conceived as a ‘partner’ movement (i.e. ‘Dance and Fugue’) to the finale, not least because of its thematic links:

Music example 7: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement III, Trio, bb. 47 – 50

(see fugue subject Mov. IV b.53)

Dance elements, (particularly in the Scherzo movements) and the more lyrical side, are the two main facets of Dvořák's music that Coleridge-Taylor admired and drew inspiration from. Dvořák was lionised in England from his first arrival in 1884 to conduct his *Stabat Mater* at the Albert Hall, London; Coleridge-Taylor almost certainly studied the Czech composer's scores and would have known his chamber music and other significant instrumental works (many of which were heard for the first time at Dannreuther's semi-private chamber music concerts at Orme Square in Bayswater), in particular the Sixth, Seventh (commissioned by the Philharmonic Society) and Eighth Symphonies (heard during Dvořák's visit in 1891 to Cambridge to receive his honorary doctorate), and later, (heard for the first time in England in 1894) the Ninth Symphony when it was hot from its premiere in the United States.

The last movement of Coleridge-Taylor's quintet, akin to the first movement, also has an expanse of melody, this time with a dance-like quality. The development section is replaced by a fugue in D major, during which the composer, revealing his

youth, makes studious use of an invertible countersubject that would doubtlessly have gained pedagogical praise from Stanford:

Musical example 8: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement IV, bb. 61 – 64

Stanford's lessons were being well assimilated, although, even at this stage there are signs that, in spite of his considerable proficiency and confidence, Coleridge-Taylor was already developing a proclivity and vulnerability towards overuse of formulaic ideas, therefore sometimes resorting to clichés and academic platitudes; in the same way the repeat of the exposition in this final movement conveys a formulaic effect as does the developmental process of the first movement which also lapses into such a platitude in its over-emphasis of sequence:

Music example 9: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement I, bb. 84 - 88

The musical score for measures 84-88 of the Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement I, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 84-86) is marked *[Allegro con moto]*. The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic, followed by a *f* dynamic. The string parts are marked *sf*. The second system (measures 87-88) shows the piano part with *f* and *p* dynamics, and the string parts with *cresc.* markings. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

However, Coleridge-Taylor had obviously learnt from, and assimilated, important instrumental paradigms. Take, for example, the early stages of the final movement of this work, where the ‘concertante’ piano, in octaves with string accompaniment, is suggestive of Schubert’s Piano Quintet in A major (“Trout” quintet) of 1819. (The same technique is also found in the first movement of Coleridge-Taylor’s Nonet):

Musical example 10: Quintet for piano and strings in G minor, Movement IV, bb. 22 –

26

The musical score shows five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The tempo is marked [Allegro molto]. The key signature is G minor (three flats). The time signature is common time (C). The score includes dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando), *ff* (fortissimo), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). There are also trill markings in the Viola and Violoncello parts.

The final movement of the quintet ends precipitately after a very short recapitulation which advances no second group material at all; this shortcoming of a sudden and absolute finality exemplified in the precipitous endings of the opening and closing movements of this work (which can also be found in the end of Dvořák's *New World Symphony*¹³) reveals a conflict between the lyrical side and the developmental side, where, in this case, the lyrical element wins the internal argument. Although such instances can often make it easy to dismiss student works as 'academic', and are perhaps symptomatic of inexperience, Coleridge-Taylor nevertheless shows deft handling in the piano quintet, and is prophetic of the harmonic quirks and exotic harmonies that predominate in his later works.

In this same year, 1893, Coleridge-Taylor wrote three other chamber works, each of which reveal differing aspects of the composer: *Suite de Pièces* op.3, for

¹³ The first airing of Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor in England was not until 1894 (Philharmonic Society, Queen's Hall, London).

violin and piano or organ was published by Schott. 'Trio in E moll' for violin, 'cello and piano remains unpublished but exists complete in manuscript form (the twelve pages of score are, as with all the early manuscripts, clearly and neatly written). The third piece, his Nonet in F minor, for oboe, clarinet in B-flat, horn in F, bassoon, violin, viola, 'cello, double bass, and piano, is also unpublished.

The *Suite de Pièces* is a four-movement work (Pastorale; Cavatina; Barcarolle; Contemplation) that meets all the requirements of 'light' music and reflected Novello's appetite for this commercially profitable genre (*teste* the violin works of Elgar, Parry's *Twelve Short Pieces* of 1894 and Stanford's *Characteristic Pieces* of 1895). It was to be followed four years later by works in a similar mood; this succession of other salon pieces, *Valse Caprice* op.23, *Two Moorish Tone Pictures* op.19, *Three Humoresques* op.31 illustrate the composer's standpoint between salon music and serious music; the fine dividing line between the two genres is further exemplified in the *Ballade in A minor* op.33 of 1898 which established Coleridge-Taylor firmly as an orchestral composer. This work, predicated on a vast self-developing tune, is nonetheless too weighty in terms of its structural content to be considered purely as salon music.

The Nonet is structured in four standard movements (i) Allegro moderato (ii) Andante, con moto (iii) Scherzo, Allegro and (iv) Finale, Allegro vivace, and was first performed on July 5, 1894 at the Royal College of Music. The manuscript bears the pedagogical inscription 'Gradus ad Parnassum', indicating that the composer considered the work as a step towards inspiration and technical competency.¹⁴ The first movement, organised in sonata form (albeit with a development section of

¹⁴ *Vide* Johann Joseph Fux's textbook of formulated rules and training for counterpoint, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna, 1725).

modest proportions - thirty-two bars, following the exposition of seventy-seven bars), offers two strong opening ideas in F minor and A-flat major:

Music example 11: Nonet in F minor, first movement, 1st subject bb. 1 – 9

1 **Allegro moderato**

Music example 12: Nonet in F minor, first movement, 2nd subject bb. 69 – 71

69 **[Allegro moderato]**
Tranquillo

Coleridge-Taylor's use of instrumental polyphony in this movement is conspicuous; for instance, in the passage leading up to the announcement of the secondary idea above:

Music example 13: Nonet in F minor, first movement, bb. 60 – 68

60 [Allegro moderato]

Ob. *p* *f*

Cl. *p* *f*

Hn. *f*

Bsn. *p* *f*

Vln. *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Vc. *cresc.* *f*

Cb. *f*

Pf. *p* *cresc.* *f* *sf*

64 *ff sf* *mp* *f* *rall.*

ff sf *mp* *f* *rall.*

ff sf *mp* *f* *pizz* *p*

ff sf

And in the recapitulation:

Music example 14: Nonet in F minor, first movement, bb. 120 – 126

120 [Allegro moderato]

Ob. *dim.* *p*

Cl. *p*

Hr. *p*

Bsn. *p*

Vln. *f dim.*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

Pf. *dim.* *p*

123

mf

f

mf

f sf

f sf

f sf

f sf

ff *molto dim.*

molto dim.

molto dim.

f sf *p*

Coleridge-Taylor's comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of particular combinations of instruments is most notably evident in the closing idea of the exposition (where the perceptibly less imaginative piano part highlights further his propensity to think more naturally in instrumental terms):

Music example 15: Nonet in F minor, first movement, bb. 73 – 77

73 [Allegro moderato]

Ob.

Cl.

Hn.

Bsn.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Pf.

f dim.

mf dim.

mf dim.

mf dim.

pizz.

cresc.

sf

p

The second movement, *Andante con moto* (of which Sir George Grove reportedly commented to Colonel Walters during the college performance ‘he will never write a good slow movement until he has been in love. No one can who has not been in love’¹⁵), is organised as a small-scale song-form (i.e. ternary form) in A-flat major, with the fleeting middle section in C major. Whilst parts of the central section display an almost Schubertian grace:

Music example 16: Nonet in F minor, second movement, bb. 45 – 49

The musical score for measures 45-49 of the second movement of the Nonet in F minor is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 45-47, and the second system covers measures 48-49. The instrumentation includes Violin I (Vln.), Violin II (Vla.), Viola (Vc.), and Piano (Pf.). The tempo is marked [Andante con moto]. The key signature is one flat (F minor). The time signature is 3/8. The score shows a melodic line in the strings and a rhythmic accompaniment in the piano.

the outer sections contain passages that are potently evocative of the lighter French

‘ballet music’ of Delibes and Gounod:

¹⁵ W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 26.

Music example 17: Nonet in F minor, second movement, bb. 97 – 101

97 [Andante con moto]

Ob.

PI

100

This approach shares a commonality with the ballet scores of Tchaikovsky, in addition to some of Elgar's salon music, and Elgar's Enigma variations:

Music example 18: Elgar, *Enigma Variations*, No. V, bb. 8 - 9

[Moderato]

Fl. *pp* *p dim.*

Ob. *pp* *p dim.*

Cl. *pp* *mf* *p* *dim.* Solo

Hn. *pp* *mf* *p* *dim.*

Vln. I *p* *mf dim.* *p* pizz.

Vln. II *pizz* *mf dim.* *p* pizz.

Vla. *pizz* *mf* *dim.*

Vc. *pizz* *mf* *dim.*

Cb. *mf* *dim.*

The same effect is explicit in the second movement of Coleridge-Taylor's *Sonata in D minor* for violin and piano:

Music example 19: *Sonata in D minor*, Movement II, bb. 61 - 63

[Larghetto]

61 *a tempo*

Vln. *ff*

Pf. *f* *a tempo*

con pedale

This ternary movement shares its main theme with another Coleridge-Taylor work for violin (and orchestra), the Romance in G op. 39 (Novello, 1900), which was performed by the composer himself at the Salle Érard, London, on 24 May 1899¹⁶. He invited one of his few private pupils, Mrs. Rudolph Lehmann (mother of Liza Lehmann) to the event:

I am very sorry to hear that you are so unwell and hope you will soon be well again. If you are able to go to the Salle Erard on the 24th, will you please accept the enclosed tickets. Otherwise perhaps you will kindly pass them on to someone who would care to use them.¹⁷

Coleridge-Taylor's intuitive observation of this particular pupil that 'I don't really think she wants the lessons at all, she only takes them in order to help me to an income'¹⁸, was reinforced by her daughter's comments in her autobiography which disclosed that 'my mother certainly had extraordinary gifts, but suffered all her life from quite abnormally developed diffidence. As a girl, she was so musical that her father declared *she did not require lessons!*'¹⁹

The violin sonata was published posthumously in 1917 (edited by the violinist Albert Sammons); the composition date cannot be accurately pinpointed, but it is likely that the work dates from his college years. It is a strongly Dvořák-orientated work; for instance the suggestion of Dvořák is displayed immediately in the modality of the opening idea:

¹⁶ Berwick Sayers, 74.

¹⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Mrs. Lehmann, undated, but sent from 30 Dagnall Park, Selhurst, Croydon, where Coleridge-Taylor was resident in 1899. *GB-Lbl ADD 54316*.

¹⁸ Berwick Sayers, 76.

¹⁹ Liza Lehmann, *The life of Liza Lehmann* (London, 1919; repr. 1980), 19.

Music example 20: Sonata in D minor, Movement I, bb. 5 – 8

5 [Allegro ma non tanto]

Vln.

Devoid of polyphony and much simpler in texture than the nonet and the clarinet quintet, the sonata is also less discursive, with no large-scale discussion of motivic material; indeed the material is at times somewhat thin and over-formulated:

Music example 21: Sonata in D minor, Movement I, bb. 55 – 62

[Allegro ma non tanto]

55 *mp a tempo*

Pf.

61

Ped. * Ped. *

The work cannot be considered an intellectual piece in the same way that Coleridge-Taylor's later chamber works are (in that they demonstrate an unbridled deference to Brahmsian organicism); instead, the reliance is placed on tonal effects created by the juxtaposition of unrelated keys:

Music example 22: Sonata in D minor, Movement I, bb. 123 – 124

The image shows a musical score for Violin (Vln.) and Piano (Pf.) for measures 123 and 124. The tempo is marked [Allegro ma non tanto]. The violin part begins with a pizzicato marking [pizz.] and dynamic markings of *f* and *ff*. The piano part features a complex chordal texture in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand, also marked *ff*.

In contrast to the processes in the monothematic violin sonata, much more modernist intellectual ideas are evident in the Nonet. Although the material in the final movement of the Nonet (in F major) is not as strong as the other movements, its execution is considerably bolder. In the same way that Brahms, in the first movement of his Symphony no. 4 in E minor, starts in the home key and then unexpectedly proceeds at a different tangent without an expositional repeat (bar 150), Coleridge-Taylor incorporates this technique in the nonet's fourth movement (bar 115).

At the beginning of May 1894 the College relocated to its new building on Prince Consort Road. In succession to George Grove who had recently resigned, Hubert Parry, one of England's most influential musical personalities, was appointed as director. At this time, Coleridge-Taylor was in the process of writing his *Fantasiestücke* for string quartet, dedicated to his tutor and performed at the new premises of the College on March 13, 1895. The *Musical Times* reviewed the concert, concluding that 'Mr. Coleridge-Taylor is a *rara avis* amongst students, for he has something to say that is worth saying, and he does so in his own individual way. Considering the lamentable dearth of good string music by native composers, his

Fantasiestücke should be in request; they certainly deserve to become well known, for they are thoroughly charming, remarkably free from reminiscences, and effective.²⁰ The work was published in individual parts by Augener, and the College archives hold the score of the first movement, Prelude, in the hand of the composer's son, Hiawatha. The five short movements of the work (Prelude, Serenade, Humoresque, Minuet and Trio, Dance) form a cycle of pieces beginning and ending in the key of E minor which, (if the third and fourth movements are considered as one movement) are analogous to the four movements of a string quartet. The idiomatic writing of each section demonstrates the young composer's capability. By this date, when the composer was still nineteen years old, his bold and exotic harmonies had become well established.

The Prelude is a very assured and beautifully composed structure, displaying that the student had assimilated the standard harmonic vocabulary of the romantics, an idiom that is fully formed in the 1895 Clarinet Quintet. Take, for instance, the exposition of the movement, which sees a move firstly from E minor to the submediant C major (bar thirty), and then five bars later to the Neapolitan (F major):

²⁰ "Royal College of Music", *Musical Times* (1 Apr. 1895), 236.

Music example 23: *Fantasiestücke op. 5, first movement, bb. 28 - 38*

[Allegro ma non troppo]

28

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla

Vc

cresc. poco a poco

ff

33

sf

The central section is also in C major, a submediant modulation typical of stock romantic language:

Music example 24: *Fantasiestücke op. 5, first movement, bb. 61 - 68*

61

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla

Vcl.

dolce

sf

The evocative harmonies of the second movement, a Serenade, owe much to Dvořák (see, for example, the beginning of Dvořák's String Quartet in E-flat, op.51, 1878-79). Coleridge-Taylor was experimenting with similar tonal procedures and imaginative harmonic progressions, and the chromatic harmonies suggested a few years before in the Piano Quintet are now quite clearly well formed:

Music example 25: Fantasiestücke op. 5, second movement, b. 33

The musical score shows four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vcl. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/4. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure is in 6/4 time, and the second measure is in 5/4 time. Dynamics include piano (p) and forte (f).

Written principally in 5/4 time (the composer's only other use of this metre is in the scherzo section of his symphony written the following year), the movement is based on a strong continuous strand, with self-developing melodies. Although encased in a ternary structure, the music is essentially through composed, evolving both tonally and thematically. The first section is in G major; the second section is based on material from the first theme. An enharmonic change (violin II in bar 21/22) facilitates a key change from G major to F major:

Music example 26: *Fantasiestücke op. 5, second movement, bb. 20 – 22*

The music then swiftly moves through B-flat major to D major, then, briefly, E-flat and A-flat major, before returning to G major again at bar thirty-four for the return of the first section, and coda.

The ‘Fantasy’ title of the piece, suggesting some sort of flight of fancy, is felt in the fourth movement, minuet and trio (working round the connected key areas of G major/G minor/B-flat major/D major, creating an improvisatory atmosphere) and dominates the final movement, Dance. There are no long or complex modulations, (and as in the Piano Quintet the ending is somewhat precipitant), but this last movement contains a significant reference to the first movement with the same move to the submediant (C) as the Prelude. The fantasy element comes from within the harmonic dimension. All of Coleridge-Taylor’s significant chamber works are written in a minor key, suggesting that the composer’s creative instincts were attracted to the possibilities of the exotic sounds and harmonic progressions within the minor modality. His technical proficiency in use of key structures and closely related key areas including third relationships, developed and matured rapidly during his college years, and his professional abilities were at ease in these keys. There is a clear road of development from the Piano Quintet to the Clarinet Quintet, his last substantial extant

chamber work written under Stanford at the Royal College of Music and the most important of the works produced by Coleridge-Taylor during his years there (other smaller chamber works included *Dance and Lament for violin and Piano* op.9, published by Augener as *Two Romantic Pieces* op.9 1895/6, and also available for piano solo, and the *Hiawathan Sketches* for violin and piano, op.16, 1896/7).

Coleridge-Taylor was absorbed in the composition of the Clarinet Quintet throughout the midsummer term of 1895. His *Fantasiestücke* had been premiered at a college concert in March of this year, which had included Brahms' Clarinet Quintet in B minor, op.115 (1891). The popularity of Brahms' music in London had grown steadily for the last twenty years, and his works were being regularly performed at the Philharmonic concerts, the Royal College of Music concerts, and the popular Crystal Palace Saturday concerts under August Manns (who held the position of conductor from 1855 to 1900). Coleridge-Taylor's daughter Avril (who was not yet born), comments in her memoirs: 'As is well known, Stanford was a devotee of Brahms....It having been suggested that no one could write a work of this nature [Clarinet Quintet] without showing Brahmsian influence, Coleridge-Taylor went home, locked himself up, and took up the challenge. When the completed work was ready he took it to Stanford who perused it carefully, apparently exclaiming at the finish: 'You've done it, my boy'.'²¹ The composer certainly had 'done it'! Stanford was so impressed with the Quintet he introduced it to the prominent German violinist and composer Joseph Joachim who subsequently rehearsed it with the Joachim Quartet in Berlin (1897)²². His letter to Joachim extols the work and the talent of his pupil: 'A mulatto scholar at the College, a boy of 19 with a quite wonderful flow of invention and idea has written a clarinet quintet which I am going to bring to you to see, and if you have time to try.

²¹ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 21.

²² The MS score is inscribed, in Joachim's hand 'Nicht stechen nur stimmen' ('Don't engrave, only parts').

I know you will be pleased with it.....his power of melodic invention reminds me a good deal of Dvorak. He is altogether the most remarkable thing in the younger generation that I have seen: and he *knows his counterpoint*.²³

The first performance of the quintet took place on July 10, 1895, at the Royal College of Music, and received enthusiastic reviews. In the 'memory sketch' of her husband in the 1940s, Jessie Coleridge-Taylor recalled: 'From the very earliest his compositions showed remarkable originality, as the various reviews of that day testify in no uncertain manner.'²⁴ The *Musical Times* observed that 'there is little or nothing in Mr. Taylor's Quintet to betray the fact that he is still *in statu pupillaris*. His is, indeed, an achievement, not merely a 'promise'.²⁵

The work was later performed by the Rimmer String Quartet (Edward Mills, clarinet) in Liverpool, in a programme devoted exclusively to the compositions of Coleridge-Taylor (including *Fantasiestücke*, and *Five Negro Melodies* transcribed for violin, 'cello and piano, but not, as he had originally hoped, the *Four African Dances*).²⁶ The composer wrote to Thomas Rimmer regarding rehearsals, on the Wednesday before the concert:

My dear Rimmer

I hope you have, by this time, received the music for the 17th.
When will you be likely to rehearse? I shall be in Liverpool on the Monday evening, and could rehearse then, but, of course, the morning of the next day will be better.
I think the Four Dances will not prove too many, for they are very short and concentrated.²⁷

²³ Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford, 2002), 270.

²⁴ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Genius & Musician: A Memory Sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/3), 14.

²⁵ "Royal College of Music", *MT*, 1 August 1895, 528.

²⁶ See programme of 'The Rimmer Quartet Chamber Concerts', Tuesday 17 Mar. 1908. *GB-Bu MS33/2/1/39*.

²⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Thomas Rimmer, 11 Mar. 1908, *GB-Bu MS33/4/1/3*

A small selection of songs was accompanied at the piano by the composer himself; he communicated with the second violinist, Herman Sutherland Bantock (cousin of Sir Granville Bantock) shortly afterwards to confirm that his expenses for the evening 'amounted to £2.5.'²⁸

The Quintet is thematically sophisticated and exudes assured writing, especially for someone of the youthful age of twenty. Whilst the lyrical thematic precedent is Dvořák, there is no doubt that Coleridge-Taylor also fully understood the techniques and various generative ways of writing ideas stemming from a German Teutonic root; Stanford was a Brahms enthusiast, hence the copious evidence, in his student's composition, of the Brahmsian intellectual and organic nature of composition. The principal similarity is manifested from the beginning in the dichotomy of tonal areas, which takes its lead from Brahms' Clarinet Quintet in B minor, op. 115 where Brahms (like Haydn before him in his String Quartet Op. 33 No. 1) appears to define D major even though the underlying tonic is B minor. Coleridge-Taylor adopts this same principle in his own clarinet quintet, and like Brahms' clarinet work, the opening bars do not stress the key; the piece begins in the home key of F-sharp minor, but appears already to have moved to A major by bar 10. The reputable German publishers Breitkopf and Härtel issued the parts in Leipzig in 1906 as part of their Kammermusik-Bibliothek (No. 159/163), and listed the composition as 'Quintet in A dur'. The prevalence of A major may well have led to the careless mistake, though it is hard to see how the publisher could have mistaken the last chord. The error has nevertheless endured; it was repeated in the notes accompanying the 1992 CD recording by Harold Wright and the Hawthorne String Quartet, where it is announced as "Quintet in A (World Premiere Recording), and the

²⁸ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Herman Bantock, 21 Mar. 1908, *GB-Bu MS33/4/1/4*

concert programme for its performance in December 1999 as part of the Brighton & Hove Philharmonic Society 75th Season also introduces it as “Clarinet Quintet in A”.

Further instances of the F-sharp minor/A major dualism underline the similarity with Brahms. For example, the expositional second-group material in A major is presented in the recapitulation in F-sharp minor:

Music example 27: Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, first movement, bb. 176 – 179

The clear sonata form of the first movement, in 6/4 time, is marked *Allegro energico*. After the initial F-sharp minor chord, Coleridge-Taylor has already introduced, by bar three, the VI chord (the chord of D) in first inversion (VI b). This added ‘sixth’ note opens up a tonal area that he uses later in the exposition and provides an example of the significance that Coleridge-Taylor attaches in his compositional procedure to the way in which smaller elements may predict or shape the larger tonal elements; this parallels the added sixth note (f, a, c **d**) in the first movement of Dvořák’s “*American*” *Quartet* in F major, No.12, op.96, written two years earlier (1893). By bar thirty-three the music begins to move to the dominant of

F-sharp minor (C-sharp), and the influence of Brahms via Stanford is evident at bar thirty-eight when the cadence is delayed. Bars forty-one to forty-four move through a transition to the second-group material in the exposition, with Coleridge-Taylor's distinctive chromaticism, which is presented in A major:

Music example 28: Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, first movement, bb. 45 – 48

The musical score for bars 45-48 of the Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, first movement, is presented in 6/4 time. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score consists of five staves: Clarinet (A), Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The Clarinet part has a whole rest in the first measure. The Violin I and II parts play a melodic line with slurs. The Viola and Violoncello parts play a rhythmic accompaniment with 'pizz.' markings.

The key moves to the tonic minor, facilitating a move through C major to F major (the flat submediant of A major) by bar sixty-seven. This tonal area is now used as a dominant to B-flat major (Neapolitan) ten bars later, for the secondary material of the second group. The music progresses to the key of D, before cadencing in A, and the closing idea of the exposition (bar ninety-three), is related to the opening idea, which again is a Brahmsian concept. This illustrates the rich and complex means whereby Coleridge-Taylor links key elements and visits multiple tonalities for a deliberate reason; the music in the development section is geared, not by accident, towards the dominant of F and not F-sharp as expected, (through the modulation from C to F, rather than C-sharp to F-sharp), a move that stems from the semitonal slides (bars

ninety-four to ninety-seven) linked to the Neapolitan shift already mentioned above, which in turn derives from the semitone cells presented at the beginning of the work:

Music example 29: Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, first movement, bb. 1 – 2

These elements show an assiduous preoccupation with the development of smaller, generative cells, where the imperative of continuous variation and continuous development play a much more central role in Coleridge-Taylor's thinking. It was presumably this intellectual achievement that Stanford was alluding to when he commented 'You've done it, my boy'.²⁹

The second movement of the quintet (*Larghetto affetuoso*), in B major, is stunning, and presents a long self-developing melody, not dissimilar to Dvořák's corresponding movement in his "*American*" string quartet. The clarinet initiates the theme, and the violins continue with a variation of the same melody. The second part of the theme moves to the relative minor (bar twenty-four); there is a shift to G minor

²⁹ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 21.

six bars later, and by bar forty, the same growing material reaches C major, before the recapitulation at bar fifty-two:

Music example 30: Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, second movement, bb. 52 – 56

52 [Larghetto affetuoso]
 CL. (A) *f*

The scherzo in 9/8 and 3/4 (a device Coleridge-Taylor had employed in *Fantasiestücke*), leads to another sonata form movement, and here the composer treats the instrumentation with remarkable assurance. He uses the clarinet both as an integral inner part and as a solo part, and sometimes handles the string quartet as a unit. The theme from the second movement reappears, following a low E in the chalumeau register of the clarinet:

Music example 31: Quintet for clarinet and strings in F-sharp minor, op. 10, last movement, bb.337 – 347

337 *Un poco piu moderato*

343

This rich composition, with its related thematic ideas, has a lyrical impulse, which is redolent of Dvořák.

Berwick Sayers, cites that Coleridge-Taylor “was scarcely more than seventeen when he first became possessed of a complete devotion to the works of Antonin Dvořák”³⁰ This is evident in the young composer’s nature of building up melody, his love of unusual harmony and his predilection for Dvořákian harmonic formulae, particularly the distinctive and novel diatonic combinations of dominant

³⁰ Berwick Sayers, 27.

sevenths, ninths and elevenths which are so much a part of Dvořák's cadential vocabulary.

Regrettably, Coleridge-Taylor's most mature student chamber work, the String Quartet in D minor op.13 (1896) is missing, for this was a work of his final period as a student and surely would witness further developments beyond that of the Clarinet Quintet.

These student works, culminating with the Clarinet Quintet not only provide a fascinating insight into the way that Coleridge-Taylor developed and matured during his years of training with Stanford, and present stylistic features indicative of his later style. The processes that Coleridge-Taylor works, a prevalent lack of tonicizing built into the fabric of the pieces, generic elements, his tonal strategy (where tonal elements are important and small elements may predict or shape the larger), his ability to develop music, use and extend material, all stem from his training (methods and approaches learnt from Brahms filtered through Stanford) in the 1890s. What is remarkable however, is the way in which he applies his technical ability and skills learnt as a student. These pieces reveal the advance of a grasp of how to handle the apparatus of organic music from the German Romantic camp, and show considerable ability to be able to use material in this Brahmsian way – something that Coleridge-Taylor was to turn away from in his choral music, but returned to in his orchestral writing.

To call Coleridge-Taylor's chamber works 'student compositions' is not only potentially disparaging but also misleading; the very fact that the Clarinet Quintet shows the composer's technique in all its maturity should encourage us not to view the student years as a juvenile period.

Chapter 3

The Choral Reef (1): from the 'Big-Sea-Water' (*Hiawatha*) to shipwreck (*Meg Blane*)

1.1 FIRST ATTEMPTS

The composer's initial foray into dramatic music for the stage took place whilst he was still a student at the Royal College of Music, but his most representative and successful works, epitomised by *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, are to be found in his approach to the favoured genre in British music of this time, the narrative form.

It is evident that Coleridge-Taylor found the narrative form congenial, particularly in the way that a 4-part chorus could be used as a multi-dimensional vehicle for the purposes of 'entertainment' as well as edification (notably exploiting the registers of the voices, personification, characterisation, and unison writing). His liking for narrative was, however, also derived from an affinity for dramatic music (he evinced a lifelong interest in the theatre as is evident from the numerous incidental scores) and the opportunities that the more potentially experimental forms that drama afforded for choral structures and genres. Furthermore, what is clear is that Coleridge-Taylor wished to avoid conforming to the paradigm of the 'epic' large-scale choral work (such as those favoured by the Birmingham Festival, in their traditional two parts) and, in the end, preferred to explore an amalgam of dramatic and formal procedures in a series of hybrid works in which elements of cantata, operetta and opera combined. Ultimately this led to the writing of a substantial opera, *Thelma*, which, to his dismay, never got off the ground. With one major exception, he chose to explore this genre as a secular phenomenon (see the Table below) and favoured contemporary poetry (Longfellow, Buchanan, Dunbar, Barrett, and Noyes) above the

'classics' (though he did set the words of his namesake, Samuel Taylor-Coleridge, Edward Oxenford, and Thomas Moore). This proved to be a wise decision since his one foray into sacred music proved to be disastrous.

Table 1: Coleridge-Taylor's choral works, 1898 – 1911

| DATE | TITLE | GENRE | LIBRETTIST | FIRST PERFORMANCE | COMMENTS |
|-----------|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1898 | <i>Dream Lovers</i> | Opera | Paul Laurence Dunbar | 16 December 1898, Croydon. | |
| | <i>The Gitanos</i> | Cantata-Operetta | Edward E. Oxenford | | For female voices & piano |
| | <i>Hiawatha's Wedding Feast</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow | 11 November 1898, Royal College of Music, London. | |
| 1899 | <i>Death of Minnehaha</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow | 26 October 1899, North Staffordshire Music Festival, Hanley. | |
| 1900 | <i>Hiawatha's Departure</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow | 22 March 1900, Royal Albert Hall, London. | |
| 1901 | <i>The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuille</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow | 9 October 1901, Leeds Music Festival. | Translated from Jasmin's Gascon |
| | <i>Meg Blane</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Robert Buchanan | 3 October 1902, Albert Hall, Sheffield Music Festival. | Dedicated to Miss Wakefield |
| 1903 | <i>The Atonement</i> | Passion | Alice Parsons | 9 September 1903, Hereford Music Festival. | |
| 1904 | <i>Choral Ballads (Five)</i> | | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow | | |
| 1905 | <i>Kubla Khan</i> | Cantata (Rhapsodic/Symphonic) | Samuel Taylor Coleridge | 23 May 1906, Queens Hall, London. | |
| 1907-1909 | <i>Thelma</i> | Opera | Samuel Coleridge-Taylor | Never performed | |
| 1908 | <i>Bon bon Suite</i> | | Thomas Moore | 14 January 1909, Brighton. | Dedicated to Doris "Miss Sunshine". |
| 1909 | <i>Endymion's Dream</i> | Cantata/Opera | C.R.B. Barrett | 3 February 1910 | |
| 1910/11 | <i>A Tale of Old Japan</i> | Cantata (Narrative) | Alfred Noyes | 6 December 1911, Queens Hall, London. | Dedicated to Mr. & Mrs. Carl Stoeckel. |

Just before his twenty-second birthday, whilst in the midst of composing *Dream Lovers*, and a few months before he would embark upon *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, Coleridge-Taylor had felt the need to record his standpoint on operatic and absolute music, by responding to a letter published in the *Croydon Advertiser* which had propounded that operatic music was the more significant of the two:

I was surprised to read your correspondent's letter re operatic music. The writer would evidently have us believe that such music has greater emotional worth than what is called "absolute" music! Surely such compositions as the Meyerbeer type – charming though they may be – are not to be compared with those of Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Dvořák, etc., from an emotional point of view! Again, so many things go to make up the opera – libretto, scenery, acting, and a thousand other little realities and artifices – that *music* can only be reckoned as being a fraction of the whole – a most important one, I grant. Wagner's music dramas are the great exception. He was his own poet, and his music as far removed from Meyerbeer as the East from the West.

Symphonic music, etc., however, has none of these auxiliaries to assist it in sustaining interest; it is a case of music *only*.

Which, therefore, is the greater – the operatic composer, who is only, after all, *part* creator, or the symphonic composer, who is *sole* creator? I have yet to be convinced of the existence of "legions who can sing sentimental songs and perform classical music", and am absolutely sure that really first-rate concert-artistes are as scarce as operatic-artistes. Good taste and good sense both forbid operatic excerpts being introduced at concerts. Music originally written for the stage invariably falls flat when divested of its necessary "dressings", and as so much legitimate concert music has been written I fail to see why dished-up pieces of opera should be advised in its stead.

By all means let us honour operatic composers and their works, but not by taking the music from its proper sphere and thus robbing it of much of its effect.¹

His letter highlighted the schism between 'old' and 'new' styles, which had occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century; the ongoing debate, raging since the 1860s, stemmed from the bifurcation of the 'conservatives', who followed Brahms in their preference of the more traditional classical precepts of Mendelssohn and Beethoven

¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to 'The Editor of the Advertiser', *Croydon Advertiser* (7 Aug. 1897), 6. Although curiously appearing in the *Advertiser* on the 7th, the letter finishes 'Sincerely yours, S. Coleridge-Taylor, Thornton Heath, August 9th, 1897'.

(Dvořák, Joachim, Bruch, Parry and Stanford) and the maxims of the ‘progressivists’ (Wagner, Liszt, Bruckner, Wolf and Richard Strauss), who, after Beethoven had brought the symphony to its greatest level of monumentality, explored the integration and interrelation of new methods, including external influences such as poetry and art, and experimentation with form (for instance, Liszt’s single movement B minor piano sonata of 1853, where one idea transforms into another). Schumann had already made considerable headway from the mid-1830s, with works such as his innovative piano sonata in F sharp minor (1835) based entirely on its opening material, his *Fantasy* in C op.17, and his Fourth Symphony, which is principally based on the transformation of two or three ideas (the trio of the third movement is based on the solo violin arabesque from movement two, and the open-ended first movement is made whole by the recapitulation in the finale). Whilst some composers considered it impossible to serve two masters (for instance Ethel Smyth who quite clearly did not subscribe to Wagner’s methodology),² others, such as Dvořák, Parry, Stanford and Saint-Saëns, were not driven by such fixed philosophies or hidebound by the two established aesthetic astringencies, and chose to assimilate what they wanted from both camps to gain the best of both worlds. This is clearly evident in Coleridge-Taylor’s works; he embraced ‘absolute music’ in his chamber music, his symphony and his *African Variations*, but it is also clear that, with his love of all the colourful, exotic excitement and energy of the stage, he honoured and valued the theatre as an idiom in its own right. His above-stated comment that Wagner’s music is ‘as far removed from Meyerbeer as the East from the West’ shows Coleridge-Taylor’s recognition of Wagner’s art as *different* (in that all facets of the whole art - scenery, drama, poetry,

² See her memoirs - Ethel Smyth, *Impressions that remained*, 2 vols. (London, 1919).

text, song, architecture of the theatre - are unified)³; however, although clearly seeing that Wagner's music, deriving from Beethoven's idea of the 'monumental' symphony, was essentially 'instrumental' in origin (as opposed to the vocal conception of Verdi's operas), Coleridge-Taylor chose to swim the current of a different channel, with his operatic ideals deriving from French and Italian opera, just as Stanford had chosen to do. Furthermore, it is clear that Coleridge-Taylor had a penchant for the exotic and the 'oriental.' One could attribute this in part to his part-African (and hence non-European) origin in that he fostered a full awareness of a heritage largely alien to those around him, but it is also a fact that his theatrical bent of mind naturally inclined him towards colourful and unusual subject matter (then an increasing fashion in British society – take for example the passion for all things Japanese).

Coleridge-Taylor's first choral work, *Dream Lovers* (1897), takes the form of a short one-act opera, and it was this piece, along with the 'cantata/opera' *The Gitanos* written in the same year, that "marked the beginning of a life-long love affair with the operatic stage and indeed the theatre in general."⁴ Coleridge-Taylor's love of colour and image was not only manifested in such pieces, but also in a series of incidental scores for the stage, commissioned by theatre manager Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and written sporadically from 1900 until the end of his life. He was in good company; the likes of Delius, Stanford, Parry, Sullivan and many other British composers including such names as Norman O'Neill and James Hamilton Smee Clarke all produced quantities of incidental music at the behest of the three main theatre managers of the day: Sir George Alexander (1858 – 1918) of St. James' Theatre; Sir Henry Irving, (originally John Broadribb) of the Lyceum, the first actor in British history to receive a knighthood (1838 – 1905); and Mr. Herbert Draper

³ Wagner termed such unified works of art 'Gesamtkunstwerk' in his *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (The Art-work of the Future) written in 1849.

⁴ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 28.

Beerbohm (1853 – 1917), better known as Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who received a knighthood in 1909, of Her Majesty's Theatre.

Coleridge-Taylor's first appointment from Tree, to provide the incidental music for *Herod*, crystallised in the summer of 1900:

Mr. Tree has much pleasure in engaging your services to compose the Overture, Entr'acte and Incidental music for his forthcoming production for Mr. Stephen Phillips' new play "Herod" and Mr. Tree agrees to pay you the sum of £105 (one hundred and five pounds) upon completion of the same, you undertaking to have all the music ready in time for the production. And it is further understood and agreed that the entire dramatic performing rights of such music for all countries shall be Mr. Tree's exclusive property and that although you shall retain all publishing rights in the same, you shall pay to Mr. Tree a sum equal to 25% (twenty-five per cent) of all benefits or royalties you may receive from such publishing rights.⁵

The composer immediately acknowledged receipt of the contract⁶, and returned it the following day remarking 'I have much pleasure in enclosing a signed agreement as requested'.⁷

The play ran from Wednesday 31 October 1900, with Tree himself taking the part of Herod, King of the Jews.⁸ The one and only scene is set in the entrance hall of Herod's palace. In Act I this is abundantly decorated with harvest offerings for Sukkoth (the Feast of Tabernacles which commemorates the period during the Exodus from Egypt when the Israelites lived in tents in the desert), with a view of the sacred Hill of Jerusalem through a colonnade at the back. The surviving music in manuscript form, consists of only four numbers, all instrumental. The first two, Processional (the procession of people from the Feast of Tabernacles to the palace, and the ceremonial arrival of Herod) and Breeze Scene, are both in Act I; from Act III are 3) Dance (a troop of dancing girls), and 4) Finale. These were published together as a suite in

⁵ Letter from Henry Dana (Tree's business manager) to Coleridge-Taylor, 22 Aug. 1900, GB-BRu(D) HBT 000260/22.

⁶ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Henry Dana, 22 Aug. 1900, GB-BRu(D) HBT 000260/20.

⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Henry Dana, 23 Aug. 1900, GB-BRu(D) HBT 000260/21.

⁸ Stephen Phillips, *Herod: A Tragedy* (London, 1901), 7; Herod – First night Programme (31 Oct. 1900), 2.

1901, and a song was also published separately. However, in addition to music used throughout the course of the drama, there was also an overture and another song; the souvenir programme and various newspaper reports remark that ‘the actual incidental music is almost entirely taken from the “Prelude”, with the exception of the two short vocal numbers, which are naturally independent settings of the author’s lyrics’.⁹

The *Musical Times* delivered a lukewarm response to the composer’s introductory foray into the world of incidental music, proclaiming that ‘there is a motive illustrating the love of *Herod* for *Mariamne* which is full of poignant expressiveness, and there is a great deal of life in the overture and the *entr’actes*; but the impression gathered from hearing the music in the theatre is that it shows less of that originality and maturity which have made most of Mr. Taylor’s compositions so remarkable’.¹⁰ Jaeger also had reservations concerning the composer’s suitability to this genre, remarking:

Taylor writes to me this morning that he has a commission to write the music to Stephen Phillips’ *Herod* which Beerbohm Tree will produce at Her Majesty’s. Lucky beggar! But I do wonder what he will do with music to a play. I don’t think he has ever been to a theatre in his life, at least I’ve never heard him say so. Really nothing succeeds like success. Produce one work that will become really popular, & you get commissions chucked at you! It’s extraordinary.¹¹

Tree, however, was evidently more than happy with the music, and re-engaged Coleridge-Taylor to provide the music for *Ulysses* (1901), ‘a drama in a prologue and three acts’¹², scheduled for production in February 1902 (first performance Saturday 1 February, Her Majesty’s Theatre)¹³. Coleridge-Taylor was to conduct, but was forced out of action by illness:

⁹ *Herod*, *Her Majesty’s Theatre*, ‘The Music’, 7. *GB-BRu(D)*.

¹⁰ *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1900), 818.

¹¹ Letter from Jaeger to Elgar, 12 Aug. 1900, *GB-EBm L8476*.

¹² Stephen Phillips, *Ulysses* (London, 1902), 3.

¹³ *Ulysses Programme*, *GB-BRu(D)*.

This has been a week of disappointment for me – among other things I was to have conducted the first performance of “Ulysses” at Her Majestys’, & the Scottish Orchestra at Glasgow, but for once King Influenza has reigned supreme! – now you know why I have not been able to write!.....I hope you and Mrs. Carr will go to see “Ulysses” - nothing has ever been seen on the stage to equal it - & I think you’ll like my music, though it is not Grecian and therefore not ugly enough for certain critics!¹⁴

The *Musical Times* saw nothing ugly in it, noting that “ ‘Great is he who fused the might’ is a drinking song, of vigorous but graceful character, but it is surpassed in charm by ‘O set the sails’, which may be described as the gem of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor’s incidental music to this play”.¹⁵ Berwick Sayers noted that Coleridge-Taylor ‘believed and affirmed that the blank verse of *Ulysses* was “the greatest he had ever heard” ...in a conversation on this point he made the side remark that “the verse of Shakespeare does not appeal to me except when it is read aloud; then it has real grandeur”.¹⁶ Subsequent years saw five further commissions for incidental music (*Nero*, 1905 –6; *Faust*, 1908; Alfred Noyes’ *The Forest of Wild Thyme*, 1910-11; *Othello*, 1910-11, which reflected his continuing ‘enthusiasm for the magnificence of spoken Shakespearean language’¹⁷; and John Keats’ poem *St. Agnes’ Eve*, 1912).

Dana wrote to Coleridge-Taylor concerning *Nero* to confirm:

Will you please consider it as definitely settled that you write the music for Mr. Tree’s production of “Nero” by Stephen Philips, at a fee of One Hundred guineas. Mr. Tree to retain the performing rights in your music, you to retain the publishing rights. I am forwarding you by this post, duly registered, a copy of the Manuscript and I am sure Mr. Tree will be pleased to see you at any time to discuss the play.¹⁸

¹⁴ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Miss Edith Carr, Wednesday 5 Feb. 1902, *GB-Lcm 6924*.

¹⁵ *Musical Times* (1 May. 1902), 319 –20.

¹⁶ Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 132.

¹⁷ Berwick Sayers, 246.

¹⁸ Letter from Henry Dana to Coleridge-Taylor, 11 Sept. 1905, *GB-BRu(D) HBT 000262/1*.

The composer, having returned from a 'long and very pleasant holiday'¹⁹, wasted no time in setting to work, declaring to Kilburn: 'I am very busy writing the music to Stephen Phillips' "Nero", which has appealed to me immensely.'²⁰ The programme of music consisted of a Prelude, Bacchanalia (between Acts I and II), Eastern Dance (Act II), Agrippina (between Acts II and III), Intermezzo 'Storm to Calm' (Act III scene 3), Tableaux 'Nero's entry into Rome – Processional March', Poppaea (between Acts III and IV) and Fire Music (Act IV scene 2); only part of this, as was often the case, was suitable for inclusion in the published suite of pieces (Novello 1906).

Coleridge-Taylor was well aware of the financial implications this incurred, and when embarking on *Faust* in 1908, stated to Dana:

I have now carefully considered the question of music for "Faust", & think that the same fee as I received for "Herod" & "Nero" will be but appropriate – viz one hundred guineas. There will be almost as much incidental work as in "Ulysses" for which I had one hundred and fifty, but taking into consideration the fact that I need not necessarily do all the Entr'actes, I am willing to do it for the lesser amount. You see, there is so much that can never be made use of with publishers & which therefore will be of no financial value apart from the actual play. I hope this will be satisfactory to you, & if so, may I ask you to kindly see "it" is notified in the press – (I don't mean the fee!) & also that when the play-bills are ready "Incidental Music by SCT" is included?²¹

Tree readily agreed to his terms, and met with the composer the following week for a 'thorough good talk'²² concerning the play, 'freely adapted from Goethe's dramatic poem'²³ by Stephen Phillips and J. Comyns Carr. The drama commenced on Saturday 5 September 1908, at His Majesty's Theatre²⁴, and won immediate popularity.

Although he found the camaraderie of the theatre inspirational, the timing of this particular dramatic commission posed a dilemma for Coleridge-Taylor, who was still

¹⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 13 Sept. 1905, *GB-Lcm* Portraits Dept.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Henry Dana, 21 Jun. 1908, *GB-BRu(D)* HBT 000259/158.

²² Letter from Henry Dana to Coleridge-Taylor, 22 Jun. 1908, *GB-BRu(D)* HBT 000259/160.

²³ Stephen Phillips & J. Comyns Carr, *Faust* (London, 1908), title page.

²⁴ *Faust*, First Night Programme, *GB-BRu(D)*.

engrossed in his main theatrical project (which was to occupy him for the best part of two years), his opera *Thelma*, amidst an increasingly exhausting and punishing schedule that even affected his day-to-day correspondence:

I don't know what you think of me not writing sooner. Every day I've been going to do so & something has happened to prevent ... I have been very busy indeed lately, & I am afraid my correspondence has become neglected. My typewriter has been out of order for the last fortnight, & the man hasn't yet been to see it – hence my pen-&-ink letter, which I hope you'll be able to understand.*

Perhaps you know that Mr. Tree engaged me yet again to do the music for "Faust" which has just been produced in London. It is certainly Tree's greatest success and it will be difficult to get a ticket for weeks. It came at a very hard time for me, - I am just in the middle of my first opera – so I had to leave it for the time.....

It seems that quite a lot of Washingtonians & others have been over to England this Summer. I suppose the Exhibition has had a great deal to do with it. Some I've seen - & some I haven't – I've something else to do than going to & giving entertainments & the continual excitement is upsetting to one's imagination – though I simply loved the excitement of the stage rehearsals at the theatre. Then, you see, everyone is doing his & her best for one great end, and it inspires one immensely. Just fancy, the principal woman part (Margaret) is taken by a Miss Marie Löhr, only seventeen and a half years old. In London's greatest and most artistic theatre!²⁵

Marie Kaye Wouldes Lohr (July 1890 – January 1975) had been born in Sydney, before moving with her family to London in 1900. Coleridge-Taylor was mistaken about her age, as she had already turned eighteen when she played Margaret to Tree's Faust. Her acting career had, however, begun at a very early age, and she had already established herself in the principal role of a Bernard Shaw play (*Getting Married*) at London's Theatre Royal before working with Tree, with whom she remained for the next five years.

Although Coleridge-Taylor indicated a significant reluctance to break off work on *Thelma* in order to complete *Faust*, it is evident that he relished the challenge of

* In 1874 the first typewriter, invented and patented by the American Christopher Latham Scholes in 1868, and manufactured by Remington, was made available commercially in the U.S. The composer's first biographer notes that, at some point, Coleridge-Taylor's 'American friends had presented him with a typewriter'. Berwick Sayers, 219.

²⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Mr. & Mrs. Hilyer, 28 Sept. 1908, *US-Whu*.

writing music of a sufficiently polemic nature to underpin the dramatic and moral elements of Goethe's classic. What is more, the subject of *Faust*, with its underlying theme of endless struggle between Good and Evil (and the 'true love conquers all' aspect) conveniently presented a tangible link between his work for Tree and *Thelma*, which also evinced similar moral polarisations. The programme of music for *Faust* included a prelude, interludes, choruses, church music and dances, and from the turn of the century, Coleridge-Taylor's experience of writing this kind of incidental music crafted to fit the dramatic idea of stage-plays (in the form of dances, entr'actes, overtures etc.) certainly provided a suitable entrée to the more exacting undertaking of writing an opera by opening up the chance to be able to write such illustrative music. The wealth of precedents that Coleridge-Taylor could draw on for his music for the stage included Beethoven's *Egmont* overture and incidental music to Goethe's historical drama (1810); Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1842) (Shakespeare); Schumann's *Manfred* (1849) (Byron) and Grieg's music for Ibsen's play, *Peer Gynt* (1875). Of paradigmatic works from British composers there was Parry's music for Aristophanes' *The Birds* and *The Frogs* (1885 and 1892); Stanford's *Queen Mary* and *Becket* (Tennyson) (1876 and 1892), *The Euminides* (Aeschylus) (1885) and *Oedipus Tyrannus* (Sophocles) (1887); Sullivan's incidental music to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Henry VIII* and *Macbeth* (1862, 1871, 1874, 1877 and 1888 respectively), *The Foresters* (Tennyson) (1892) and *King Arthur* (Comyns Carr) (1894), and Edward German's corpus of music for the stage, which also embraced a high proportion of Shakespearean works (*Richard III*, 1889, *Henry VIII*, 1892, *Romeo & Juliet*, 1895, *As You Like It*, 1896 and *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1898). Mackenzie produced *Ravenswood* in 1898, and, postdating Coleridge-Taylor's initial foray into the theatre

world with *Herod* (1900) is Mackenzie's *Coriolanus* and Elgar's *Grania & Diarmid* of 1901. The very nature of incidental music provided an opportunity for composers to 'rehearse' a variety of style-forms and genres, for instance a march, or a nocturne, church music, funeral music, antique forms (canon etc) involving counterpoint and polyphony, overtures (sonata form) and song forms. In particular, the lighter forms such as the 'dance numbers' that he found so congenial (scherzo, waltz etc), had already found voice in some of Coleridge-Taylor's earlier instrumental works (piano quintet, symphonic variations etc), but the stage afforded him the opportunity to intensify this colourful dimension of his more formalist background under Stanford. This is evident in the polarised nature of pieces with different colours, style-forms and techniques underpinning the drama on the stage in *Faust*; such small-scale character pieces exemplifying the skill of immediately capturing a specific mood, were not only important in displaying those particular strengths of his output, but were also consequential in providing the raw material for suites of pieces. The suite of published pieces from *Faust* numbers only three items: 1. Dance of Witches, 2. The Four Visions (Helen; Cleopatra; Messalina; Margaret), and 3. Dance and Chant (Devil's Kitchen Scene). The ballad 'A King There Lived in Thule' was published separately; yet the MS includes male & female choral passages, a 'drinking song', several dances (incorporating two 'Ape' dances and a 'Firefly's' dance), and snippets of orchestral music to be interwoven with the text, although the sketches are fragmented (the prelude and several other items are missing). However, the *Musical Times* comprehensively portrays the scope of the entire range of music for *Faust*:

The *Prelude* to the Prologue possesses a dignity which admirably prepares the spectator for the scene in which the Spirit that Denies converses with the Angels Raphael, Gabriel and Michael. The second subject of the *Prelude* is the Angels' Song, which is taken up *pianissimo* with beautiful effect by an unseen chorus. The music is almost continuous throughout the Prologue, the words of the Evil Spirit being accompanied by tremolo on the lowest C in the orchestra, which, together with a few chords, form the leitmotive of this Personage. There is

also much music in the witches' kitchen; a dance of apes and fearsome creations of the stage carpenter; a chorus for male voices; and when the vision of Margaret is seen, phrases of the Love theme provide an effective contrast to the fantastic and weird context.

The *entr'acte* to the second Act starts gaily with the subject of the Drinking Song, sung in the succeeding scene, and subsequently the basses anticipate softly some of the strains of the church music, after which is heard for the first time the beautiful and impassioned melody of the theme representative not only of the love of Faust and Margaret, but the new birth of Spring, symbolical of the pure love which proves Faust's salvation. This fine subject is effectively and appropriately developed with the church music, the *entr'acte* ending sonorously with the Spring love motive. It was no light task to provide a fresh setting for the King of Thule's ballad, but Mr. Coleridge-Taylor has allied the legend to a melody which possesses charm, and is thoroughly in keeping with the spirit of the lines... To suggest what is supposed to take place after the second Act the composer has had recourse to the 'Will o' the wisps' dance and the 'Ballet des sylphes' from Berlioz's *Faust*, but before the fourth Act Mr. Taylor has written a Rhapsody of great musical interest, founded on the subjects of the Brocken scene music. Whilst this is passing before the eyes of the spectator, the rhapsody is played again, but with the parts for the male chorus sung.²⁶

Despite the success of *Faust*, Coleridge-Taylor's next opportunity to develop this kind of music in his next theatrical essay proved to be somewhat of a cul-de-sac, since *The Forest of Wild Thyme* never came to fruition as a staged event under the auspices of Tree (and neither did Coleridge-Taylor's other work of that year, the cantata *Endymion's Dream* - for Soprano, Tenor and Chorus - written for the Brighton Music Festival, although the composer had been under the impression that Tree wished to produce it as a one-act operetta at His Majesty's Theatre). Tree had suggested to Noyes as early as 1907, that he was interested in making a Christmas play out of the latter's poem *The Forest of Wild Thyme*, 'for children under ninety'.²⁷ He bought the dramatization of it in 1909, but kept both poet and composer 'in uncertainty' until it was finally shelved three years later.²⁸ The play was subtitled 'A Fairy Play in three acts'²⁹, and, with its symbolism and fantasy world of fairies, and the associated connotations of pastoral and childhood innocence, it tapped into the subculture of 'fairyland', the fascination with fairy lore that existed in late nineteenth-century

²⁶ *Musical Times*, 1 Oct. 1908, 657.

²⁷ Alfred Noyes, *Two Worlds for Memory* (London, 1953), 24.

²⁸ Noyes, 66.

²⁹ See prompt copies, *GB-BRu(D) HBT 247 (834)*.

culture and the Victorian's *invention* of childhood, not only in art and music but also in literature (*teste* Grimm's Fairytales, Charles Kingsley's 'The Water Babies', Charles Lambes' *The Dream Children* and the works of Charlotte Brontë who 'often used the fairy as a motif in her novels').³⁰ Musically, the typically light, diaphanous orchestration of such pieces was set in the important precedent of Mendelssohn's overture to *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1842), and is also reflected in works of this nature such as Elgar's *Dream Children* (1902), the *Wand of Youth* suites (1907 & 1908) and the later *Starlight Express* (1915), Cowen's ballet suite *In Fairyland* (1896), Parry's ballet *Proserpine* (1912), and the gossamer-like instrumentation of Stanford's 'A fairy lough' of 1909 (Stanford also produced *Fairy Day*, a set of three partsongs, in 1912).

The range of fantastic characters in *The Forest of Wild Thyme* included three children (Daphne, Dick and Bobby), Peterkin (their little brother who is dead), their parents, their tutor Mr. Spinner (also known as the Hideous Hermit, half spider and half human), the gardener Grumble (afterwards known as Umphery Grumble, a bee), Old Glow-worm, Arachne, Little Boy Blue, Little Snow White (a fairy), angel-children, and various denizens of the forest - caterpillar, dragon, butterfly, ladybird, procession of bees etc. Had the production taken place, it would certainly have been on a grand and elaborate scale; what particularly caught Tree's interest about the fairy story seemed to be:

the scenic possibilities of a dream world in which the children, who had been magically dwarfed to the size of ladybirds, wandered through an enchanted forest where stalks of thyme towered like eucalyptus trees over daisies ten feet high. He liked the melodramatic possibilities of the Spider, who was of course the villain of the piece and had long wished that he might meet children of an eatable size in his native jungle.

There was one blood-curdling scene in which the Spider, or Hideous Hermit as we called him, was discovered preparing his web for the little visitors, who were being lured by the Glow-worm (an old man with a green lantern) into the depths of the forest...Tree himself, fresh

³⁰ Nicola Brown, *Fairies in Nineteenth Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 2001), 13.

from a triumph as Caliban in *The Tempest*, was to play the part of Hideous whenever the Spider spoke, and when gymnastics were necessary (as in the making of the web) he was to be doubled by an expert acrobat.³¹

The Forest of Wild Thyme ultimately produced a series of disparate miniatures which were later published in different forms by the composer. *Scenes from an Imaginary Ballet* formed a suite of pieces for piano; *Three Dream Dances* were orchestrated for both full and small orchestra, though they were popularised in various ‘chamber’ forms for piano, piano duet and violin and piano. An *Intermezzo*, a delicious interlude, was performed orchestrally though was available for piano and organ, and there was a *Christmas Overture* which was not published until 1925. The songs and partsongs, published between 1920 and 1923, also had to wait until after the composer’s death to be better known. Wholly neglected, and rather unique in his output (just as Parry’s *Proserpine* is unique to his), *The Forest of Wild Thyme* is a score worthy of revival and deserves to stand as an important work for children alongside the long-enduring *Peter Pan* and *Where the Rainbow Ends*.

The subject matter of one of Coleridge-Taylor’s earliest forays into the theatre world, *The Gitanos*, was symptomatic of another late nineteenth-century preoccupation – this time with pseudo-Hispanic (and thereby ‘oriental’ culture), as evidenced in Bizet’s *Carmen*, Rimsky Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnole*, Chabrier’s *España*, Lalo’s *Symphonie espagnole* and the two interpretations of Longfellow’s *The Spanish Student* by Stanford and Elgar (not to mention Elgar’s later operatic attempt with *The Spanish Lady*). This example of Coleridge-Taylor’s attraction to the development of elements of dramatic music (disclosed not least by its hybrid title as a ‘cantata operetta’ – a title, incidentally, he also assigned later to *Endymion’s Dream*), is for female voices, solo and three-part chorus, and is set in an Andalusian orange

³¹ Noyes, 64.

grove, where the daughter of a Spanish nobleman, Isola, who wishes in vain to be a free Gitana, continues her annual tradition of lavishing presents on those she meets on this particular day each year. Together with her attendants she encounters a band of Gitanos and the celebrations ensue before the two groups part. The rather short and inconsequential piece is set in twelve sections as an uncomplicated scheme of brief pieces interspersed with recitative (1. Overture & Chorus, including an Andalusian dance, the *Seguidilla*; 2. Recit.; 3. Solo; 4. Choral recit.; 5. Recit.; 6. Solo & Chorus of Maidens; 7. Chorus of Gitanos; 8. Recit., Solo and Chorus of Maidens; 9. Ballad; 10. Recit. & Dance, the *Habañera*³²; 11. Duet; 12. Final Chorus). The work has an undistinguished libretto by Edward Oxenford (the American playwright/librettist who died in 1929 at the age of 82), and, conventional in terms of its content and standard form pieces, it relies on the clichéd use of castanets, tambourines, triangles and finger snapping. Between the two works *The Gitanos* and *Dream Lovers*, composed around the same time, the latter is certainly a more interesting and substantial piece and shows a different and more sophisticated manner of experiment.

The libretto of *Dream Lovers* was written by ‘the virtual father of black American poetry’³³, Paul Laurence Dunbar. The son of former slaves, he was born on 27 June 1872, in Dayton, Ohio. His first poem was published when he was just sixteen, and by the age of twenty-four, his third volume of poetry, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (published in 1896), established him as one of the first African American writers to achieve an international reputation. By the time of his death at the age of thirty-three, his copious works included poetry in dialect and standard English, short stories, four novels, and two plays. *Lyrics of Lowly Life* contained a number of poems from

³² See the habañera in Bizet’s *Carmen* (‘L’Amour est un oiseau rebelle’) and Ravel’s *Rapsodie Espagnol* (used earlier in his piano duet *Sites auriculaires*).

³³ Joanne M. Braxton (ed.), *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Virginia, 1993). Back cover.

earlier books alongside new material, and it sold extremely well in England, precipitating an ideal opportunity for Dunbar to visit London and advertise his work early in 1897. He was greeted by a plethora of publicity, as his numerous letters home to his fiancée, Alice Ruth Moore reveal.³⁴ It was during this somewhat auspicious trip to England that the American ambassador to England, John Hay, introduced Dunbar and Coleridge-Taylor to each other, and their partnership during 1897 initially produced *African Romances*, comprising seven of Dunbar's poems that Coleridge-Taylor set to music (*Song*, which the composer entitles *An African Love Song, A Prayer, A Starry Night, Dawn, Ballad, Over the Hills, and How Shall I woo thee?*). Four of these were selected from *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, as was their next collaboration, *A Corn Song*. A selection of these songs was performed at two recitals, which also included individual works by the poet and the composer. Although it is stated in some publications that Dunbar visited England in 1896, met Coleridge-Taylor in this year, and presented the first of the two joint recitals with him in January 1897³⁵, it is impossible that the two men had met each other by this date, as the poet did not set sail from America until the beginning of February. Dunbar wrote to Alice from on board ship, in a letter dated 'Wednesday Feb 10th '97, 5th day out'³⁶ apologizing for not having written sooner 'but circumstances compelled me, for a rolling ship gathers no letters. I have proved a somewhat better sailor than I anticipated although I have been somewhat sick'.³⁷ Furthermore, it is feasible that John Hay did not introduce the men to each other until May 1897.³⁸ They presented a programme together on 5 June

³⁴ Paul Laurence Dunbar/Alice Dunbar Nelson Papers, 1873-1936, *US-PROu*.

³⁵ Berwick Sayers, 48-49; Jeffrey Green, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor – English Composer* (Paper dated Oct. 1993), 11; Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man: The Life and Work of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (Aldershot, 1995), 58.

³⁶ Letter from Paul Laurence Dunbar to Alice Ruth Moore, 10 Feb. 1897, *US-OHs*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See letter from Robert G. Ingersoll to John Hay, 14 May 1897, introducing P.L. Dunbar. If Hay had not met Dunbar by this date, he could not have introduced him to Coleridge-Taylor beforehand. *US-PROu*.

1897, which ‘consisted of nine new songs, some for [sic] pieces for violin and pianoforte (“Hiawathan sketches”) and five Fantasiestücke for string quartet all of his [Coleridge-Taylor’s] own composition, interspersed with recitations by the gifted young Negro poet, Mr. Paul Dunbar.’³⁹ The following month Dunbar notes that ‘my songwords have taken so well, that I have been asked to write the libretto for an operetta. I don’t know whether I can do it or not, but at any rate I am trying.’⁴⁰ This surely refers to Dunbar and Coleridge-Taylor’s last project together during this year, *Dream Lovers*, which received a first performance at the Public Hall, Croydon, on 16 December 1898. Dunbar was not present and it is unlikely that he ever heard a production of it; he had already returned to America, partly due to dwindling finances, but perhaps also through an anxiety to be reunited with his own ‘dream lover’, Alice. They married in March 1898, amidst strong disapproval by the bride’s family, in a similar vein to Coleridge-Taylor’s future parents-in-law’s objections when he married Jessie nineteen months later. Jessie recorded the extent of her own family’s opposition (which culminated in Coleridge-Taylor being literally kicked out of the house by her brother-in-law when asking Jessie’s father for his consent to the marriage), in her ‘memory sketch’ of her husband:

It was only natural that my parents, and the family in general, were shocked at the idea of a mixed marriage, but when their objection was based upon colour-prejudice, I determined to turn a deaf ear to all their reasons against my marriage to Coleridge-Taylor.

Of course, it wasn’t easy, especially as I worshipped my mother, and I could – up to a point – sympathise with her point of view. But my feelings were outraged when measures were adopted to separate us (outside influence was tried), vile suggestions were made to me, and horrid threats hurled right and left; the result being that I lost any good opinion I may have had of those who could stoop to adopt such mean and immoral methods. And so my way seemed clear to accept a good man’s love and to consider his happiness, leaving my family out of the picture.⁴¹

³⁹ *Musical Times* ((1 Jul. 1897), 465.

⁴⁰ Letter from Paul Laurence Dunbar to Alice Ruth Moore, 4 Jul. 1897, *US-OHs*.

⁴¹ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/43), 20 – 21.

Her closing comment shows the growing desire on her part for no further contact with her family and their prejudices. Dunbar had married his wife in secret, but it would appear that this was not the case for Coleridge-Taylor, although a clandestine arrangement may have originally been intended.⁴² Following an engagement of at least a year and a half⁴³, the marriage certificate documents that their wedding, on 30 December 1899, took place in the presence of Herbert Walters and Jessie's father, Walter Milbauke Walmisley. It is plausible that other family members also overcame their 'bitter resentment ... against our union'⁴⁴ (although there is no official record) as Jessie prepared for the wedding in her family home. She states that on "the morning before our marriage my mother surprised me by saying, 'your father and I would like to shake hands with Coleridge before you are married!'" She continues, "I often wonder what passed in the minds of the members of the family the following morning. One knocked at my bathroom door and warned me it was unlucky to sing before breakfast; another invited me to do my hair in her room while she talked to me. Somewhat later yet another sister tried even at the last moment to turn me from my purpose; my father (bless his heart) insisted that I should take a 'little Dutch courage' just to please him!"⁴⁵

The dramatis personae of *Dream Lovers* consist of Torado, 'A Mulatto Prince from Madagascar' (baritone); Manuel, 'His Friend' (tenor); Katherine, 'A Quadroon Lady' (soprano); and Martha, 'Her Sister' (contralto). The parts were played by Mr. J. H. Thomas, Mr. E. J. Bull, Miss Bènè Dixon and Miss Lallie Hodder respectively.

⁴² Berwick Sayers 1927, 90-91 cites a letter from Coleridge-Taylor to his friend Miss Petherick explaining that 'Miss Walmisley and I both wish the ceremony to be kept very *private*.....so that practically there will only be ourselves present.'

⁴³ Elgar's note in the left-hand margin of a letter to Jaeger, written in the summer of 1898, comments that he is 'awfully sorry to hear about CT. I suppose it's matrimonial and no possible consolation'. Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 21 Aug. 1898, *GB-EBm L8316*.

⁴⁴ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 26

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 26

The operetta formed the second half of the programme, the first half proffering works by Brahms (Four Trios for Female Voices op. 17: *Whene'er the Sounding Harp is heard, Come Away, Death, The Gardener and The Death of Trenar*), Robert Schumann (*Romances* for Female Voices op. 69: *The Tambourine Player, The Convent Maiden, The Soldier's Bride and The Mermaid*), Benjamin Godard (*Scherzo-Valse* for pianoforte) and Schubert (*The Lord is my Shepherd*), with Coleridge-Taylor's 'Negro Love Song' from the *African Suite* and *Two Partsongs* ('*How they so softly rest*' and '*We strew these opiate flowers*').

Both of the Coleridge-Taylor items highlight discrepancies in their opus numbers; the 'Negro Love Song' is listed as op. 36 on the programme, but is detailed as op. 35 on the score and in a chronology of the composer's music by his friend J. H. Smither Jackson. The *Two Partsongs* appear as op. 35 on the programme, but read as op. 21 on the score and Jackson's list; the latter records op. 36 as 'missing', and states: "I persuaded him [Coleridge-Taylor] early in 1912 to devote a little time with me to revising [*sic*] the numbers. The list, therefore, is authentic, and may be taken to represent his views on the subject."⁴⁶ This statement is misleading in the light of Avril Coleridge-Taylor's assertion that this list was "altered by the compiler for the second edition of Berwick Sayers (1927)".⁴⁷

The operetta's straightforward scenario involves Torado and Katherine meeting in a dream, and then fulfilling their destiny when they finally meet in reality (after Torado 'searching the world over for her') and get married.⁴⁸ Not only is Coleridge-Taylor's choice of libretto here of interest because of the autobiographical connotations (the principal character is a 'mulatto', the offspring of one black parent

⁴⁶ W. C. Berwick Sayers, *Appendix: The compositions of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* by J. H. Smither Jackson, 310 – 324. Also reprinted in Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 62 – 75.

⁴⁷ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 145.

⁴⁸ Paul Laurence Dunbar & Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, *Dream Lovers*, London 1898.

and one white parent), but the story itself is also significant for Dunbar and Coleridge-Taylor, who both overcame tough obstacles surrounding their marriages to ensure that 'naught that surely is and surely seems/ May turn me from the lady of my dreams'.⁴⁹ It is also interesting that, within this context of quadroons (offspring of a mulatto parent and a white parent), and mulattos (Torado, the mulatto prince has been born in Madagascar and, 'living there all his life, has imbibed all the notions and superstitions of the natives themselves'⁵⁰), Coleridge -Taylor writes in an entirely European idiom (i.e. that of light opera), and sets the story in seven short scenes, outlined in Table 2 below.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Table 2: *Dream Lovers*

| Scene | Page | Number of bars | Description/texture | Title | Key area/s |
|-------|-------|----------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | 1–2 | 44 | Orchestral Prelude | Prelude | G major |
| 2 | 3–7 | 70 | Duet: Tenor & Soprano | Is the Red Rose? | G major. b. 68 modulation to V7 of A minor |
| 3 | 8–10 | 52 | Trio: Soprano, Contralto & Tenor | You may go from bleak Alaska | A minor A major b. 45 modulation to V7 of F major |
| 4 | 11–14 | 93 | Solo Song: Baritone | Long Years Ago | F major |
| 5 | 15–19 | 79 | Song: Soprano Contralto Baritone (recitative) | Pray tell me | C major G major E minor |
| 6 | 20–31 | 200 | Solo (baritone) and Chorus | I'm a wealthy wand'ring wight | G minor G major C major |
| 7 | 32–37 | 79 | Quartet | Long, long the labour | G major |

Very much conceived as a piece for the stage (immediately betrayed by its subtitle of 'an operatic romance'), the structure of *Dream Lovers* (Table 2) is significant owing to the fact that each of the seven set songs are inserted in between spoken dialogue as in a play, rather than surrounded by recitative. Their dramatic function is internal to the drama, rather than serving as purely 'entertainment' pieces, but the most noteworthy part is the central song of the work, No. 4; this baritone solo "Long years ago" forms the emotional centre of the piece, in the same way that the

baritone solo “Onaway, awake! Beloved!” was to constitute the central aria and focus in *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast*. Song 5 and song 6 (the most extensive episode of the operetta), prove to be more transitional and fluid, before the work concludes with a quartet in the home key.

In keeping with the precedence of English operetta, which had been established since the late nineteenth century in the standard format of Gilbert and Sullivan’s ‘Savoy operas’, *Dream Lovers* follows the form of English opera with spoken dialogue and separate set numbers, notably Alfred Cellier’s *Dorothy* (1886), which achieved huge success, and his penultimate full-length opera *Doris* (1889). And there were also other notable examples during the 1890’s in Stanford’s *opéra-comique*, *Shamus O’Brien* (1896), Sidney Jones’ *The Geisha* (1896) and Mackenzie’s opera *His Majesty* (1897). Moreover, with the general move towards writing shorter opera during this period, in particular an inclination towards realism as projected by the verismo of Italian operas (such as Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 1888; Verdi’s *Falstaff*, 1889-92; Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, 1892; Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*, 1890-2 and *La Bohème*, 1894-5) it is not surprising that Coleridge-Taylor, with his interest in colour and exoticism, should have been interested in a similar dramaturgical paradigm with its penchant for more concentrated emotion, unelaborate plots and uncomplicated *dénouements*.

Dream Lovers exhibits a number of significant stylistic departures which suggest that the composer’s musical language was still in a state of crystallisation. Harmonically, the work clearly displays an affinity with the colourful harmonic sequences that Delius (inspired essentially by Grieg) was producing from the late 1880s to the early 1900s in works inspired by the sound of the slaves improvising melodies on the plantations in Florida (*Florida Suite*, 1886-7, rev. 1889; the ‘Negro

opera' *Koanga*, 1896-7, particularly in Act III; and the set of variations on a Negro slave song, *Appalachia*, 1896).

Although writing in a simple lyric and melodic style, Coleridge-Taylor shows the same delight in harmonic effects and unusual progressions right from the outset of this piece:

Music example 1: Dream Lovers, Prelude, bb. 35 and 36

35 [Andante con moto] Meno mosso

Music example 2: Delius, Koanga Act III, bb. 742 - 3

742 [Lento molto]

Music example 3: Delius, Appalachia, Andante (p. 19) bb. 15 - 17

15

Music example 4: Delius, *Florida Suite*, bb. 38 - 42

Such harmonic nuances and chromaticisms, for example in the lyrical piece 'Is the red rose?' show a distinct parallel with Grieg's imaginative harmonic palette of colourful chords:

Music example 5: *Dream Lovers, No. 2, Is the red rose?* bb. 48 - 50

Music example 6: Grieg, *Lyrical Pieces for piano, Set V op. 54, No. 4 Notturmo*, bb. 12 - 14.

Music example 7: Grieg, *Lyric Pieces for piano, Set III op. 43, No. 6 To Spring*, bb.23 - 26.

(The impression created by the sudden harmonic shifts in the second movement of Coleridge-Taylor's Violin concerto is particularly reminiscent of the second piece in this set, *Solitary Traveller/Lonely Wanderer*).

Once more, it is evident that Coleridge-Taylor drew considerably from his European past. These progressions and textures, presenting an ethos of simplicity, were part of the Romantic currency of the time, but the intensity of their occurrence in Grieg, Delius and Coleridge-Taylor demonstrates and confirms that these elements had become a stylistic thumbprint of the period. That Coleridge-Taylor drew on his Western heritage is demonstrable, but his choice of chromatic harmonies, especially those showing a propensity for inner chromatic voice-leading, may also have been drawn from his experience of hearing black spiritual arrangements sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The latter had been founded soon after the Fisk Free Colored School opened after the American Civil War in 1866. The choir had then undertaken successful singing tours of Great Britain, following their initial visit to London in April 1873. These tours had been 'timed with a view to reaching the influential ministers and laymen from all parts of the kingdom who throng there during the May anniversaries... Through this first concert, and the distinguished hospitalities to which it led, the Singers found themselves at once introduced to the British public under the

most favoring auspices.’⁵¹ The original ‘jubilee’ singers were emancipated slaves, and the group was given its name by their musical director, George Leonard White.

According to Old Testament history, each fiftieth Pentecost was to be followed by a ‘year of jubilee’ in which all slaves would be set free.⁵² Since most of the students at Fisk University were former slaves, the name was pertinent. The Fisk University Jubilee Singers disbanded in 1879, but White reorganised them, in conjunction with Frederick Jeremiah Loudin, who had previously sung baritone with the choir.

Although now no longer associated with Fisk University, the choir continued under the same name. The sole management of the choir was eventually taken over by Loudin in 1882, who instigated a six-year world tour in 1884, and who brought them back to tour Britain from 1900 to 1903⁵³ (he collapsed whilst touring Scotland in the autumn of 1902, dying two years later). Coleridge-Taylor acknowledges Loudin in the foreword to his “Twenty-Four Negro Melodies”, declaring: ‘nor must I forget the late world-renowned and deeply lamented Frederick J. Loudin, manager of the famous Jubilee Singers, through whom I first learned to appreciate the beautiful folk-music of my race, and who did so much to make it known the world over’.⁵⁴

The men had certainly met each other by 1900, as Loudin and his wife were present at the three-day Pan African Conference held in London that year⁵⁵, alongside other delegates including W. E. B. Du Bois, Dr. John Alcindor, Henry Downing (a

⁵¹ J. B. T. Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers*, with supplement by F. J. Loudin ‘containing an account of their six years’ tour around the world, and many new songs’ (London 1903).

⁵² Leviticus, Chapter 25, v. 11-12. “And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his possessions, and each of you shall return to his family.

At fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord nor gather the grapes of your untended vine.

⁵³ Louis R. Harlan, Raymond W. Smock (eds.), *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 5: 1899-1900 (Illinois, 1976), 157n.

⁵⁴ Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*. Foreword, signed and dated ‘London, England, December 17, 1904’.

⁵⁵ Harlan & Smock, 157n

friend to whom the composer had dedicated a work in 1898⁵⁶) and Coleridge-Taylor himself.⁵⁷ During the course of the Conference, after analysing various papers and topics throughout the day, “in the evening the delegates went back to their papers and discussions, which were ‘interspersed with musical selections.’ It is likely that Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the black English pianist and composer who at twenty-five was already famous, and J. F. [sic] Loudin, director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and Mrs. Loudin, who were delegates, contributed to the musical program.”⁵⁸

Maime Hilyer, the first wife of Andrew Hilyer (both of whom were instrumental in the inception of the Washington ‘Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society’ in 1901), confirms that Coleridge-Taylor and Loudin were not simply passing acquaintances but had built up a strong friendship by the turn of the century. Maime’s ‘Tribute’ on Coleridge-Taylor’s death discusses her visit to his home with the Loudins:

...I received a letter from my dear friends in England, the Loudins, saying that they would be in London for a few days, and wished me to join them there and meet the now famous coloured composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Such was the magic of this name, that when I found myself again I was in London, having given up without any mental struggle whatever, my long-cherished purpose to see “The Passion Play” at Obergammerngau, one of the objects for which I had put three thousand miles of ocean between myself and my loved ones. Mr. Coleridge-Taylor regarded Mr. Loudin as the best friend he ever had, saying, ‘He, more than anyone else, helped to make me known to our dear American people.’ Before going to London I knew something of this talented composer’s work, thanks to Mr. Loudin, who had kept us supplied with English papers from time to time containing glowing accounts of this young Anglo-African, and to Mr. Harry Burleigh, who had sent me a copy of *The Wedding Feast* shortly after it had made its triumphal appearance in 1898.⁵⁹

Clearly then, Coleridge-Taylor’s encounter with the Jubilee Singers and with Loudin was a major artistic turning-point in that this experience compelled him to reassess his

⁵⁶ See Chapter 6.

⁵⁷ For a comprehensive list of ‘who was at the 1900 Pan-African Conference’ see Owen Charles Mathurin, *Henry Sylvester Williams and the origins of the Pan-African Movement 1869 – 1911* (Connecticut, 1976), 165 -169

⁵⁸ Ibid. 66 –67.

⁵⁹ Maime Hilyer, ‘Tribute’, quoted in W. C. Berwick Sayers (rev. 1927), 108-9.

cultural heritage. Moreover, he also had to reappraise his own position within the Western European musical arena and the 'black' culture of both Africa and the United States where he would ultimately become an iconic figure.

An examination of Coleridge-Taylor's later choral works clearly demonstrates that he was fundamentally unable to adapt the narrative choral writing and compositional techniques that worked so well in *Hiawatha* in his next major choral work, *The Atonement* (which, although called a 'sacred cantata', is effectively a passion story). This inability raises an interesting dichotomy. A perceptible lack of dramatic instinct for theatrical effect and impact in *The Atonement* goes a long way towards explaining why the Carl Rosa Opera Company rejected his opera *Thelma* for production, on the grounds that perhaps the sheer practical difficulties of staging it outweighed the merits of producing it. It has been suggested that Coleridge-Taylor may have destroyed the manuscript of *Thelma* himself,⁶⁰ in much the same way as he tore up the fourth movement of his Symphony. However, a letter from Adolf Schmid, the musical director of His Majesty's Theatre, written to Coleridge-Taylor's widow, shows us that the work was certainly still in existence the year after his death:

As to the valuation of the unpublished works of your late Husband, it is indeed very difficult to put an exact valuation upon them. For instance, the three-act opera "Thelma" which is still unpublished and unperformed. If this work is successfully produced and is well received by the press and public, the performing rights of this opera may amount to several hundred pounds per year. On the other hand, if the production should not be successful, it would even prevent the work being published, and no result of any kind would result to you. The same condition applies to the Ballet "Hiawatha", although in this case perhaps you might have a chance of publishing part of the music without the work actually being produced on the stage. In this case, I should say the publication rights might bring in £50. [Hawkes 1919 and 1925].⁶¹

In the light of this incontrovertible proof that the manuscript had endured beyond the composer's lifetime, the entire work, in both full score and short score, were unearthed during the course of this research. The profoundly significant work *Thelma*,

⁶⁰ Self, 195.

⁶¹ Letter from Adolf Schmid to Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 11 July 1913, *GB-Lpro IR 59/371*.

so dear to his heart, which Coleridge-Taylor terms as his *first* opera ('I am in the middle of my first opera....getting it well in hand now, and it probably will be produced here next June. It is, of course, grand opera and on a Norwegian subject'⁶²) forms the fulcrum of the composer's output interwoven with the fabric of his stylistic development, and will be discussed fully in Chapter 5.

1.2 THE HIAWATHA TRILOGY

It is probably without precedent in the history of music that the first part of a trilogy should be composed while its author was in a state of pupilage, its second commissioned by a provincial festival, and its third brought out by the most conservative society in existence.⁶³

From the end of 1897 through to the autumn of 1898, Coleridge-Taylor was engrossed in the composition of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, a setting of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem of 1855, 'The Song of Hiawatha'. The composer had been familiar with the poet's work for some time, and thoughts of setting this particular poem had already occurred to him; Augener had published Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawathan Sketches* op. 16 for violin and piano in 1897, and each of these three short sketches bears an introductory quote from Longfellow's poem (see Table 3).

⁶² Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Andrew Hilyer, 28 Sept. 1908, *US-Whu*.

⁶³ *The Times* (23 Mar. 1900), 8.

Table 3: *Hiawathan Sketches, Nos. 1, 2, and 3*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. A Tale <i>Allegro risoluto.</i> | ‘O good Iago, Tell us now a tale of wonder, Tell us of some strange adventure, That the feast may be more joyous’ etc. (Longfellow) |
| 2. A Song <i>Allegro quasi Andantino</i> | ‘Sing to us, O Chibiabos! Songs of love and songs of longing, That the feast may be more joyous’ etc. |
| 3. A Dance <i>Presto</i> | ‘O Pau-Puk-Keewis, Dance for us your merry dances, Dance the Beggars Dance to please us’ etc. |

Furthermore, Coleridge-Taylor’s earliest extant songs, dating from c. 1893 (*The Broken Oar*, and *The Arrow and The Song*)⁶⁴ both make use of the poet’s verses, and two of Longfellow’s translations had also been set by the composer in 1896-7 comprising part of *Five Southern Love Songs* op. 12: *My Love* (‘Song, from an Ancient Spanish Ballad’) and *If thou art sleeping maiden* (‘Song, from the Portuguese’).

Longfellow’s popularity in the latter part of the nineteenth century is undoubted, as is testified by the numerous prominent British musicians who considered his texts and translations suitable, including Stanford (*The Golden Legend*, 1875), Cellier (*The Masque of Pandora*, 1880), Sullivan (*The Golden Legend*, 1886),

⁶⁴ The songs formed part of a programme presented by Coleridge-Taylor and fellow students from the RCM in the October of that year. The latter was assigned to Augener but never published and the manuscript remains in the RCM. The MS of the former is still missing.

Elgar (*The Black Knight*, 1889-93, translated from the German of Uhland; *King Olaf*, 1894-6 [from *Tales of a Wayside Inn*]; *Spanish Serenade*, 1892 [from *The Spanish Student*, Act I Scene III – Serenade: ‘Stars of the Summer Night’]), Holbrooke (*The Viking*, 1902 [from *The Skeleton in Armor*]), Boughton (*The Skeleton in Armor*, 1895), Hubert Bath (*The Spanish Student*, 1904) and MacCunn (*The Wreck of the Hesperus*, 1905), and although it was never performed, Delius also composed a work, in his earlier years, based on Hiawatha. Interest in Longfellow was not exclusively restricted to musicians. The painter William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), a founder of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, whose intricately detailed works relate strongly to the principles of good and evil, is considered to have been inspired to paint *The Light of the World* (1854) by one of Longfellow’s translations.⁶⁵ His mass appeal also traversed into literature – many parodies of verses appeared just after the arrival of *The Song of Hiawatha*; a particular favourite was one entitled *The Song of Drop O’ Wather – a London Legend*, by Harry Wandsworth Shortfellow!⁶⁶

Coleridge-Taylor had finished his studies at the Royal College of Music by the end of the Easter term of 1897, just a few weeks after the first performance there of his *Legend* for violin and orchestra, conducted by Stanford, and dedicated to fellow student Miss Marie Motto. Berwick Sayers indicates that the composer had already started setting Longfellow’s poem some time before he left the college, *ergo*

in fact, it was a college composition in the first place; and it owes something to the suggestions and criticisms of Stanford. He [Coleridge-Taylor] always said that the curious names, Pau-Puk-Keewis, Iagoo, Chibiabos, Nokomis and so on, which he would roll out with intense appreciation of their sound values, were the first cause of his affection for the poem. More intimate acquaintance gave him an intenser appreciation of the beauty of the poetry itself. ‘The essential beauty of the poem’, he told Mr. Walter Hayson, ‘is its naïve simplicity, its unaffected expression, its unforced idealism’.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ C. Gohdes, *American Literature in Nineteenth Century England* (Illinois, 1944), 103

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Berwick Sayers, 57.

Coleridge-Taylor clearly adopts a romanticised Western approach, as does Longfellow, who presents the reader with a similarly idealistic account of the Noble Savage, sent to enlighten and bring peace to the North American Indian. The poet, in his preface to the work, acknowledges the writings of Mr. Schoolcraft⁶⁸; however, it appears that these writings were the basis of a misunderstanding on Longfellow's part about who the historical figure Hiawatha actually was.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a government agent among the Indians of the upper Great Lakes, began writing down the folklore and legends of the Ojibwa Indians, including the tale of the demigod Nanabozho. He also began collecting material for his 1846 book, *Notes on the Iroquois* and acquires from the author J. V. H. Clark stories relating to Chief Hayenwatha or Hiawatha, as the name was sometimes written. In ignorance, Schoolcraft applied the name of the Iroquois chief to Nanabozho and published the results in the *Hiawatha Legends*. The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow became acquainted with Schoolcraft's writings and was inspired to compose a long poem about the exploits of Nanabozho and his companions under the mistaken impression that he was writing about a hero named Hiawatha.

Longfellow's fanciful poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, though a moving and beautiful literary creation, had nothing whatsoever to do with the noted Iroquois chieftain and only served to obscure and confuse this leader's very great achievements.⁶⁹

The New York State Museum Bulletin elucidates further on Hiawatha's actual and legendary status:

Hiawatha, also called Haiyenwatha, was a fourteenth century statesman, a follower of the great philosopher Dekenawidah, and the best known of the founders of the Iroquois Confederacy. He was a real person who lived on in legend and in Honorary Title in the Confederacy. The Iroquois Confederacy was the union of five nations – the Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida and Onandaga. Many other nations were adopted into the union over time... It was founded, according to records, at the end of the fourteenth century to bring peace and justice to a region wracked by civil war and political chaos.⁷⁰

The *Wedding Feast* was written amidst the legacy of a tradition of British works in the narrative choral ballad genre bearing descriptive imagery. Stanford's

⁶⁸ *The Poetical works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, Author's Copyright Edition (London, n.d.), 129.

⁶⁹ Barbara Graymont, *Indians of North America: The Iroquois* (New York, 1988), 27.

⁷⁰ *New York State Museum Bulletin*, University of the State of New York, Albany, New York (April 1916), No. 184.

popular archetypal choral work, *The Revenge*, one of the monuments of English choral music and a marker of the narrative piece, dates from 1886. Stanford went on to produce two other popular works in the same genre, *The Battle of the Baltic* (1891) and the Irish ballad *Phaudrig Crohoore* (1895), but there was no shortage of other analogous offerings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (MacCunn, 1889), *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *The Witch's Daughter* (Mackenzie, 1888 and 1904), *John Gilpin* (Cowen, 1904) and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (Walthew, 1893 and Parry, 1905).

Based on a fashionable poem of the time, with alluringly exotic poetry and imagery capable of capturing people's imagination, Coleridge-Taylor's cantata instantly attracted colossal interest. By the beginning of November 1898, the *Musical Times* had revealed that 'in spite of the absence of the prestige attached to a work that has been produced at an important Festival,performances are already announced to be given at the Royal College of Music (London), Plymouth, Torquay, Sunderland, Glasgow, The People's Palace (London), Bridlington and Middlesborough'.⁷¹ After having been rehearsed by the College choir and orchestra under Stanford's direction throughout the autumn of 1898, the cantata was premiered at the Royal College of Music on 11 November that year. Besides the support of Sullivan who was in the audience, the composer had the felicitous wishes of Elgar behind him: 'To-day I think is the *Hiawatha* at the Coll: good luck to it & the young man: I saw in a local paper that the committee N. Staffs: propose asking him to do something for them'.⁷² And after the first performance the *Musical Times* was able to report that a sizeable audience, full of anticipation, was present for the performance: 'the crowd came to

⁷¹ *Musical Times* (1 Nov. 1898), 728.

⁷² Letter from Edward Elgar to August Jaeger, 11 Nov. 1898, *GB – EBM L8320*.

A note is added in Jaeger's hand following a symbol inserted next to 'Hiawatha', stating "- at the RCM. I had sent him a copy of S. C-Taylor's Wedding Feast & told him of the production."

hear a novelty with which many-tongued rumour had been busy for weeks past – viz., Mr. S. Coleridge-Taylor's cantata "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast", now to be produced for the first time.'⁷³

Parry's later account of the evening's proceedings (in his tribute, which formed part of an obituary to the composer) also intimated an air of expectancy in what he considered to be 'one of the most remarkable events in modern musical history. It had got abroad in some unaccountable and mysterious manner that something of unusual interest was going to happen, and when the time came for the concert, the 'tin tabernacle' [the College's concert room] was besieged by eager crowds, a large proportion of whom were shut out – but accommodation was found for Sir Arthur Sullivan and other musicians of eminence.'⁷⁴ Parry goes on to reveal that his 'expectation was not disappointed'⁷⁵; Sullivan, who, on the morning of the performance had proclaimed to the young composer 'I'm always an ill man now, my boy, but I will come to this concert even if I have to be carried into the room'⁷⁶, recorded the event in his diary:

Dined at home and went to Roy. Coll. Music Concert to hear Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha*. Much impressed by the lad's genius. He is a composer...not a music maker. The music is fresh and original - he has melody and harmony in abundance, and his scoring is brilliant and full of colour – at times luscious, rich and sensual. The work was very well done.⁷⁷

The excitement that Parry related had been precipitated several months before with the enthusiasm engendered by the proofs. Indeed, Elgar had already seen a copy by June, as the postscript of a letter sent to Jaeger, whilst orchestrating *Caractacus* at his country cottage, Birchwood, confirms:

⁷³ *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1898), 807.

⁷⁴ *Musical Times* (1 Oct. 1912), 638.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Berwick Sayers, 58.

⁷⁷ Diary, 11 Nov. 1898. Quoted in Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 32; Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician* (Oxford 1984), 385; and Self, 72.

P.S. I have Taylor's theme jiggling in the vacuities of my head – have sent the book to Forli⁷⁸ but the tune remains



and I am trying to orchestrate! – I feel like Poins I would steep the cantata in SACK and make him eat it!⁷⁹

Longfellow's poem depicts a detailed story of Hiawatha's wedding to Minnehaha (Laughing Water), where the assembled guests call on various key figures to entertain them with dance, song and storytelling during the wedding feast, and the account of events even extends to the intricacies of the feast menu and the guests' attire. The way in which Coleridge-Taylor tackled the challenging narrative was essentially through a series of episodes, building in important cohesive elements, since the episodes are cemented together by repeatedly bringing back and transforming material. The first principal idea introduced in the expository section of the work is an opening orchestral fanfare, which is immediately taken up by the chorus to set the scene as they sing:

You shall hear how Pau-Puk-Keewis, how the handsome Yenadizze, danced at Hiawatha's wedding.
How the gentle Chibiabos, he the sweetest of musicians, sang his song of love & longing.
How Iagoo, the great boaster, he the marv' llous storyteller, told his tales of strange adventure

⁷⁸ His house in Malvern Link, between Worcester and Great Malvern.

⁷⁹ Letter from Elgar to August Jaeger, undated, but c. 30 Jun. 1898, *GB –EBm L8301*.

He refers to the character Poins in Shakespeare's *2 King Henry IV*, Act II Scene II, line 109, who, after reading aloud a letter from Sir John Falstaff to Prince Henry declares "My lord, I'll steep this letter in sack and make him eat it."

Music example 8: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 27 – 32

27 [Allegro moderato]

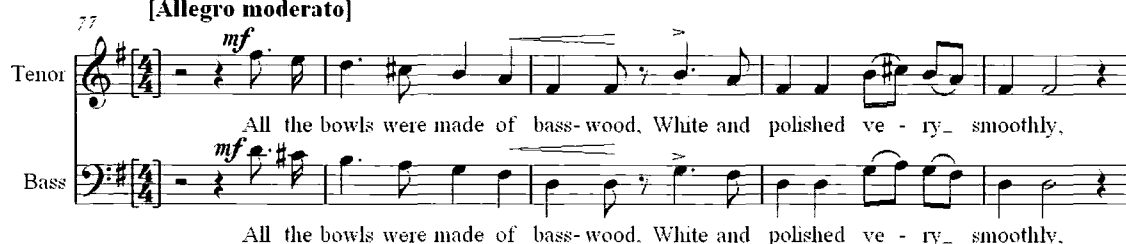

After permeating the work in various forms (sometimes elided with other themes) this theme, in augmentation, also closes the work:

Music example 9: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 1038 – 1043 (violins):

1038


A second theme is first evident at places containing textual allusion to the feast itself:

Music example 10: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 77 – 81.

77 [Allegro moderato]


This theme, initially stated in B minor over an F sharp pedal (and then in C minor and G minor), reappears again (this time in F sharp minor), in the moment of drama as the chorus describes Pau-Puk-Keewis' solemn dance (b. 379 onwards) first of all through the pine trees and 'then along the sandy margin of the lake, the Big-Sea-Water', underpinned by the orchestra, which transforms the material. Coleridge-Taylor's

natural use of the orchestra (as the agency that ultimately provides the cement and continually drives the piece forward in a quasi-Wagnerian manner) contrasts sharply with the nature of his choral writing (which often provides but one contrapuntal voice). The instrumental and chromatic voice-leading in this passage (especially the use of the augmented sixth) prefigures Coleridge-Taylor's use of this technique in his opera (see, for example, the opening scene of *Thelma*) where it is most prominent. Although the composer would have undoubtedly derived this process from Brahms, as taught to him by Stanford, the stylistic derivation and rhetoric has more to do with Tchaikovsky's manipulation of the same technique:

Music example 11: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 388 – 390.

The theme makes a final appearance, in its original key of B minor, in the recapitulation at bar 819; the fact that it is again stated on the dominant – F sharp – (without exception) is significant as a tonal reference to the key of the crux of the work, i. e. G flat major. The nature and contrast of the material undergoes constant transformation. Take, for instance, the theme heard during the opening stages of the work (as 'Old Nokomis' - Hiawatha's grandmother - is preparing to ask Pau-Puk-Keewis to dance for the guests):

Music example 12: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 170 – 175.

170 [Allegro moderato]
mp

Basses

And when all the guests had finish'd, Old No-ko-mis, brisk and bu-sy, From an am-ple pouch of otter,

This is the source for two further related themes, the first of which is used in conjunction with descriptive textual references to Pau-Puk-Keewis (see also b. 265 — orchestral statement combined with the opening theme in chorus, and b. 479 — again merging with Theme 1).

Music example 13a: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 246 –251.

246 *mf*

Tenor

Skill'd was he in sports and pas-times, In the mer-ry dance of snow-shoes, In the play of

Bass

Skill'd was he in sports and pas-times, In the mer-ry dance of snow-shoes, In the play of

251

quois and ball-play;

quois and ball-play;

The second derivation also refers to Pau-Puk-Keewis (this time as a description of his appearance, see also b.319, 329, 341), and then later, in the recapitulation (bb. 860, 970), denotes Iagoo the storyteller:

Music example 13b: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 311 – 316.

311 [Allegro comodo]
Sopranos



He was dress'd in shirt of doe-skin, White and soft, and fring'd with ermine. All m-wrought with beads of wampum.

In addition to the tight thematic links, the tonal structure is also organised cohesively (summarised in Table 4 below). For example, although the music throughout the first seven episodes is evidently tonally fluid and moves (through long periods of building upon the dominant but avoiding tonicisation) into several other keys of tonal contrast, G major remains the main bedrock of the first section of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. The distant area of G flat that is briefly indicated towards the end of this first section (b. 329) prefigures the central core of the movement – the tenor love aria (*Onaway! Awake, beloved!*), which the wedding guests persuade Hiawatha's friend Chibiabos to sing in order 'that the feast may be more joyous'.

| Episode | Bar Nos. | Key areas | Macro Level | Texture | Commentary |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Orch. Prelude | 1 – 26 | G | Expository G major | Orchestra | Theme 1. |
| 1 | 27 – 77 | G-g-G/(e) | | Chorus | Theme 1. Added 6ths in the G major passages create suggestion of E minor |
| 2 | 77 – 113 | b-G | | Chorus | Theme 2 – ‘Feast music’. Tonally fluid section, passing from B minor through A minor, Bb, Eb and C minor to V of G. Repeats chord modulation in b. 112 –13 later on in augmentation (b. 228 – 231) |
| 3 | 114 - 145 | G-B-E-C-G | | Orchestra, Chorus | Recapitulation of opening chorus material (Theme 1). |
| 4 | 146 - 167 | G | | Chorus | Recapitulation of Feast theme. |
| 5 | 168 - 231 | Bb-Eb | | Chorus | Theme 3. Modulates to V of C minor after the Feast theme returns. |
| 6 | 232 - 310 | c-g-F-C | | Chorus, Orchestra | Theme 1, with derivative of Theme 3 in conjunction. Moves to the relative minor of the Bb of the previous section, then briefly passes through F to C. Short orchestral passage modulates back to F. |
| 7 | 311 - 374 | F-Gb-G | Chorus | A second derivative of Theme 3, moving to the Neapolitan. CT uses the note Cb (subdominant of Gb) for an enharmonic change to D# in the next bar, which initially appears to be V of E, but eventually changes to V7 of G. This technique of long periods of music without cadencing was learnt by CT under Stanford. | |
| 8 | 375 - 470 | f#-gm (Ab-b-C-c) | Transition | Chorus, Orchestra | Return of Feast theme. Section becomes more tonally fluid when the words present an element of mystery with the word ‘panther’. Word painting (chromatic figures for the wind etc.) |
| 9 | 471 - 508 | Cm-C | Tonally developmental | Chorus | Repeat of material from 6 th episode. Again, orchestral passages modulates to F. |
| 10 | 509 - 608 | F – (Db) | | Chorus, Orchestra | Homophonic choral passage. Related to Theme 1 (1b). Short orchestral introduction to the central aria, moving from F to the Neapolitan Gb by using Db as V of Gb. |
| 11 | 609 - 687 | Gb-G-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb | Central Aria G flat | Solo | Focus of the piece. Verse 1 - Gb to dominant of G; Verse 2 - G to dominant of Ab, then tonally fluid; Verse 3 – Gb. |
| 12 | 688 - 751 | Gb-A-F | Transition | Chorus | Theme 1b (from b. 509) in diminution. b. 702 – change of mode (C# - C ♯) to facilitate change to F – stock use in romantic nineteenth century. |
| 13 | 752 - 818 | a-C-a-A | | Chorus, Orchestra | New theme (Iago). Orchestra repeats theme in major key. |
| 14 | 819 - end | b-F-Gb-G | Recapitulation G major | Chorus | This final episode is used as a Recapitulation of material from the 1 st half. Now goal directed towards G. Chorale (b. 509, F major) now in G. |

Table 4: Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast

Jaeger had loaned Coleridge-Taylor a copy of Frederick Cowen's 'Onaway', written in the same year as the *Wedding Feast*, and in an undated reply to Jaeger's accompanying letter, Coleridge-Taylor comments:

Very many thanks for Mr. Cowen's "Onaway". Some of it I like much – but why has he missed one beautiful section out altogether and repeated another? Evidently Onaway's lover in Mr. Cowen's conception is a very different and less sentimental – less languid – person from mine!...I will return Onaway tomorrow or Tuesday – for which I thank you very much.⁸⁰

Unlike Cowen, Coleridge-Taylor set the words in their entirety, in three verses.

Following a chorale section in F major (related to the opening theme), in which the chorus introduce Chibiabos, Coleridge-Taylor engineers a Neapolitan step to G flat for the first verse of the aria:

Music example 14: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 609 – 613

609 Tenor solo

f

"On a - way! A wake — be - lov - ed! — Thon the wild flow'r of the for - est!

pp a tempo

p

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped. sempre* *Ped.* *Ped.*

This moves, through a descending sequence, to the dominant of G major, ready for the Neapolitan 'false' recapitulation that forms the second verse. The same process is worked towards the end of the second verse, which moves to the dominant of G then, in the tonally fluid passage that leads to the third verse, modulates to E flat which is transformed immediately to the dominant of A flat, and then the dominant of G flat

⁸⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to August Jaeger. Dated 'Sunday'. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

for the final verse. The recapitulation, truncated and more concise provides not only a tonal anchoring of the work as a whole but as a forum for thematic and tonal memories. Perhaps the most significant of these is the reference to G flat at bar 880 which recalls the central tonality of the aria. In addition, the composer uses the coda to develop the seminal theme into a chorale-like valediction. The sense is ultimately one of finality.

The cantata largely presupposes a lot of participation by the chorus, and the full chorus, which takes on the role of narrator throughout the work, is predominantly homophonic, and frequently in unison, for example in the chorale section in F major noted above (finally stated in the coda in the home key of G major):

Music example 15: Hiawatha's Wedding Feast, bb. 944 – 952

944 **Molto moderato, come al Ima**
pescante

CHORUS

Tell us now a tale of won-der, Tell us of some strange ad-ven-ture,
 Tell us now a tale of won-der, Tell us of some strange ad-ven-ture,
 Tell us now a tale of won-der, Tell us of some strange ad-ven-ture,
 Tell us now a tale of won-der, Tell us of some strange ad-ven-ture,

and towards the end of the cantata, where they comment:

Music example 16: *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, bb. 1002 - 1016

1002 **Meno mosso**

mf

Such was Hi - a - wa - tha's wed - ding. Thus the wed - ding - ban - quet end - ed,

CHORUS

mf

Such was Hi - a - wa - tha's wed - ding. Thus the ban - quet end - ed,

mf

Such was Hi - a - wa - tha's wed - ding. Thus the ban - quet end - ed,

mf

Such was Hi - a - wa - tha's wed - ding. Thus the ban - quet end - ed,

1009 *morendo*

And the wed - ding guests de - part - ed, Leav - ing Hi - a - wa - tha hap - py.

And the guests de - part - ed, Leav - ing Hi - a - wa - tha hap - py.

And the guests de - part - ed, Leav - ing Hi - a - wa - tha hap - py.

And the wed - ding guests de - part - ed, Leav - ing Hi - a - wa - tha hap - py.

This choral technique, which was one highly approachable to amateur choral societies (and one amply proved by *Hiawatha's* overwhelming success) was derived from the earlier model of Stanford's *Revenge*, first heard at Leeds in 1886. This work had become an established 'classic' of the choral society repertoire in that it made reasonable but not onerous demands on the chorus, there was no need of a (potentially expensive) soloist, and much of the pictorial element fell to the orchestra. *Hiawatha* followed much the same trend (almost to the point of cliché in the other two cantatas), though the miracle of the central aria for the soloist became an irresistible draw to audiences over and above the dimension of choral participation.

The *Wedding Feast* was produced in Sunderland in the week following the RCM performance, under the auspices of Nicholas Kilburn, a highly successful businessman and amateur musician. An experienced choral conductor, he directed two other musical societies (the Bishop Auckland Musical Society and the Middlesborough Musical Union) in addition to the Sunderland Philharmonic Society. This performance, on 16 November 1898, was the one credited by both the press⁸¹ and the composer as the earliest introduction of the work to the public, with Mr. Lloyd Chandos singing the tenor solo of Chibiabos, 'the sweetest of all singers, the best of all musicians'. It would appear that Kilburn himself also regarded the Sunderland performance as the definitive one, believing Stanford to have created a 'rush job' in order to 'get in first'! As a good friend of Elgar (who dedicated a Minuet to Kilburn's son in 1899, and *The Music Makers* of 1912 to 'my friend Nicholas Kilburn'), he corresponded with Elgar four days after the concert; following a discussion in some detail concerning Coleridge-Taylor's acknowledgement of his affinity with Elgar and his work, Kilburn revelled in disparaging the RCM performance of Coleridge-Taylor's cantata:

His new little Cantata 'Hiawatha' was done at Sunderland on Wed: night, & he conducted what was really the first public performance, although: (& this was a source of merriment to us, rather than annoyance!) I learned that Professor Stanford, hearing of the Sunderland one, hurried on a High School performance at the R.C.M., so as to get 3 days in front! But as will happen when one hurries, many ugly slips occurred & a discreditable performance ensued!⁸²

Coleridge-Taylor, amidst an ever-increasingly busy schedule, had accepted the invitation to conduct with relish:

⁸¹ *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1898), 815.

⁸² Letter from Nicholas Kilburn to Elgar, 20 Nov. 1898. GB-EBm L6544



My dear Sir –

Most Certainly! I shall have great pleasure in conducting “Hiawatha” at Sunderland on Nov. 16th, as it will be its first performance. Will there be a full rehearsal, band & chorus, on the 16th? If so, please tell me at what time, as I’m afraid I can only manage the one day clear.⁸³

The customary practice of provincial choral societies being required to produce a work with very little rehearsal, sometimes without even the benefit of a dry run between a collective chorus and orchestra, and usually under the direction of a conductor they were unaccustomed to, prompted the Musical Times to comment that under the circumstances the performance really was ‘remarkably good’.⁸⁴ (The sequel to the cantata was not to be as fortunate in the reviews of a performance rendered with obvious lack of preparation). With characteristic haste the composer had to beat a hasty retreat back home immediately after the production, sending a courteous note of appreciation to Kilburn the next day:

How very sorry I was not to have the opportunity of wishing you good-bye, & for thanking you for the tremendous pains you must have taken with my music. I can assure you I have never felt so highly gratified as I did at last evening’s performance. I hope you will not forget to post me a copy of Master Paul’s “Symphony” at your leisure – I shall prize it very much indeed...Please give my very kindest regards to Mrs. Kilburn and Master Paul – I’m sure the latter will do big things in music some day.⁸⁵

Kilburn fulfilled his request, sending his son’s composition the following month, and Coleridge-Taylor reciprocated: ‘Very many thanks for your kind letter, and the M.S. both of which I shall prize very much indeed. The “Symphony” I intend putting in my album, and some day when Master Paul has made a name, I shall feel particularly honoured by possessing his first opus number!’⁸⁶ Just over a year later Coleridge-

⁸³ Letter from Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 11 Oct. 1898. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept. A postscript to this letter contains the aside that ‘by the way – the first time my name appears on your prospectus, it is the wrong way about!’

⁸⁴ *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1898), 815.

⁸⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 17 Nov. 1898. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

⁸⁶ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, ‘Monday’. Dec. 1898. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

Taylor was still praising the work, informing Kilburn that it occupied ‘an auspicious place in my study’.⁸⁷

Coleridge-Taylor’s characteristic modesty, caution and inexperience in dealing with the promulgation of his own work unfolds in a letter to Jaeger regarding publication of the cantata by Novellos, who, apart from a few early church anthems (‘In Thee O Lord I put my Trust’, 1891; ‘Break forth into joy’, dedicated to Colonel Herbert Walters, ‘O Ye that love the Lord’, ‘The Lord is my Strength’, ‘Lift up your heads,’ 1892) and a *Ballade in D minor* for violin and orchestra (1895), had not invested any interest in publishing the composer’s work until this year: ‘Of course, I shall be perfectly willing to leave all arrangements regarding “Hiawatha” with Mr. Littleton. Will you tell him this on my behalf, or would it be advisable to write to him personally?’⁸⁸

Augener, established since 1853, had been the main publishers of his work from the mid 1890’s. They had undertaken publication of *Fantasiestücke* and a Dance and Lament for violin and piano published as *Two Romantic Pieces* in 1896. The following year had seen the appearance of *Five Southern Love Songs*, and a successive catalogue of pieces such as the *Hiawathan Sketches* (mentioned previously), a variety of salon music (*Two Moorish Tone Pictures*, *Three Humoresques*, and *Valse Caprice*), a partsong ‘Land of the Sun’, *Seven African Romances*, and the notable *Legend*. The certainty that a great amount of persuasion and coercion would be required by Jaeger in order to facilitate any consideration of publishing *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast* by Novello is evident from a passage in a lengthy letter from him to Elgar, written the previous year:

⁸⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 14 Mar. 1900, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

⁸⁸ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to August Jaeger. Dated ‘Sunday’. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

The other “coming man” is Coleridge-Taylor.....(He is only 21!) That boy (a very nice, dear boy!) will do great things. His originality is astounding. When he grows older and develops beauty a little more (in his music I mean!) he will be a ‘power’. Novellos published 5 Anthems of his while he was 16 or 17. Now he develops his individuality & strength they will take nothing of his! I have before me a Morning & Evening Church Service* which I consider splendidly fresh, original & yet simple & effective & devotional which ‘we’ won’t do because the Editor thinks it is not the English Church style (precious English Church Style!!) He says that of your work! You see: to succeed always write as others did before you!! Poor Taylor is disheartened because we refuse all his things lately & yet he writes better & better every month! He is a genius I feel sure, if ever an English composer was (his mother is English, his father a full blooded nigger!). Have you seen his ‘7 African Romances’? (Augener). They are strange & yet beautiful when one gets used to his peculiarities or originality. Do get them! He is a fellow sufferer! A word of appreciation from you (if you do see anything in them as I do in my amateurish way!) would give him courage! And such poor devils want cheering up! I am awfully sorry for him. If I had any means I would back up my enthusiasm to the extent of publishing his Service at my own expense. But alas I am a poor devil too, and – damn it – no genius!!!

But I must not tire you out! Excuse the length of this scribble. Meanwhile, you will go on writing to please yourself, please! Never mind publishers I say. You cannot turn out great things if you ever try to please them. This is my opinion as a private individual & musical Enthusiast, & not that of the Head of Novello’s Publishing department.⁸⁹

Novello were eventually persuaded, and agreed to take on the cantata, paying Coleridge-Taylor a ‘one-off’ fee of fifteen guineas for the copyright (across the top of Coleridge-Taylor’s correspondance concerning the ‘arrangements regarding “Hiawatha”’, Jaeger notes “accepts £15/15/0”). The composer’s daughter Avril recounts that he ‘never had a proper agreement – only a letter stating “accepts £25”’.⁹⁰ She explains further, in the biography of her father, that this second and final payment for the work had been made ‘when he was in need later on’.⁹¹

Following the enormous success of the cantata, Coleridge-Taylor inevitably regretted both his inability to press for better terms, and his eagerness to accept the ready money offered by the publishers. Reticent to discuss the subject, it is remarkable that he displayed no bitterness regarding the situation (and what was to be

* Written c. 1890, the Service was finally published by Novello in 1899.

⁸⁹ Letter from Jaeger to Elgar, 15 Sept. 1897, *GB-EBm L9175*.

⁹⁰ Handwritten notes of Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

⁹¹ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 123.

its far-reaching impact on his life). His wife verifies that 'he seldom broached the subject.... but on one occasion he exclaimed, "If I had only a farthing royalty on every copy sold I should be a wealthy man".'⁹²

Stanford's awareness of the situation led him to procure support for the Society of Authors in their efforts to secure 'fair terms' for composers, by engaging the help of other noted musicians. Elgar was more disposed towards caution⁹³, but Stanford was adamant:

I am of course glad that your experience leads you to think that the big publishers are often everything that is considerate. I can tell you of many cases where they are not., some horrible cases. One e.g. of a man out of whom a big firm made circa £10,000 (out of one of the 'small works to take care of themselves') and gave nothing, and who is now precious near starvation. But if you and the other prominent men won't move, it makes any amelioration all the more difficult. I shall do my best, but it will be an up hill job. I think if by accident you saw the accounts of Messrs Novello concerning Hiawatha, it might open your eyes a little as regards the 'considerate' treatment of young composers. If the conditions which the Soc. of Authors established for authors applied in this instance, & the accounts of the publishers were open to inspection, the very disgrace of showing them would prevent their risking an exposure.⁹⁴

Aided by the considerable efforts of Stanford, and subsequently reinforced by Elgar and others - 'composers of your weight and position exert immense influence, both amongst Members of the House of Commons and the public generally'⁹⁵ - championing the cause of the Musical Defence League which had been formed by William Boosey (the head of light opera and ballad specialist publishers Chappell & Co.), the third parliamentary musical copyright Bill was finally passed as an Act in August 1906.

The *Wedding Feast* hit the ground running, and was taken up by choirs all over the country. It's overwhelming success was reflected in a myriad of

⁹² Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 39. See also Carl Stoeckel's recollection that Coleridge-Taylor wrote in one of his letters to him 'If I had retained my rights in the Hiawatha music, I would have been a rich man'. *US-NH, MS247*.

⁹³ Self, 71.

⁹⁴ Letter from Charles V. Stanford to Edward Elgar, 8 Nov. 1902, *GB-EBm L7416*.

⁹⁵ Letter from William Boosey to Edward Elgar, 25 Mar. 1904, *GB-EBm L2914*.

congratulatory reviews, and brought, amongst others, a commission from the North Staffordshire Festival (Hanley). Endowed with all the kudos of a fêted composer, Jaeger's 'coming man' had now 'arrived'.

The result of the North Staffordshire commission was a sequel to the *Wedding Feast*. Coleridge-Taylor originally intended the title to be consistent with the corresponding section (Chapter XX – *The Famine*) of Longfellow's poem, and named the cantata accordingly. It would appear, from his explanation in a letter to Kilburn, that it was the publishers who decided to change the name to *The Death of Minnehaha*, and not the composer himself.⁹⁶ Such name changes were not unusual – his orchestral salon piece of 1900, published as *Scenes from an Everyday Romance* (and performed as such at Queen's Hall, 24 May 1900), was also conceived under a different heading.⁹⁷ Regardless of the title, Coleridge-Taylor applied himself diligently to the task of completing the sequel, the antithesis in its tragic theme and poignant content of famine, death and anguish to the uplifting mood of its predecessor, during the first quarter of 1899. Because the success of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* had generated ensuing engagements from other festivals, he was also busy with two other new works: one of these was an orchestral offering, *Solemn Prelude* (dedicated to Nicholas Kilburn⁹⁸) commissioned by the Three Choirs Festival (Worcester) which premiered on 13 September. He travelled to Worcester with Jessie Walmisley two days beforehand to rehearse at the designated time requested by Ivor Atkins, (conductor of the Worcester Festival), and both were invited to stay with the Gloucester Cathedral organist C. Lee-Williams throughout the proceedings.⁹⁹ In

⁹⁶ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, April 1899. Cited in G. Self, 87.

⁹⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Novello, June 1899. *GB-Lcm 4449*. "My dear Sir – yours to have – I propose calling my little work – 'Miniature of an Everyday Comedy (for full orchestra).'"

⁹⁸ 'May I have the honour of dedicating my "Solemn Prelude" (Worcester Festival) to you?' Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 28 Aug. 1899. *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

⁹⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Mr. Lee-Williams, 8 Sept. 1899. *GB-Lcm 6902*.

addition, the Norwich Festival had also engaged his services, for which he decided to compose another orchestral piece, *Overture to the Song of Hiawatha*.

This time, he chose to explore a source unconnected with Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, drawing instead on a spiritual from the Fisk Jubilee Singers' repertoire, *Nobody Knows the Trouble I See, Lord*:

Music example 17: Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord! [J. B. T. Marsh, The Story of the Jubilee Singers, 159.]

1

No-bo-dy knows the trou-ble I see, Lord, No-bo-dy knows the trou-ble I see.

The image shows a single line of musical notation on a treble clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a simple, spaced-out font: "No-bo-dy knows the trou-ble I see, Lord, No-bo-dy knows the trou-ble I see." A small number '1' is positioned above the first measure of the staff.

Music example 18: Overture to the Song of Hiawatha, bb.29 – 36. [GB- Lcm 4943 Copyists' Score; GB-Lbl ADD 63801]

29 **[Allegro ma non troppo]**

The image shows a single line of musical notation on a treble clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8. The melody is marked with a tempo instruction "[Allegro ma non troppo]" and a measure number "29". The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and a half note, with some notes beamed together. There are slurs under the first two measures and the last two measures. A small accent (^) is placed above the final note of the third measure.

The onset of both Jaeger and Elgar's disenchantment with Coleridge-Taylor was becoming all too clear in their correspondence, and Elgar slated both of the new works:

I think you are right about C. Taylor – I was cruelly disillusioned by the overture to *Hiawatha* which I think really only 'rot' - & the Worcester Prelude did not shew any signs of cumulative invention or effect: the scoring is altogether uninteresting & harsh of both these works: wherever I've been people are sympathetic on acct. of the colour question and he is well advertised & backed but his later work is insincere & cannot do any real good: this is what I feel.¹⁰⁰

The *Hiawatha* overture received its first airing nearly three weeks before the *Death of Minnehaha*, when it was presented together with the *Wedding Feast* on 6 October 1899, under the conducting skills of Coleridge-Taylor.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 10 Jan. 1900, *GB-EBm L8403*. Just four months earlier Elgar had been praising the *Solemn Prelude* (Worcester) – see Chapter 6, p. 197.

¹⁰¹ Programme & general arrangements of the Norfolk & Norwich Twenty-Sixth Triennial Musical Festival (1899), 14.

The expectations placed upon the *Death of Minnehaha*, in the light of the eminence achieved by *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, were inevitably high, and in addition to spurring him on with tremendous momentum must surely have exerted added pressure on the shoulders of the young composer; but, true to the self-effacing and unassuming qualities of his character, he did not manifest any signs of this extra burden. The cantata was performed at Hanley on 26 October 1899. Jaeger, who had sent Elgar a score to peruse at the end of October, was once again impressed with Coleridge-Taylor's work and the emotional effect it quite clearly rendered on the expectant audience, although the orchestra's performance left, in his opinion, (and that of the reviewers) much to be desired: 'Minnehaha is beautiful. It was a sight for Gods to see Bennett & Stratton, & Shedlock & other old stagers "wipe their eye". As for my little wife she cried half the time. I was too much concerned about the bad orchestral performance to cry.'¹⁰²

The *Musical Times* marvelled at the fact that although the work was presented at the end of a very lengthy programme, 'yet such was the spell which Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's music cast over the large audience that not a soul, from her Grace the Duchess of Sutherland to the humblest amateur in the gallery, moved before the last echo of the last chord of the beautiful work was drowned in a spontaneous and splendid ovation for the happy young composer.'¹⁰³ However, they concurred with Jaeger's castigation of the orchestra, commenting:

The chorus sang the work, and the delightful "Hiawatha's Wedding-Feast", which preceded it, as if they loved it, which we feel sure they did. Excepting a few minor blemishes their performance was most excellent. Not so that of the orchestra! And here we must raise a protest against the treatment which the work received at rehearsal. It will hardly be believed that the composer had no rehearsal alone for the first performance of a cantata which was absolutely new to the orchestra. It is not our concern to apportion blame for such an inartistic, aye, dangerous piece of false economy. We merely place the fact on record, and express our

¹⁰² Letter from August Jaeger to Edward Elgar, 1 Nov. 1899. *Gb-EBm L8385*.

¹⁰³ *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1899), 821.

opinion that Mr. Taylor would have gained the approval and deserved the thanks of all creative musicians if he had left Hanley in disgust, and made the performance of his new work impossible. The result of this lack of rehearsals was seen at performance.¹⁰⁴

The cantata is a Funeral Lament, revolving around Minnehaha's funeral after she finally yields to the onslaught of famine and fever through a 'cold and cruel winter.' In a similar vein to *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, the work was conceived as a large-scale ternary form in which paragraphs of the 'tragic' E minor frame a central section. The fundamental difference, however, of *Minnehaha* is that, unlike the core aria of *Hiawatha*, the larger central paragraph is discursive and dramatic (evidenced by the thematic and tonal interplay) and is where the tragedy of Minnehaha's isolation and inevitable death is played out. A second stratum of the cantata is its internal construction of a series of short episodes, and it is evident that Coleridge-Taylor deliberately calculated the impact of these to create a sense of 'breathlessness.' This can be witnessed in microcosm in Minnehaha's solo passages, which are liberally punctuated with pause marks (specified in Novello's published score to 'be quite short'). The keys of E minor and G major (again an exposition of the composer's love of this tonal dualism) are intrinsic to the cantata (see Table 5 below). Moreover, Coleridge-Taylor makes great play from the potential of third relationships, particularly between E minor and C major (which share E and G). Take, for example, the first choral entry (bar 52) in E minor, the second verse in C, and the third verse which restates E minor. The fourth verse makes reference to the larger E minor/G major dualism by commencing in G before yielding to E at the close. Also the relationship between E and C is subtly referred to in the opening motif of the cantata where the most dissonant step, the minor ninth, is given special emphasis, as is the C neighbour note of the pedal point (see bars 11-13).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

| Episode | Bar Nos. | Key areas | Macro Level | Texture | Commentary |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|---|
| Orch. Prelude | 1 - 51 | E | Expository | Orch. | Introduction of 'Famine' Theme. 1 st 20 bars over dominant pedal. Chromatic figure from 2 nd half of theme used later in <i>Hiawatha's Departure</i> . |
| 1 | 52 - 124 | e-G | | Chorus | Transitional episode from E minor to G, also incorporating reference to C (b. 78), where the semitone theme used in HWF denoting 'snow-shoes' is used. |
| 2 | 147 - 221 | g-e-E | | Orch., Chorus Solos | Entrance of 'Famine'/Buckadawin (baritone) & 'Fever'/Ahkosewin (soprano). Music changes in character. b. 196- lyrical narrative re Minnehaha in E – harp always associated with Minnehaha & heaven. |
| Orch. section | 222 - 235 | c-g | | Orch. | Extract of famine theme. |
| 3 | 236 - 274 | G | | Chorus | Hiawatha's 'active' theme. Unison chorus (a device previously used in HWF), followed by descriptive chorus moving in pairs or all together. Orchestra state extract of the 2 nd theme from HWF. |
| 4 | 276 - 328 | f-e-c-f | Transition | Solo, Chorus | Hiawatha's solo, 1 st time he is heard in the trilogy. Enharmonic writing in b. 279 important, as Coleridge-Taylor uses this again to facilitate the same change for the soprano solo in Fm at b. 449. Famine theme in Chorus. |
| 5 | 329 - 398 | d-c-C-Eb | | Chorus | Transitional material. b. 378- lyrical material from b. 196, now in Eb. Harp again when Minnehaha dying. |
| 6 | 399-412 | G | | Orch. | Opening theme from HWF in D minor in bass – i.e. Minnehaha's 'hallucination'. |
| 7 | 413-543 | g-Eb-f | | Solo, Chorus | Dialogue between Minnehaha, solo (Gm) and Nokomis (Eb), whose role is taken on by sopranos & altos. Enharmonic change used to move from Eb to the significant key of F minor (key of desolation), as Minnehaha calls out to Hiawatha. Tonally fluid section. Personification of Death (Pauguk). The impact of these short pieces is deliberately calculated, intensified by the pause marks for Minnehaha which intimate breathlessness. b. 524 Recapitulation of opening theme in orchestra. Moves to V7 of G. |
| 8 | 544 - 583 | G-e-G | | Solos, Chorus | Contrasting section. Nokomis (G) repeated by Hiawatha in relative minor (E minor), then repeated very effectively by unaccompanied chorus (G), who take on role of chiefs, braves and squaws – tourba. |
| 9 | 584 - 625 | c-C | | Chorus | Transitional episode. Identification with material in opening chorus in a passing key of E. |
| 10 | 626 - 686 | A | | Solo | Set Piece, placed immediately before the Funeral. Solo soprano narrating for 1 st time (chorus has been used to narrate up to this point, with solo voice declaiming text). |
| 11 | 687 - 802 | d-e | Recapitulation | Chorus | Minnehaha's Funeral. Hiawatha's 'active' music in orchestra in contrast to chorus. b. 794 return of 'Famine' theme in orchestra. |
| 12 | 803 - 896 | E | | Solo, Chorus, Orch. | Recapitulation of E major material from b. 196 as Hiawatha bids farewell to Minnehaha. Passes through C major, then chorus have final comment (as in HWF and HD), repeating farewell in E, followed by a short orchestral postlude. |

Table 5: Death of Minnehaha

An orchestral prelude introduces a sombre 'Famine' theme (over a dominant pedal for the most part), which is then repeated by the chorus; this first section imparts the chilling impression of a funeral cortège and a sense of foreboding. As in *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, the rhythmic motif of the opening theme features again in the rest of the work, and its second phrase reappears in the third cantata of the trilogy,

Hiawatha's Departure:

Music example 19: Death of Minnehaha, bb. 2 – 14.

The chorus, in unison, describe Hiawatha's foray into the desolate woodlands:

Music example 20: Death of Minnehaha, bb. 236 - 239

236 [Allegro]
Chorus (unison) *f*
Forth in-to the emp-ty__for-est Rush'd the mad-den'd Hi - a - wa-tha;

A snippet of the 'Feast' theme from the first cantata (see *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, b. 77) is heard in the orchestra (see b. 266), this time in the completely different context and setting of desolation, since it occurs after Hiawatha angrily strides into the

forest to find food for the dying Minnehaha, and precedes his solo plea to 'Gitche Manito' (the Great Spirit & Master of Life) for food:

Music example 21: Death of Minnehaha, bb. 276 – 279

276 **a tempo**
Baritone solo



"Git - che Ma - ni - to the Might - y, Git - che Ma - ni - to the Might - y!"

Coleridge-Taylor's choice of F minor for the 'Transition' and dramatic argument was significant. In one sense it reflected the emphasis placed on the minor ninth of the opening motif (B-C), though there is an even greater sense of dissonance in the relationship between E minor and F minor, the Neapolitan minor (as opposed to major). This unusual relationship intensifies the sense of urgency, hopelessness and isolation intrinsic to Minnehaha's desperation. This tonal juxtaposition is rudely evident at bars 276-292 for both soloist and chorus. F minor, however, dominates this first section of the tonal 'argument' (up to bar 523) though, at the height of the crisis, as Minnehaha lays dying in the wigwam, the music becomes more tonally dissolute (b. 370). The principal theme of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* is now stated instrumentally in D minor (which foreshadows the D minor setting of Minnehaha's funeral), and after a section of dialogue between Minnehaha and Nokomis (alternating between G minor and E flat major), it is significant that Minnehaha's solo (b. 449), when she feels 'the eyes of Pauguk' [death] upon her, is also set in F minor. The music reaches a major climax as she calls out for Hiawatha (b. 500) with her last breath. In a contrasting section in G major (where there is also a tonal reference to E

minor), the solo chorus take on the role of chiefs and ‘squaws’ in their cry of lamentation – ‘Wahonomin’:

Music example 22: Death of Minnehaha, bb. 568 – 571

246

pp Wa - ho-no-min! Wa - ho-no-min! Would that I had per-ish'd for you.

CHORUS

pp Wa - ho-no-min! Wa - ho-no-min! Would that I have per-ish'd for you,

pp Wa - ho-no-min! Wa - ho-no-min! Would that I have per-ish'd for you, Would

pp Wa - ho-no-min! Wa - ho-no-min! Would that I have per-ish'd for you,

There then follows a set piece for soprano (b. 626), in A major, describing Hiawatha’s torment as he sits at Minnehaha’s deathbed. This episode, placed immediately before the Funeral March, is notably the first time in the cantata that a solo voice portrays the action (until this point, the chorus has been exclusively reserved to fulfil this narrative role), a touch by the composer to throw special emphasis on the dramatic situation.

Minnehaha’s Funeral (b. 687, *Moderato, quasi una Marcia funèbre*) marks the beginning of the recapitulatory material in the orchestra; its statement of the choral theme from bar 236, in D minor and then E minor, effectively forms a stark contrast to the funeral dirge. The opening Famine theme returns (again over a dominant pedal) signalling Hiawatha’s solo as he bids his final farewell to Minnehaha. This E major passage has also figured before, in one brief moment of optimism earlier on in the

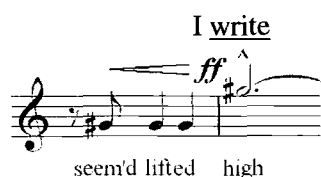
cantata (see b. 196). The music modulates to the jubilant key of C major when Hiawatha declares that he will follow Minnehaha ‘To the Islands of the Blessed, To the Kingdom of Ponemah! To the land of the Hereafter!’ The chorus have the last comment; they repeat the farewell in E major before the ten-bar orchestral postlude. Even in this short final passage the sixth relationship is still evident, now alternating between C sharp minor and E major (parallel to the E minor and C major relationship of the beginning).

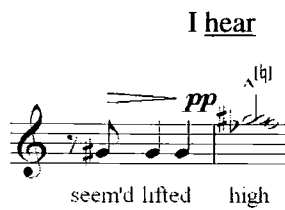
The *Death of Minnehaha* formed a catalyst to the concluding cantata of the trilogy, *Hiawatha’s Departure*, which, having been completed during the early part of 1900 - (after extensive revisions, as the first draft of the work reportedly found no favour with Jaeger) - was performed by the Royal Choral Society at the Albert Hall on 22 March. The week before the trilogy’s performance, Coleridge-Taylor picturesquely expressed his impatience and dissatisfaction with the Chorus in an unusually cynical letter to Kilburn, concomitantly revealing his great delight in the work itself:

I’m pleased with the Finale – particularly the Baritone Scena, which I suppose you’ll like as well as anything in the whole work. But the Albert Hall Chorus!! Heavens! how I long for Sunderland & Middlesborough! There is neither voice nor pathos nor humour nor anything – and they are so heavy to move along – they remind me of very muddy roads and huge waggons – each waggon having only one horse, and that one stolid to an incredible degree.

He continued, with more than a hint of mixed humour and sarcasm:

My passion they sing with pained & strained faces. My pathos is indeed pathetic – in more ways than one!





Woe is me! for my spirit is troubled within me, and so would yours be if you could hear "England's Premier Choral Society"!! I'm glad you live in Bishop Auckland, as you might feel inclined to sever friendship with the man who wrote those sounds!¹⁰⁵

Set in the spring (following the 'intolerable winter' of *The Death of Minnehaha*), *Hiawatha's Departure* is framed by broader brushstrokes than its two predecessors. Almost twice as long as each of the first two parts, this cantata brings back many quotations from both of them. (See Table 6 below).

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 14 Mar. 1900, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

| Episode | Bar nos. | Key area/s | Macro level | Texture | Commentary |
|-----------------|----------|------------|--|----------------------|--|
| Orch. Prelude | 1 - 30 | B/b | B major/minor and E minor | Orchestra | |
| 1 | 31-114 | D | | Solo (sop.) | 'Spring' aria. ABA. |
| 2 | 115 | f# | | Chorus | Underpinned with instrumental return of Iago's theme (b. 139, 191) from HWF (b. 752). |
| 3 | 218 | F/G/e | | Solo (ten.) & chorus | Descriptive dialogue section between solo & chorus – <i>quasi recitativo</i> . Iago's theme in augmentation (b. 383). Section closes with unaccompanied chorus, in E minor. Orchestral statement of principal theme from HWF, on V of e (b. 407), leads to next episode. |
| 4 | 409 | e/d | Set Piece | Solo (bar.) | Dramatic scena/soliloquy. Incorporates material (b. 427) from DOM (b. 277 –284) |
| Orch. Interlude | 549 | e, b | Transitional | Orchestra | Theme from b. 107, and opening theme. |
| 5 | 573 | C | | Chorus | Opening theme elided with principal theme of HWF in augmentation. |
| 6 | 682 | Ab | | Solo (sop.) | Moves briefly to B major. Repeats the same process, remaining in B major the 2 nd time, for choral section. |
| 7 | 748 | B, f# | B major | Chorus | Triumphal chorus in B major. Orchestra moves briefly through E major to A major for baritone solo. |
| 8 | 844 | A | | Solo (bar./ten.) | Long solo section , framed by reference to A major. |
| 9 | 923 | | | Orch./Chorus | |
| 10 | 1033 | c# | | Recit (ten.)/Chorus | b. 1079 reference to DOM. |
| 11 | 1257 | V of B | | Chorus/ Solo | Theme from HWF, sung unaccompanied as before (see b. 510 HWF), punctuated by Hiawatha's solo |
| 12 | 1353 | B | This section marked by composer for possible excision. | Orch. | Opening theme of HWF |
| 13 | 1371 | e | | Chorus | Describes Hiawatha launching his birch canoe and sailing into the distance, in 'the sea of splendour'. |
| 14 | 1497 | B | | Orch./Chorus | Motif from DOM. b. 1513 Chorus' final farewell to Hiawatha as he departs 'to the Islands of the Blessed, to the kingdom of Ponemah, to the land of the Hereafter'. |
| 15 | 1559 | B | Postlude | Orch. | Opening theme of HWF. |

Table 6: Hiawatha's Departure

Jaeger noted to Elgar that he had analysed the piece ('My Dear Potatoe Planter ... they will have to have my "Hiawatha's Departure" analysis. In fact they have ordered them already (1500!)).¹⁰⁶ Jaeger's commentary, in his analytical notes prefacing a 1903 performance of the work by the Royal Choral Society at the Royal Albert Hall, equated the trilogy to a symphony (see *Figure 1* below):

If we could compare the complete cycle of cantatas, apart from all question of form, with a symphony, we should call the "Wedding Feast" the opening *Allegro*; the "Death of Minnehaha", the slow movement; the first portion of the "Departure" up to the end of the Iagoo scene, the *Scherzo*, and the rest of the "Departure", the *Finale*, with the powerful and impressive baritone scena, "Hiawatha's Vision", added as a short fifth movement or Intermezzo between the *Scherzo* and *Finale*.¹⁰⁷

Figure 1: Summary of Jaeger's comparison of Scenes from the Song of Hiawatha with a Symphony:

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|---|
| Opening Allegro | I | Hiawatha's Wedding Feast |
| Slow Movement | II | Death of Minnehaha |
| Scherzo | III | Hiawatha's Departure (to bar 406) |
| Finale | IV | Hiawatha's Departure (from bar 407 to end). |

This quadro-partite structure bears the hallmarks of a typical late nineteenth century practice with which Coleridge-Taylor was familiar (having already written his *Symphony in A minor*). Indeed, other composers had already written choral works with this kind of overarching structure in mind, notably Parry's second oratorio *Job* (1892), and Elgar's cantata *The Black Knight* (completed in 1893), both of which are set in four individual distinguishable scenes; postdating the *Hiawatha* Trilogy, within this nature of hybridisation, a number of Parry's ethical choral works such as *The*

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Jaeger to Elgar, 16 Jul. 1900, *GB-EBm L8470*.

¹⁰⁷ A.J. Jaeger *Analytical Notes, Scenes from the song of Hiawatha*, (London 1903), 23. (Printed copies in *GB-Lam* and *GB-Ob*).

Soul's Ransom (1906) and *The Vision of Life* (1907) also had a symphonic design of four contrasting movements, and Vaughan Williams' choral symphony (*A Sea Symphony*) of 1909 included soprano, baritone and chorus.

Jaeger's perception of *Hiawatha's Departure* was not actually sanctioned by the composer though it provides a fascinating overview of the *Hiawatha* trilogy (or tetralogy through Jaeger's eyes) even if the perception is somewhat over-contrived. In truth, both 'Scherzo' and 'Finale' are indissoluble in that one cannot function separately without the other. The Scherzo, beginning in B major, relates closely to the central tonality of the Finale which is also B major, though one could argue cogently that E minor forms the main tonality of the Scherzo after an oblique beginning in B major and D major. The Scherzo ultimately concludes on its dominant (i.e. V of E), and gives way to a section for solo baritone. The goal of this section is actually the lament at bar 502 in D minor in which Hiawatha prophesies the destruction of his people and the conquest of his country by the 'white man.' This is the section that Jaeger referred to as the 'fifth movement or Intermezzo between the *Scherzo* and *Finale*.' Certainly this 'movement' provides a diversion from the main choral sections, though it seems more likely that the real 'Finale' to the work, and to the three cantatas as an entirety, takes place from bar 749 where the chorus enter in an unequivocal statement of B major portraying Hiawatha's exultation (the previous section functioning as an extended prelude – bb. 549-748). This final section provides the main frame to his second extended 'scena' from bar 844 in A major where he declares that he will meet the 'white man' in peace. One final, shorter soliloquy, based around G major occurs at bar 1284 which constitutes Hiawatha's last farewell. Tonally this provides a significant memory of the first cantata *in* G major. Just before this section the chorus also interject with further memories of the first cantata as if to

stress the importance of this cyclic event. The dominant of B returns at bars 1351-1356. In the cut sanctioned by Coleridge-Taylor, this led immediately to the final section in B major. However, in the uncut version, E minor reappears which surely refers back to the ‘Scherzo,’ (and which surely underlines the structural integrity of the whole cantata). The final return to B brings forth a conspicuous and moving memory of *Minnehaha*, a reference which seems to suggest a final purging of the trilogy’s central tragedy, and the closing bars, in the orchestra, remind us of the seminal theme.

2 THE BLIND GIRL OF CASTÉL-CUILLÉ and MEG BLANE

Coleridge-Taylor entered a more unequal period in his choral writing for the next few years; 1901 saw the completion of two more choral works, *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé* and *Meg Blane*, both of which continued in the narrative cantata vein. Yet, what became rudely evident in these subsequent works was that the composer, comfortable in the formula tried and tested in the subject matter in his earlier cantatas, rapidly showed his limitations in his handling of other literary topics. Nowhere was this more evident than in the treatment of the chorus where his creative originality began to flag.

The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé was commissioned for the Leeds Festival, receiving a first performance there on 9 October, with Coleridge-Taylor conducting, and Madame Albani and Andrew Black as soloists. Coleridge-Taylor based his work on Longfellow’s translation of the poetical legend bearing the same title, by Jacques Jasmin (6 Mar. 1798 – 5 Oct. 1864). He was not the first to do so; Frederick Corder’s “Margaret, The Blind Girl Castél-Cuillé” had already been published by 1895

(J. Williams, London). Jasmin's successful work, written in 1835, had established him as the Poet Laureate of the South of France. The poem was translated from the Gascon dialect into English a few years later, with the British ambassador's daughter in Paris, Lady Georgina Fullerton's translation preceding the one by Longfellow. Translations of the popular work into Spanish and Italian also quickly followed. Jasmin's setting of the poem was rooted in popular tradition; the castle, situated near to Jasmin's hometown of Agen in the picturesque valley of Saint-Amans, South France, was significant when the English, through the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry II in 1152, occupied the region of Guienne, which France was unable to reconquer until three centuries later.

The synopsis of the cantata revolves around a soldier's daughter, Margaret, who lives with her brother Paul at 'the foot of the mountain height/Where is perched Castél Cuillé'.¹⁰⁸ She is engaged to be married to Baptiste; however, whilst he is away Margaret loses her eyesight through small pox:

Jour per aoutres, toutjour! et per jou, malhurouzo,
 Toutjour ney! toutjour ney!
 Que fay Negre len d'el! Oh! que moun amo es tristo!
 Oh! que souffri, moun Diou! Couro ben doun, Batisto!" [Gascon]

Day for the others ever, but for me
 For ever night! for ever night!
 When he is gone 'tis dark! my soul is sad!
 I suffer! O my God! come, make me glad. [Longfellow's translation]

Although Margaret waits patiently for Baptiste, he does not return, being enticed instead into marrying another girl, Angela. Margaret and Paul decide to attend the wedding ceremony, whereupon, at the exchange of the rings, Margaret rushes

¹⁰⁸ *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, 1st two lines* (Novello score – London, 1902), 2.

forward, intending to stab herself in front of her betrayer, but is forestalled in this action when she falls down dead of a broken heart.

Part I opens with scenes of pastoral delight. The chorus play a predominant part, and from the outset Coleridge-Taylor's perception of it is a simple and uncomplicated homophonic one:

Music example 23: *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, Part I, bb. 82 – 90*

[Allegro moderato]
 mp
 CHORUS
 "The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom. So fair a bride shall leave her home!"
 mp
 "The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom. So fair a bride shall leave her home!"
 mp
 "The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom. So fair a bride shall leave her home!"
 mp
 "The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom. So fair a bride shall leave her home!"

The only contrast, at the end of this section, is the short ten bar recitative by Jane, a soothsayer (contralto solo), warning of the imminent (and inevitable) tragedy:

Music example 24: *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, Part I, bb. 444 – 454*

Contralto solo. (Jane.)
 RECIT.
 mf
 "Thoughtless An-ge-la. be-ware, be-ware! Lest, when thou weddest this false
 451
 rit.
 bridegroom, Thou diggest for thy-self a tomb!"

Part II portrays the anguish and suffering of Margaret. Coleridge-Taylor's stereotypical approach to the chorus is in evidence again, in their series of seven interjections (set to the same words), during Margaret's desperate cries of sorrow and torment:

Music example 25: *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, Part II, bb. 32 – 35*

32 [Andante] *pp* *poco rit.*

Thus la-ment - ed Mar-ga-ret, In her cottage lone and drea-ry. —

Thus la-ment - ed Mar-ga-ret, In her cottage lone and drea-ry. —

Thus la-ment - ed Mar-ga-ret, In her cottage lone and drea-ry. —

Thus la-ment-ed Mar-ga-ret, In her cottage lone and drea-ry. —

The interspersion of these same repeated comments is the only main alteration of the poem by the composer; the libretto, which, apart from a few short excisions in Part I, and one in Part II, is set almost in its entirety, would perhaps have benefited from more adaptation by Coleridge-Taylor. Part III conveys the gloom and doom of the fateful wedding ceremony and Margaret's death. A bell tolls at the outset of the short orchestral introduction, before the chorus enters, once more depending laboriously upon uniform homophony:

Music example 26: *The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, Part III, bb. 39 – 52.*

39 *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Now rings the bell, — nine times re-ver-ber-at-ing, And the white day - break steal-ing up the

CHORUS *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Now rings the bell, nine times re-ver-ber-at-ing, And the white day - break steal-ing up the

mf *cresc.* *f*

Now rings the bell, — nine times re-ver-ber-at-ing, And the white day - break steal-ing up the

mf *cresc.* *f*

Now rings the bell, — nine times re-ver-ber-at-ing, And the white day - break steal-ing up the

46

sky, Sees in two cot-tag-es two mai-dens wait-ing, How diff'-rent-ly!

sky, Sees in two cot-tag-es two mai-dens wait-ing, How diff'-rent-ly!

sky, Sees in two cot-tag-es two mai-dens wait-ing, How diff'-rent-ly!

sky, Sees in two cot-tag-es two mai-dens wait-ing, How diff'-rent-ly!

Coleridge-Taylor sets the poem's refrain, sung by the chorus four times during Part I

(bars 82 – 100; 179 – 197; 273 – 291; 477 – 498) in F major each time it appears.

This unifying element is presented again at the end of the piece, now in the minor tonality; the blossom and bloom has been displaced by grief and gloom

as this final time it is, poignantly, a corpse and not a bride leaving home:

Music example 27: The Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé, Part III, bb. 557 – 565.

537 **26**
Andante doloroso

CHORUS

mp "The roads should mourn and be veil'd in gloom, So fair a

mp "The roads should mourn and be veil'd in gloom, So fair a

mp "The roads should mourn and be veil'd in gloom, So fair a

mp "The roads should mourn and be veil'd in gloom, So fair a

543

corpse shall leave its home!

corpse shall leave its home!

corpse shall leave its home!

corpse shall leave its home!

The short orchestral coda reintroduces the first phrase of the refrain in the major key again, bringing the work to a close in F major.

The cantata was not particularly received well by the press¹⁰⁹, or indeed by Jaeger, who had written to the *Yorkshire Post* critic Herbert Thompson, well in advance of the first performance:

I fear you won't like Taylor's Leeds cantata much. I leave him severely alone now, for he is too big a celebrity now to ever come near me. He sent me the other day another new choral work [Meg Blane] to this address without even a letter of explanation & I haven't even looked at it yet. I'll teach that youngster manners yet, though his *Hiawatha* sells like hot cakes. It is I should think the biggest success Novello's have had since the *Elijah*.¹¹⁰

Coleridge-Taylor, unsurprisingly, did not take the lukewarm reception of his cantata well, writing to his friend Kilburn:

I had your letter, and thank you for it most heartily – you were the one friend in need! – and at any rate my Leeds experience has opened my eyes in that particular way.

You shall have an advance proof of “Meg Blane” shortly.

Thank you, yes, I saw the Daily Telegraph notice. Bennett is the only one who seems to understand that I deliberately set the Dramatic Element on one side, and even had I not, it is no weaker than “Hiawatha” in that respect. For instance, Nokomis, in the Death of Minnehaha speaks thro' the chorus – “Minnehaha herself is Famine” and after she is dead she sings “Spring had come”!

There is strong dramatic consistency for you!

¹⁰⁹ *The Times* (10 Oct. 1901), 8 “He has not maintained the high standard of individuality that was the secret of that [Hiawatha's] success”.

¹¹⁰ Jaeger to Thompson, 4 Mar. 1901. *GB-LEbc, SC MS 361/154*.

In an opera of course I should be the first to take care of these things!¹¹¹

The 'new choral work' that Jaeger had not deigned to even glance at straightaway was the cantata *Meg Blane*, dedicated to 'Miss Wakefield' and commissioned for the Sheffield Musical Festival of 1902. Mary Wakefield (1853 – 1910), author of various essays on music, and a keen vocalist, was a founder of the Westmorland Festival in 1885, to which Coleridge-Taylor was appointed as conductor, in 1901.¹¹² (The soprano Liza Lehmann commented that Mary's 'genial enthusiasm created a delightfully stimulating atmosphere there'¹¹³). 'Musical competitions of one sort or another had been well known in England for a long time, but the choral festival for which Mary Wakefield made herself responsible in 1885 may be taken as marking the commencement of what was to become an ambitious and well-patronized national institution.'¹¹⁴ The middle to the end of the nineteenth century saw an explosion of competitive music festivals, which permeated the whole fabric of musical life in Britain, including the 'Eisteddfodau' in Wales at which Coleridge-Taylor did 'a great deal of adjudicatingamong a very rough class of people'.¹¹⁵ Post-Darwinian thinking in the second half of the nineteenth century engendered a change to a more secular view of progress through struggle, or the 'survival of the fittest', in the phrase coined by Herbert Spencer in his *Principles of Biology* (1864 –67); the festivals embraced this rationalisation that competitiveness raises standards (a sentiment powerfully espoused by Adam Smith), although Mary Wakefield, following the views of the socialists William Morris and Bernard Shaw, who disliked competitive festivals, subscribed to the other side of this philosophy,

¹¹¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 17 Oct. 1901, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

¹¹² *Musical Times* (1 Sept. 1900), 593.

¹¹³ Liza Lehmann, *The life of Liza Lehmann* (London, 1919; repr. 1980), 49.

¹¹⁴ Eric Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London, 1964), 205.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Hilyer, 14 Sept. 1904. Quoted in Berwick Sayers, 154.

where it was the participation that counted. Coleridge-Taylor's judgement was that 'much is being said at the present time against the competitive idea, especially in music, because of the gambling spirit that may be introduced. But there is none of this kind of vicious excitement; nobody seems excited in the room except the competitors. There is one great thing to be learned from an eisteddfod: you get to know and use your judgement with regard to pieces of music which perhaps you would not otherwise understand.'¹¹⁶ He adjudicated many competitions for the next twelve years of his life, and found a humorous side to the organisers' strenuous attempts at maintaining absolute fairness from the judges, remarking that:

At one place there were three adjudicators, and on arriving at the hall we found three Punch-and-Judy-like erections, set on poles. Into these we three poor men climbed by means of ladders, and then curtains were drawn closely round. As each choir finished a man mounted the ladder, poked his arm through the curtains, and took our folded lists of marks, which were added together on the platform.

But the brass band contest takes the palm. Everybody connected with one seems absolutely unable to trust the judge. I was once adjudicator at a brass band contest, and I had to stay in my room at the hotel, right away from the window, and judge the bands as they played in passing along the street. On another occasion the contest was held in a large field, and a deep hole was dug in the ground in which the adjudicator was placed, and covered over with boards so that he should not see anything. At another place, I had finished my work, and was passing by the end of a platform on which the bands were competing. It had been raining all day, and the water was standing a foot deep under this platform. There I saw a man with his body hanging over the supports and his feet dangling in the water. I said to the committee-man with me, 'That poor fellow seems very ill. Hadn't we better go and help him?' 'Oh, he's all right,' was the airy reply; '*that's the adjudicator.*'¹¹⁷

Coleridge-Taylor was already familiar with Robert William Buchanan's work before beginning the preparations of setting *Meg Blane*, and the work was perhaps originally conceived with thoughts of Mary Wakefield's Westmorland Festival in mind, although it was subsequently commissioned for the Sheffield Festival; Chatto & Windus had published the fashionable poet's *Complete Poetical Works* in two

¹¹⁶ Berwick Sayers, 119-20.

¹¹⁷ Coleridge-Taylor to A. T. Johnson. quoted in Berwick Sayers, 120.

volumes in 1901, and the dark and powerful picture painted in the poem is typical of Buchanan's poetry. However, in deciding to make use of Buchanan's words, Coleridge-Taylor immediately confronted the challenge of the poet's horrifying and disturbing world of tragic realism. Many of Buchanan's verses are infused by sinister emotions of violence, betrayal, corruption, revenge and, like the novels and poetry of his contemporary, Thomas Hardy, a sense of transitoriness and insignificance within nature. *Meg Blane*, with its hopeless catastrophe of the shipwreck with all life lost, was one such poem, and its sense of realism seemed to share elements of other contemporary tragic plots such as Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (which Coleridge-Taylor probably knew) where the two lovers die hopelessly from thirst in the Arizona desert. Cecil Coles, who was tragically killed in April 1918, during the last German offensive of World War I, also used Buchanan's narrative poem, *Fra Giacomo*, a ghastly tale of betrayal, poison and revenge.

Coleridge-Taylor's first biographer, Berwick Sayers, notes that it was whilst the composer was enjoying his annual seaside holiday in the autumn of 1901 at Hastings 'that the germinal idea of *Meg Blane* came to him. He was standing in the upper room of a boarding house on the parade watching the sea.....in his fascinated watching of the waves he found the inspiration of its setting'.¹¹⁸ Jessie confirms the galvanising effect that the turbulent water had on him:

He was much impressed by the tremendous seas which used to break with such fine effect right over the terrace of houses where we stayed, making it necessary for the owners to put up thick barred shutters during high tide..... We used to go to our bedroom on the third floor to watch these seas at high tide, and Coleridge said, 'When I get home I must try and find a poem about the sea.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Berwick Sayers, 133-4.

¹¹⁹ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 52.

The narrative poem, written by Buchanan in 1867/8 is a lengthy work in four parts, written in a ballad metre. Part I provides a detailed description of the heroine of the piece, a single mother called Meg Blane, and depicts a shipwreck caught up in the turbulence of 'The Storm'; Part II is centred around the peace, tranquillity and 'Dead Calm' ensuing after the violence of the storm, and introduces a sole survivor of the shipwreck; Part III, 'A Troubled Deep', brings about the revelation that the recently shipwrecked mariner is in fact Meg Blane's missing one-time lover (and father of her disabled son), whose return she has prayed and waited for by the sea for many years. Her joy at finally being reunited with him is short-lived, turning to anguish when he reveals that he has been married for seven years and has several children. The final section of the poem, consolidating the religious feel of the piece, bears the caption 'And the Spirit of God moved upon the waters'¹²⁰

Coleridge-Taylor chose only to set a portion of Part I of the poem, and excluded the description of Meg Blane, her son, and their way of life, concentrating on the event of the storm and shipwreck. The first section of Coleridge-Taylor's setting, in *A minor*, is prelude, and the prologue begins with a supplication of prayer by the mezzo-soprano soloist (sung at the Sheffield Festival first performance of 3 October 1902 by Madame Louise Kirkby Lunn who 'received her musical and vocal training at the Royal College of Music, where she held the Courtenay Scholarship'¹²¹), over a dramatic dominant pedal. The composer also utilises this same invocation in an epilogue, which is sung with double chorus, forming the frame of the work, an elegy to those who have been lost at sea. The short main motif, which permeates the work, is introduced in bars 19 – 20.

¹²⁰ Robert Buchanan, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2 vols. (London, 1901), 217.

¹²¹ Sheffield Musical Festival Souvenir (Sheffield, 1902), 50.

Music example 28: *Meg Blane*, bb. 19 – 20.



Music example 29: Variant of above, *Meg Blane*, bb. 101 – 4.



The chorus plays the role of narrator throughout, but the work again evinces Coleridge-Taylor's slavishly stereotypical approach to choral writing. Such homophonic, uniform choral writing, without any relief whatsoever, is perhaps somewhat surprising after his success with *Hiawatha*, although *Meg Blane* follows in the same tradition, as a choral piece with set solo sections. The composer's innate judgment for dramatic impact in *Meg Blane* is questionable, in a piece which is for the most part reflective, and in which Coleridge-Taylor fails to find the apposite vocabulary to highlight those dramatic moments of greatest significance. One such instance occurs as the soloist declaims, "Then one cried, 'She has sunk'", a moment of absolute and indeed frightening catastrophe but one which is undermined by a surprisingly feeble and tonally banal gesture:

Music example 30: *Meg Blane*, bb. 167 -70

167 Mezzo-soprano solo *ff*

Then one cried. "She has sunk!"

cresc. *sf* *sf*

The set piece for the soloist a few bars later (b. 181) remains in the key of A minor. The key structure of the piece then moves to F major, through F minor to C minor, and then E minor, facilitating the all important move back to A minor for the concluding epilogue, where the repeated words of the *Allegro molto agitato* prologue are now *Lento*. Here, the double chorus (unaccompanied in some of the passages) echo each phrase sung by the solo mezzo-soprano, in four-part harmony, moving this time to a closing chord of A major.

The cantata followed Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* and Bach's motet for 5 voices *Jesu, Priceless Treasure* in the Friday morning programme, which concluded with Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 in B minor.¹²² The chorus master was Dr. Henry Coward, whose reputation for raising the standard of large-scale choral singing had been established since the first Sheffield Festival in 1896, and whose excellent preparation of the chorus for the 1902 festival ensured that 'at the final and only rehearsal with the composers not a single correction was made by the various conductor-composers.'¹²³ Coward had more than a passing acquaintance with Coleridge-Taylor, recalling that:

¹²² Sheffield Musical Festival Programme, 1902. *SCa MD7080*.

¹²³ Henry Coward, *Reminiscences of Henry Coward* (London, 1919), 151 – 2.

I often came into contact with that gentle spirit, Coleridge-Taylor, and as he felt I was in sympathy with many of his views, he told me a great deal of his aspirations in relation to his race. We were staying at the North Western Hotel, Liverpool, and someone who had just come from America assumed that C. T. being coloured, had no right to be in the drawing-room. Taylor took up the challenge and gave the objector such a hot reception that he found it convenient to retire.¹²⁴

Reviews of the work were varied. The *Musical Times* commented that although ‘folks have been wont to shake their heads over the productions of the young African composer since his *Hiawatha*.....in *Meg Blane* one gladly welcomes the return of Coleridge-Taylor to his former field of declamatory utterance and vigorous music....Mr. Coleridge-Taylor has certainly risen to the occasion and produced a work that forms a fitting companion to the *Hiawatha* music and one that is likely to find favour with choral societies.’¹²⁵ The *Sheffield Daily Independent* of 4 October described the work as ‘one of the most pleasing and effective compositions submitted at the 1902 Festival’¹²⁶. However, the paper’s critic of 6 October argued that the cantata ‘is entirely superficial and wanting in plastic force. All that I have heard of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor’s compositions made subsequently to the first part of *Hiawatha* leave the impression that the powers of his mind were exhausted in the acquirement of a composer’s technique. He seems to fasten upon externals, and so to stop short of those regions in which the true eloquence of music begins.’¹²⁷

Joseph Bennett wrote the programme notes¹²⁸, and the composer thanked him for ‘your clever & sympathetic analytical notes...I admired them very much.’¹²⁹

The work was conducted, by Coleridge-Taylor, who:

¹²⁴ *ibid*,

¹²⁵ *Musical Times*, 1 Nov. 1902, 730.

¹²⁶ *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 4 Oct. 1902, 7.

¹²⁷ *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 6 Oct. 1902, 6.

¹²⁸ *SCA MD 7080*, 30 – 39.

¹²⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Joseph Bennett, Oct. 1902, *US-NYpm MFC C693.B4716*.

'on the conductor's rostrum attracted no little attention. He is an arresting personality to watch. There is no sparsity about his methods; by look, gesture, and vigorous action he exerts great influence over the chorus and band. A novel feature about his conducting is the energy he puts into the upbeat: he creates almost a whirlwind around him by the strokes of his baton. But it would be difficult to find a man whose face wears a more pleasant expression during the ordeal of conducting a work. As he stood on the conductor's rostrum his facial expression conveyed the idea that he was enjoying the performance as much as anyone in the audience. As a matter of fact he was: it could scarcely be otherwise, but it is not every conductor who has a smile hovering around his mouth in the way that Mr. Coleridge-Taylor had yesterday as he pioneered chorus and orchestra through a difficult performance.'¹³⁰

As usual, Coleridge-Taylor's increasingly busy schedule forced him to rush for a train back to London almost immediately after the performance. The *Sheffield Daily Independent* reported that he was 'immensely pleased, and had never been more delighted with the rendering of any of his compositions. 'Say what you will in the way of eulogy', added Mr. Coleridge-Taylor, as he left for the railway station, 'and I will endorse it'.¹³¹

¹³⁰ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 4 Oct. 1902, 10.

¹³¹ *Sheffield Daily Independent*, 4 Oct. 1902, 7.

Chapter 4

The Choral Reef (2): from disaster to salvage

From the latter end of 1902 through to the summer of 1903, Coleridge-Taylor was occupied with the composition of his first (and ultimately only) substantial religious choral work, *The Atonement*, which although given the epithet ‘sacred cantata’ is effectively an attempt at a passion story. Alice Parsons, born in Cheltenham¹ in 1872, created the libretto, and the composer also set a couple of her short poems the year after *The Atonement* (*Love’s Questionings* and *Eulalie*). Alice was a member of the Three Choirs, and wife of the journalist Francis L. C. Parsons², who alongside Joe Bennett (a Liberal journalist) and his brother Harry Bennett, had bought the *Gloucestershire Echo* and *The Chronicle* from General Wilson in 1894 for the sum of £700, later to sell out to a conservative group on 1 January 1912 for £17,500.³

A journal article of the time, in a lengthy discussion concerning the second English performance of Coleridge-Taylor’s work (Royal Choral Society, Royal Albert Hall, Ash Wednesday, 17 February 1904; soloists: Maggie Purvis, Louise Kirkby-Lunn, Mme. Sobrino, William Green and Andrew Black) suggested that:

when the idea of the sublime story first entered his mind he wrote to his librettist, and told her that he wanted something absolutely different from anything that had ever been written before, and therefore he suggested to her scenes in a kind of Eastern style, he himself writing the music to it rather from its pictorial than from its spiritual side. He has tried to illustrate incidents in the story of the Redeemer, and his hearers can evolve the spiritual for themselves as they listen to the harmonious strains.....

In the *Atonement* Mr. Coleridge-Taylor has not attempted any realistic Eastern music, being of opinion that the absolutely correct would be hopelessly out of place in such a composition. He has confined himself entirely to his own imagination of what Eastern music might be; for,

¹ *1901 Census*.

² *Ibid.* See also Ward Rolls, Cheltenham Reference Library.

³ *Gloucestershire Echo Archives*.

says he, 'how can the cultivated Western mind appreciate that which is absolutely uncultivated?'"⁴

It is uncertain whether or not Coleridge-Taylor worked in conjunction with Alice Parsons, but there is unequivocal evidence that the composer maintained clear intentions regarding his setting of the work, as a letter to Reginald Buckley, who was preparing to annotate the work, reveals:

I am sure you will do the notes on my work better without my interference!
I have written the music on no accepted religious lines, and have merely tried to put musical life to my libretto.
I am told my treatment of Christ's part is different to the usually undramatic setting. This is of course intentional, for I, personally, cannot imagine Christ, when on earth, to have been minus dramatic life.
Personally speaking I have used "motif", though not rigidly; in fact, I have tried to portray the scenes as naturally as I possibly could, without regard for any preconceived notion as to how such a work should be set.
If I have failed, it is not through want of good and reverent intention.⁵

The work was written for the Three Choirs Festival of 1903 (celebrating its one hundred and eighteenth meeting). Coleridge-Taylor had contributed to the festival for four years in a row since his fortuitous introduction by Elgar in 1898⁶ that had resulted in the commissioning of the *Ballade in A minor* (Gloucester 1898). Three of these further commissions were orchestral works - *Solemn Prelude* (Worcester 1899), *The Soul's Expression* (Hereford 1900) and *Idyll* (Gloucester 1901) - but the *Atonement* was the composer's first large-scale choral work for the Three Choirs, receiving its first performance at Hereford cathedral on the morning of 9 September. Criticism was varied, but the reception by Jaeger and Elgar, following the trend of their growing disenchantment with Coleridge-Taylor's work, was disastrous; at the conclusion of a long letter to Elgar, Jaeger remarked, 'poor Taylor! And yet Maitland

⁴ Raymond Blathwayt, 'Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's New Oratorio', *The Quiver* (n.d.), 353 – 358.

⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Mr. Buckley, 12 Aug. [1903], *US-BEm MSS72/165*

⁶ See letter (Chapter 6) from Elgar to Jaeger in which he explains that 'I have been asked to furnish a short orchl work for Gloucester Festival Concert and have refused as I have enough to do but I have strongly urged them to make the offer (alas! an honorary one!) to Coleridge-Taylor'. *GB-EBm L8307*.

& Thompson (Herbert) praise it muchly. Heavens! Where are critics with taste?’⁷

Elgar replied to Jaeger’s correspondence the following day, and noted vertically along the left-hand margin of his response that: ‘Taylor’s work was a disgrace to any civilised country: the utter want of education is the curse of this chap. The clergy condemn it as blasphemous.’⁸

The ‘condemnation’ to which Elgar referred was in relation to the setting of the librettist’s own words for Jesus, rather than the usual employment of the exact words from the Holy Bible attributable to Jesus in such sacred works, without any degree of invention or ornamentation. Elgar himself devised the libretto of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, but Jesus still narrates directly from the Bible in these works. (‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ , *The Apostles*. II. – By The Wayside).⁹ However, in the same unconventional manner that Berlioz omits liturgical text in his three-part oratorio *L’Enfance du Christ* (1854), the *Atonement*’s librettist also had no qualms about breaking this tradition, following the precedence of Beethoven’s oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (1803). Although the first English performance of Beethoven’s oratorio had been successful, ‘from the outset *The Mount of Olives* met with disapproval and suffered cuts and adaptations’.¹⁰

The primary objection was that in *The Mount of Olives* Christ is introduced as a person with a singing role, as a character of the drama. The English public considered it an unpardonable impropriety that not only was the Saviour included among the dramatis personae but that Christ also expressed the agony of his death in extended monologues and that he even engaged in a duet with an angel.¹¹

Judas does not figure in the piece at all (as he does for example in Elgar’s *The Apostles*) and, instead, six dramatis personae were chosen, two of which lay well

⁷ Letter from Jaeger to Elgar, 16 Sept. 1903, *GB-EBm L8665*

⁸ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 17 Sept. 1903, *GB-EBm L8615*

⁹ King James Holy Bible, *Matthew 5:3*, The Beatitudes.

¹⁰ Barbara Mohn, ‘Personifying the Saviour? English Oratorio and the Representation of the Words of Christ’, *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies Vol. 1*, (Aldershot, 1999), 228.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 228-9.

outside the norm of the Passion narrative, consisting of Christ (baritone), Pontius Pilate (tenor), an additional part of Pilate's wife (soprano), Mary the Mother of Christ (soprano), her sister Mary the wife of Clopas¹² (mezzo-soprano) and Mary Magdalene (contralto), with the chorus taking on the role of narrator. The soloists for the Hereford performance were Marie Albani (Lajeunesse), who realised both soprano characters, Muriel Foster, Emily Squire, William Green and the Scotsman Andrew Black, who took the part of the Saviour.

The composer broke convention once more in this religious choral work by incorporating a 'love duet', 'Ye Mighty Gods of Ancient Rome', between Pilate and his wife¹³; this was included at the first performance, but withdrawn before publication of the work, along with Pilate's preceding number, 'Breath of my Life'. Given their general irrelevance to the narrative, Coleridge Taylor was wise to effect their excision. He expressed his confidence in the revised work after the Royal Choral Society's performance, in a letter written to Kilburn the following day, which also cast aspersions about the integrity of Novello, who had published the 'sacred cantata' the previous year:

I am writing specially about the "Atonement".
 We had a magnificent performance last night at the Albert Hall. Choir, Band and Soloists covered themselves with glory.
 I was recalled twice after the first part and three times after the end.
 I mention this not for the sake of it, but because I always had great faith in the work in spite of the dishonest newspaper criticism, many of which I found out were written in the neighbourhood of 1 Berners Street* a fortnight before the Hereford performance!
 So you can tell how pleased I was last night to feel that the people who were performing it were making it live, and that the usually dull West End London audiences remained to the very end to hear music which has none of the tuneful attractions of "Hiawatha".
 I do hope you'll try and do it at Sunderland or Middlesbro' – it isn't terribly difficult and the band has no extra instruments!¹⁴

¹² Notated as 'Cleophas' on the score (*Atonement*, V. – Calvary, b.283); 'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (King James Holy Bible, *John 19:25*)

¹³ See MS dated 8 Aug. 1903, *GB-Lcm 4871*.

* Novello moved to No. 1 Berners Street in 1867, remaining there until relocating to 160 Wardour Street in 1906.

¹⁴ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 18 Feb. 1904, *Gb-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

The work is set in five sections (outlined in *Table 1* below), with a 'Final Chorus' (soli and chorus) for the concluding 75 bars of the last section.

Table 1: The Atonement

| Section | Length (bars) | Solo/Chorus/Orchestra | Title |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| I PRELUDE | 168 | Orchestral | ----- |
| II GETHSEMANE | 546 | Orch Intro (30 bars) (i)... Chorus (ii)... Baritone Short orch. interlude (iii)... Chorus (iv)...Baritone (v) ...Chorus Orchestral March (vi)... Baritone (vii) ...Chorus (viii).. Baritone (ix) ...Chorus (x)....Baritone (xi)...Chorus | <i>In the soft moonlight glow Father! the last dread hour</i> ----- <i>Lo! through the gathering gloom Could ye not watch one hour Listen! a murmur of voices</i> ----- <i>Whom seek ye? Jesus of Nazareth! Lo! I am He Away with Him! O little flock But the disciples</i> |
| III PRAYER OF THE HOLY WOMEN AND APOSTLES | 239 | 8- part Chorus (SSAATTBB) | <i>Father Omnipotent</i> |
| IV PONTIUS PILATE | 466 | Orch Intro (25 bars) (i).....Chorus (ii).....Tenor (iii).....Chorus (iv).....Tenor (v).....Chorus (vi).....Soprano (PW) (vii).....Tenor (viii)....Chorus (ix).....Tenor (x).....Chorus | ----- <i>The night is past Upon what accusation He is a traitor I meddle not with your faith Let Him be crucified! O Pilate! hear my voice Shall I crucify your King? We have no King but Caesar Hypocrites! Wolves! Now lead they Jesus forth</i> |
| V CALVARY | 631 | Orch Intro (21 bars) (i)...Chorus (Female) (ii)....Baritone (iii)...Chorus (iv)...Chorus (Female) (v)...Soprano (MMC) (vi)...Contralto (vii)...Mezzo-soprano (viii)..Trio (3 Marys) (ix)...Chorus (x)....Baritone (xi)...Chorus (xii)...Baritone (xiii)..Soli and Chorus | ----- <i>Through the gateway of the city Women, weep not Behold the Cross At the Cross their vigil keeping Son of mine Friend of Sinners Master! Master! I am praying Son of Man, & Friend of Sinners Lo! at the sixth hour My God! My God! He calleth Elias Father! into thy hands It is finished</i> |

The sizeable orchestral prelude (which tends to sink into repetitive formulas almost from the outset, in contradistinction to the *Solemn Prelude*, similar in genre) sets out, as expected, themes and ideas that appear later on in the work at some stage, although they do not emerge in the order that they are initially laid out. Section II, in the garden of Gethsemane, is cast in a narrative mould, albeit without the Evangelist:

Music example 1: Atonement, II Gethsemane, 'Listen, a murmur of voices', bb. 282–7

382 [Allegro]
Soprano *mp*
A sound of num - erous foot steps!

Alto *mp*
A sound of num - erous foot steps!

CHORUS
Tenor *mp*
Listen, listen, listen! a murmur of voices.

Bass *mp*
Listen, listen, listen! a murmur of voices.

p *pp*

The chorus then suddenly changes in dramatic character (see *Music Examples 2* and *3* below) from narrative to *tourba*, taking on the role of a crowd (in the manner of a Passion):

Music example 2: Atonement, II Gethsemane, 'Jesus of Nazareth', bb. 351 – 62

Allegro
Baritone Solo. CHRIST.

351 *f* *b*

Whom seek ye? whom seek ye?

Je-sus of Na-zar-eth! Je-sus of
Je-sus of Na-zar-eth! Je-sus of
Je-sus of Na-zar-eth! Je-sus of
Je-sus of Na-zar-eth! Je-sus of

CHORUS

fp *f*

358

Na-zar-eth! the Ga-li-le-an! the Ga-li-le-an! Je-sus of Na-zar-eth!
Na-zar-eth! the Ga-li-le-an! the Ga-li-le-an! Je-sus of Na-zar-eth!
Na-zar-eth! the Ga-li-le-an! the Ga-li-le-an! Je-sus of Na-zar-eth!
Na-zar-eth! the Ga-li-le-an! the Ga-li-le-an! Je-sus of Na-zar-eth!

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features a Baritone Solo for Christ and a Chorus. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 351-357) includes a Baritone Solo part and a Chorus part. The Baritone Solo part begins with a forte dynamic and a key signature change to two flats. The Chorus part enters with a piano dynamic. The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with a forte dynamic. The second system (measures 358-362) continues the vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment includes a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Music example 3: *Atonement, II Gethsemane, 'Blasphemer', bb. 388 – 95.*

Poco più mosso

388 *f* Dai - ly in yon - der Tem - ple have I taught. *ff*

Tenor *ff* Blas - phem - er!

Bass *ff* Blas - phem - er!

pp *mf*

392 Dai - ly I paced your cities crowd - ed ways. *ff*

ff Blas - phem - er!

ff Blas - phem - er!

pp *mf*

The 'words of Christ', so many of which were freely invented, adapted and extended upon throughout the work by the librettist, are also interwoven with literal quotations and paraphrases from the Bible.

Section III presents a uniform hymn setting of a reflective prayer (without the involvement of the congregation), mainly based upon the Evening Collect.¹⁵ The choral writing in this section is singularly monochrome; Coleridge-Taylor fails to lift it out of the totally banal, and the chorus here seems to have inhibited his rhythmical

¹⁵ *Morning Prayer & Evening Prayer, from the Alternative Service Book 1980, 70:-*

'Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray; and in your mercy defend us from all perils and danger of this night; for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ'.

and structural imagination. Although more than capable of thinking polyphonically, Coleridge Taylor reveals his inability to probe beyond the reflective surface and the result is consequently prosaic, uniformly dull and utterly ineffective.

The orchestra sets the scene of the next section with a March, as Jesus' trial convenes; however, problems start again when the chorus enters, since the choral writing is once again pedestrian, with no hint of tension or conflict (cf. the same moment in Elgar's *The Apostles* and its reminiscence in *The Kingdom*), and the lack of dramatic impact and momentum (which, engendered by rapid exchange of chorus and soloist, is exploited with real effect by Bach and his baroque contemporaries) is disappointing. This uniform and limited concept of the chorus seems extraordinarily restrained, and is relentless through to the closing stages of the final and longest portion of the work:

Music example 4: Atonement, V Calvary, 'It is finished', bb. 557 -562

557

MARY I and Soprano *f* It is fin-ish'd! He hath tri-umph'd! It is

MARY II & III and Contralto *f* It is fin-ish'd! He hath tri-umph'd! It is

PILATE and Tenor *f* It is fin-ish'd! He hath tri-umph'd! It is

Bass *f* It is fin-ish'd! He hath tri-umph'd! It is

pesante *f* It is fin-ish'd! He hath tri-umph'd! It is

SOLI & CHORUS

561 **L'istesso tempo**

fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd! It is fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd!

fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd! It is fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd!

fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd! It is fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd!

fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd! It is fin- ish'd! He hath tri- umph'd!

sf *sf* *sf* *sf*

Coleridge-Taylor was fundamentally unable to build up a dramatic matrix in his one and only religious choral essay, and the *Atonement* failed to make any impact in England because people were quickly wearied by its material and undramatic demeanour, rather than were offended by the contentious issue of 'blasphemy' that led Elgar to denounce it. There is no sense of conflict or internalised drama (as is for example manifested in Elgar's unconventional exploration of the character of Judas in *The Apostles* or Mary in 'The sun goeth down' in *The Kingdom*), no crisis from which there issues any denouement, no feeling of inexorable forward motion (essential to dramatic depiction), no impassioned musical structure in what is essentially a dramatic story, nor is there any real awareness of the *topos* of the Passion genre, where soloists and chorus closely interact, often with a rapid rate of interplay and contrast of sentiment. Much of the blame must be laid at the door of his librettist, not only for the doggerel of her words and the effete nature of her poetic sentiment, but

for the lack of insight in terms of dramatic and reflective intercourse, germane to the epic passion structure. In agreeing to set the text, Coleridge-Taylor was undoubtedly culpable in his lack of judgment, but it is questionable whether he possessed the necessary instinct for this kind of form. For example, at the point of greatest dramatic tension and greatest suffering, where Christ asks ‘My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?’¹⁶, Coleridge-Taylor can only offer a relatively tame gesture, supported by harmonic progressions devoid of that vital dissonance and chromatic ‘angularity’ required to portray Christ’s sense of isolation and physical agony. (A study of the ‘Angel of the Agony’ in *The Dream of Gerontius* might well have been a useful lesson, or of ‘Golgotha’ in *The Apostles*):

Music example 5: Atonement, V Calvary, ‘My God! My God!’, bb. 494–508.

494 **Molto moderato**
Bantone solo. CHRIST *f*

My God! My God! Why hast Thou for-

499 *piti espress.* *accel.* *rall.*

sak - en Me? My God! My God! Why hast Thou for - sak - en me?

pp *accel.* *rall.*

¹⁶ *Matthew 27:46*

504 RECIT.

Why hast Thou for - sak - en Me? My God! Why hast Thou for - sak - en Me?

pp

The *Atonement* had its first U.S. hearing at the wealthy St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in New York on 24 February 1904, with a sixty-piece orchestra, two organs, and a chorus of one hundred and fifty, presented as part of a service which opened with a congregational hymn and chorale, and closed with a short collect and prayer. It was during the latter part of this year that the Coleridge-Taylor Society's efforts to bring the composer to America to conduct the *Hiawatha* trilogy finally came to fruition. Since the beginning of 1902 the Society had been assiduously enlisting the help of various musical organisations in their 'efforts to organize a chorus of 200 voices to sing HIAWATHA....The chorus not only needs all the good voices that you can send but the active cooperation and interest of all your members....The rehearsals are held every Tuesday evening in the Sunday School room of the Lincoln Memorial Temple'.¹⁷ Their effusive approach by correspondence in the summer of 1903 invited Coleridge-Taylor to:

visit Washington and personally conduct one or more presentations of your immortal "Hiawatha". You have already been informed by our Treasurer, Mr. Hilyer, of the high compliments paid by the American press to the excellence of your work..... Suffice it to say, the state of the public mind is such that your coming to this city, and indeed to America generally, would be greeted by an unprecedented outpouring of the people, and would mark an epoch in the history of music in America.

The S.C.T.C.S. was born of love for your work; was christened in your honour, and for two years has studied your masterpiece inspired by the hope that you would sooner or later come to America and personally conduct its presentation. Should you visit us, we can assure you of a thoroughly competent chorus of no less than 200 voices, all in love with "Hiawatha" and its

¹⁷ Letter from A. Gray (Secretary of 'The S. Coleridge Taylor Choral Society') to various musical organisations, 5 Feb. 1902, *US-Whu*.

creator. Your coming will be a great boon to music, and will afford you an opportunity to be introduced to the great American public who are rapidly awaking to the fact that a new star has appeared in the firmament of the world's immortals.¹⁸

This was a propitious moment for Andrew Hilyer, with whom Coleridge-Taylor had corresponded since 1901, to introduce the composer to a foundation work in the literature of black protest, W.E.B. DuBois' collection of essays, newly published together under the title *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay, who moved to the U.S. in the year of Coleridge-Taylor's death, described in his autobiography the impact the work had on his life avowing that 'the book shook me like an earthquake. Dr. DuBois stands on a pedestal illuminated in my mind. And the light that shines there comes from my first reading of *The Souls of Black Folk*.'¹⁹ Coleridge-Taylor's declaration (rather tame by comparison) a decade earlier, in his letter of thanks to Hilyer, proclaiming the publication to be 'about the finest book I have ever read by a coloured man, and one of the best by any author, white or black',²⁰ is often quoted. Nonetheless, it is necessary to be cognisant of his wife's claims that in fact 'he read all manner of things, and with a boyish enthusiasm was always ready to proclaim the latest thing, 'the finest book he had ever read'.'²¹ He was to speak equally effusively about the man who represented the opposite of DuBois' more militant approach of opposing slavery, Booker T. Washington (whose autobiography *Up from Slavery* had been published in 1901), in his correspondence with F. G. Edwards at the *Musical Times*:

Since seeing you, I met an American friend, who is very keen on getting a word in your article by Booker Washington, who as you know, is the best-known man in America after

¹⁸ Letter from Arthur Gray to Coleridge-Taylor, 1 June 1903, Andrew Hilyer Papers, *US-Whu*.

¹⁹ Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (London, 1985), 110.

²⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Hilyer, 3 Jan. 1904.

²¹ E.M.G. Reed, 'Interview with Mrs. Coleridge-Taylor', *Music Student* (Jul. 1917), 320.

Roosevelt, & the most distinguished coloured man living. I send you some of his remarks which have just appeared at Warrington where I adjudicated last week. Perhaps something could be cut to put in this, as in America his words carry so much weight – whatever he talks about!!²²

Each section of *The Souls of Black Folk* opens with a short verse and a musical phrase; DuBois explains in the final essay, ‘Sorrow Songs’, “they that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days – Sorrow Songs – for they were weary at heart. And so before each thought that I have written in this book I have set a phrase, a haunting echo of these weird old songs in which the soul of the black slave spoke to men.”²³ The impression this made on Coleridge-Taylor may have prompted him with the notion of naming the selection of poems by Christina Rossetti that he had recently set, *Six Sorrow Songs*. Coleridge-Taylor accompanied Marie Brema for the first performance, at Croydon Public Hall on 18 May 1904, and the contralto singer Ada Crossley in her rendering of three of these numbers at St. James’ Hall the following month (2 June 1904);²⁴ the work is dedicated to his wife, who noted that on the occasion ‘the “Sorrow Songs” (which were new to the public [*sic*]) were received with much applause, singer and composer being recalled again and again.’²⁵ She poignantly adds ‘My seat was next to a young couple, who were very interested throughout the songs and clapped most excitedly, and I was intensely amused when the lady exclaimed, “What a killing little Nigger!” Mdme. Crossley enjoyed that part very much, and hoped I could appreciate the compliment!’²⁶

²² Coleridge-Taylor to F. G. Edwards (17 Feb. 1909), *GB-Lbl ADD41570*.

²³ W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1st pub. Chicago 1903), 1994 edition (London), 155.

²⁴ ‘London & Suburban Concerts, *Musical Times* (1 Jul. 1904), 466.

²⁵ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/3), 35.

²⁶ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 35-36.

The Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society had hoped that the composer's forthcoming visit, for which they would arrange a musical festival, could be scheduled for the following March or April, whilst also concurring, if necessary, to 'gladly subordinate our wishes to your own convenience.'²⁷ This proved to be the case, as Coleridge-Taylor's continual procrastination ('owing to the very great demands for his services') led to a much later arrival date in November. (Refer to Appendix 2, Vol. 2, for an itinerary of Coleridge-Taylor's American tour dates during 1904, 1906 and 1910).

The invitation to compose a new work for the Washington Festival brought about Coleridge-Taylor's principal choral creation of 1904, *Choral Ballads*, which he appropriately dedicated to the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society. Originally bearing the title *Songs of Slavery*, the work consisted of five settings from Longfellow's *Poems of Slavery* ('written at sea'²⁸ in 1842): 'Beside the Ungathered Rice He Lay' (The Slave's Dream), 'She Dwells by the Great Kenhawa's Side' (The Good Part, That shall not be Taken Away), 'Loud He Sang the Psalm of David' (The Slave Singing at Midnight), 'The Quadroon Girl' and 'In Dark Fens of Dismal Swamp' (The Slave in the Dismal Swamp). Only the first three of these were written for, and presented at, the Washington concert, which took place on Thursday 17 November in the Convention Hall. The programme also featured the *Hiawatha* overture, a song 'Beat, beat drums' from Coleridge-Taylor's *Six American Lyrics*, various portions of his *Four African Dances* and *Hiawatha's* 'farewell' from *Hiawatha's Departure*, in addition to Arthur Sullivan's 'O Gladsome Light' (*The Golden Legend*). The complete group of *Five Choral Ballads* was not performed until

²⁷ Letter from Arthur Gray to Coleridge-Taylor, 1 Jun. 1903.

²⁸ *The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (London), 28

the following year (Wednesday 25 October 1905), as part of the Norwich Festival, sharing the first half of the programme with Frederick Bridge's overture *Morte d'Arthur*; Mackenzie's ballad for orchestra, *La Belle Dame sans Merci* formed the second half. Although numbers 1, 2 and 3 were dedicated to the Coleridge-Taylor Society (leaving a remaining two new numbers to make up the *Five Choral Ballads* of the Norwich Festival), the Festival Programme notes that 'numbers 2, 4 and 5 are expressly composed for and dedicated to the Norwich Festival Chorus'²⁹, and Coleridge-Taylor's correspondence with Kilburn a month earlier refers to *three* new numbers, asking:

Have you seen the whole set of my Choral Ballads yet? There are three entirely new numbers to be done at Norwich – one for Female Voices [The Quadroon Girl, with Andrew Black taking the baritone solo], which is a great favourite there. I wish you could do No.1 and the one for Female Voices at one of your concerts in Sunderland, Middlesbro' or Bishop Auckland!!³⁰

This discrepancy surrounding the apportioning of ballad number 2 is clarified in a note at the end of the Programme, which explains that Coleridge-Taylor 'has published two entirely different settings of the second Ballad – that sung today and another in A (written earlier), for S.A.T.B.'³¹

The *Choral-Ballads* Op. 54 were, as the title page clearly states, intended to be a series or suite of orchestral part-songs, a genre steadily growing in popularity. Examples of this had already been seen in Elgar's *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, and Delius was to produce an epic series of partsongs and solo numbers in his *Songs of Sunset* (1908). Simple in structure, but highly visual in their orchestral

²⁹ *Norfolk & Norwich Musical Festival Programmes 1905*, n.p.n. Norfolk Heritage Centre.

³⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Nicholas Kilburn, 13 Sept. 1905, *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

³¹ *Norfolk & Norwich Musical Festival Programmes 1905*, n.p.n.

guise, they were undoubtedly directed at a more popular market, one that had already taken to their hearts Stanford's choral ballads *Revenge*, *Battle of the Baltic* and *Phaudrig Crohoore* and the narrative structures of Coleridge-Taylor's own *Hiawatha* trilogy. Highly melodic, and exotic in their subject matter (the sweltering swampland of the southern states of the US), the indignities of slavery are expressed in choral material that has a modal-melodic and rhythmical resonance with negro spirituals, though of course the dominating harmonic fabric of the material is late nineteenth-century through and through. Perhaps most telling are the *a cappella* sections, especially in No. 2 ('She dwells by great Kenhawa's side') which has a strong affinity with those sounds of the plantation negroes, the very negroes that inspired Delius in *Appalachia* with their 'improvised' and ever-changing harmonies supporting repetitive melody. This is also a powerful impression on the opening strains of 'The Quadroon Girl' with its chromatic inner parts. Such sounds would clearly have resonated powerfully with the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society in Washington whose essence and cultural 'consensus' is enshrined in its pages.

KUBLA KHAN

Coleridge-Taylor arrived back in Britain after his American visit on Christmas Eve. During the course of the following year, 1905, two works for piano were published (*Twenty Four Negro Melodies* op. 59 no.1; *Two Oriental Valses* op. 19 no. 1) and Coleridge-Taylor began work on the incidental music for *Nero* (in Chapter 3) and the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air* Op. 63; a church anthem ('What Thou hast given me, Lord here I tender') was issued, in addition to *Three Partsongs* (op. 67) and several short solo songs. One of these songs, 'Genevieve', was a setting of a sonnet of the same title by the composer's namesake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (written

sometime between 1797 –90), and the composer turned again to this poet for his main choral work of 1905, the cantata *Kubla Khan*. One of the factors in the bard's inspiration surrounding Kubla Khan was provided by an English clergyman and compiler of travel literature, Samuel Purchas (1577 – 1626), whose publication "Purchase His Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and the religions observed in all ages and places discovered from the Creation unto this present" (1613) mirrored England's increasing preoccupation with exploration. An account (believed by many to be spurious) of the genesis of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan, or a Vision in a Dream* is related by the poet in the preface to the 1816 publication of 'the fragment of Kubla Khan':

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then ill in health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton..... In consequence of a slight disposition, an anodyne [opium] had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, in "Purchase's Pilgrimage". 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall'. [Purchase's actual words read 'In Xamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant springs, delightfull Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place.³²] The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines..... On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distant recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purpose of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast.....Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him.³³

"In a moment of rash optimism a notable scholar once began an essay by declaring that 'We now know almost everything about Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* except what the

³² Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (London, 1613), 472.

³³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel; Kubla Khan, a vision; The Pains of Sleep* (London, 1816), 51 – 54.

poem is about'. The truth of the matter, however, is that we know almost nothing conclusive about *Kubla Khan*, including what it is about."³⁴

The very essence of this poem, which commences with the immediate introduction of Kubla Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan and a ruler of the biggest land empire in human history, the Mongol Empire, in the late 1200s, is based on a sense of the exotic, ambiguous, enigmatic and mysterious. The possibility that "no single interpretation of 'Kubla Khan' has ever wholly satisfied anyone except the person who proposed it"³⁵ is not surprising, but controversy also surrounds copious other aspects of the work, including its genesis (opium or non-opium induced) and structure (fragment, as indicated in Coleridge's preface, or entire poem). Musical compositions based on the work are few and far between; the American impressionist composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884 – 1920) set the poem in the year of Coleridge-Taylor's death, originally scoring it for piano solo and later expanding it into a tone poem for piano, voice, chamber ensemble and orchestra, *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* (1917), and Granville Bantock produced *Kubla Khan* for unaccompanied male voices in 1912.

The Handel Society, at the Queen's Hall on 23 May 1906, aired Coleridge-Taylor's cantata, subtitled 'A Rhapsody for Contralto Solo, Chorus and Orchestra'. The smattering of other performances included one 'shortly afterwards at the Scarborough Festival'³⁶, and a rendition in Croydon's Public Hall by the Central Croydon Choral Society, conducted by Coleridge-Taylor on 19 January 1907 (Part I: Coleridge-Taylor's *Kubla Khan* and *Choral Ballads*; Part II: Entr'acte No.1 from

³⁴ John Spencer Hall, *A Coleridge Companion* (London, 1983), 61.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 97

³⁶ W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 182.

Nero, and Stanford's *Revenge*).³⁷ There was a first presentation in the U.S. by the New York Choral Society, Brooklyn, the same year (14 May 1907), and the Woking Musical Society performed it four years later (17 January 1911).

Coleridge-Taylor was not initially self-motivated to explore the idea of setting the work; several publications suggest that it was the poet's great-nephew Ernest Hartley Coleridge (1846 – 1920), during a teatime meeting early on in the year, who persuaded Coleridge-Taylor to use *Kubla Khan* as the basis of a choral work.³⁸ In truth Coleridge-Taylor had not been immediately attracted to Taylor-Coleridge's work, as he had been for example to Longfellow's or Rossetti's, but *Kubla Khan*, with its aura of exoticism and obscurity seemed to communicate more congenial possibilities and a fresh understanding of the poet's language, one which later provoked him to set two more short sonnets by the poet in subsequent years ('Encinctured with a Twine of Leaves' and 'The Pixies', 1908).

The piece begins with a majestic orchestral opening, one of the composer's most expansive, and presents thematic material at its opening that shows characteristic influences of Grieg (especially *Peer Gynt*) and the organic bent of Brahms:

³⁷ Central Croydon Choral Society Programme, *GB-BCa*.

³⁸ Berwick Sayers, 181; Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 61; Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man: The Life and Work of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (Aldershot, 1995), 171-2.

Music example 6: *Kubla Khan*, bb. 1-2 and 9-12

Moderato

The image displays two excerpts of musical notation. The first excerpt, labeled 'Moderato', consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) for measures 1 and 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The first measure of the first staff has a fermata over it. The dynamic marking 'pp' is present. The second excerpt, starting at measure 9, is on a single treble clef staff. It features a melodic line with a fermata over the first measure and an accent (^) over the final note of the fourth measure.

Indeed the entire conception of *Kubla Khan*, though entitled a 'Rhapsody', is one of symphonic cohesion in which the substantial orchestral prelude is effectively a microcosm of the larger scheme (see Figure 1 below). Moreover, the opening progression (bars 1-2) contains within itself a motivic germ that is subtly 'composed out' over the work's entire expanse. G major forms the essential framework, E minor an important secondary tonal level (which interacts with its third-related C major), and B major (which vies with its third-related E flat) as a tertiary level. The opening theme (bars 9-12) of course brings to the fore the composer's favourite melodic and harmonic I-vi-I thumbprint, but in this context such a motif has greater motivic significance as a seminal, generative germ to the whole work. Coleridge-Taylor's symphonic bent develops the opening melody *in extenso* and the passing modulation to E flat (bar 20) marks out this key as an important tonal area for later reference. The return to G major in b. 30 and further statements of the key at bb. 172 and 224 provide the pillars of a rondo form, a plan which is played out in the larger structural scheme of the work in its entirety. Important tonal and thematic material is stated at b. 44 in E

minor, articulated by a shift of tempo to '*Allegro agitato*.' From here the tonality moves to C major for another important thematic departure (bar 56):

Music example 7: Kubla Khan, bb. 56-62

This thematic strand is however only preludial to what is the central theme of the work at bar 91, a similar 'pseudo-African tune' as in the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*) presented with a double tonic (C/Am).

Music Example 8: Kubla Khan, bb. 92-99

A symphonic exposition of this broad, 'exotic' melody across almost 80 bars of music leads eventually to the return of the rondo theme at b. 172. A further episode continues to develop the I-vi-I motive and to explore the strategic keys of B and C before a final return to G (b. 224) and a recapitulation of the opening 'cell' (b. 243).

Figure 1: Kubla Khan, Prelude

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--------------------|--|----------|------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----|--|
| Key: | G | E^b | G | (B) | Em | C | C | Am | Em | C | G | B, C | G | | |
| Bar: | 1 | 9 | 20 | 30 | 43 | 44 | 56 | 88 | 92 | 98 | 112 | 124 | 172 | 192 | 224 |
| | Main cell G/Em. | 1 st main theme (Rondo) | | | End of section (V of E) | New theme | sub. theme | | 2 nd main theme. | | | | Developmental (Rondo) section. | | Return of the 1 st theme. (Rondo) |

Music Example

Music Example



The poem is set in its entirety, with some alteration and modification. In the first chorus the parent cell (I-vi-I) and first main thematic idea is 'articulated' by Coleridge's famous text 'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree.' This chorus forms the first of several statements of this idea as a more protracted rondo. (Further statements of this rondo theme occur strategically at b. 271, b. 426, and b. 531.) Constituting the episodic material of the rondo, the theme of b. 44 of the prelude is reintroduced at b. 112, now in B minor, by the solo contralto. Much expanded, this leads to the further 'subsidiary' thematic strand of b. 56 (formerly in C), stated in B major (a chronological process which conforms with the prelude). B major then yields to its third-related E flat (a tonality with which it is closely associated) at b. 233 before G and the rondo theme return in b. 271. Central, however, to the rondo structure (and again analogous to the prelude) is the second main thematic idea ('The shadow of the dome of pleasure'), 'textualised' by the contralto at b. 305. Presented in the prelude as a 'double tonic' of C major and A minor, it is here introduced, as a 'composing out' of the parent cell, as G major and E minor, a relationship of which the composer reminds us in b. 426. This major secondary theme, in various transformations, forms the basis of the last major episode of the work which is tonally underpinned once again by B major and E flat major. It is here particularly, that, with the process of thematic transformation, the symphonic dimension of the work is intensified, and this symphonic ethos reaches a climax with the recapitulation of the rondo theme, itself transformed, but now also heard in conjunction with the secondary theme (see. b. 495), as if the composer is attempting to create an impression analogous with sonata (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Kubla Khan, No.2. Solo and Chorus. **Bold type** in 'TEXT' section = Coleridge-Taylor's repeated lines of the poem

| EPISODE | BAR NOS. | TEXT | TEXTURE | KEY | COMMENTARY |
|---|--------------|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| Theme 1 | 1 - 38 | <i>In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decree: Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea</i> | Solo & Chorus with Orchestra | G | Unison. 6/4. |
| Orchestral interlude | 39-44 | | Orchestra | G | |
| Theme 1 RONDO | 44 - 82 | In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decree: Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea. <i>So twice five miles of fertile ground With walls and towers were girded round: And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills, Where blossomed many an incense bearing tree; And here were forests ancient as the hills, Enfolding sunny spots of greenery Enfolding sunny spots of greenery</i> | Solo & Chorus with orchestra | G A F G | Coleridge-Taylor repeats the words of the first half of the stanza. Uses this repetition to change the theme from line 4 onwards (b. 53), modulating to A (b. 66). Slight word change from 'here' to 'there'. Reiterates sentence in 4/4, returning to G. |
| Orchestral passage | 82-112 | | Orchestra | G, b | b. 93 from 6/4 to 2/2; key change from G to b. |
| New section. New theme, previously stated in Prelude. | 112 - 208 | <i>But oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover! A savage place! A savage place! As holy and enchanted As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted By woman wailing for her demon-lover! And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething, As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing, A mighty fountain momentarily was forced: A mighty fountain momentarily was forced: Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail, Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail: And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever It flung up momentarily the sacred river</i> | Solo & orchestra | b | Previously heard in Prelude (b. 44) in e. Now features an extended stay on dominant of b. |
| Orchestral passage | 209- 214 | | Orchestra | F# | Repeated later in Eb. |
| Short new section. New theme, stated in Prelude at b. 56 | 214 - 263 | <i>Five miles meandering with a mazy motion Through wood and dale the sacred river ran, Then reached the caverns measureless to man, And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean: Five miles meandering with a mazy motion Through wood and dale the sacred river ran, Then reached the caverns measureless to man, And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean: And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far Ancestral voices prophesying war! prophesying war!</i> | Solo & orchestra Solo & Chorus with orchestra | B Eb | Key change via V7 of Eb |
| Orchestral passage | 263 - 272 | | Orchestra | Eb | Same material as previous orchestral passage- Eb. |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|---------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Theme 1 RONDO | 272 – 287 | In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decree: Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea. | Solo & Chorus with orchestra | G/e | Recapitulation of opening material, with repetition of 1 st 5 lines of poem. |
| Theme 2 | 288 – 305 | | Orchestra | D/b | b. 293 Theme from b.92 of the Prelude |
| Theme 2 & 3 | 305- 426 | <i>The shadow of the dome of pleasure</i> <i>Floated midway on the waves</i> (On the waves, on the waves) <i>Where was heard the mingled measure</i> From the fountain & the caves , From the fountain & the caves , <i>(From the fountain & the caves) ,</i> <i>It was a miracle of rare device,</i> <i>A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!</i> The shadow of the dome of pleasure Floated midway on the waves (On the waves, on the waves) Where was heard the mingled measure From the fountain & the caves, From the fountain & the caves, (From the fountain & the caves), It was a miracle of rare device, A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice! | Solo & orchestra (Chorus) | G/e G | 2 nd theme finally textualised by contralto. Expands on the lines of the poem in a long lyrical section, with another 'big tune'. Similar to <i>Hiawatha's Wedding</i> <i>Feast.</i> Chorus repeat and extend upon section |
| Orchestra, Theme 1 RONDO | 426 – 437 | | Orchestra | G, B | Change to B major at b.431 |
| Related tune to Theme 2. Develop - ment | 437 | <i>A damsel with a dulcimer, a damsel with a dulcimer,</i> <i>In a vision once I saw, in a vision once I saw,</i> (A damsel with a dulcimer, a damsel with a dulcimer, In a vision once I saw, in a vision once I saw), <i>It was an Abyssinian maid,</i> <i>And on her dulcimer she played</i> <i>Singing of Mount Abora, singing of Mount Abora.</i> (It was an Abyssinian maid, And on her dulcimer she played Singing of Mount Abora, singing of Mount Abora Singing of Mount Abora, singing of Mount Abora) | Solo & orchestra (Chorus) | B Eb | Continues with poem. Long development of theme. |
| Orchestral link | 486 – 495 | | Orchestra | Eb | Change of metre to 2/2 |
| Continu - ation of Theme 2 develop - ment | 496 – 516 | <i>Could I revive within me</i> <i>Her symphony and song</i> Could I revive within me Her symphony and song That symphony and song | Solo, Chorus & orchestra | Eb | Tune still developing. Reaches ultimate climax at b. 511. |
| " | 517 – 529 | <i>To such a deep delight 'twould win me,</i> | Solo, Chorus & orchestra | Db | Another version of 2 nd theme – transforming. Back to 3/2. |
| Themes 1 RONDO & 2. | 530 – 564 | <i>That with music loud and long,</i> <i>I would build that dome in air,</i> <i>That sunny dome! those caves of ice!</i> That sunny dome! those caves of ice! <i>And all who heard should see them there,</i> <i>And all should cry, Beware! Beware!</i> <i>His flashing eyes, his floating hair!</i> | Chorus | G | Opening material combined with 2 nd theme in augmentation. b. 547 change to 2/2 Climactic. |
| Coda | 565 – 582 | | Orchestra | G | |
| Opening material (develop - ment) | 583 – end | <i>Weave a circle round him thrice,</i> <i>And close your eyes with holy dread,</i> <i>For he on honey-dew hath fed,</i> <i>And drunk the milk of Paradise</i> And drunk the milk of Paradise And drunk the milk of Paradise | Chorus & orchestra | G | |

The poem of *Kubla Khan* clearly inspired Coleridge-Taylor to return to his symphonic instincts, and to conceive his setting, not as a narrative structure which had driven so many of his previous choral essays, but as a more instrumentally cohesive canvas in which both tonal and thematic material had greater integrational and interactive significance. These elements of the work are further highlighted by the augmented role of the orchestra which acts as the principal cement and vehicle of continuity. In this sense Coleridge-Taylor fell back on those symphonic lessons of his RCM training in which Brahmsian processes of organic cogency were thoroughly assimilated (on several architectonic levels) as were the stringencies of classical forms (such as rondo in this case), and a selective application of Wagner's concept of the orchestra. The composition of *Kubla Khan* therefore marked an emergence of Coleridge-Taylor's abilities as a choral composer from the wilderness of *The Atonement* in which the public undoubtedly witnessed a disastrous decline in his powers. Here, that former creative fertility returns with vigour and intellectual tautness.

Chapter 5

Thelma

I don't think I have any favourite piece, but I am a great admirer of the modern Italian. I think Puccini has done a great deal for modern music. But then, of course, my sympathies are all with the stage and opera.¹

Coleridge-Taylor's standpoint on the merits of operatic and 'absolute' music underwent a transformation during the decade between his letter to the *Croydon Advertiser* (1897) and his views on the same subject in 1907, recorded by his first biographer. The fact that Coleridge-Taylor embraced 'absolute' music in his early works is evinced in his chamber music and symphony. However, although he had always held the theatre in high esteem, the composer's love of the sheer vibrancy and dynamism of the stage was intensified through the series of incidental music scores that he wrote in the 1900s. Furthermore, the compositional procedures rehearsed therein provided a congruous and appropriate initiation into the operatic genre. Thoughts of writing an opera germinated in his mind for some considerable time. Berwick Sayers notes that Coleridge-Taylor made an early request of him to 'endeavour to provide him with the libretto of a grand opera. To write such an opera was one of his ardent desires'.² Possibly towards the end of 1907, certainly by the beginning of 1908, Coleridge-Taylor was able to relieve Berwick Sayers of this task, informing him 'with some glee that at last he had acquired an opera libretto that was worth setting and that appealed to him.'³

¹ Coleridge-Taylor, 1907. Cited in W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 99.

² *Ibid.*

³ Berwick Sayers, 214.

The subject he chose was something thoroughly European – a Norwegian Nordic theme. For all the emphasis placed on Coleridge-Taylor as the ‘African (or Black) Mahler’ known for his ‘exotic’ and African works, this opera, undoubtedly his biggest and most ambitious achievement, a work which he virtually exclusively poured all his hopes, energy and ideals into for two years, is decidedly Anglo-Saxon, therefore quintessentially asserting his English character rather than the African facet. This ‘national’ element of Coleridge-Taylor’s libretto is further reinforced by the context of other Saxon operas from the 1880s onwards. There were several preceding models: the Carl Rosa Company had produced Frederick Corder’s opera *Nordisa* (libretto by Corder) in 1887; Frederick Cowen’s ‘attempt to claim Nordic myth for the English musical theatre’⁴, *Thorgrim* (Joseph Bennett, after Icelandic saga *Viglund the Fair*) augmented the repertoire in 1890, the same year that Arthur Sullivan’s grand opera *Ivanhoe* (Julian Sturgis, after Sir Walter Scott) was written for the opening of D’Oyly Carte’s second theatre, the ‘English opera house’ in Cambridge Circus, and in 1895 Cowen’s opera *Harold, or The Norman Conquest* (E. Malet) was premièred at Covent Garden. Though unknown at the time, there was also Stanford’s unfinished Nordic opera, *The Miner of Falun* (1887-8), based on E. T. A. Hoffmann’s haunting story.⁵ And, of course, Elgar’s *Scenes from King Olaf*, based on Longfellow’s poem, had brought the young composer from Worcester to the fore in 1896 and had attempted to associate English nationalism with its supposed Nordic origins.

The early magnetism of the theatre for Coleridge-Taylor is aptly borne out in an anecdote that explains how:

⁴ John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1999), 252.

⁵ Stanford began this opera, probably for Rosa, but clearly decided to leave incomplete (after Act I), possibly after Cowen’s opera was produced on a similar geographical theme. See Dibble, Jeremy, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford, 2002), 198.

when Sir Charles' opera, *Shamus O'Brien*, was staged [premièred 2 March 1896, Opéra-Comique Theatre], the student resolved to go in spite of the fact that in those early days the expenditure of half-a-crown on a pit seat involved a distinct sacrifice. He was there in good time...and he waited patiently for the time when the doors would open, and for the still more distant moment when the opera would begin. He worked his way at last into the theatre and got his seat. Then the curtain went up. With a shock of consternation and horror he saw before his eyes the opening scene of *Charlie's Aunt!* [the farcical comedy, set in the 1800's, by the playwright Brandon Thomas (1850 – 1914) which premièred at the Theatre Royal, London in 1892, where it ran for over four years]. He had come to the wrong theatre, and had not only missed *Shamus* but had wasted his precious half-crown into the bargain! In his disgust at this double disappointment he got up and left the theatre without even waiting to follow the enterprising lady through her chequered career.⁶

There is precious little documentation about Coleridge-Taylor's opera (completed 15 March 1909) which is surrounded by a great deal of spurious reasoning, assumption and speculation, necessitated by the fact that apart from the composer himself and a handful of his contemporaries (Mr. Van Noorden, the director of the Carl Rosa Opera Company, who, after looking through it with Coleridge-Taylor, 'pronounced it to be utterly unsuitable for representation'⁷, other associates in the theatre from whom 'competent opinions were sought'⁸ and Herbert Antcliffe, who wrote a short paragraph about *Thelma* during the course of an article in the *Musical Quarterly*⁹) no-one else, until now, has glimpsed the finished product. Berwick Sayers was compelled to admit: 'I have not seen the libretto as a whole, and am not able to form an opinion of its constructional merits'.¹⁰ Coleridge-Taylor's daughter Avril, writing over half a century later, although recognising that 'his greatest disappointment was that *Thelma*, on which he worked for two years – from 1908 to 1910 [*sic*]– was rejected'¹¹, was only able to elucidate further (together with a few musical examples) about the Prelude: 'From this wreck of hopes was salvaged the

⁶ E.M.G. Reed, 'Interview with Mrs. Coleridge-Taylor', *Music Student*, 9 no.2 (Jul. 1917), 321.

⁷ Berwick Sayers, 220.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁹ H. Antcliffe, 'Some Notes on Coleridge-Taylor', *Musical Quarterly* VIII 2 (1922), 186.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹¹ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 75.

Prelude, which was played for the first time by the New London Symphony Orchestra in March 1910. The autograph score of the Prelude is now available...'¹² One of the more recent biographical sources remarks that 'the score is lost and the work was never produced'.¹³ Other publications are unable to do little more than mention the opera by name, and even the derivation of the title itself can be laid open to false supposition without the endorsement of concrete evidence.

Although Coleridge-Taylor originally considered naming his opera *The Amulet*,¹⁴ he later altered the title (as he had done with a small number of other works in the past) to *Thelma* and simultaneously changed the name of the main character of the work, Freda, to Thelma. The MS vocal score, which bears no title, details 'Freda' throughout; at this stage the opera was presumably called *The Amulet*. However, the exquisitely notated full score, although containing very little libretto, is clearly inscribed 'Thelma', and the name is accordingly replaced when indicating the soprano entries. A forerunner of the modern-day 'multi-tasker', the composer, whilst concentrating on scoring his works, invariably had a penchant for his wife to read out loud to him at the same time. Once Coleridge-Taylor had chosen a particular author or authoress, their entire corpus would then be narrated by Jessie 'one [book] after the other'.¹⁵ One authoress that he selected for this purpose was the remarkably successful romantic novelist Marie Corelli (the pseudonym of Mary Mackay, 1854 - 1924) who 'by her own definition...wrote three types of novel: religious novels, novels of the imagination, and novels with a purpose.'¹⁶ The many subjects that her books covered were diverse, including intoxicated fathers, atheism, religious hypocrisy, and, in

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man* (Aldershot, 1995), 193.

¹⁴ Berwick Sayers, 214

¹⁵ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/3), 42.

¹⁶ Rachel Anderson, *The Purple Heart Throbs: the sub-literature of love* (London, 1974), 151.

Thelma (1887), one of her earlier archetypal works about a Norwegian princess (the heroine was originally called *Thekla*) set in Norway and London, ‘the triumph of good over evil’.¹⁷ Such misinformed and misleading comments as: ‘[Coleridge-Taylor] chose Marie Corelli’s novel *The Amulet* as his text, intending to call the opera *Thelma*’¹⁸ tend to cloud the issue, especially as Corelli never wrote a book called *The Amulet*; Berwick Sayers clearly states that ‘the story had no reference to Marie Corelli’s novel of the same name [Thelma], but revolved, he [Coleridge-Taylor] told me, about a Norwegian saga-legend’.¹⁹ The composer’s letter to Hilyer in 1908 (see Chapter 3, page 86) indeed confirms that Coleridge-Taylor based his opera upon a Norwegian subject, but there are a number of similarities with Corelli’s book²⁰ (including setting: Norway; overall general theme: good and evil; and some characters’ names: Thelma and her father Olaf Guldmar), which, although not concerning the storyline, reveal a discernible connection between the two, however slight.

Coleridge-Taylor’s three-act opera embraces such stock-in-trade archetypal dramatic elements as magic and the supernatural, the devil, a love liaison, an obstacle to prevent or complicate the course of true love, unrequited love, and a necessary ordeal to prove true worth, and this is reflected in the range of *dramatis personae*, listed below in order of appearance:

Carl (bass): the villainous Captain of the Guard, duplicitously ‘enamoured’
with Thelma

Earl Eric (tenor): the hero, who is truly in love with Thelma

¹⁷ Brian Masters, *Now Barabbas was a rotter: the extraordinary life of Marie Corelli* (London, 1978), 71.

¹⁸ Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: Heirs and rebels of the English Musical Renaissance from Edward Elgar to Benjamin Britten* (London, 1985), 60.

¹⁹ Berwick Sayers, 214.

²⁰ Marie Corelli, *Thelma* (London 1896, 15th ed.)

Thelma (soprano): daughter of Olaf, she reciprocates Earl Eric's love

Trolla (contralto): Eric's beneficent Fairy Godmother

Olaf (bass): King, father of Thelma

Gudrun (contralto): in love with Carl, the heroine ultimately sacrifices her life

Diavelen (bass): demon/wizard

Neck- König (baritone): underwater King of the sea-necks

The principal soloists in the opera follow standard generic dramatic archetypes: Eric, like the majority of Wagner's tenors and Huon in Weber's *Oberon* (1826), is the typical 'Heldentenor' (heroic tenor) or 'tenor di forza' (as in Verdi's *Otello*, 1884 – 6), whereas Carl's *raison d'être* typifies the cruel and dastardly bass. Thelma comes closest to the archetype of the lyric soprano in that she is largely associated with music of a more euphonious kind. By contrast, Gudrun, who plays a supporting role to Thelma, is arguably the heroine of the drama, though her music, like that of Thelma tends to gravitate towards the lyric rather than the overtly dramatic or histrionic. The Chorus is deployed both on and offstage as the drama demands, and includes various combinations of choruses of maidens, soldiers, male retainers, male sea-necks, angels, bridesmaids and wedding guests as appropriate. When onstage, the chorus predominantly participate physically in the drama, either marching (e.g. soldiers' procession onstage Act I Sc. 2) or dancing (e.g. Act I Sc. 2 'Chorus of Maidens singing and dancing the Waltz'; Act III Sc. 1 'the chorus of necks dance around'; Act III Sc. 2 'the chorus of bridesmaids dance around') and in the final act, as the 'anxious crowd', they angrily hold and restrain the hated Carl.

After a prelude of modest proportions (about 100 bars), modelled largely on the Italian paradigm of the short orchestral introductions deployed by Verdi (in *Otello*

and *Falstaff*) and Puccini (in *La Bohème* and *Tosca*),²¹ the curtain rises to reveal Olafhalle ‘with terraces and garden statues etc.’, and the synopsis of the story line is as follows: Carl, Captain of the Guard, wishes to marry Thelma/(Freda), the daughter of King Olaf. Meanwhile Earl Eric, who is in love with Thelma/(Freda) (the feeling is reciprocated) learns that her father wishes her to marry the hated Carl. A duet between Eric and Thelma/(Freda) witnesses their binding love for each other. Trolla, Eric’s fairy godmother, informs Eric that King Olaf has decided to set a test for both Eric and Carl in order to confirm who is most worthy of Thelma/(Freda’s) hand, and Trolla gives Eric a magic amulet in order to protect him. During the course of Scene 2 (the ‘Betrothal Fête’ at Olafhalle), King Olaf announces to both Eric and Carl the ‘rite of passage’ necessary in order to win Thelma/(Freda’s) hand in marriage, and recounts the tale of how his cup of gold was lost – it is the task of Eric and Carl to recover it. Gudrun, who is in love with Carl, arranges to meet him to declare her love, distressed that he is enamoured with Thelma/(Freda).

Act II Scene 1 (Sea Shore, Maelstrom in distant view) begins with Carl’s soliloquy, and discloses how he is to win the test. A ‘sympathetic’ demon/wizard, Diavelen, appears and reveals the secret of how Eric has received a magical amulet. Carl believes his hopes of winning to be in vain unless he can obtain the amulet. He implores Diavelen to help him and declares that he will do anything in return. Diavelen consents and Carl exits. During this encounter, Gudrun has been hiding behind a rock, and has heard everything. She affirms that she will disclose to Earl Eric

²¹ The Prelude under discussion here is the one that appears in both the autograph vocal and orchestral scores. The Prelude referred to by Avril Coleridge-Taylor is a much more substantial orchestral work of a ‘closed’ nature (unlike the open-ended prelude in the manuscripts), clearly intended for separate performance. This later version, though it contains similar thematic material to the original prelude, is a somewhat different composition with a more rounded form to suit its freestanding status. The surviving material – orchestral parts – of this later version of the prelude is only in a copyist’s hand. This, significantly however, was the only music of *Thelma* that was ever publicly heard.

what Carl has plotted with Diavelen. She returns behind the rock just as Eric enters and greets Diavelen. They talk of the maelstrom, though Eric does not divulge that he is about to brave it in order to recover the cup. Diavelen gives him magic snuff and Eric falls asleep. Diavelen removes the amulet from Eric's neck but inadvertently drops the snuffbox. Gudrun appears from the rock and notices the snuffbox, which she decides to use to aid Eric. As Diavelen and Gudrun exit, Eric wakes up and realises, lacking the amulet, that he has been tricked. A brief ballet interlude, 'Moonlight Dance of Sprites' follows (although this is omitted from the full score), before Scene 2 opens, which returns to the castle and gardens of Olafhalle.

Carl and Diavelen are together; Diavelen gives Carl the amulet and reveals how he obtained it, assuring him that whenever Carl needs him, he will appear. Gudrun enters and she and Carl sing a duet, which imparts at first that Carl does not realise that she knows his plot and intentions, although at the end she does declare it. Carl remonstrates, to which Gudrun answers with some magic snuff. Carl falls asleep accordingly and Gudrun departs with the amulet, with the intention of giving it to Eric. Carl awakes and departs to search for Thelma / (Freda). Meanwhile she and Eric enter and sing a second love duet in which they vow to triumph over all. Gudrun arrives and warns Eric of the dangers ahead; he assures Gudrun that he is now protected by the amulet, but then realises he is without it! Gudrun produces the amulet, betraying Carl's plot against Eric, for which Eric thanks her.

At the outset of the next scene (Scene 3), Olaf, Carl and Eric are together, preparing to go off in the boats to the maelstrom to recover the cup. They exit with the chorus, and Carl re-enters to announce that he is confident of Eric's demise and Thelma/ (Freda) will now be his wife.

In the final scene of the second Act, Thelma/(Freda) questions Olaf about why he was compelled to set this test. She longs for her dead mother, who vowed, after Olaf's promise to her, that Thelma/(Freda) would wed the man she loved. Olaf remonstrates, but presumes that Eric is dead. Carl, whom Olaf clearly favours, enters 'wet and disordered' (perhaps feigning that he has been in the maelstrom). Carl states that Eric is dead, but Olaf asks if he has seen this happen. Carl denies that he has, but convinces Olaf that Eric is, after all, dead. Olaf therefore declares that Carl may marry Thelma/(Freda). She vociferously objects, but Carl presses Olaf. Thelma/(Freda) wishes she was dead, and pleads with her father. Olaf agrees to postpone the wedding day, though we are left with more threatening asides of Carl's forthcoming tyranny. Act III Scene 1 introduces us to 'the maelstrom spirits banqueting hall beneath the sea', where, under the Neck-König's instructions, a chorus of 'sea necks' welcome Eric who has braved the maelstrom to find the cup, which they offer him gladly as a token of his bravery. Eric is modest about his boldness, since he declares that help had come from Trolla. Trolla declares that it is of no consequence, and the Neck-König invites them all to feast and drink. The necks 'circle round again for fantastic dance', glad that they are free from the misery and grief that Earth's gold can bring to mortals. Trolla asks if Eric will share the bliss of their magical surroundings, but Eric longs to return to the world and Thelma/(Freda) and, 'in an ecstatic dream', bids the 'Neck-König' farewell as he takes the cup, and the necks slowly disperse.

In the final scene of the opera, at Olaf Halle for the 'impending nuptials of Carl and Thelma (Olaf, Carl, Thelma, Bridesmaids, Guests...)' the female chorus of bridesmaids sing of Thelma's/(Freda's) journey to the altar to marry Carl, and dance around. Thelma/(Freda) meanwhile confides to Gudrun that, in loving Eric, she has decided to kill herself rather than marry Carl. At this point a trumpet fanfare

announces the arrival of Eric, Trolla and the Neck- König. Olaf is surprised to see Eric, but Thelma/(Freda) is overjoyed and rushes into his arms. Eric takes the cup from Trolla, and on one knee, presents it to Olaf. Eric has now won the right to marry Thelma/(Freda). Carl is incandescent with rage and utters curses.

Thelma/(Freda), 'in an ecstasy of delight', sings of her joy. She and Eric embrace again, and Trolla and the Neck-König urge Olaf to grant the happy marriage. They celebrate with the wedding guests. Carl, in desperation, lunges at Eric with his sword but Gudrun throws herself in the way and is killed. Surrounded by an anxious crowd, some of whom hold Carl angrily, she dies heroically, glad that her unrequited love for Carl is at an end. Carl repentantly realises his folly, but it is too late and he is claimed by the wizard Diavelen; as the stage grows suddenly dark, Diavelen turns him into a 'horrible form', and an 'unearthly light' reveals him dragging the wretched Carl away. The chorus comment on this tragedy before singing a prayer in thanksgiving to God together with Eric, Freda and Olaf.

Coleridge-Taylor, competently able to draw on his wealth of experience of writing illustrative instrumental music – afforded by the diversity of dances, entr'actes, overtures, songs, marches, duets, choruses and melodramas deployed in his incidental music to fit the various dramatic ideas of the plays - unsurprisingly employs the use of *leitmotif* in the opera. In the manner of many late nineteenth-century operas, particularly post-Wagnerian ones, Coleridge-Taylor supplies all the necessary clues through the music to pre-empt characters' entrances or exits, or certain wider reaching themes such as love or evil intent, and this anticipation, and potential for modulation, whether created through the use of certain ideas or themes, particular key areas, tempo, time-signature, or orchestration, engenders the facility to build up suspense or tension and heighten emotion in response to the drama.

The short 'Vorspiel' in C major introduces several of the more significantly important ideas and leading themes that will appear at key dramatic moments during the opera, each symbolising a particular character or concept. Indeed, the scheme is clearly intended to function as a form of musico-dramatic microcosm in that its themes appear at salient moments across all three acts and effectively encapsulates the emotional heart of the opera. The opening theme (stated in octaves by bassoon, horns, trumpets and trombones) is associated with the 'sea necks' and their Neck-König, and thus does not recur again until they make their first appearance (welcoming Eric to 'the maelstrom spirit's banqueting hall') in the final Act (Scene 1):

Music example 1: Thelma, Prelude, bb. 1 – 15, Orchestra, C major

1 **Molto marcato**

5

Music example 2: Thelma, Act III Sc. 1, bb. 152 – 163, Sea necks "Welcome theme", Eb major

152 **Molto maestoso**

Wel-come wel-come! mor-tal brave _____ Wel-come wel-come to our board. _____

156

Thou didst love the mael-strom's wave, fear-ing not while for-rents roared, while the bil-lows fren-zied

161

played _____ Thy brave heart was not dis-

Their 'King' also states a derivation of the first half of this theme:

Music example 3: Thelma, Act III Sc. 1, bb. 240 – 244, Neck- König, Bb major

240

Be - neath the storm - y__ o - cean se - cure from ev - ry__ strife

The material, however, is intrinsically much more than simply 'the sea-necks' theme'; it denotes the whole concept of their pleasurable, peaceful, carefree and magical world in sharp contrast to the avaricious and mercenary characteristics of the mortal world. This is epitomized at the climax of the scene when Eric reveals that he desperately longs to return to Thelma in the mortal world, and he and the male chorus of sea necks bid each other farewell, both joining together and singing their opposing views ('The earthly skies invite me/The earthly skies invite us not; All I hold most dear is 'neath that dome so bright and fair/We hold most dear the revels in this region fair; My happiness alone is there/Our happiness alone is here'). Whilst the vocalists begin this chorus with the second part of the theme, the orchestra simultaneously propels the drama along, commencing with the first part of the same idea (with 'cello and double bass reinforcing the original orchestration):

Music example 4: Thelma, Act III Sc.1, bb. 438 – 452, Eric & Chorus of Sea-necks, F major

438

447

Music example 5: *Thelma*, Act III Sc. I, bb. 439 – 451, Orchestra, F major

The musical score for measures 439-451 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 439-444) features five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 3/4. The instruction "(senza sord.)" is written above the string staves. Dynamics include *sf* (sforzando) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second system (measures 445-451) continues the orchestration with the same five staves, showing a transition in dynamics and articulation.

The secondary idea presented in the Vorspiel, in the key of A major, by a clarinet with harp accompaniment, is a foretaste of the central lyrical tenor ‘love aria’ in F major, ‘My heart with passion beats in fondest love for thee!’ which forms the central crux and focus of Act I, similar in function, style and impact to the baritone solo ‘Onaway! Awake, beloved’ in *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast*.

Music example 6: *Thelma, Prelude, bb. 44 – 53, A major*

An essential, indeed intrinsic, nugget, incorporated within one crotchet beat of this significant love theme, permeates the entire work (with the exception of the D major quartet, ‘Gentle Heavens’ – Thelma, Gudrun, Eric, Carl – in Act I) in various modulations, not only integrated as part of other characters’ own individual themes, but also in the orchestra, choruses, and particularly in Eric and Thelma’s love duet (which, with the addition of Olaf, full chorus and organ, concludes the opera). The composer uses this tiny thematic ‘germ’ to convey the dichotomy between the notion of the safety, protection and tenderness of romance and true and divine love, against the perilous treachery and malevolence of deceit and the grief that it invariably causes. Such a technique is also to be found in Wagner’s *The Ring* and *Parsifal*, in Puccini’s *Tosca*, Dvořák’s *Dimitri* and *Rusalka*, and (composed after *Thelma*) Richard Strauss’s *Elektra*, *Salome* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*:

Music example 7: “Motif”, *Thelma, Prelude b. 46*

As can be seen from the selection of examples below, it is subsumed into the entire thematic or leitmotivic matrix of the *dramatis personae*:

Music example 8: "Motif" ('m') –

Love and protection

a) Eric – Aria ('My heart with passion beats') Act I Sc. 1, b. 375

373

Thy name_ it_ ten-der-ly re-peats

b) Trolla – Act I Sc. 1, bb. 451, 452, 453

(*'This amulet shall thee protect, and save thy task from being wrecked'*).

449

Great cre - a - tor hear our prayer. Hear_ us from_ thy throne_.

c) Trolla – Act I Sc. 1, bb. 496 and 497 (repeated by soprano of 4-part chorus 'behind scenes' bb. 516 and 517)

492 **Andante religioso**

Great cre - a - tor hear our prayer. Hear_ us from_ thy throne_.

d) Male chorus of Soldiers – Act I Sc. 2 bb. 148, 152, 168

147 **Tempo all marcia**

Love ab-sorbs the hu - man soul, Sol - dier lov - er youth or_ maid-en.
Love in - spires a_ joy sub-lime; love is life's div-i-nest trea - sure: All must cap- tive fall in time.

e) *Thelma & Eric, Love duet - ('Kind Heav'n to Thee I Pray')* Act II Sc. 2, bb. 304, 306, 308 etc.

303

Kind Heav'n to thee I pray. Be - fore thee trem - bling bow - My lov - er

Kind Heav'n thy gra - cious aid in pi - ty now be - stow! Let

312

guide up - on the tide. Let vic - tory crown his brow.

mer - tal love now faith - ful prove! With hope our hearts en - dow -

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a love duet. It consists of two systems of music. The first system (measures 303-308) features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The vocal line has lyrics: "Kind Heav'n to thee I pray. Be - fore thee trem - bling bow - My lov - er". The piano accompaniment has lyrics: "Kind Heav'n thy gra - cious aid in pi - ty now be - stow! Let". The second system (measures 312-318) continues the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line has lyrics: "guide up - on the tide. Let vic - tory crown his brow." and the piano accompaniment has lyrics: "mer - tal love now faith - ful prove! With hope our hearts en - dow -". Both systems include dynamic markings such as (m) and (mf) above notes, and a crescendo marking above the piano accompaniment in the second system.

f) *Orchestra (oboe, trumpets), Act II Sc. 4, b. 2. This variation of the soldiers' theme [see d) above] continues with a first statement of Olaf's theme ('o'), which later signals his presence at various junctures in the final Act.*

5

Ob. *mf* *cresc.* (o)

Cl. (B♭) *mf* *cresc.*

Bsn. *mf* *cresc.*

Hn. *mf* *cresc.*

Tpt. *mf* *cresc.* (m)

Detailed description: This is an orchestral score for five instruments: Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (B♭)), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), and Trumpet (Tpt.). The score is in 3/2 time and begins at measure 5. Each instrument part starts with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The Oboe part includes a first statement of Olaf's theme, indicated by a circled 'o' above the staff. The Trumpet part includes a first statement of the soldiers' theme, indicated by a circled 'm' below the staff. The score is written in a grand staff format with five staves.

g) *Female chorus, offstage – ‘soft soothing strains’ (‘Constant maid’) Act II Sc. 4, bb. 354, 355.*

343

Hope's bright star hath ris - en bright O'er thy sor - row's gloom - y

351

night! Ra - diant-ly on thee to shine

h) *Eric – Aria (‘My Spirit Yearns within me’), Act III Sc.1, b. 320.*

318

My spi-rit yearns with - in me, pines to seek the beam - ing light of day

i) *Trolla, Neck- König, Chorus, Act III Sc. 2, bb. 169, 171.*

167

He hath his bride, now fair - ly earned with O-laf's cup he hath re- turn'd

Unrequited love, sorrow and deceit

j) *Carl, Act I Sc. 1, bb. 71, 73, 74. Carl warns ‘O Freda I despair, take care, take care’:*

71

Lest, like the wild beast from its lair That leaps up-on its prey, I bear thee far a-way

k) *Gudrun & Carl, Act I Sc. 2, bb. 590 - 591 (Gudrun pleads with Carl) & bb. 594 - 5*
(Carl, in turn, promises to meet and speak to her by the shore):

590 (m) 594 (m)

Has love for me grown dead and cold? And with thee then some converse hold!

l) *Diavelen (mocking Carl), Act II Sc. 1, bb. 92, 94*

91 (m) (m)

Thou art in-deed a loving swain! I'd like to hear that song a-gain!

m) *Freda (in despair), Act II Sc. 4, b. 279*

276 [Agitato] poco rall. (m) a tempo

Yet my heart's pains and bitter grief to thee are naught!

Following a snippet of what later emerges as part of the soldiers' chorus, the final idea presented in the orchestral prelude introduces Carl's theme of unrequited love, which he states shortly after the curtain rises on Act I. The soldiers' chorus that follows is also based upon Carl's material, intimating the fact that Coleridge-Taylor evidently wished to inject a process of symphonic development into his opera, through the constant derivation and interrelationship of thematic material, a dimension further accentuated by the prominent role of the orchestra as a dramatic and polyphonic vehicle.

The general over-arching key structure of the opera, which is in C major (the key of the 'love duet' between Eric and Thelma at the nucleus of the work, and Eric's lyrical love aria in the final act), encompasses the following key areas:

Figure 1: Key structure of Thelma

| | |
|---------|--|
| Prelude | C → A minor (ends on dominant, V7) |
| Act I | A minor → F (scene 1, A minor – G; scene 2, D – F) |
| Act II | C minor → E (scene 1, C minor – F; scene 2, C; scene 3, E minor; E; scene 4, Eb – E) |
| Act III | C/E → C (scene 1, C/E; scene 2, A – C) |

Certain tonalities are reserved for certain characters or notions. For instance, Carl's key areas, particularly in the set pieces, are mainly in the minor mode (Act I scene 1, b. 24, A minor; Act II scene 1, b. 29, C minor; scene 2, b. 40 A minor; Act III scene 2, b. 216, E minor) whereas the key of D flat major proves to be significant as a 'love' key (Eric & Thelma, Act I scene 1, b. 260, quasi recit. section; Eric, Act I scene 1, b. 354, central section of love aria; Freda's aria, Act II scene 4, b. 206), thrusting us into that most romantic of tonal *topoi* evinced in such works as the concluding section of Brünnhilde's 'Liebestod' in *Der Ring des Nibelungen – Götterdämmerung* (Wagner, 1869-74) Dvořák's *Rusalka* (1900) and the 'Liebestod' of Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (1901). The orchestration also reinforces characters' roles: take, for example, Trolla's first entrance, which is anticipated with, and accompanied by, 'fairy music' (redolent of the later *Forest of Wild Thyme*) in the form of *divisi* high strings and harp:

Music example 9: *Thelma*, Act I scene 1, bb. 405 – 415

The musical score for Music example 9, Act I scene 1, measures 405-415, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 405-410) features the Harp (Hp.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello/Double Bass (Vel.). The second system (measures 410-415) features the Piano (Pn.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello/Double Bass (Vel.). Dynamics include *pp*, *pizz*, and *mf*. Performance markings include *(div)*, *poco rit.*, and *ppp*.

The opera is arranged in three acts: Act I is set in two substantial scenes, the first of which introduces us to the star-crossed lovers; the second scene – strongly reminiscent of the ‘bardic’ techniques of Wagner’s earlier operas – imparts historical information as to how Olaf’s golden cup was lost ‘in days of old’, and establishes its retrieval from the maelstrom as the ‘test’ to be braved, upon which most of the drama in Act II (the most substantial act, in four scenes) hinges. Act III, comprising two scenes, is rather brief by comparison, and brings us to a fitting if precipitate conclusion where true love conquers all. The main dramatic foci and principal thematic ideas of each Act, with their characters and important tonal centres, are highlighted (in bold) in the three *Tables* below:

Table 1: *Thelma*

Act I (2 scenes)

| Page of Vocal Score | Key(s) | Delivery | Time-Signature | Comments |
|---------------------|--------------|--|----------------|--|
| SCENE 1 | | | | |
| 4 | a | Solo: Carl (unrequited love) | 4/4 | 'Carl's theme' predominates in Act II where the majority of subterfuge and plotting occurs. |
| 5 | a/F/ Ab/F | Chorus: Soldiers | 3/4 | Based on the above material and the 3 rd idea of the <i>Vorspiel</i> . The orchestra carries along much of the material. |
| 11 | Db | Orchestra (oboe, clarinet, violin) | 4/4 | 'Love theme' (containing the 4-note semiquaver figure which dominates the opera) signals the entrance of Eric & Thelma. |
| 12 | Db | Quasi recit. Eric & Thelma | 4/4 | Reference to Olaf in the orchestral material (b. 273/4, flutes & oboes) immediately preceding Eric's mention of him, later to appear in Olaf's set-piece when establishing 'the test' (scene 2, b. 214) |
| 14 | F | Aria: Eric (Love theme - 'My heart with passion beats') | 3/4 | Central focus of the Act. |
| 18 | D/c/ Bb | Trolla; Eric | 4/4 | Trolla's entrance accompanied by 'fairy music'; |
| 20 | g Bb | Orchestra Trolla | 4/4 | 'Trolla's theme' introduced (woodwind, violin), immediately taken up by Trolla singing about the necks and sea-nymphs. This theme returns in the orchestra (brass) in Act III to set the scene for Eric's entrance with Trolla to the sea-necks' world |
| 21 | G | Chorus: Trolla & Chorus (behind scenes) - 'Great Creator' | 3/4 | Prayer |
| SCENE 2 | | | | |
| 25 | D | Orchestra | 3/4 | Waltz - dance music |
| 26 | A | Chorus: Maidens - 'Trip a lightsome measure' | 3/4 | Maidens vocalise the theme whilst dancing the waltz, then joined by male chorus of Retainers. |
| 29 | F | Orchestra: March | 4/4 | Olaf's soldiers in procession heard in the distance - march theme. |
| 30 | F/C | Chorus: March | | Soldiers vocalise Olaf's march theme; when singing of love, material from Eric's love aria utilised. Full chorus of maidens, soldiers and retainers 'Hail Olaf!', underpinned by Olaf's theme in orchestra. |
| 32 | b | Solo: Olaf - 'The Test' | 3/4 | Olaf's march theme in diminution in orchestra. |
| 33 | b | Chorus | 3/4 | Chorus comment on the 'dreadful test'. |
| 34 | a | Solo: Olaf - 'The Tale' | 3/4 | 3 verses, punctuated by chorus of soldiers who repeat the last line of each stanza. |
| 39 | a | Orchestra/Chorus | 3/4 | Recapitulation of Waltz material. |
| 43 | D | Quartet: Thelma, Gudrun, Eric, Carl - 'Gentle Heavens'. | 2/4 | Chorale |
| 46 | f | Aria: Gudrun - 'Where is my dream of bliss?' | 3/4 | Sombre and dramatic 2 verse aria in which Gudrun, realising her love for Carl is unreciprocated, contemplates death. |
| 48 | F | Chorus (behind scenes): - 'Trip a lightsome measure' | | Reprise. |

Coleridge-Taylor creates a degree of tension throughout the larger structure of the first scene of Act I by moving from C (the all-embracing key of the opera, and the key of the opening prelude) to G at the end of the scene. The arrival at G is aptly marked by a set piece of prayer and supplication sung by Trolia and, behind the scenes, the Chorus. Other tonal events, however, are significant: self-evidently a darkness clouds the opening by a move to the relative minor (A minor) with the entrance of Carl (who shares a similar sinister air to Kaspar in Weber's *Der Freischütz*), but the chorus of maidens in A major at the beginning of the second scene (and also at the beginning of the final scene of the opera) later acts as a foil to this. The main focal point of scene 1 (Eric's Aria in F major) is preceded tonally by a move (i) down a minor third (C major of the prelude to the A minor of Carl's entry); (ii) up a major third (A minor to the Db major of Eric and Thelma's material - *molto appassionato* - which is the exposition for the aria that follows); (iii) up another major third (Db to the F major of Eric's solo), underlining the initial shift to Db by this even more unequivocal modulation to F major, which makes much more symphonic use of the original material. F major (and its counterpart F minor) in turn serves to frame the rest of the Act (see the table above).

From the outset of this motivically rich piece, Coleridge-Taylor uses the material in a Wagnerian manner in terms of voice-leading (for example, bb. 344 – 365) and the polyphonic dialogue that is set up between orchestra and voice; the initial two-bar phrases in the orchestral preamble soon take on a more elastic phrasing with the entry of Eric in the 'love aria'. (Such a technique must have originally be drawn from a similar process in Act II of *Tristan* in the love duet of Tristan and Isolde):

Music example 10: *Thelma*, Act I Scene 1, 'My heart with passion beats', bb.308 – 324

308 *Andante appassionato* *(Molto appassionato)*

My

heart with pas-sion beats In fon-dest love for thee! Thy name it

ten-der-ly re-peats In tune-ful har-mo-ny!

Besides the obvious interests of phrase construction, the whole contrapuntal conception of this aria is that it is *not* purely vocal, although the declamation and rhetoric does have an element of Puccinian *verismo* about it. After starting in F, a move to the relative minor is felt with the dominant of D (minor) at bar 338, but the composer, quizzically, chooses *not* to resolve this dominant in the conventional way, as this is then held in abeyance by shifting to the dominant of F major first, and even the arrival at D minor at bar 342 is never fully resolved, holding us in suspense for a further two bars. The following section is tonally fluid, and its growth is based largely upon sequence.

Music example 11: *Thelma*, Act I Scene 1, 'My heart with passion beats', bb. 344 – 368

344
Love, like a gen-tle stream_ first smooth - ly on-ward flows! Then wild the speed of light' ning's gleam A

350
might - ty tor-rent flows! Di - vi - ded it re - joins a-gain And then our
cresc. poco a poco

356
love shall be. Through joy and plea-sure, grief and pain Tri - um - phant love shall
cresc.

362
live and reign. shall reign e - ter - nal - ly!
ff

The ambiguity surrounding F major and D minor, the romantic passionate tissue of this music, is implicit in the opening progression (bar 315), and finds yet a further dramatic moment during the aria. The culmination of the voice-leading in the passage above gives us a climax with the note 'A' (dominant of D minor), stated, as before

(bar 338) as A major, and, in a masterstroke, the same process as before then marks the return back to F major for the final portion of the aria, which, although a repeat of the opening material, is in a much richer orchestral form with voice. Such skilful moves heighten the awareness that Coleridge-Taylor evidently reserved his greatest intellect and compositional energy for this rich and beautifully written piece, since, in spite of the appeal and craftsmanship of the many vocal numbers in his choral works, these never reach the level of this white-hot creativity.

Scene 2 is framed by the waltz tune ‘Trip a lightsome measure’ (a style of music curiously redolent of Stanford’s ‘All in morning glory’ in *The Travelling Companion*, which, though not a waltz, has a similar dramatic function of reprise and buoyant mood), which opens the scene, and features at the close of Act I. Its meaningful placement here at the end of the Act, sung by chorus behind the scenes immediately following Gudrun’s heart-wrenching aria ‘Where is my dream of bliss?’, strikingly intensifies the supreme irony of Gudrun’s contemplation of death. This is emphasised even more with the quaver rest that is now inserted at the beginning of a number of bars:

Music example 12: Thelma, Act I Scene 2, Chorus ‘Trip a lightsome measure’, bb.659 – 668, Soprano.

Allegro

The musical score is written for Soprano in 3/4 time. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking and the tempo instruction **Allegro**. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with three triplet markings over the final three measures of the first line. The lyrics are: "Trip a lightsome mea- sure, Life is full of plea- sure, Let's be gay, while we may, In the day of lei- sure!" The second line of music starts with a *p* dynamic marking and includes a quaver rest at the beginning of the first measure. The lyrics for the second line are: "Time ne'er slum- bers Throu' his num- bers, Time ne'er slum- bers through his num- bers".

pp Trip a lightsome mea- sure, Life is full of plea- sure, Let's be gay, while we may, In the day of lei- sure!

p Time ne'er slum- bers Throu' his num- bers, Time ne'er slum- bers through his num- bers

Furthermore, the music evinces some wonderfully inspired harmony (for example, bar 672 below):

Music example 13: Thelma, Act I Scene 2, Chorus 'Trip a lightsome measure', bb. 669 – 676.

[Allegro]

CHORUS

Gai-ly let us pass the bliss-ful hours, the bliss-ful hours a-way

Gai - ly let us pass the bliss - ful hours a - way

Gai - ly let us pass the bliss - ful hours a - way

Gai - ly let us pass the bliss - ful hours a - way

The homophonic chorus fits perfectly and Coleridge-Taylor uses it convincingly as a leitmotif throughout the opera; such skilful use palpably contrasts with the majority of his other choral works where a distinct tendency towards an abundant overuse of homophonic chorus and literal repetition gradually begins to strain, and consequently inevitably ceases to be effective.

The other main events of the scene include two solos and a quartet. Following Olaf's 'test' (a rite of passage of the same ilk as the song contests in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and *Die Meistersinger*, and the shooting contest of Weber's *Der Freischütz*) which is delivered in narrative style in the new key area of B minor, he more weightily embarks upon the tale of the historical battle that resulted in the disappearance of his treasure into the maelstrom. 'In Days of Old' is cast as a ballad, akin to Senta's ballad in Act II of *The Flying Dutchman* (although in Wagner's work her ballad is the crux of the whole opera). In a return to the tenebrous key area of the beginning of the act (A minor), the ballad takes the form of three 4-line stanzas punctuated by a pithy reiteration of the fourth line of each verse sung by the male

chorus, apart from the final verse which moves briefly back to the home key of C major for a rousing choral comment on the entire ballad ('A right good song') before modulating back to the relative minor again for the choral *leitmotif* 'Trip a lightsome measure'.

Throughout the D major tonality of the quartet 'Gentle Heav'ns' (S.A.T.B: Thelma, Gudrun, Eric and Carl), already foreshadowed in the orchestral introduction ('trip a lightsome measure') to this scene, there are numerous instances where Coleridge-Taylor deftly manipulates the musical material in order unexpectedly to deflect or avert the cadence:

Music example 14: *Thelma*, Act I Scene 2, Quartet 'Gentle Heav'ns', bb. 502 – 505

[Andante con moto]

CHORUS

Ye can e - ver peace - ful smile.

Ye can e - ver peace - ful smile.

fer - vent vow, the vow I swear.

fer - vent vow, the vow I swear.

Music example 15: *Thelma*, Act I Scene 2, Quartet 'Gentle Heav'ns', bb. 511 – 514

[Andante con moto]

511

CHORUS

Droop - ing 'neath dark sor - row's blight.

Droop - ing 'neath dark sor - row's blight,

Love shall keep me firm and true

Love shall keep me firm and true

This aspect of the piece is noteworthy in that such examples underline even further Coleridge-Taylor's desire to create a much more intense technique of 'developing variation', where the lack of cadences and resulting continuity obviate the somewhat slavish repetition of many of his choral structures and procedures. Largely for solo quartet (at least for the first part), in 2/4, 'Gentle Heav'ns' is a chorale. There are several other previous analogous yardsticks for such use of a chorale setting in opera, (all of which Coleridge-Taylor must have known): at the commencement of Act I of Wagner's *Meistersinger of Nuremberg* (St. Catherine's Church, Nuremberg) where the congregation, Eva and Magdalena are singing the closing chorale of the church service; the choir and congregation in Mascagni's *verismo* opera in one act, *Cavalleria Rusticana*; in the second act of Humperdinck's opera (to his sister's text) *Hansel and Gretel*, the Evening Prayer that the children sing just before they fall asleep from the effects of the Sandman sprinkling sand into their eyes; the 'Te deum' in Act I of Puccini's *Tosca*; and, contemporary with *Thelma* was Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (performed in Berlin in 1907) which features a quasi-chorale in the 'dream scene'.

The final dénouement in Act I occurs when Gudrun eventually realises that her adoration of Carl is not reciprocated, and therefore 'he never will outpour love's passion into Gudrun's ear'. Her dream is shattered, all hope is lost, and this significant dramatic moment of reversal is marked by her passionate and emotional aria 'Where is my dream of bliss?', in the sombre key of F minor:

Music example 16: *Thelma*, Act I Scene 2, Gudrun 'Where is my dream of bliss?', bb. 612 – 633.

612 [Molto moderato con espressivo] *mp*

Where is my dream of bliss? Gone, gone for aye Life's pur-est hap-pi-ness,

619 Fa-bleth a- way! Gold lights the sky no more; woe hangs a

625 pall be-fore, Heavn's beam is cloud-ed o'er, Love dies to-day.

630 Love dies to-day!

The juxtaposition of F minor with the ensuing F major key of the unseen chorus' closure of the act ('Trip a lightsome measure, see *Table 1*) doubly serves to heighten and reinforce the irony of Gudrun's predicament.

Table 2: *Thelma*

Act II (4 scenes)

| Page | Key(s) | Delivery | Time-Signature | Comments |
|---------|-----------|--|----------------|--|
| SCENE 1 | | | | |
| 1 | c | Orchestra | 3/4 | 3-note motif, later taken up by Thelma (scene 4) when questioning why her mother has left her 'in this dark world to grieve'. |
| 2 | c | Solo: Carl | 9/8; 3/4 | Carl's 'plot'. 2 verses and a contrasting section. |
| 5 | D/F/f | Diavelen/Carl, quasi recit. (Gudrun) | 4/4; 3/4; 2/4; | Tonally fluid. Diavelen's material based on Carl's tune above and from Act I scene 1. 3-note 'grief' motif later predominates in orchestra, followed by return of Diavelen's 'revenge' theme when he puts Eric to sleep with the magic snuff and removes the amulet from his neck. |
| 18 | E | Chorus | 2/2 | Chorus recurs again in Scene 4 ('Constant maid') |
| 20 | F | Solo: Eric (Love theme) | 3/4 | Strains of Eric's 'love song' in the orchestra signals his awakening, before he sings again of his love for Thelma, which ends the scene. |
| SCENE 2 | | | | |
| 27 | C | Orchestra | 4/4 | Carl's theme and new theme. |
| 28 | a | Carl/Diavelen | 4/4; 3/4 | Carl's theme and Diavelen's material from scene 1. |
| 31 | | Duet: Carl and Gudrun | 3/4; 9/8 | Followed by Love theme (in orchestra), which pre-empts entrance of Eric and Thelma |
| 40 | C | Duet: Eric and Thelma (Love duet – 'Kind Heav'n') | 4/4 | Features motif from Eric's love aria; followed by tonally fluid passages, during which Gudrun presents Eric with the amulet. |
| 45 | C | Chorus: 'Kind Heav'n' | 4/4 | Scene concludes with choral recapitulation of love duet. |
| SCENE 3 | | | | |
| 48 | F/C/D | Orchestra | 4/4 | Olaf's march theme from Act I prepares us for his entrance, with soldiers, retainers, and Carl and Eric. |
| 51 | e | Chorus: Soldiers & retainers – 'Speed on!' | 2/4 | Male chorus; theme then continued in orchestra. |
| 57 | a | Carl | 3/4 | Unrequited love theme from the opening scene of the opera. |
| 58 | E | Orchestra | 3/4 | Reprise of 'Trip a lightsome measure'. |
| SCENE 4 | | | | |
| 59 | Eb | Orchestra | 2/2 | Brief orchestral introduction of Olaf's theme; Thelma/Olaf (3/4) |
| 61 | f/f# | Carl | 4/4 | Part of Carl's theme. b.84→ Fm→G (via D7)→Cm→Db, enharmonic C#→F#m. |
| 63 | C/Eb/G | Olaf/Thelma/Carl | 4/4 | Material from the beginning of the first act – b.169 second section of Carl's theme (Act I scene 1, b. 39), continued by Thelma, cadencing this time in G (rather than Am as before). Olaf's theme in C. |
| 65 | Db | Solo: Thelma – 'Despair my heart will fill' | 4/4 | Db 'love' key. |
| 66 | bb c/d | Olaf/Carl; Thelma (p. 67) | 3/4; 4/4 | |
| 68 | F | Aria: Thelma – 'Ye Gentle Azure Skies'. | 9/8; 12/8 | |
| 71 | E | Chorus: 'Constant Maid' | 2/2 | Invisible female chorus (angels?). See p. 18. |
| 72 | F → E | Thelma & Chorus | 12/8; 2/2 | Ends in E. |

The middle act of the opera mainly embodies a reprise of parts of Act I, and some of the material also mirrors the same tonal events. Carl's 'unrequited love' theme from the beginning of the work runs through the two central scenes of the act, preserved in its original key of A minor. With the same ironic use of 'trip a lightsome measure' that followed Gudrun's aria in Act I, an orchestral reprise of that same choral material - again in E major - also follows Carl's unrequited love theme at the end of the third scene (see the Table above). With his entrance in Scene 1 of the second act, the use of Carl's theme (beginning this time in the tonic minor rather than the relative minor) recreates the darkness of the opening scene of the opera, as Carl confidently imparts the details of his iniquitous plot to eliminate Eric and leave the way clear for himself to marry Thelma and wield his hitherto covertly menacing power over her. The chorus' material in E major, introduced towards the end of this scene, is juxtaposed with a reprise of Eric's love theme in F major; this prefigures a further dramatic event of importance when the same tonal implications are deployed on a wider scale at the end of the act (E major chorus 'Constant maid' interspersed with the F major tonality of Thelma's aria 'Ye gentle azure skies'). The repeat of Eric and Thelma's love duet ('Kind Heav'n') in C by the chorus, which concludes scene 2, is also later echoed in the final act, where the chorus join with Eric, Thelma and Olaf. However, it is clear that Act II is very much weighted towards the final aria (scene 4). This is directly preceded by two short arias from Thelma in F minor/D flat ('Despair my heart will fill') and D minor ('Ah, father!'). The latter, in particular, moves towards a display of dissonance at moments of great drama, creating a number of noticeably bold and interesting harmonies:

Music example 17: *Thelma*, Act II Scene 4, 'Ah, father!' bb. 281, 289.

281

Carl forth from thee thine own blood bought!

pp

The entire section of this ariosa is based upon the dominant of D minor (bb. 264 – 307); after intensifying the expectation of arrival at that key, Coleridge-Taylor mirrors the tonally significant ambiguity of D minor and F major (with A major used once more as an unresolved dominant) created in the very first scene of the opera (see pages 182 - 4 above), by suspending a resolution and moving instead to the key of F major (as before), for the main focus and closing piece of the act ('Ye gentle azure skies'):

Music example 18: *Thelma*, Act II Scene 4, bb. 296 – 308

296 *(ad lib.)*

Kind Heav'n, oh, give me aid!

dim.

304 *mp* **(Larghetto)**

Ye gen - tle a - zure skies

pp

Beautifully scored (predominantly for strings, *pizzicato* and/or *con sordini*), ‘Ye gentle azure skies’ is an exquisitely rich piece in which Thelma, believing Eric to be dead, outpours her anguish and grief, beseeching the heavenly skies above to help ease her heart’s pains. Her supplication does not go unanswered; an invisible female chorus (of angels), softly intoning ‘soothing strains’, gently reassures her that peace, hope and solace are imminent. Thelma’s ‘pastoral’ declamation, set in 9/8 and 12/8 includes tonal references to Eric’s material of Act I, with a move to Db towards the end of each verse (bb. 315, 326). The arrangement of the choral harmonies, with the tune in the outer voices is powerfully reminiscent of similar techniques in Grieg and Puccini:

Music example 19: Thelma, Act II Scene 4, bb. 331 – 334. Female voices (invisible).

331 *pp*

Con - stant maid, sweet peace and rest!

pp

Con - stant maid, sweet peace and rest!

pp

6 6

Music example 20: Puccini, *Madame Butterfly*, Act II, bb. 1326 - 8

poco rit. *a tempo*

p dolce

The dialogue between Thelma and the chorus is more rapid in the middle section of the aria, each still maintaining their respective keys of F and E major. Certain block chordal passages in this section even suggest Debussy with their seemingly non-functional parallelisms:

Musical example 21: *Thelma*, Act II Scene 4, bb. 369 – 70

369

What is that sweet sooth-ing strain that serves to dull my keen-est pain.

pp

The Act ends on a much brighter note of optimism, in the key of E major.

Table 3: *Thelma*

Act III (2 scenes)

| Page | Key(s) | Delivery | Time-Signature | Comments |
|---------|--------|---|----------------|--|
| SCENE 1 | | | | |
| 1 | C/E | Orchestra | 3/4; 4/4 | Sea-necks' 'dance theme'; Neck- König, quasi recit. |
| 2 | g | Chorus (male sea-necks) | 3/4 | Derived from Olaf's 'cup' material, Act I scene 2, b. 208. Followed by orchestra (horns & trombone) with Trolla's theme (from Act I scene 1 b. 462, where she discusses the sea-necks) in 2/2. |
| 4 | Eb | Chorus: 'Welcome'. | 3/2 | First vocalisation of the 'Welcome' theme from the opening bars of the vorspiel. |
| 5 | Eb/Bb | Eric/Trolla/Neck – König | 4/4 | |
| 6 | Bb | Orchestra: Dance | 3/4 | Music from the opening of this act (b. 5) as the necks 'dance round again'. [C7, Bb, A7, F7, cadencing in Bb]. Welcome theme from prelude continued by Neck – König in 3/2, joined by male chorus of sea-necks on the last line of each verse. |
| 9 | f# | Orchestra/ Trolla/Eric | 4/4 | Trolla's theme in orchestra heralds her entrance. Theme extended by Eric. |
| 10 | C | Aria: Eric – 'My spirit yearns' | 4/4 | |
| 12 | C/E | Orchestra/Neck- König | 3/4 | Neck theme |
| 14 | d | Orchestra | 3/4 | Eric's love theme. |
| 14 | F | Solo & Chorus (Eric & sea-necks) – 'The earthly skies' | 3/4 | First theme from vorspiel (2 nd half stated first) over first half of the same 'sea-necks' theme in the orchestra. |
| 16 | A/Db | Orchestra | 3/4 | 'Trip a lightsome measure' & a new theme. Bar 528/9 Db→A→Db (CT modulates to key of A when female chorus of bridesmaids vocalise this tune in the following scene). Runs into Scene 2 without break. |
| SCENE 2 | | | | |
| 18 | A | Chorus: Bridesmaids | 3/4 | Continues the two themes above, 'dancing around' in-between. |
| 21 | f# | Thelma/Gudrun | 4/4 | |
| 21 | C/A | Orchestra | 4/4; 3/4 | Trumpets on stage (sea-necks' theme). Eric's love theme, Olaf's motif, Trolla's motif. |
| 23 | A | Trolla, Neck- König, Carl, Chorus | 3/4 | |
| 23 | E | Solo: Thelma – 'Ah! the joy of thus awaking' | 4/4 | 2 verses, interspersed with Eric's love theme stated in the orchestra. |
| 26 | g# | Trolla | 3/4 | Trolla's theme in orchestra, together with Olaf's theme from Act II scene 4 (b.1 and 189) |
| 27 | Bb/G/e | Neck- König/Trolla/Chorus/Carl | 2/4 | Based on 'necks theme' from previous scene. Repeated by Trolla & full chorus (G) and Carl, punctuated by chorus (E minor). Unrequited love theme from opening scene in orchestra. Orchestra continue in E minor (4/4) with soldiers' theme - angry crowd restrain Carl as Gudrun dies! |
| 31 | C | Thelma, Eric, Olaf, Chorus | 4/4 | Finale, from the love duet in Act II scene 2, now marked <i>Andante Religioso</i> . |

Coleridge-Taylor brings back the salient motifs and leading themes for the dramatic requisites of the concise final act of the opera, including an entire piece - the 'love duet' - as a concluding chorus; the noticeably disproportionate dimensions of the opera's compendious final act are intensified by the fact that its two scenes run straight through continuously. After Eric's successful retrieval of Olaf's cup, his ensuing aria 'My spirit yearns', centred in the home key of C major, foreshadows the inevitability of Eric's inexorable decision to return to Thelma, which is conveyed through his discourse with the sea necks and brings us full circle to the opening theme of the opera, now stated in the subdominant. Yet again, in order to accentuate the maximum dramatic impact, Coleridge-Taylor organises the material to ensure that this striking moment of anagnorisis and the 'trip a lightsome measure' theme (delivered now by the orchestra) with its ironically felicitous connotations of light-heartedness and frivolity, are contiguous. The theme intersects seamlessly with scene 2, taken up by the chorus of bridesmaids (in A major as the beginning of the second scene of Act I) during celebrations for the impending wedding of Thelma and Carl; whilst they happily dance and sing, we are reminded, through Thelma's declaration of utter despair, that Eric's well being is still unknown to her. The scene reaches the height of suspense therefore, when Thelma confides to Gudrun that, rather than marry Carl, she, (Tosca-like), is going to take her own life and be united in death with Eric. Our anxiety is short lived; Coleridge-Taylor promptly relieves the tension by intimating the imminent arrival of Eric, together with Trolla and Olaf, by utilising each of their themes in the orchestral material, following a dramatic trumpet fanfare on stage. Self-evidently, the momentum of Act III reaches a climax with this ultimate anagnorisis; as Thelma rushes into Eric's arms, the darkness lifts and her radiance is encapsulated in 'Oh! the joy of thus awaking'. In E major, each section of this rapturous two-verse

aria is juxtaposed with Eric's love theme stated by the strings in octaves (Andante); the strong relationship between F and E major established at the end of the second act is thus continued and further reinforced through this descending semitone shift from the love theme's original key (F major).

Music example 22: Thelma, Act III scene 2, bb. 204 – 205

The clear-cut musical structure of each verse is identical. Although cadencing in G-sharp major at the end of the first line, the music immediately proceeds back to the dominant of E major by the middle of each four-line verse. The significance of the penultimate line of the text, 'Madness mingled with my weeping I beheld my lover slain' (and, in verse 2 'Heav'n dispels the cloud of sorrow, All the weary pain is o'er') is enhanced by more tonal fluidity, moving through G and C major, with an extra 2/4 bar prolonging the chord of C, before returning back to E. The frequent commentary on the rapidly developing sequence of events and situations by the chorus of wedding guests during the ensuing final stages of the work culminates with their interposition of 'O! tragic, awful end!', after the unfortunate demise of Gudrun (underpinned with previous material from Act II scene 3 in the orchestra). Such short sections add to the pace of the drama, which is finally resolved as the chorus kneel and surround the dead body of Gudrun; the love duet from the opening act now becomes a prayer (*Andante Religioso*) encompassing chorus, soloists and orchestra with organ (on the same large

scale as the closing fugue - 'Tutto nel mondo é burla' - of Verdi's *Falstaff*) in a replete and admirable conclusion.

Coleridge-Taylor was interested in writing dramatic music throughout his life, and drama seems to have elicited a large amount of instrumental music from him (but of a much simpler kind). The opera overwhelmingly shows us a completely different side to Coleridge-Taylor, in which he unequivocally demonstrates the accomplished skill of not only providing unqualified 'top drawer' set pieces, but also the facility to juxtapose them, and the variable tempi, with an assured ease and dexterity. Although using specific and distinct themes for various characters, in *Thelma* Coleridge-Taylor is not writing opera in a Wagnerian manner *per se*, and ultimately his concept of writing opera is more in the guise of late nineteenth-century Italian opera. However, features such as the interrelationships of thematic ideas used at major climaxes, interlocution between voice and orchestra, voice-leading, use of the chorus as a leitmotif threading its way throughout the opera, and, on a more esoteric level, the deft use of key symbolism, give direction to the work; moreover, the association of keys with particular characters notably contributes to holding the whole opera together. It is difficult to understand what constituted the ultimate refusal of The Carl Rosa Company to stage *Thelma* and the insurmountable problems of its staging and *mis-en-scène* that were claimed. It is possible that the technical demands, then, of creating an 'unearthly light' to reveal Diavelen turning Carl into a 'horrible form' and dragging him away,²² whilst the rest of the stage remained in total darkness, were too problematic to engineer, or perhaps the depiction of the maelstrom was impracticable. Whatever problems precipitated the shelving of the opera (to Coleridge-Taylor's

²² Assimilating the paradigm of the devil 'claiming his own', found in such works as *Die Freischütz*, (Devil - Samiel, the Great Huntsman, claims Kaspar) and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (statue, in graveyard, of a nobleman killed by the unrepentant Don Giovanni, drags him down to hell).

'bitter disappointment'²³), they do not apply to the quality of the music itself; it is poignant that, magnifying the ironic juxtaposition of material used by the composer during the opera in order to intensify the drama, the paramount irony of all is that *Thelma*, Coleridge-Taylor's biggest achievement, has never been heard, nor indeed is anyone yet properly aware of its existence!

²³ Berwick Sayers, 220.

Chapter 6

Orchestral Works

His orchestral music was direct from heart to score, not first conceived for piano and then afterwards arranged for orchestra. He thought, and wrote, “orchestrally”. A vast difference!¹

(i) ORCHESTRAL BEGINNINGS

Coleridge-Taylor produced three purely orchestral compositions during his student years. The most substantial of these, his unpublished Symphony in A minor, was written in 1896, and is flanked chronologically on each side by a Ballade in D minor for violin and orchestra, (1894/5, published by Novello, Ewer & Co.) and another shorter work for violin and orchestra, Legend (1897, Augener), which was performed only weeks before he left the College.

Unsurprisingly, the composer dedicated both published works to fellow students, the latter to Marie Motto (whose presentation at the first performance on 15 February 1897 was reviewed as ‘without being fully equal to it, her intonation being frequently at fault and her tone thin’²), and the former to ‘my friend Miss Ruth Howell’ (the violinist at the first performance of the Clarinet Quintet). The Ballade was rescored for a larger orchestra for its first (and only) Bournemouth performance on 17 April 1899; the soloist on this occasion was Isabella Donkersley, a violinist at the RCM, who was newly married to August Jaeger.³ (Elgar’s letter to Jaeger the month before the marriage expressed ‘I am so very very happy thinking of your new

¹ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, ‘Unexplored Coleridge-Taylor’, *Sound: the Entertainment Review* (Apr. 1947), n.p.n.

² *Musical Times*, 1 Mar. (1897), 173.

³ Stephen Lloyd, *Sir Dan Godfrey: Champion of British Composers* (London 1995), 41.

life, because I've seen Miss D [onkersley] and can, thank God, congratulate you and believe you will be happy'.⁴) The *Musical Times*, in its review of an earlier arrangement of the Ballade for violin and piano, declared that 'Mr. S. Coleridge-Taylor is one of the most promising students of composition at present at the Royal College of Music'⁵, and praised the 'individuality' of his earliest published orchestral work⁶, continuing:

Violinists will find the Ballade an attractive piece by reason of its freshness and earnestness of expression. The pianoforte part, arranged by the composer from the orchestral score, is also interesting and enhances the effectiveness of the violin part. That a student-composer, yet unknown to fame, should be able to get such a high-class work printed reflects no small credit on English publishers generally, and is very encouraging to young writers.⁷

Coleridge-Taylor's next orchestral work, the Symphony, was completed in the early months of 1896; however, the finale did not meet with Stanford's approval, and only the first three movements were performed for the college concert at St. James's Hall on 6 March⁸. Several successive further revisions of the last movement were similarly rejected, one of which, now held in the British Library⁹, was completely ripped in half and subsequently taped together again, with an inscription explaining:

It is the Finale of a Symphony by Coleridge-Taylor and it is in his handwriting throughout. It came into Boughton's [Rutland] possession in the following way. Coleridge-Taylor showed the MS to Stanford who expressed disapproval of the music. Thereupon Taylor tore it across and threw it away. William Read, who was present, rescued it from the waste-paper basket and gave it to Boughton.¹⁰

⁴ Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative life* (Oxford, 1984), 256.

⁵ *Musical Times*, 1 Aug. (1895), 532

⁶ Another work from 1894, *Zara's Ear-Rings*, 'a Moorish Ballad for soprano voice and orchestra', set to the words of J. G. Lockhart's volume of adaptations from *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823) and first performed by the College (soloist Clementine Pierpont) on 6 Feb. 1895 at the Imperial Institute, remains in manuscript. *GB-Lcm 4919* (parts) and *GB-Lcm 5001*.

⁷ *Musical Times*, 1 Aug. (1895), 532.

⁸ Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: His Life & Letters* (London, 1915, 1927), 311.

⁹ *GB-Lbl ADD63798*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Another variation of the finale is filed at the Royal College of Music¹¹; the last leaf indicates that the manuscript transferred from Coleridge-Taylor to Hurlstone, then to Fritz Hart (who studied at the college contemporaneously with Coleridge-Taylor). He then passed it on to the composer's daughter in 1931.¹² A further version at the College¹³, complete with the first three movements, seems to be the finished work that was performed in full (receiving an accolade from the *Visitors' Directory* critic of being 'a striking and characteristic work very well rendered'¹⁴), directed by the composer with Dan Godfrey's Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra on 30 April 1900. The feasibility that this score could be the completed work presented at Bournemouth is underlined by the timings of each movement and the total duration of the symphony noted at the end of the manuscript (furthermore, the original address on the front cover - although crossed through - is Dagnall Park, where Coleridge-Taylor was resident at this time, from 1899 to 1901). A set of string parts is in existence¹⁵ (with *both* of the above fourth movements included for the violins only), accompanied by a note from the composer:

To the Librarian –

It is most important that the distribution of parts be clearly understood.

The first and second violin parts are complete in themselves (excepting one or two sheets may be separated).

All other instruments should have two copies given them – (a) the first three movements (b) the Finale in the order of this package.¹⁶

¹¹ *GB-Lcm 4447*

¹² See letter from Hart to Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 31 Aug. 1931 – 'You could call it an overture, for it can't be called the last movement of a symphony for practical purposes. It is so characteristic of your father'. *GB-Lcm 4449*.

¹³ *GB-Lcm 5012*.

¹⁴ Lloyd, 44.

¹⁵ *GB-Lcm 4908*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The A minor tonality of Coleridge-Taylor's symphony is perhaps a premonition of the *Ballade*, the work which was to afford him an invaluable opportunity just two years later; and both works are demonstrative of the composer's facility for lyrically expansive and mellifluous melody, assurance in the handling of tonality, large-scale canvases, and expert scoring. Indeed, it is more than likely that Coleridge-Taylor turned to the challenge of a symphony as the result of Stanford's wholehearted endorsement of his Clarinet Quintet. The composition of a symphony – with all its concomitant symbols of technical mastery, fluency of abstract thought, the ability to think in orchestral, indeed polyphonic, terms – also marked his 'coming of age' in that a work of this magnitude demonstrated his full technical and creative powers. (In addition, Stanford must have beamed with pride in that *two* of his pupils, Coleridge-Taylor and Hurlstone (whose *Variations on an Original Theme* dates from the same year) evinced such prodigious facility in large-scale form.)

Of the symphony's four movements (which are in the classically conceived keys of A minor, C major, E minor and A minor respectively), the opening movement, *Allegro appassionato*, is the lengthiest. The first subject is presented in the violins:

Music example 1: Symphony, first movement, bb. 10 – 15



Coleridge-Taylor's predilection towards a Dvořákian harmonic vocabulary (evidenced quite clearly in his chamber music of this period) is maintained in the symphony; a marked suggestion of Dvořák is revealed straightaway in the immediate change during the first two bars of the above theme from chord I (A minor) to VIb (F major), a technique favoured by the Czech composer in his 'New World' Symphony (E minor to C major) and the Eighth Symphony (e.g. the flute entry in the first movement). This manner of quasi-modal harmonic fluctuation remained a trademark of Coleridge-Taylor throughout his creative life, and the 'New World' Symphony undoubtedly assumed an iconic status for him in terms of its colour and harmonic *topoi*.

Corroboration of this overwhelming admiration is evident from correspondence. A little more than a month before his death, during a period of escalating pressure and overwork, Coleridge-Taylor still found time to write from Eastbourne to a former pupil, Edith Carr enthusing 'I wish you could have heard our really magnificent performance of the New World Symphony here'.¹⁷ The first statement of second subject material in the opening movement of the symphony remains, quite unconventionally, in the key of A minor, initially introduced by 'cello and clarinet, and taken up by violins with – with true Dvořákian flair (e.g. the first movement of the Eighth Symphony) - a counter-melody in 'cellos and viola':¹⁸

¹⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Edith Carr, 25 Jul. 1912 (dated 'Thursday'). *GB-Lcm 6924*.

¹⁸ This unconventional process is highly unusual. An interesting precedent can be seen in the first movement of Mozart's String Quintet in G minor K. 516 where the second subject begins in the tonic before modulating to B flat major midway, though Coleridge-Taylor's insistence on the tonic before departure to the related key is considerably more protracted.

Music example 2: Symphony, first movement, bb. 61 – 68

The musical score for Music Example 2 consists of four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vcl.). The music is in 2/4 time. The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *f* (forte), with a *cresc.* (crescendo) section. The score includes various articulation marks such as slurs, accents, and slurs with accents. The key signature is one flat (B minor).

The music then moves to V of B in preparation for a more vigorous version of the second group theme, first in B minor (as dominant preparation – see bar 108) and then E minor, the more conventional dominant. Again, particularly in the paragraph leading up to this section, the influence of Dvořák’s ‘New World’ Symphony is apparent in terms of rhythmic figuration and melodic contour:

Music example 3: Symphony, first movement, bb. 104 – 107

The musical score for Music Example 3 consists of two staves: Timpani (Timp) and Strings (in 8ves). The music is in 2/4 time. The dynamics range from *sf* (sforzando). The score includes various articulation marks such as slurs, accents, and slurs with accents. The key signature is one flat (B minor).

The first part of the extensive development section centres principally around the key of F major, (subtly anticipated in the concealed harmonic suggestion in bars 11 and 12), and in a manner akin to Mozart (e.g. the first movement of his ‘Hunt’ Quartet) introduces entirely fresh material and this new theme forms the basis of an extended lyrical fantasy (though once again haunted by the I-VI thumbprint with its tonal *topos*

of F major to D minor and, with the repeat of the material in F minor, to D flat); the second portion of the development – from bar 226, marked by a re-entry of the first subject in D minor, is more tonally fluid and the pace of tonal change, initially slowed by the section in F major, rapidly accelerates from bar 241, where the second subject, originally stated in its unconventional A minor in the exposition, is now stated unequivocally in its ‘corrective’ E minor. Following a move to the key of B minor, a further key change to B flat (a Neapolitan step away from A) signals a return to the lyrical material heard at the outset of the development, a restatement which is not only thrown into relief by its tonal ambience, but also by its new and evocative instrumentation for mellifluous clarinet and lower strings:

Musical example 4: Symphony, first movement, bb. 279 - 283

The musical score for measures 279-283 is presented in a five-staff format. The top staff is for Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (B♭)), marked 'solo' and 'p'. The second staff is for Violin II (Vln. II), marked 'pp'. The third staff is for Viola (Vla.), marked 'pp'. The fourth staff is for Violoncello (Vcl.), marked 'p' and 'pp'. The bottom staff is for Contrabass (Cb.), marked '[pizz.]'. The time signature is 2/4. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score shows a melodic line in the clarinet and a supporting harmonic texture in the strings.

The prolonged dominant pedal (on E) towards the end of this section (bar 317 to bar 328) then provides a significant structural dominant for the return of A minor in the recapitulation at bar 329 in which both first- and second-group material are heard simultaneously (almost in the manner of quodlibet). This climactic statement is, however, considerably truncated, and the process of tonicisation is left to a

restatement of the second subject (whose tonic associations are now finally affirmed). Furthermore, we are allowed to experience the same tonal properties of the exposition through the interjection of D minor at bar 397 which emulates the same expositional event in B minor. Showing a true sense of formal mastery, Coleridge-Taylor provides space for the recapitulation of the new thematic material of the development in the tonic major (virtually confirming this material's status as a 'third group'), subtly reintroduced on the clarinets as a memory of the development's conclusion. This provides an unexpected lyrical conclusion, though the final statement is reserved for a genuine restatement of the symphony's opening material which was only paraphrased at the beginning of the recapitulation. These events are summarised in the table below and distil what is a fertile and unconventional handling of sonata principles:

Table 1: Symphony, first movement, summary of sonata form key structure.

| Section | Description | Key |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Exposition | 1 st subject | A minor |
| | 2 nd subject | A minor |
| | 2 nd subject - version | B minor/E minor (V) |
| Development | New material (third group?) | F major (VI) |
| | 1 st subject (latter half) | D minor |
| | 2 nd subject New material | E minor, B minor B flat major |
| Recapitulation | 1 st and 2 nd subjects | A minor |
| | 2 nd subject | A minor, A major, D minor, |
| | New material | A major |
| Coda | 1 st subject | A minor |

The second movement, a 'Lament', *Larghetto affetuoso* (of only seven minutes duration in contrast with the fourteen minutes of the opening one) is more-or-less a monothematic movement, perhaps best described as a 'song form'. Although the introductory expansive, pentatonic melody is replaced by bar 21 with a second idea in the dominant (G major), the first theme is not totally dispelled; instead, the strong association with the original thematic material continues, as part of the first idea (stated by the clarinet at bar 3, and violins at bar 10) is now converted into a counter-melody ('cellos). After a lyrical and fluid developmental section which moves through a more tonally-distant province of E flat major, B flat major, G flat major and B major, there is a final semitone shift upward to C major, for the recapitulation at bar 46.

The pentatonic flavour of the second movement also dominates the Scherzo with a perpetuation of Coleridge-Taylor's affinity with Dvořákian pentatonicism emanating principally from the distinctive flattened seventh 'Ds' of the movement's distinctive Dorian modal flavour (a ubiquitous feature of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, also in the key of E minor). Coleridge-Taylor's modal harmony is perhaps even more unbridled than that of Dvořák, particularly in the 5/4 section of the movement (C major) where a melody that is powerfully evocative of a 'negro spiritual' is accompanied by root position harmonies prefiguring much of the harmonic sound of *Hiawatha*:

Musical example 5: Symphony, third movement, bb. 112 – 115

The musical score for measures 112-115 is written for five instruments: Clarinet in A (Cl. A), Bassoon (Bn.), Horn in F (Hn. F), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Cb.). The time signature is 5/4. The key signature has two flats. The music is marked 'dolce' and includes dynamic markings 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The Cello and Viola parts include 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco) markings.

In addition to Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony being at the forefront of Coleridge-Taylor's mind, the metre of the scherzo, noted above, elicits the further suggestion of Tchaikovsky's Sixth ('Pathétique') Symphony's slow movement in 5/4. Both works were premiered during the Philharmonic Society's 1894 season (the year following Tchaikovsky's visit to England, a matter of months before his death, to receive an honorary doctorate from Cambridge, together with Saint-Saëns, Bruch and Boïto); the immediate success of Tchaikovsky's symphony resulted in a further concert. This was the same year that Coleridge-Taylor began work on his *Fantasiestücke*, the second movement of which is also in 5/4. (The Scherzo of Coleridge-Taylor's, composed two years later, is the only other work produced by him that incorporates irregular 5/4 metre.) His thoughts on Tchaikovsky's symphony veered more towards the opinion of the work's manifestation of a typical Russian melancholy, rather than psychological symptoms: – 'Being asked if he did not think the *Symphonie Pathétique* the work "of a mind diseased", he replied, "I don't think there was much the matter with the mind

to which we owe the *Pathétique*. It is morbid; but then Russian thought in literature and music is largely morbid. No, no; I regard Tchaikowsky as a great composer, but a most unequal one".¹⁹ He also attributed the advance in the orchestration techniques of British composers directly to Tchaikovsky's symphony, stating that the 'extraordinary improvement in English orchestral writing is distinctly traceable to the influence of that great man – at any rate, it commenced immediately after the advent of the *Symphonie Pathétique*, which work was, until quite recently, far more often heard than any of the composer's other compositions'.²⁰

Jaeger, continuing his praise of Coleridge-Taylor as 'the coming man'²¹, mentioned the young composer's symphony in a letter to Herbert Brewer, conductor of the Three Choirs Festival for 1898 in Gloucester:

My object in writing is to draw your attention to a young friend of mine, S. Coleridge-Taylor, who is most wonderfully gifted and might write your committee a *fine* work in a short time. He has a quite Schubertian facility of invention and his stuff is always original and fresh. He is the coming man, I'm quite sure! He is only 22 or 23 but there is nothing immature or inartistic about his music. It is worth a great deal to me – I mean I value it very highly, because it is so original and often *beautiful*. Here is a real melodist at last.

Why not try him and make the '98 Festival memorable by the introduction of young S. C-T. He scores very well, in fact he conceives everything orchestrally and never touches the P.F. when composing! I suppose you know that his father is a negro. Hence his wonderful *freshness*.

Why not give him a commission? He would rise to the occasion and do something good.

His symphony in A minor is a most original work. We are doing a short Cantata of his, "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast"; delightful stuff! Won't *that* do for your Festival? You want a secular work don't you? I'll send you the M.S. score (P.F.) if you like (though at present in the printer's hands).

At any rate, keep your eye on the lad, and believe me, he is *the* man of the future in musical England.²²

¹⁹ Berwick Sayers, 84-5.

²⁰ Coleridge-Taylor, 'Is Technique Strangling Beauty? (From an English Point of View), *Etude* (Jan. 1911), 12.

²¹ See Chapter 3, page 104, for full transcript of this letter.

²² Letter from Jaeger to Brewer, 12 May 1898, quoted in A. H. Brewer, *Memories of choirs and cloisters (fifty years of music)* (London, 1931), 94.

The letter followed, and strengthened, Elgar's endeavour (prompted by Jaeger's enthusiastic letter to him about Coleridge-Taylor) to influence the Three Choirs committee to put forward Coleridge-Taylor, who had by now completed his studies at the R.C.M. Moreover, Elgar, who had been too busy with his dramatic cantata *Caractacus* for the Leeds Festival to accept a Three Choirs commission, saw it as a golden opportunity for his younger English contemporary to come before the public for the first time:

.....I have strongly urged them to make the offer (alas! An honorary one!) to Coleridge-Taylor. I don't in the least know if they will do so, but if it shd. come and he shd. consult you, you had better advise him to accept – nicht wahr?²³

Continuing overleaf:

It is not a bad introduction & I should dearly like to see a clever man get on and upset the little coterie of '3-Choir hacks'.²⁴

Coleridge-Taylor was duly offered the commission on the back of Elgar's recommendation (and it was also typical of Brewer's more enterprising spirit to engage new faces and new music, thereby taking a genuine risk); this interesting set of circumstances resulted in his *Ballade in A minor*, which he dedicated to Jaeger²⁵.

Elgar expressed both his delight and his reservations in a letter to Jaeger:

²³ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 17 Apr. 1898, GB-EBm L8307.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ A few months after the first performance Coleridge-Taylor dedicated and sent a piano score manuscript of the work, entitled *Rhapsody in A minor* for orchestra [GB-Lcm 5008] 'to Mr. & Mrs. Downing with all good wishes for a most happy Christmas & New Year' (inscribed 'Xmas/98'), including a note at the foot of the title page explaining: 'being the second M.S. of the "so-called *Ballade*" in its revised form.' (Henry Francis Downing, an ex-United States Consul of Luanda, Angola, was a co-founder of the African Association in 1897; he later served alongside Coleridge-Taylor on the executive committee for the Pan-African Congress of 1900, in London).

Your news about Coleridge-Taylor gives me great joy & I am happy in thinking I may have had a little to do in bringing the invitation about.

I hope he won't write anything too startling – that is founded on too remote a subject – of course he will want to shew the critics what's in him but the easy going agriculturalists who support these things also want a tiny bit of consideration and, if he can please them, without the slightest sacrifice of his own bent of course it wd be well in view of future commissions. You had better not tell him this from me, a stranger – or he will kick me if we ever meet, and – well I'm thin & bony & it might hurt.^x

^x I don't know – I never have been kicked.²⁶

Elgar did eventually meet Coleridge-Taylor three months later, at a rehearsal of the *Ballade*, shortly before the first performance at the Shire Hall on 12 September 1898 (in a programme that also embraced the overture to Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger*, Sullivan's *Golden Legend* and a choral ballad by the Bishop of Gloucester's daughter, Rosalind Ellicott)²⁷. He articulated his impressions to Jaeger:

It was a real refreshment to me to see C.T. & know him. I don't think the opening of the *Ballade* too fast when the 'chaps' are familiar with it – but, as I told him, the cantabile sections would gain infinitely by being taken slower (& rubato?) – the fiddles could then draw '3 souls out of the weaver' in many expressive places – I liked it all & loved some & adored a bit.....

I am afraid I gave you bad impression of my temper the other day – I am not really bitter & my heart warms to anything like naturalness & geniality (C.T. e.g.) – but I detest humbug & sham²⁸

Coleridge-Taylor's reciprocal respect for Elgar is made clear in the letter from Nicholas Kilburn to the latter, written two months after the composers' first meeting (and just over a week after the successful first performance of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* at the RCM):

²⁶ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 2 Jun. 1898, *GB-EBm L8309*.

²⁷ *Musical Times* (Oct. 1898), 667. Brewer (*Memories of choirs & cloisters*, 84) noted that 'Miss Rosalind Ellicott wrote more than one work for the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester and was a soloist of no mean ability. Her services were very much in request at Charitable Concerts in the country'.

²⁸ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 8/9 Sept. 1898, *GB-EBm L8318*.

You have been not only in our thoughts but also much nearer the surface of things than that, for on Wed: last we met Mr. Coleridge-Taylor, & the discovery that he (as we) knew & cared for your work, was a real joy. I long to tell you (viva voce) with what sympathy and fellowship he spoke of you, for writing of such delicate affairs is a kind of rough handling of a Schmetterling [butterfly]! I told him how you had spoken to me at Leeds about his *Orchestral Ballade*, & I assure you that few things in connection with our strivings has, for a long time, given me such a comfortable feeling in the region of the heart as both what was said & the sincerity which accomp'd it.

He is surely one of us, if I may go so far as to couple myself in comradeship with you, to whose accomplishment my sympathy is but a mere shadow. I mean that in feeling for art & in his views of the conditions in England & especially in London, he is very much in that position which I regard as your own & mine.²⁹

In anticipation of the forthcoming Three Choirs Festival, the September issue of the *Musical Times* was to include a sizeable profile on both Brewer, newly appointed and thus yet to establish himself, and on Coleridge-Taylor, the 'New Festival Composer'.³⁰ Coleridge-Taylor could do no wrong in Elgar's eyes, who remarked to Jaeger:

Brewer is very lucky – or rich – to get into the M.T. before he's done anything – S. T. deserves it & I rejoice thereat.³¹

The ensuing issue of the *Musical Times* was able to report that the *Ballade* had been remarkably successful. The critique's introductory categorisation of the composer as 'the young Anglo-African',³² proved symptomatic of the unfounded 'primitive' elements that were perceived in the music:

Assuredly it is stimulating, highly coloured, and sonorous even for the present generation of hearers. It has barbaric moments, moreover, and is by no means unworthy of a youth who follows Tchaïkowsky. Mr. Taylor will tone down in course of time. He is at the stage of crude feeling now; presently will come the tempering influence of judgement. The composer conducted his own work, and received a perfect "ovation".³³

²⁹ Letter from Kilburn to Elgar, 20 Nov. 1898, *GB-EBm L6544*.

³⁰ *Musical Times* (Sept. 1898), 600.

³¹ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger, 29 Aug. 1898. *GB-EBm L8317*.

³² *Musical Times* (Oct. 1898), 667.

³³ *Ibid.*

Berwick Sayers describes how Coleridge-Taylor took the ovation three times, preceding this with a description of the ‘amazement’ of the vast audience regarding the composer’s physiognomy:

The audience knew that the young composer was an Anglo-African, and we have the word of a South African who was present that the general impression and expectation were that Coleridge-Taylor would prove to be a white colonist. There was a general pause of astonishment at the entry of a short, swarthy, quick-moving and entirely conscious young man, whose enormous head, with its long thick hair, broad nostrils and flashing white teeth betrayed at once the race from which he came.³⁴

Other press reviews concurred with the favourable opinion expressed in the *Musical Times*, although they too (presumably because of the composer’s appearance) chose to alight on the supposed ‘savage’ nature of the work, erroneously and unashamedly drawing a parallel between Coleridge-Taylor’s ‘dual’ ancestry and the qualities in his music:

The Orchestral Ballad produced for the first time in public to-night is a remarkable and striking work, and possesses in notable degree the peculiar blending of barbaric and Western modes of expression which is so distinguishing a feature of this young composer’s efforts. (Standard)

It is a striking work, and it possesses a masterful force and half untamed and fiery exuberance that give it memorable distinctiveness. (Morning Post)

The work occupies barely a quarter of an hour in performance, but it is long since a Festival novelty has provided fifteen minutes packed so full of excitement and charm. In its alterations of barbaric gaiety with languid swaying melody, in its wayward rhythms and strange exotic harmonies, this remarkable work provokes comparisons with the best work of the Bohemian school, and emerges with credit from the ordeal of comparison. (Daily Graphic).

It has the semi-barbaric force and emphasis characteristic of the Slavonic school...(Daily Chronicle).

The theme, which we should be warranted in naming the second subject, is most fascinating in its naïve beauty, and placed as it is in contrast to a strenuous and most original theme of bluff and almost savage character, it is thrown into the best light. (Times)³⁵

³⁴ Berwick Sayers, 54.

³⁵ All quoted in *Musical Times* (Oct. 1898), 695.

Though the spirit of the Ballade is largely one of a Scherzo (whose ‘savage’ material once again promotes a variation of the Dvořákian *topos* of the characteristic i-III progression), the central focus of the work is essentially the highly lyrical and extended second subject, in the relative major. Here for the first time do we hear Coleridge-Taylor’s mature gift for protracted melody, which, with its predilection for sequence (‘x’) and wilting contours (‘y’), has much in common with the melodic *topoi* of Elgar:³⁶

Music example 6: Elgar, Enigma Variations (Nimrod, bb. 1 – 6)

Music example 7: Ballade in A minor, bb. 101 – 116

³⁶ Coleridge-Taylor’s affinity for Elgar’s thematic style is striking in this context, though, fascinatingly, the Ballade predates Elgar’s most characteristic thematic material in the *Enigma Variations* which were heard for the first time a year later, in 1899.

The development section begins in the dominant key (E minor), underpinned with a dominant pedal on B with the first group material. By bar 205 the tonality shifts to C major and then to C minor. The section is, however, ultimately unstable because of the constant switching back and forth between the third relationship of the seminal tonic and mediant. Statements of the opening phrase of the work are presented in E flat major and D flat major, before an unexpected submediant recapitulation (F major) takes place, subtly anticipated by the C major section of the development (dominant of F major). Coleridge-Taylor's formal concept here is thoroughly sophisticated. Having initially created a traditional sonata dialectic between first- and second-group ideas (in A minor and C major), he then allows the structural status of these two paragraphs to change. The first group assumes the role of turbulent development (engendered by its tonal instability and greater tonal dissolution) while the second subject, with its self-contained, tonally stable and self-developing attributes, is given the status of recapitulation, and it is only with the final measures of the work that the first idea, in A minor (bar 365) over a dominant pedal (which parallels the B pedal from the exposition i.e. C major to E minor over B pedal now F major to A minor over E pedal) is permitted to conclude the work in the mood of the opening. (Redolent, perhaps, of Tchaikovsky's climactic rhetoric, the final thirty bars, marked *piú mosso*, are based entirely around scale passages.)

At the time that he was offered the commission through which Coleridge-Taylor really made his mark and achieved public recognition, the composer was working on another orchestral work, *Four Characteristic Waltzes* (re-using material from the Piano Quintet for part of No. 3, *Valse de la Reine*); he also arranged this for

piano, violin and piano, and quintet³⁷ (the full orchestral score being published by Novello the following year). Jaeger forwarded the *Characteristic Waltzes* to Elgar, who once again conveyed his approval: 'Many thanks for the poetic vales – I have only time to look & like what I see.'³⁸ For the next Three Choirs Festival in Worcester (1899), Coleridge-Taylor composed another orchestral work, *Solemn Prelude*, which he again conducted himself. Elgar, whose *Enigma Variations* – receiving their very first hearing – were also on the programme, commented (to Jaeger) that:

Taylor's prelude went well except a trifle of unsteadiness in the scale passages & one other place – at least that's all I (a borrel man) could discover: I revelled in the opening & the close but I could not 'sequentiate' (!) the middle: he is a dear chap & it's all so human and yearning.³⁹

The performance of the Variations was really good especially you – slow & fine it sounded. Finale sounded gorgeous but the room is small.⁴⁰

The *Musical Times* considered it an 'admirable rendering'⁴¹ of Coleridge-Taylor's work, adding that 'the young Anglo-African musician has so rapidly made his mark as a composer that any new work from his pen is anticipated with eager interest'.⁴² *The Times*, too, in an extensive report, was quick to remark on his 'comparatively rapid rise to such distinction'⁴³, but questioned whether or not it was 'more rapid than his creative faculty can bear'⁴⁴. It continued:

Mr. Coleridge-Taylor must be measured by his own standard, and here he undoubtedly falls short of it. The Prelude, which is in the key of B minor, is to this extent rhapsodical in that the composer has adopted none of the recognised classical forms, but as no poetic idea is vouchsafed in the programme the work must be judged as absolute music. In the opening section there is some of that warmth of colouring, and of passion, perhaps, which are characteristic of most of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's work, but the trail of Tchaikowsky, and

³⁷ *Musical Times* (1 Jun. 1898), 402; (1 Feb. 1901), 115; (1 Oct. 1903), 670.

³⁸ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger (5 Jun. 1898), *GB-EBm L8310*.

³⁹ By the beginning of the following year Elgar's opinion of this work, and of Coleridge-Taylor, had changed considerably for the worse – see Chapter 3, p. 101/2.

⁴⁰ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger (14 Sept. 1899), *GB-EBm L8362*.

⁴¹ *Musical Times* (1 Oct. 1899), 669; the popularity of this work and others such as the *Variations on an African Air* can be measured by Novello's willingness to publish the scores in piano reduction, an option generally only reserved by the publisher for works with real commercial potential. Most of Elgar's orchestral works enjoyed this treatment including the two symphonies and the Violin Concerto.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *The Times* (14 Sept. 1899), 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

especially of the “pathetic” symphony, seems over it. A later section only escapes triteness by the clever harmonization. Certainly the prelude lacks the poignancy of expression of the Russian master, though it is not for this that we express disappointment. A single hearing left the impression that the work is more scholarly but less spontaneous than its best predecessor from the same brain, and it is hardly necessary to state that technically there is little but high praise to be given.⁴⁵

It was perhaps such comments that led Elgar to note:

I heard from C. Taylor in response to a friendly note I sent him – I wish the critics had a little more imagination when British music is concerned: if it’s cut & dried they sneer at us & if we do shew a bit of real feeling & emotion they laugh at it...⁴⁶

It is not surprising that Elgar felt a keen affinity for *Solemn Prelude*. Its title suggests perhaps that the piece is short or introductory, but the scale of Coleridge-Taylor’s conception is largely symphonic; indeed the piece has more in common with those expansive slow movements of late nineteenth-century symphonists such as Tchaikovsky (notably the ‘Pathétique’, the key of which is shared by *Solemn Prelude*) which are dominated by two well defined, self-developing melodies in a largely rhapsodic form that is enhanced by the arresting effects of unexpected modulation (note the modulation to F on page 3 of the piano edition) and by the sheer impact of the climactic material at the heart of the developmental phase. Moreover, Coleridge-Taylor’s melodic style here is shot through with sequential writing (even more so than the secondary material of the *Ballade*), the contours of which strongly resemble Elgar’s penchant for falling sixths and sevenths, and the dissonant appoggiaturas and passing notes in many ways anticipate those thoroughly distinctive gestures of Elgar’s later style. Indeed this piece, with its sedate, introspective yet probing sentiment shares a profundity with the slow movement of Elgar’s *Second Symphony* and the much-neglected *Coronation March* of 1911.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Letter from Elgar to Jaeger (21 Sept. 1899), *GB-EBm L8364*.

Coleridge-Taylor's other orchestral essays dating from the opening years of the turn of the century included: the suite *Scenes from an Everyday Romance*, a four-movement salon piece crafted to appeal to a commercial audience, which he conducted at Queen's Hall on 24 May 1900;⁴⁷ *Idyll* op.44, written for the 1901 Three Choirs Festival (Gloucester), which was an adaptation of material from the second movement of his Symphony; *Four Novelletten* for strings, tambourine and triangle (1902), the third movement of which also bears similarities to the Symphony (Scherzo); and *Hemo Dance* op. 47 no. 2 1902. Another work, *From the Prairie*, *Rhapsody for full orchestra*, performed posthumously, remains undated. Attractive, melodic pieces, in a light vein, these works (save *From the Prairie*) were largely composed to satisfy the insatiable appetite of Novello and an Edwardian public hungry for music of a more entertaining and unchallenging nature and for the growing popularity of concerts in which light music was frequently juxtaposed next to more substantial 'serious' music (such as those programmes of Henry Wood and the London Promenade Concerts and Cowen with the Hallé and Scottish Orchestras).

During 1907 Coleridge-Taylor embarked upon a *Concertstück* in A for 'cello & orchestra, in variation form. This unpublished work is missing⁴⁸; however, Coleridge-Taylor's correspondence with his friend Read tells us that he had completed it by the summer of 1907: 'I've just done a Concertstuck for Cello and Orchestra, which is being played at New Brighton early in July'.⁴⁹ The work had been immediately preceded by another piece in variation form, one that would come to

⁴⁷ *Musical Times* (1 Jun. 1900), 393.

⁴⁸ See Berwick Sayers, 205–6 and Herbert Antcliffe, 'Some Notes on Coleridge-Taylor', *Musical Quarterly* VIII 2 (1922), 183, for brief analyses of this piece, which both term as a '*Fantasiestück*'.

⁴⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read (14 Jun. 1907), US-NYpm MFC C693.R284(10). The concert took place on 7 July. The *Concertstück* was first heard at New Brighton in a programme entirely made up of Coleridge-Taylor's works. As a new and modern figure in British music, he had come to the attention of Granville Bantock (and William Wallace) who were organising pioneering concerts of contemporary British works at the northern resort, and had already included programmes by Parry, Stanford and Elgar.

epitomise the apogee of his entire orchestral output, his *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*.

(ii) VARIATIONS ON A THEME: THE AFRICAN CONNECTION

The closing months of 1905 through to the summer of 1906 saw Coleridge-Taylor at work on his *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*. A specific 'African' appellation (in contrast with the more 'general' titles of pieces such as *Moorish Tone Pictures* and *Moorish Dance*)⁵⁰ had been similarly (and rather sporadically) applied by the composer to several of his previous works (mainly for smaller forces) from 1897 onwards: for instance the *African Romances* (1897), a set of seven songs which were the fruit of Coleridge-Taylor's early collaboration with Paul Laurence Dunbar; an *African Suite* for piano (1898) also inspired by Dunbar's work (the fourth movement of which - *Danse Nègre* - originally began life as a string quintet but was also transcribed for violin and piano, and orchestra); *Four African Dances* for piano (1904), dedicated to the violinist John Saunders (leader of the New Symphony Orchestra⁵¹ and the South Place Sunday Concerts), in which Coleridge-Taylor notes that the second dance is 'from a traditional African melody'⁵² and the fourth one 'arranged from African melody'⁵³, and *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* (1905) for

⁵⁰ See Earl Stewart & Jane Duran, 'Coleridge-Taylor: Concatenationism and Essentialism in an Anglo-African Composer', *American Philosophical Association Newsletter, on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Vol. 99 No. 1, Fall 1999) who assert that Coleridge-Taylor's music 'employed an Africanized representationalism in such a way that his compositions displayed culturally essentialist [i. e. rooted in black/African culture] elements' to differing extents, including those works where 'cultural essentialism is inferred from the titles and subject matter of the poetry' through to the strongest form of representation 'which lends itself to concatenationism because of the small-scale motifs occurring in works in which he used Black folk idioms, particularly African American spirituals'.

⁵¹ *Musical Times*, 1 Dec. 1907, 809.

⁵² Coleridge-Taylor appended this description (as a footnote) in the manuscript and published score of the *African Dances* (GB-Lbl ADD 54370).

⁵³ This description appeared *only* in the manuscript.

piano. The latter were a direct consequence of his first trip to America, and two of them fuelled two subsequent orchestral works. The most immediate was the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air* (based upon No. 14, 'I'm troubled in mind'), and then No. 8, 'The Bamboula (African Dance)', a West Indian tune, was re-used to form the keystone of *The Bamboula* of 1910 (a 'rhapsodic dance' for full orchestra). Two of Coleridge-Taylor's earlier orchestral pieces, *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1901) and the Commemoration March *Ethiopia Saluting the Colours* (1902) also demonstrate an African connection, regarding the subject of liberation from slavery.

Coleridge-Taylor produced *Toussaint L'Ouverture* in the same year as the inauguration of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society in Washington, which was set up to champion and sing his works. The Society's inception was brought about principally (after 'keenly watching Coleridge-Taylor's mercurial rise to fame'⁵⁴) through the efforts of Maime Hilyer's Treble Clef Club: 'a small band of married women music-lovers, who immediately pledged themselves to promote the cause. A meeting of the prominent musical people was called at my home. There and then was born the S. Coleridge-Taylor Society'.⁵⁵ In addition to the correspondence between Coleridge-Taylor and the Hilyers throughout this period, his acknowledgement of their homage was explicitly marked by his dedication of *Ethiopia Saluting the Colours* (first performed 5 December 1902 by the Croydon Conservatoire String Orchestra, alongside two of his *Novelletten* and Dvořák's Serenade for Strings) 'to the treble clef club, Washington U.S.A; with all good wishes'.⁵⁶ The caption of this work sets out a quotation (first three lines only, inscribed in the top left-hand corner of the manuscript) from the piece after which it is

⁵⁴ Ellsworth Janifer, 'Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in Washington', *Phylon* 28 no. 2 (summer 1967), 185.

⁵⁵ Maime Hilyer, 'Tribute', quoted in Berwick Sayers, 109.

⁵⁶ Coleridge-Taylor, *Ethiopia Saluting the Colours* (1902).

named - Walt Whitman's topical poem of 1867 (when media interest in Ethiopia⁵⁷ was fuelled after the British consul and his team were taken hostage there, prompting a successful British invasion to release them):

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,
With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony feet?
Why, rising by the roadside here, do you the colours greet?

Coleridge-Taylor's only other setting of Whitman also occurred during this same period, when he set 'Beat, beat, drums' as part of his *Six American Lyrics* op. 45, published by Novello in 1903⁵⁸ (the other five of the set embraced four of Ella Wheeler Wilcox and one of John Greenleaf Whittier).

The source Coleridge-Taylor chose for his orchestral march, Whitman's American Civil War poem, depicts a 'dusky' old slave woman (who personifies Ethiopia in her yellow, red and green turban - the traditional colours of the Ethiopian flag) and her reverence towards the American flag which embodies liberation from slavery in the American South as General William Sherman's army marches by her door. Both Gustav Holst and William Henry Bell, ('an RAM student who studied counterpoint with Stanford'⁵⁹) had already used the poet as a source for orchestral works in 1899 (Holst's *Whitman Overture* op. 7, and Bell's *Walt Whitman: a Symphony in C minor*), just a year after the Irish composer Charles Wood's setting of *Ethiopia Saluting the Colours* (Good, 1898) as a solo song, was published (at Stanford's insistence⁶⁰). Around 1908 Vaughan Williams also made sketches to set

⁵⁷ The composer showed more than a passing interest in Ethiopian current affairs - Berwick Sayers, 264, notes the preservation amongst Coleridge-Taylor's papers of 'various cuttings he had taken from London newspapers, dealing with the questions of Ethiopianism'.

⁵⁸ See *Musical Times* (Sept. 1903), 609 for the review of the volume. See *GB-Lcm 4864* for the full score (MS, baritone and orchestra) of the setting of Whitman's poem.

⁵⁹ Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man & Musician* (Oxford, 2002), 356.

⁶⁰ Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the early 20th century* (London, 1984), 28.

the same poem for soprano, narrator and humming chorus⁶¹, although the work never came to fruition.

During 1901 Coleridge-Taylor had worked concomitantly on a number of projects, including *Toussaint L'Ouverture* and his cantata *The Blind Girl of Castél Cuillé*, which were both premièred in the same month. The *Musical Times* favourably drew the conclusion from *Toussaint's* first performance, on 26 October 1901 at Queens Hall that 'in its entirety the overture shows advance on Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's previous writings for orchestra.'⁶² The subject matter of *Toussaint L'Ouverture* directly reflected Coleridge-Taylor's commitment to, and close involvement with, the Pan-African Conference (held at the turn of the century when imperialism was at its height), where, in addition to contributing to the musical programme during the three-day congress (23 to 25 July), the composer was also elected to serve on the executive committee for two years (meetings were scheduled to be biennial, and the 1904 one was to be held in Haiti 'to add to the solemnity of the celebration of Haitian freedom'⁶³). The Conference set up a Pan-African Association, whose main aims and objectives were to improve the position of Africans worldwide, encouraging them and their descendants in educational, industrial and commercial enterprise (by campaigning for legislation to ensure civil and political rights), to produce relevant statistics, and to raise funds in order to facilitate these proposals.⁶⁴ It was thus no coincidence that Coleridge-Taylor based his main composition of 1901, an orchestral overture, on the historical figure François Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture (c. 1743 – Apr. 1803), a self-educated Haitian slave (legally freed in 1777). An inspirational leader of the black rebellion movement that enfranchised

⁶¹ Ibid, 30.

⁶² *Musical Times* 'Mr. Robert Newman's Symphony and Albert Hall Concerts' (Dec. 1901), 819.

⁶³ See Owen Mathurin, *Henry Sylvester Williams & the origins of the Pan-African Movement 1869 – 1911* (Westport, 1976), 68.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

Haitian slaves in the late eighteenth century, Toussaint only embraced the nickname L'Ouverture (meaning 'the opening')⁶⁵ after he became renowned through a series of military victories; these culminated in 1801 when, after conquering St. Domingo (contravening orders from Napoleon, then First Consul of France) Toussaint finally gained control of the whole island, restoring a stable government and economy⁶⁶ and proclaiming himself governor-general-for-life. Napoleon, unsurprisingly, sent indomitable troops the following year, under his brother-in-law Leclerc. Following an inevitable defeat, Toussaint agreed to meet with Leclerc, who nonetheless had him seized and imprisoned in France, from where Toussaint made his appeal:

When I left the ship, I was put into a carriage. I hoped then that I was to be taken before a tribunal to give an account of my conduct, and to be judged. Far from it; without a moments rest I was taken to a fort on the frontiers of the Republic, and confined in a frightful dungeon. It is from the depths of this dreary prison that I appeal to the justice and magnanimity of the First Consul. He is too noble and too good a general to turn away from an old soldier, covered with wounds in the service of his country, without giving him the opportunity to justify himself, and to have judgement pronounced upon him....
First Consul, father of all soldiers, upright judge, defender of innocence, pronounce my destiny..... I rely entirely upon your justice and wisdom!⁶⁷

Subjected to maltreatment and starvation, Toussaint died in prison in April 1803.

The first 'History of Toussaint L'Ouverture' was published in London later that year, (with a new edition appearing in 1814⁶⁸) which chronicled the events of the hero's life and detailed various elements of his contradictory character. This literature would have been available (it is possible that he may well have consulted it) for the

⁶⁵ There are several accounts of why Toussaint chose the name: the most probable is the large-scale implication that he would open the way for emancipation from slavery. Others range from a literal interpretation of the gap he consistently broke through enemy ranks, to an explanation that refers to his two missing front teeth, lost in battle! See James G. Leyburn, *The Haitian People* (Connecticut, 1941).

⁶⁶ See the Memoir of Toussaint L'Ouverture, published within Rev. John R. Beard, *Toussaint L'Ouverture: A Biography & Autobiography* (Boston, 1863), 295 – 328.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 325-6, 328.

⁶⁸ M. D. Stephens, *The History of Toussaint Louverture* (London, 1803; 2nd edn. 1814).

composer to further his knowledge of the black Haitian rebel leader, and Coleridge-Taylor's '*Huldigungsmarsch*'⁶⁹ was 'designed to interpret and illustrate the character and tragedy of one of the most striking personalities that the negro race has given to the world'⁷⁰, presenting both 'the warlike and tenderer sides of the negro patriot'⁷¹. The piece centres principally on the two main, and striking, key areas of B minor and its Neapolitan neighbour, C major. The first theme, in B minor and then the relative major (D major), is a Negro (possibly pseudo- Negro) spiritual:

Music example 8: Toussaint L'Ouverture bb. 3 – 5



A continuation of the same material in A minor then leads to a short animated section in E minor/G major (double-tonics, bars 50 – 68). The new idea which follows it, *con tenerezza* (with tenderness), in C major, in the violins (bars 69 – 93), is repeated (bars 94 – 110) with a taste of the lush scoring (first violins - melody, strings and woodwind – countermelody, and brass and double bass – harmony) that is also apparent in the later *African Air* variations. With the conclusion of the C major section there is a return to the opening material again (in E minor), which is then developed (bars 119 – 208), incorporating the keys of D minor (bar 127) and G minor (bar 131). The brass predominate the closing stages of the development of the first subjects, powerfully delivering the opening theme sequentially in chords:

⁶⁹ Herbert Antcliffe, 189.

⁷⁰ Berwick Sayers, 259.

⁷¹ *The Times* (28 Oct. 1901), 13.

Music example 9: *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, bb. 139 – 150

139 *Animato* *accel. poco a poco* *accel.*

Hn. (in F)

Trpts. (in F)

I. II.

Tbn. III. e tuba

147

After the sound is expanded even further with the full orchestra, in D flat major and F major, a series of dominant minor ninths (of E, at bar 164 and of B flat at bar 167) lead to the dominant of E flat major (bar 173) for the development of second subject material, now orchestrated for oboe, moving to the key of B minor at bar 195. The dominant pedal from bar 203 delivers us to the recapitulation (bar 209), which brings back both the material from the exposition, formerly heard in D major and A minor (bars 37 and 41). The second subject, originally in C major, now returns (again in the violins), this time in D major; though the conventional relative it here is more

arresting given its original Neapolitan source. Coleridge-Taylor reserves B major as his main coda (over a dominant pedal from bar 322 – 331), which the manuscript indicates has a revised ending.

Although the work is in sonata form, the rhetoric of the overture is almost as much that of a symphonic tone poem (based on the opening four-note germ in bar three) as it is an overture, with several substantial episodes of conspicuous narrative, and long self-developing melodies, features analogous with the practices of Liszt's symphonic essays (especially the earlier symphonic poems) and Dvořák's later symphonic poems of the 1890s (notably *The Water Goblin* and *The Noonday Witch*). Moreover, from the thematic material, the lush scoring and orchestration in the work, it is yet again indicative of Coleridge-Taylor's natural gifts, that he was a composer who, like Elgar, was ultimately much more at ease in conceiving *echt* orchestral or instrumental ideas.

The apex of Coleridge-Taylor's orchestral catalogue, the Symphonic Variations of 1905/6, received its first airing when it opened the last Philharmonic Society concert of the season at Queens Hall on 14 June 1906⁷². Marking the significance of the melody on which it was based, Coleridge-Taylor made time to drop a line and review clipping to Hilyer a month after the performance, whilst in the midst of planning a second trip to America:

I thought you would be interested in the enclosed, especially as it is connected with a Negro Melody.

This is not the moment for me to write a letter, as I'm just off to town.

Please tell Mr. Gray [secretary of the SCT Choral Society] that I'm writing to him at the end of the week to arrange dates, which I'm afraid will have to run rather closely this time!

Greatest haste, and with kindest regards to you, Mrs. Hilyer, and ALL.⁷³

Coleridge-Taylor highlighted the relevant paragraph of the enclosed press cutting:

⁷² *Musical Times* (1 July 1906), 485.

⁷³ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Hilyer, 18 Jul. 1906. *US-Whu*.

Two performances were given last week. The first of these was a set of “Orchestral Variations on an African Theme”, by S. Coleridge Taylor. The theme is said to be an existent African song, “I’m troubled in mind”, a genuine negro tune, which presents little attraction by itself. But it has been so cleverly treated, varied in key, time, presentment, and orchestral colouring, that it forms quite an attractive piece of value, and deserves re-hearing, and not merely to be put on the shelf, and listed as a forgotten Opus. The work is replete with life and strength and ingenuity. The composer, who conducted an admirably presented performance was several times recalled to the platform on the conclusion of this piece.⁷⁴

The work had obviously been well received. Additional glowing extracts from ten national reviews were reprinted in the *Musical Times* from July to October, as an advertisement for the forthcoming piano arrangement that was already in the press⁷⁵, and Coleridge-Taylor’s own classification of the ‘air’ was also printed in the October edition:

The melody on which the variations are built is, the composer says, ‘well known in America under the title of “I’m troubled in mind”’. It is a genuine negro tune, which, although hailing from America, so closely resembles an existent African song that the charge of white influence can scarcely be made.’⁷⁶

Coleridge-Taylor’s attitude towards the discrepancy in the origins of negro spirituals, the music which had transcended and survived ‘the brutality of slavery’⁷⁷, had already been clearly set out in the preface to his *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* (which he stresses are set out as a series of variations, ‘therefore my share in the matter can be clearly traced, and must not be confounded with any idea of “improving” the original material any more than Brahms’ Variations on the Haydn Theme “improved” that’⁷⁸):

There is a great distinction between the *African Negro* and the *American Negro Melodies*. The African would seem to be more martial and free in character, whereas the American are more personal and tender, though notable exceptions to this rule can be found on either side. One of the most striking points regarding this music is, in the author’s opinion, its likeness to that of the Caucasian race. The native music of India, China and Japan, and in fact all non-European music, is to our more cultivated ears most unsatisfactory, in its monotony and shapelessness. The music of Africa (I am not thinking of American Negro music, which may

⁷⁴ *Musical News* (Jun. 1906), 628.

⁷⁵ See *Musical Times* (1 Jul., 1 Aug., 1 Sept. and 1 Oct. 1906), 507, 575, 643 and 708 respectively.

⁷⁶ *Musical Times* (Oct. 1906), 682.

⁷⁷ Graeme Ewens, *Africa O-Ye! A celebration of African Music* (Middlesex, 1991), 27.

⁷⁸ Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, 1904. Foreword.

or may not have felt some white influence) is the great and noteworthy exception. Primitive as it is, it nevertheless has all the elements of the European folk-song and it is remarkable that no alterations have had to be made before treating the Melodies.⁷⁹

His precept of assimilating ‘the beautiful folk-music of my race’⁸⁰ into the fabric of a thoroughly Western form, was one which was exemplified in particular by black American musicians such as Clarence Cameron White (who studied in London with Coleridge-Taylor firstly in 1906, and then between the years of 1908 and 1910) and the composer Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882 – 1943), who stated that:

...it is gratifying to see the large number of composers who have recently turned to the use of Indian and Negro folk tunes, if not as actual themes, as the acknowledged source of their musical inspiration...In this country we are, musically, in much the same position as a man who owns a valuable mine. The fact that there are minerals in the ground, that he has that great supply of wealth stored up, will mean little to the owner unless he utilizes it. We have this wonderful store of folk music – the melodies of an enslaved people, who poured out their longings, their griefs [*sic*] and their aspirations in the one, great universal language. But this store will be of no value unless we utilize it, unless we treat it in such a manner that it can be presented in choral form, in lyric and operatic works, in concertos and suites and salon music – unless our musical architects take the rough timber of Negro themes and fashion from it music which will prove that we, too, have national feelings and characteristics, as have the European peoples whose forms we have zealously followed for so long.....There is a great need of education, continued education, for the Negro, that he may properly appreciate the rare musical legacy bequeathed to him by his ancestors. At the same time there is a still greater need for doing away with the slavish admiration in which the average American musician has held all things European. Surely, when a Dvořák, a Busoni, a Coleridge-Taylor and a Laparra can come over here and in a few months gather themes for some of their greatest works – gathering them from our slighted and ignored native music – it is not too much to hope that an increasing number of our own musicians will come to appreciate fully the great fund of material that lies waiting at their hand.⁸¹

Since elements of the American spiritual tradition derived from the same musical and historical source of African culture as African spirituals, the American plantation melodies ‘incorporated two very important qualities believed necessary for the development of black consciousness in the USA. They encapsulated the pain and

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ May Stanley, ‘R. N. Dett, of Hampton Institute: Helping to Lay the Foundation for Negro Music of the Future’, *The Black Perspective in Music* I (Spring 1973), 65- 66. Reprinted from *Musical America* (July 1918), 17.

struggle of slavery, and they contained traces of music and culture from pre-slavery days. They were thus part of the essential heritage of Black Americans as Africans.’⁸² The spiritual upon which Coleridge-Taylor’s *Variations* were based, *I’m Troubled in Mind*, was one that featured widely in the repertoire of the Fisk Jubilee Singers (see Chapter 3). The first anthology of slave songs ‘appeared in 1843, without musical notation, in a series of three articles by a Methodist Church missionary known only as “c”. Collections that included musical notation began to appear in the 1850’s’⁸³. Professor Theodore F. Seward, was the ‘distinguished teacher and composer’⁸⁴ who notated the Jubilee Singers’ songs for the first time, which, ‘published in book form, were sold by hundreds at their concerts’⁸⁵. He comprehensively noted above this particular melody that ‘the person who furnished this song (Mrs. Brown of Nashville, formerly a slave), stated that she first heard it from her old father when she was a child. After he had been whipped he always went and sat upon a certain log near his cabin, and with the tears streaming down his cheeks, sang this song with so much pathos that few could listen without weeping from sympathy: and even his cruel oppressors were not wholly unmoved.’⁸⁶ The *Musical News*’ consideration that this plain, inornate melody proffered ‘little attraction by itself’⁸⁷ suggests that Coleridge-Taylor had absorbed Stanford’s training at the RCM well, particularly regarding the professor’s ‘three essentials’ advocated for the successful choice of theme upon which to base variations:

⁸² George Revill, ‘Hiawatha and Pan-Africanism: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912), a Black Composer in Suburban London’, *Ecumene* 1995, 2 (3), 255.

⁸³ Cleveland Public Library, *Index to Negro Spirituals*, repr. 1991 as Center for Black Music Research Monograph No. 3, v.

⁸⁴ J. B. T. Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers*, 38.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Marsh, 207.

⁸⁷ *Musical News* (Jun. 1906), 628.

firstly, that it should contain sufficient material to vary; secondly, that it should have at least one striking feature; thirdly, that it should be simple.⁸⁸

Indeed, Stanford had made a point of teaching variations, steadfastly subscribing to the belief that:

Variations are to free composition what counterpoint is to technique – the master-key of the whole building. Interesting in themselves to elaborate, they are of still greater service in training the mind to deal easily with the most difficult problems in works of larger proportions. Sections of sonata form, such as the episodes between the statements of themes, the development (or free fantasia), and the coda, all depend upon the knowledge of writing variations; and the repetitions of the main themes themselves become far more intrinsically interesting in the hands of a composer who is well practised in variation writing. It should be clearly understood that we do not use the term variation from the point of view of mere ornamentation or passage writing on the basis of a theme. It is easy even among the old masters to distinguish those who knew every nook and corner of this branch of their craft from those who did not.....⁸⁹

The ‘old masters’ character variations included Beethoven’s quintessential *Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli* (1819 – 23) and Schumann’s *Etudes Symphoniques* (1834 –7, rev. 1852) for piano, and Brahms’ orchestral *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* (1873). Numbered among other orchestral variation sets of the late nineteenth century were Dvořák’s *Symphonic Variations* (1877), Tchaikovsky’s *Variations on a Rococo Theme, for ‘Cello and Orchestra* (1878) and his Third Suite for Orchestra of which the *Theme & Variations* movement is often performed separately (1884), Franck’s innovative continuous free variation, *Variations symphoniques* (1885), followed by the programmatic orchestral variations of D’Indy’s *Istar* (1896) and Strauss’s *Don Quixote* (1896/7), and, after the turn of the century, Reger’s *Variations on a Theme by J. A. Hiller* (1907) and Bossi’s *Orchestral Variations* of 1908, both of which preserved ‘the traditional *caesurae* of earlier variations.’⁹⁰ Of the numerous British examples in the genre during this period, Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* (1898/9)

⁸⁸ Stanford, *Musical Composition* (London 1911; repr. 1922), 53

⁸⁹ Stanford, 51.

⁹⁰ Robert U. Nelson, *The Technique of Variation* (California, 1948; repr. London, 1949), 112.

conceivably provides the most obvious precedent. However, all three of Hurlstone's sets of variations (*Variations on an Original Theme*, 1896, *Variations on a Hungarian Air*, 1899 and *Fantasie-Variations on a Swedish Air*, 1903) predate Coleridge-Taylor's, and a plethora of additional antecedents include: Delius, *Appalachia: Variations on an Old Slave Song* (1896, rev. 1904); Parry, *Symphonic Variations* (1897); Stanford, *Concert Variations upon an English Theme* (1897/8); Bantock, *Helena Variations* (1899); Gatty, *Variations on the Air of Old King Cole* (1899); Wood, *Patrick Sarsfield: Symphonic Variations on an Irish Air* (1899) and Holbrooke, *Three Blind Mice: Symphonic Variations on an Old English Air* (1900). Subsequent works in the orchestral variation tradition were produced by Delius (*Brigg Fair: An English Rhapsody*, 1907), O'Neill (*Theme and Variations on an Irish Air*, 1910), Goossens (*Variations on an Old Chinese Theme*, 1912), Harty (*Variations on a Dublin Air*, 1912) and Somervell (*Normandy, Symphonic Variations*, 1912). A few years after Coleridge-Taylor's death, Farrar (who was killed in action in 1918), produced his *Variations on an Old British Sea Song* (1915).

Coleridge-Taylor's *Variations* present an ambiguous tone; although based on an African air, *ergo* displaying an affinity and sympathy with black music, the intricate craftsmanship and sophistication of the work clearly shows the intellectual side that came out of his training in the 1890's, and a microcosm of this equivocality is manifested in the scheme of double tonics that are worked out throughout the piece. The spiritual theme itself is in two parts (the second half – which incorporates three verses - is a repeat of the chorus that forms the first half), and although in F minor, also presents the duality of A flat major:

Music example 10: *I'm Troubled in Mind*

The musical score is written in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two staves. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: "I'm troubled, I'm troubled, I'm troubled in mind. If Je-sus don't help me, I sure-ly will die. I O". The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics: "Je-sus, my Sa-viour, on thee I'll de-pend. When troubles are near me, you'll be my true friend." The piece concludes with a double bar line and the initials "D.C." (Da Capo).

2. When laden with trouble and burdened with grief,
To Jesus in secret I'll go for relief.
Chorus - I'm troubled, &c.
3. In dark days of bondage to Jesus I prayed,
To help me to bear it, and he gave me his aid.
Chorus - I'm troubled, &c.

The overall tonal structure of the fourteen variations exhibits an economical use of new keys (in the same manner that 'Dvořák's *Symphonic Variations* only delivers four new key areas and Elgar's *Enigma Variations* only two), with the main emphasis placed on the third relationship of E and G:

Table 2: Coleridge-Taylor, *Symphonic Variations*

| Key | e | G | B | E | e | B \flat | G | c | E | C | E | D | G | G | G/e |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Variation | T | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | (9) | (10) | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Bar No. | 1 | 23 | 64 | 148 | 206 | 261 | 291 | 325 | 409 | 436 | 458 | 507 | 521 | 563 | 615 |
| Time Signature | 4/4 | 3/4 | 3/4 | 2/4 | 2/4 | 4/4 | 3/4 | 2/4 | 3/4 | | | 4/4 | 3/4 | 4/4 | 4/4 |
| Tempo | <i>Molto moderato (maestoso)</i> | <i>Un poco più con moto</i> | <i>Allegro molto</i> | <i>Allegro appassionato</i> | <i>Allegro molto (tempo primo)</i> | <i>Moderato</i> | <i>Allegro moderato</i> | <i>Allegro molto</i> | <i>Andante</i> | <i>Poco più moto</i> | <i>Tempo primo (andante)</i> | <i>Con furia</i> | <i>Lento</i> | <i>Allegro ma non troppo</i> | <i>Molto moderato</i> |

The theme (which is preceded by an opening timpani roll on B, immediately creating a tonal ambiguity of E minor and G major) with its inherent modal flattened seventh,

is first stated by the trombones (*Molto moderato (maestoso)*). The tonal structure leads from tonic to dominant (B minor), and then from dominant back to tonic with the addition of horns. A brief transitional rhapsodic interlude leads to the first variation (in two-bar phrases, with a little arabesque in-between), which, again, is worked around the double tonic of E minor and G major. The form is that of a ternary minuet and the contrasting middle section, from bars 34 to 48, gives us a taste of E minor on the dominant (although it is never tonicized) before returning to G major. Variation 2, a scherzo waltz, is a much more extensive variation in eight-bar phrases, which modulates to E minor by bar 96. New material is introduced at bar 100, after which the music moves back to the key of B major for the final few bars.

Variation 3 is another ternary structure, and begins with an expansive melody in the violins, in E major (1st violins based on the second half of the theme, 2nd violins also interjecting the first part of the theme). A Brahms-like phrase extension (bar 160 to 163) passes through the dominant, B major, arriving at G sharp minor at bar 171. This does not progress to its dominant (C sharp minor) but is consolidated at bar 180 with a repeat of the opening material of the variation in the new key of G sharp minor, emphasising yet ‘distorting’ the elements of the original double tonic at the outset of the piece – i.e. E minor and G major – by contrasting E major (the tonic major) with G sharp minor (the mediant – and *not* the relative). Bar 196 then sees a move back to the dominant (B major) of the home key in preparation for the next variation in E minor, which is effectively a recapitulation of variation two (in the same way as the original theme itself has two repeated parts). Here we get a taste of Coleridge-Taylor’s desire to create a more rhapsodic symphonic form that cuts across the more traditional successional form of variation writing.

The fifth variation builds up new material from what has gone before (i. e. the main tune in variation 3). Still working with the same kind of tonal principles, the section begins in the key of B flat (whose tonal 'colour' is enhanced by the intrusion of its dominant in minor form) and then modulates to an implied G minor by way of an elongated dominant (D major), and this duality of B flat and G reflects that of the first phrase of the theme. Aside from finding it 'one of the most beautiful of negro melodies'⁹¹, the 'simple theme' selected by Coleridge-Taylor for his *Variations* significantly fulfils the requirement of providing considerable potential for continual tonal fluctuation which is ultimately one of the piece's seminal functions. A reversal of these elements occurs in Variation 7 when the tonal scheme moves from minor (C minor) to major (E flat major), and the following variation, which remains rooted in E major (moving only briefly to the subdominant) both extends and reworks previous material heard in variation 5 in common time and also harks immediately back to the beginning of the work through another restatement of the theme in the trombones. An elision of the last four bars of the theme on the tonic leads to variation 9 in C major (rather than closer relationship of C sharp minor), which is even more developmental. Variation 10 is again in E major, a choice of key which further emphasises the formal concept of one larger variation in ternary form through variations eight to ten, with the last half of variation 10 generating both a coda and transition to the next variation. Number 11 (like number 6), is very brief, with a vigorous and constantly changing rhythm, in the manner of a Dvořákian *Con Furiante*. Coleridge-Taylor builds a recapitulation of material again here, as the violin theme has been heard previously (see variations 2 and 5). From this point, as the variations become noticeably more obtuse and telescoped, so the differentiation between them becomes increasingly

⁹¹ Coleridge-Taylor, *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, 71.

obscure as the end of the piece approaches. The twelfth variation, like the fifth, also presents a recapitulation and variation of number 3, this time with the theme in viola and 'cello; this variation, together with number 11, are linked by a shift to A minor, a subdominant move which presages the imminent return and the final stages of the work, though ultimately this A minor provides a supertonic pedal to the eventual arrival of G major at bar 537.

The *Symphonic Variations* demonstrate Coleridge-Taylor's ability, developed from his training in the 1890's, to use and extend material (which is constantly leading up to something else) to an almost bewildering degree, thereby creating a complex and complicated series of relationships. In this work, the critic Herbert Antcliffe commented, 'we get a full exposition of the man's musical nature at its highest development'.⁹² In August 1907, little more than a year after his orchestral *Variations*, Coleridge-Taylor completed a further set of variations (in B minor) for the slighter forces of 'cello and piano, which were played by the composer and Charles Crabbe at Croydon's Public Hall (String Players Club) on 30 November. This was yet another work which 'disappeared mysteriously'⁹³. However, the manuscript resurfaced some years later⁹⁴ and was taken on by Augener, who published it in 1918. This work, though well written, does not rise to the level of inspiration of the *African Air Variations*, though it continues to demonstrate the composer's evident affinity with the style form, especially in the closing variations and the lively finale (which reveals a similar desire to exploit the double-tonic technique of B minor and D major).

In the same way that the first performance of his main work of 1906 (*African Air Variations*) had coincided with Coleridge-Taylor's preparations to return to the US, the composer's paramount orchestral work of 1910 also signalled what was to be

⁹² Antcliffe, 188.

⁹³ Berwick Sayers, 215.

⁹⁴ Now in *GB-Lbl ADD54370*.

his third and final visit to that country. During his short career, Coleridge-Taylor often wrote to his friend Read with news of what he was composing. In the spring of 1910, just a few days after informing him that 'I go to America early in May, but shall be back again about June 12th,⁹⁵, he then revealed 'I am dreadfully busy with a new orchestral work for the Connecticut Music Festival.'⁹⁶ The work was the *Bamboula: Rhapsodic Dance*, which Coleridge-Taylor had been engaged to write by Carl Stoeckel the previous autumn. Stoeckel recorded the commission in detail in his papers, recalling the striking impression that the composer made on him:

When we decided to give a gala performance of his Hiawatha music in June 1910, I called on Mr. C. T. when in London in October 1909, but did not find him at home. I left my address and the next afternoon he came to call on us at the Claridges Hotel. When his name was announced, I opened the parlor door, and saw him walking rapidly toward it. His pleasant smile of welcome and his distinguished bearing as he advanced over the red carpeted halls, made a picture which will not soon fade from my memory. He had tea with us and then I made a business proposition to him that he should come to America in the following June and direct the final rehearsals and concert performance at Norfolk. He accepted at once and while I was conversing with him the thought came to me that it would be an interesting time to ask him to compose an orchestral selection as it would be profitable to compare such a composition with his earlier style. He agreed to this almost at once and said that he would not think of taking anything more than the original honorarium offered him in the beginning of the interview, and would include the new composition in the total amount, which was certainly most generous in him; in fact, in our business transaction he was always ready to do more than his half.⁹⁷

Coleridge-Taylor had kept Edwards (*Musical Times*) informed about the success of his second American tour, which comprised an intensive series of performances in New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington and several other American cities:

I have just returned from U. S. A & I thought that perhaps you would like to see some press cuttings of principal concerts, with a view to the Feb. number of *Musical Times*.

⁹⁵ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read (9 Mar. 1910), *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (32)*.

⁹⁶ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read (13 Mar. 1910), *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (33)*.

⁹⁷ Carl Stoeckel, 'Coleridge-Taylor', Stoeckel Family Papers *US-NH, MS247*.

Please let me know, & I will send them on, with any other particulars you may wish for.⁹⁸

and the composer was now equally keen to update him regarding his latest venture:

I thought you might like to know (for *Musical Times*) that I am going to America again in May to conduct at the Norfolk Festival, Connecticut.

It is the tenth year of the Society's existence and by majority of votes the two things selected are Verdi's Requiem and "Hiawatha".

I am also to write a new Orchestral Rhapsody on Negro Melodies which will be done for the first time.

The New York Philharmonic Orchestra is engaged (Theodore Spiering leader, Gustav Mahler conductor) and the chorus will number about 400. Principal singers from Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

By the way would it be possible for you to mention in some column that the Handel Society – which I conduct is doing Dvořák's *Te Deum*, a work of Mr. Holst's and possibly MacDowells 2nd Indian Suite for Orchestra among other things?⁹⁹

Edwards had already published a substantial piece about the composer in the *Musical Times* early on in 1909, the preparation for which had necessitated Coleridge-Taylor's clarification, as best he could during a family holiday at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, on a number of specific composition details:

With this I am leaving extract from "Onaway" & amended list of compositions.

There are still several op. numbers unfilled - & I have unfortunately no published copies of anything of mine here, so cannot refer to them.

I think I've filled up pretty correctly (as far as I could from memory), if the other numbers must be filled up. Songs without op. numbers could join as there must be at least twenty or more unaccounted for, which have been published separately.

No photo proofs have yet arrived – perhaps a call from you would hurry matters.¹⁰⁰

The composer was forced to briefly dash back to London for a concert in the middle this holiday, and received an unpleasant shock on his arrival at home at Hill Crest, as he related to his pupil Clarence Cameron White:

My dear Mr. White -

⁹⁸ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to F. G. Edwards (11 Jan. 1907), *GB-Lbl ADD41570*. The details did appear, as Coleridge-Taylor had requested, in the February edition of the journal, including a citation from an American periodical that announced 'he is an ornament to his race and a credit to England'. (*Musical Times*, 1 Feb. 1907, 95).

⁹⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to F. G. Edwards (dated 'Thursday' [Oct. 1909]), *GB-Lbl Egerton 3096*.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to F. G. Edwards (dated 'Tuesday' [Feb. 1909]), *GB-Lbl Egerton 3096*.

Since I saw you, my house in Norbury has been “burgled” (things smashed all over the place). Luckily all our silver was at the Bank.
 I am bound to call there to-morrow to see if they’ve left my evening-dress, as I want it on Saturday! [13 Feb. 1909]
 So I can see you same place on Thursday (& same time) – 3.45?
 Please let me know if you cannot arrange it – as otherwise I shall expect you.
 Just had a long letter from Mr. Hilyer.
 Kindest regards to all.¹⁰¹

However, taking full advantage of his fleeting visit to London by squeezing in an interview for the *Musical Times* piece, meant that he had to reschedule his meeting with White almost as soon as he had made it:

Thanks for yours!
 After all, I must leave lesson till Tuesday, for I have to have photo taken & interview for “Mus. Times” tomorrow & our rehearsal begins at 4.30.
 So please see me Tuesday, 126, Otland St., 3.45.¹⁰²

Coleridge-Taylor was evidently more than satisfied with the *Musical Times* article when it was published in the March 1909 edition:

Many thanks for copies of Mus. Times which I received on Saturday.
 You have made the article read splendidly and the photo has turned out good, too, don’t you think.
 May I send you a word about our last Saturday’s S. P. C. Concert.
 Perhaps if I send the programme it will be enough.....
 Will you please send comp. copies to “Croydon Guardian” North End, Croydon [and] “Norwood News” Belvedere Rd., Up. Norwood, S. E?¹⁰³

Coleridge-Taylor’s note to Read that he was ‘dreadfully busy’, referred not only to the new work itself but also to the multifarious arrangements surrounding the trip, hints of which continued in his correspondence to him (mainly regarding a Benefit Concert at Croydon’s Public Hall that Read had promised to help him with), throughout the months of March and April:

¹⁰¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to White (9 Feb. 1909), *US-NYpsc R-2474*.

¹⁰² Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to White (10 Feb. 1909), *US-NYpsc R-2474*.

¹⁰³ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to F. G. Edwards (1 March 1909), *GB-Lbl Egerton 3096*.

I am so busy this week that it seems very unlikely I shall be able to get to Eastbourne at all this week.

Will you please let me know which day is your most free after Monday next.

I can arrange Tuesday, Wed., Thur. or Friday of next week, though I am afraid I must not stay as I have so many things to see to here.

I will let you have the new M.S. by the end of the week, but if you think time too short, we'll make shift with the things you already know – though I should like the Ballade.

Of course, I quite understand about the Stett & admire that previous [?] ----- [illegible] – I think it is one of Brahms finest works.¹⁰⁴

(Once the programme was agreed, Jessie, on Coleridge-Taylor's behalf, dispatched a letter to Clarence Cameron White enclosing 'a ticket for my Husband's approaching Concert, he would like you to hear Read play his Ballade'.¹⁰⁵)

Correspondence between Coleridge-Taylor and Read on 1 April indicates that the

Ballade was played from manuscript:

I've written a new middle part for the slow number of the three M.S. movements which I am sending on – you'll see exactly where it fits. The other one seemed a little slow and not enough contrasted.

Also in the 3rd number – 43 bars from the beginning, I wish you would please add two bars thus:



instead of:



This comes over twice – just before 39th bar from the end.

I hope this is quite clear for you.

We are looking forward so much to having you here.¹⁰⁶

With the concert (6 April) over, Coleridge-Taylor made sure to send Read

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read (22 Mar. 1910), *NYpm MFC C693.R284 (23)*

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Jessie Coleridge-Taylor to White (30 Mar. 1910), *US-NYpsc R-2474*.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 1 Apr. 1910, *NYpm MFC C693.R284 (34)*

a line to thank you once again for so kindly coming & for playing so beautifully. A certain Mrs. Watson – a fine musician – simply raved over your playing of the Ballade when I happened to meet her yesterday. I don't suppose I shall come to Eastbourne till July, so I'll score it while I'm in America and have it ready in ample time.¹⁰⁷

He didn't manage to complete it during his time in the US as he had hoped (and was still pushed for time on his return, particularly because of another theatre commission from Tree, *The Forest of Wild Thyme*), explaining:

I am so sorry to tell you that although I've got the score of the Ballade half done, I can't possibly complete it in time to get the parts copied out, as I am already thick with the theatre.¹⁰⁸

Notwithstanding his mother's invariable worries about such long distance travels¹⁰⁹, Coleridge-Taylor set sail for Boston on 7 May 1910, then onwards to reach New York (26 May) in time for the first rehearsal of the *Bamboula* at the Carnegie Hall on 27 May. His earlier hints to William Read about how busy he had been with the new (and unfinished) work were verified in Stoeckel's remarks when he noted the *Bamboula* as 'the new composition which he had made and brought with him and of which he had corrected the parts on board ship'.¹¹⁰

Rehearsals continued at Norfolk for *Hiawatha*, two with the choir (the Litchfield County Choral Union established by the Stoeckels in 1899, with the maxim 'to honor the composer and his works in the most elevated conditions') and three more with the New York orchestra. Verdi's *Requiem* Mass was given at the first concert; the next evening's programme (2 June 1910) opened with the first two parts of *Hiawatha*, followed by Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* suite, Lalo's Spanish Symphony

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 8 Apr. 1910, *NYpm MFC C693.R284 (24)*

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 3 July 1910, *NYpm MFC C693.R284 (27)*.

¹⁰⁹ Marjorie Evans, 'I Remember Coleridge: Recollections of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875 – 1912)', in Rainer Lotz & Ian Pegg (eds.), *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780 – 1950* (Crowley, 1986), 36.

¹¹⁰ Stoeckel, *US-NH, MS247*.

for violin and orchestra and an aria from Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, concluding with the *Bamboula*.¹¹¹

The term *bamboula* (or *bamboua*) denotes a small African drum and accompanying ritualistic dance, which like many African dances such as the *quadrille* and *calinda* (French) or *calenda* (Spanish) bridged the gulf from the West Coast of Africa to the Caribbean during the slave trade. When, in the opening decade of the nineteenth century, a large number of West Indian planters re-settled in New Orleans, their slaves brought such dances and music with them. Both music and dance provided the means through which slaves could express frustration and anger, and drumming played a vital role in this. As such, the slaves' traditions had always been seen as subversive; for instance, when the drum ('the instrument that best expresses the inner feelings of black Africa'¹¹²) was beaten it inspired fear in the planters, not only because it spoke the Africans' language, but was also a reminder that the African slaves had not, even throughout their persistent persecution, lost their ability to communicate, and posed the further threat that one day the slaves might recognise their strength as a group and revolt.¹¹³ Similarly, the New Orleans white community's mistrust of slave meetings and dances possibly leading to an uprising, brought about a law that forced slaves to meet publicly, and only on Sundays, which developed into the Congo Square Sunday Dances. The *bamboula* and *calinda* were favourites amongst many performed there; unlike the latter, which, due to its suggestive nature sustained a number of attempts to be banned from society, the

¹¹¹ The second rendition in America was by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, for the Worcester Massachusetts Festival on 30 Sept. 1910.

¹¹² F. Bebey, *African Music: A People's Art* (London, 1975), 3.

¹¹³ Catherine Carr, 'The history and development of Jamaican reggae', MPhil diss. University of Sheffield, 1994, 13.

uncontrollably frantic but only slightly risqué *bamboula* survived until shortly before the Congo Square dances ended in the 1880's.¹¹⁴

Precedents of these African dance forms being used by composers as the basis of musical compositions are sparse. The first British paradigm is Delius, who used the calinda in the second Act of his opera *Koanga*, set on a Louisiana plantation, where the slaves dance 'La Calinda' (this orchestral piece originally comprised the 'Sunrise' movement of his *Florida Suite*) at the wedding preparations of Palmyra (a beautiful slave girl) and Koanga (an African Prince and Voodoo priest). The American composer and piano virtuoso Louis Moreau Gottschalk (born in New Orleans in 1829 of French Creole and English parentage), based a piano piece on the bamboula as early as 1845. (In 1869 Gottschalk collapsed whilst on tour, shortly after playing a piece called *Morte!* - managing just the first few bars of *Tremolo* - dying a month later). The year after Coleridge-Taylor's death, Dett produced *Juba* (a lively and rhythmic dance descended from the traditional West African dance *Pattin' Juba*) as part of his Suite for piano *In the Bottoms*, and nearly two decades later the first African-American female composer to attain national recognition, Florence Smith Price (1887 –1953), based the third movement (called *Juba Dance*) of her Symphony No. 1 in E minor and a movement of her third symphony in C minor, on the *Pattin' Juba* dance rhythms.

A four-bar extract of the Bamboula, upon which Coleridge-Taylor based his orchestral work, prefaces his earlier piano setting of it as part of his *Twenty Four Negro Melodies*:

¹¹⁴ See *The Century* Vol. 31 issue 4, Feb. 1886, 524, which contains a print by E. W. Kemble depicting a 'Negro Slave Dance – The Bamboula'. The same issue includes a descriptive and detailed report of the Congo Square dances including the *bamboula*, *calinda* and other related dances such as the *Pattin' Juba*, along with the French Creole lyrics which sometimes accompanied them, by George W. Cable: 'Creole Slave Dances, The Dance in Place Congo'.

Music example 11: The Bamboula, No. 8, Twenty Four Negro Melodies



An annotation attributed to Coleridge-Taylor elucidates that in his ‘Rhapsodic Dance’ ‘the four bars beginning with the letter B are identical with a well-known West Indies Negro dance called “The Bamboula”, the tempo of the original Bamboula being quite fast throughout’¹¹⁵:

Music example 12: Bamboula, bb. 77 – 80



The work is set in a simple ternary form, with the added interesting variational dimension of developing one idea all the way through (even the middle section is based on the first), incorporating phraseological differences (expansions and contractions) and developments of the one idea:

¹¹⁵ Coleridge-Taylor’s *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast* and *Bamboula*, EMI 1984, 1996 – Sleeve notes.

Music example 13: *Bamboula*, bb. 1, 77, 229, 253 and 260

b.1

1
Picc. *Vivace*
ff

b. 77

77
Fl. *fp* *mp* *f*

b. 229

229
Ob. *mf* *cresc.* *mf*

b. 253

253
Vln. I *Animato*
ff

b. 260

260
Cl. (A) *tranquillo*
mf *f*

The countermelodies and the bold scoring throughout the piece generates a redolence of Elgar, and the chordal progressions in the *poco animato* section that immediately precedes the long lyrical interlude, are particularly evocative of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*:

Music example 14: *Bamboula*, bb. 205 – 208

[Poco animato]

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vcl.

The contrasting middle section, in A flat major, presents an expertly scored long, fluid melody, akin to the long lyrical episodes of Dvořák's two sets of *Slavonic Dances*.

In the notes about the work which are accredited to Coleridge-Taylor, it is remarked upon that, apart from the 'bamboula' theme, 'no other subject matter is used throughout the composition, which is merely a series of evolutions of the phrase mentioned. This refers to the middle part also, which is introduced for the sake of contrast.'¹¹⁶ However, the score reveals that in this portion he additionally deftly slipped in the latter part of the theme used for his *Symphonic Variations*, 'I'm Troubled in Mind'.

Music example 15: *Bamboula*, bb. 273 – 276 (see also b. 295)

Cl. (A)

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Music example 16: *Symphonic Variations (No. 7)*, bb. 383 – 389.

An even further relevance now becomes apparent in the key scheme since ‘I’m Troubled in Mind’ presented the ambiguity of A flat major as well as its tonic key of F minor, and the fragment that appears here, in the context of the *Bamboula*, is in the key of A flat major – an interesting instance of self-quotation¹¹⁷ which he may well have drawn from the practices of Richard Strauss, a well known exponent of the mannerism (and one Elgar had appropriated in *The Apostles* (in quoting from *The Dream of Gerontius*) and was to do so later *in extenso* in *The Music Makers* of 1912).

Symphonically conceived, with expansive, self-developing melodies, the *Bamboula*, in spite of its conspicuous and deliberate African origins, is ultimately rooted in Coleridge-Taylor’s instinctive western European training. Although based upon an African theme, the demeanour, harmony rhetoric and structure ultimately define this work as part of the canon of western ‘national’ works which reveal a preoccupation with exoticism. In this way Coleridge-Taylor’s work is no different from those exotic (or ‘oriental’) works (such as Rimsky’s *Capriccio Espagnole*, Balakirev’s *Islamey* or Holst’s *Japanese Suite*), which experiment superficially with unusual ‘foreign’ techniques yet ultimately retain their western heritage and syntax.

Stoeckel, in his observation that the unqualified success of the Litchfield concert was due to the enthusiastic and receptive state of mind of all present, also

¹¹⁷ An earlier instance of such self-quotation is recognisable in a passage in one of Coleridge-Taylor’s piano pieces of 1904, *Zuleika* (from *Two Oriental Waltzes*), which repeats the choral lamentation in *The Death of Minnehaha* (b. 568).

noted Coleridge-Taylor's effusive declaration as he came off stage that 'this is one of the happiest days of my life'.¹¹⁸ Indeed, once the concert was over, Coleridge-Taylor uncharacteristically went so far as to give a short address at the post-concert supper party thrown by the Stoeckels:

I never make speeches, but I do not feel as if I could leave this table without expressing the gratitude I feel for all which has been done for me by my hosts, the Litchfield County Choral Union and its conductor Mr. Paine, and the others who have been so good as to be interested in my work. I never in my life have known anything like it. It has been simply royal and I thank you.¹¹⁹

Other guests at the party included George Whitefield Chadwick, Horatio Parker (both of whose works Coleridge-Taylor showed interest in, contemplating giving Parker's *King Gorm the Grim* and 'Noël' from Chadwick's *Symphonic Sketches* when back in England¹²⁰) and Alma Gluck. The visit had been a monumental success and the profound impression it had made on the composer was revealed not only in his impromptu after-dinner 'speech' but also in a felicitous letter written to Parker concerning his opera (*Mona*, 1910, which won the New York Metropolitan Prize), the following year:

My dear Parker:

I have just received a cutting from Mr. Stoeckel with the news of your having won the opera competition.

I hasten to send my heartiest congratulations. I feel almost as if I'd won it myself, because you've always been so charming and so generous about all things.

I do hope we shall get it performed over here at Covent Garden – I shall buy the first shilling ticket.

I hope it will have the most tremendous success.

Just fancy – it is practically a year ago since we all met in that beautiful Barn¹²¹ at Norfolk – such things only come once in a lifetime – to me – at all events - & it was such a wonderful week for me – I shall never forget it.

¹¹⁸ Stoeckel, *US-NH, MS247*.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ The history of the Stoeckel's 'Music Shed' was summarised for its sixtieth anniversary, in the American *High Fidelity Magazine*: The story starts with Robbins Battell, a Yale graduate who settled in Norfolk, Connecticut, and from 1851, conducted the Litchfield County Musical Association, giving concerts in Norfolk and the neighbouring towns. His 'passion for music

Once again congratulating you and with all good friendship.¹²²

Once back in England, Coleridge-Taylor conducted the first airing of the *Bamboula* there on 24 August 1910 with Joseph Sainton's Brighton Municipal Orchestra¹²³ (who had performed the *Bon-bon Suite* under Coleridge-Taylor's direction the previous year), and was of course also keen for the *Bamboula* to be included in Read's forthcoming concert:

Is your Benefit Concert coming off all right on Oct. 15th?
I want to know for certain because I'm doing the Queens Hall Sunday Concert Oct. 16th and want to arrange rehearsals.
I propose doing the postponed *Bamboula* and also the new Dances [an arrangement of his *Three Fours Valse Suite* op. 71, under the new title of 'Three Dances for Violin and Piano'] which will by then be ready.
I wish you would casually invite me to spend a day or two with you at Eastbourne, in case some undesirable people come here to see us!
Of course I should pay, but it must seem like an invitation [*]. Any time up to Oct. 6th would do.
This is of course, strictly private!
How goes your appointment? Have you thought of Beecham – it may not last, but the first fiddles are getting £8 to £10 a week.
P.S. I might not be able to come for a few days – it depends on the theatre.¹²⁴

was passed on to his daughter Ellen, who in 1895 married Carl Stoeckel, son of Yale's first professor of music. The Stoeckels too established themselves in Norfolk, occupying the mansion known as Whitehouse and filling it with valuable books, paintings and *objet's d'art*. In 1899, they conceived the idea of establishing a festival as a memorial to Mrs. Stoeckels father, but by this time Whitehouse itself was too small to play host: the Litchfield forces which owed their genesis to Robbins Battell had grown to number more than 700 members. For a few years the group presented its concerts in the Winsted Armory, an auditorium seating 1,445, and later it performed in quarters adjacent to Whitehouse. The latter, however, proved inadequate, and by 1906 the acoustically superb 1,200-seat shed had been built on the Stoeckel estate as a home for the Litchfield County Choral Union and Norfolk Music Festival'. Harris Goldsmith, 'The Shed at Norfolk', *High Fidelity Magazine* (June 1966), 40. By 1910 the *Musical Times* (1 Aug. 1910), 535, lists the 'music-shed' as capable of seating 1,650.

¹²² Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Horatio Parker (15 May 1911), *US-NH*.

¹²³ *Brighton Gazette*, 27 Aug. 1910, 4. Coleridge-Taylor's correspondence with Read the following month (*US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 29 and 30*) shows that the latter had applied for a position with Sainton's orchestra (Coleridge-Taylor sent a recommendation to Sainton for him in Sept.), although he was not successful.

* Always punctilious about 'paying his way', Coleridge-Taylor's note to him in mid-September reads: 'It is really very kind of you and Mrs. Cooper to offer me hospitality, but I cannot accept unless I am admitted as a 'paying guest'. I was just going to drop you a line about this, so hope such an arrangement will be acceptable. Even now I do not know definitely about my time of arrival – I may go to Brighton tomorrow to see Sainton, and come on to Eastbourne by first train in time for rehearsal Friday. But I'll wire you definitely tomorrow – you know what an undecided wretch I always was and am.' Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 15 Sept. 1910, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (31)*.

¹²⁴ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 27 Sept. 1910, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (37)*.

The next year, Coleridge-Taylor conducted the *Bamboula* at what was to be his 'last appearance'¹²⁵ for a Bournemouth Symphony Concert (20 April 1911), alongside the first performance of what would prove to be 'the most successful of his many light works'¹²⁶, *Petite Suite de Concert*. Along with the *Bamboula*, this work, unlike the more ambiguous *Ballade* in A minor, diverges from his serious music and the classical romanticism of Brahms and Dvořák via Stanford, and clearly fits into the contrasting ethos of Coleridge-Taylor's music that he instinctively veered towards once out of Stanford's 'clutches', where, drawn towards writing for a more commercial market, he embraced populism and opted for a lighter side of his output. The market for this intensified during the heyday of hotel orchestras just after the turn of the century (*teste* the early life of the violinist and virtuoso Albert Sammons), the first Palm Court Orchestra being employed by the newly built Waldorf Hotel in 1908, and the term 'Palm Court Music' eventually becoming synonymous with light music for small orchestra. A nebulous crossover point between the two types of music, exemplified by works such as Coleridge-Taylor's *Ballade*, can sometimes prove unavoidable because the criteria of serious music was similarly applied to that of light music, where the elements of harmony, countermelodies and orchestration were still skilfully executed by trained musicians, but within a structure of shorter movements, attractive scoring and memorable and expansive melodies. The culture of light music grew up through this environment, and the craft of writing such music was essentially that of being able to appeal to a certain type of commercial audience that did not go to Queens Hall to listen to 'serious' music.

¹²⁵ Lloyd, 96.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

During the months that he worked on the *Petite Suite de Concert*, Coleridge-Taylor was also preoccupied with the first of the two works for Beerbohm Tree's theatre commissioned that year, the *Forest of Wild Thyme* (Alfred Noyes), laying the onus of a thwarted trip to Germany firmly at Tree's door:

Tree prevented my going to Der Vaterland this time – I've got to hang about for a fortnightisn't it rotten?¹²⁷

Another work, one that had germinated in America, was now taking a more concrete form at this time, and was also based on the work of the same poet. (September of 1910 finds Coleridge-Taylor writing 'I will try and come to Brighton one day next week – I have to see Noyes the Poet there for a few minutes – I will let you know'¹²⁸). This cantata, which harks back to the *Hiawatha* ethos, was his final choral work, *A Tale of Old Japan*.

¹²⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, Friday 24 Jun. 1910, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (26)*.

¹²⁸ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 8 Sept. 1910, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (30)*.

Chapter 7

Final Works

(i) A TALE OF OLD JAPAN

Both of Coleridge-Taylor's main compositions of 1911 (*A Tale of Old Japan*, which he began in 1910) and 1912 (the Violin Concerto) reflected, to differing extents, the influence of his inspirational time in America during 1910. Whilst the Violin Concerto was written in response to a specific proposal by Stoeckel, the cantata originated in a less direct way, during a countryside drive the day after the *Bamboula* concert:

The next day we took an automobile ride and got off of some of the main roads and drove through some of the fields of laurel (*Calmia*) then in full blossom. C. T. was greatly delighted with the wild picturesque scenery of northwestern Connecticut. When he came home that evening he retired at once to his room. When I went to call him for supper, I knocked on his door. He answered, "Come in". As I entered I saw him shoving some little sheets of musical notes into the desk. He said nothing about it at the time but some months afterwards wrote me that these were his first sketches of the "Tale of Old Japan" and that he had been inspired to make them, due to the floral display he had seen all that afternoon.¹

Coleridge-Taylor's explanation of the cause of his initial attraction to Noyes' poem, *The Two Painters* (*A Tale of Old Japan*) was analogous to the way in which the unusual names in Longfellow's *Hiawatha* had first drawn his attention to that particular poem:

I think the names attracted me first. Think of 'Yoichi Tenko the painter' – the opening line – then of 'Little O Kimi San' and 'Sawara, lissom as a cherry spray'. Then as I read on, the beauty of the poetry and imagery held me, and I *had* to express it musically.²

¹ Carl Stoeckel, 'Coleridge-Taylor', Stoeckel Family Papers *US-NH*, MS247.

² W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: his Life & Letters* (London, 1915; rev. edn. London, 1927), 286.

Japan's victory over Russia in 1904 had brought about an increased preoccupation with all things Japanese in Europe, when the English press was 'crammed with descriptions of everything connected with Japan, and books by Japanese writers were eagerly read'.³ Alfred Noyes, five years Coleridge-Taylor's junior, was a highly successful poet commercially during the opening decade of the twentieth century. Although perhaps best known for *The Highwayman* (1907) and *The Barrel Organ* (1904), he, too, frequently turned to the exoticism of Japan (or 'Old Japan') throughout much of his early work, exemplified in: *Old Japan* (1902, a revision of this appeared much later as *A Triple Ballad of Old Japan*), *Haunted in Old Japan* (1902), *The Flower of Old Japan* (1903, a poem 'on similar lines to [and which] may have inspired'⁴ *The Forest of Wild Thyme*), *The Two Painters – A Tale of Old Japan* (1909), and *A Japanese Love Song* (1909). (*A Knight of Old Japan* appeared later, in 1915). These works fundamentally offered many misconceptions about the country. For instance, it was noted of *The Two Painters – A Tale of Old Japan* that:

Noyes is utterly careless of the scene...[It] is certainly not Japan, where people do not ride on milk-white mules (he may have seen mules in Chinese-style paintings)...and cherries and peonies bloom at different seasons. And so the influence of Japan on Noyes is rather disappointing: he has missed the marvellous beauty and real romance with which the land is overlaid, and given as false a picture as any which has found its way into comic opera.⁵

Such relatively harmless fallacies were to mutate, by the time of Noyes' final 'Japanese' poem, *Japanese Doves* (1941), into increasingly biting racist remarks presented in satirical pidgin-English/Japanese speech!

Coleridge-Taylor's use of Noyes' texts was concentrated exclusively within the years 1910 and 1911. In addition to the two most substantial pieces, *The Forest of*

³ E. V. Gatenby, 'The Influence of Japan on English Literature', *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society, London, vol. xxxiv, the forty-sixth session 1936–37* (London, 1937), 56.

⁴ Coulson Kernahan, *Six Famous Living Poets* (London, 1922), 206.

⁵ Gatenby, 56.

Wild Thyme and *A Tale of Old Japan*, he also set *Waiting* (op. 81 no. 1) alongside the nine-stanza poem *Red of The Dawn* (op. 81 no. 2 - 'The Dawn peered in with blood-shot eyes') as a scena for baritone. (Although no.1 was published posthumously by Boosey in 1913, no. 2 did not appear until 1920, the same year that Boosey decided to release two songs from the *Forest of Wild Thyme*, 'Your Heart's Desire' and 'Come In'). There was also a short *Prayer for Peace* (one of several poems that Noyes had written 'on the subject of international peace'⁶); set in the key of E flat major, the 'prayer' takes the form of a five-verse 'vigorous unison song for chorus singing'⁷, and was published soon after completion in 1911, by Curwen.

Although other works were also in the pipeline at this time (*Forest of Wild Thyme*, *Petite Suite de Concert*, and, towards the end of the year, *Othello* and the Violin Concerto), Coleridge-Taylor continued work on the cantata *A Tale of Old Japan* (which he is said to have preferred to *Hiawatha*)⁸ following his arrival home from America in the June of 1910 until its completion in the early months of 1911. Jessie relates how, towards the end of the year (1910), he even 'sketched out themes, melodies, choruses, etc., the day we moved from Norbury to Croydon, and whilst sitting on packing cases', later scoring the work in his Music Shed.⁹

The Two Painters had first appeared in a volume called *The Enchanted Island and Other Poems* in 1909, and then in a publication of Noyes' *Collected Poems*. The textual theme (which echoes the same thematic pattern set by Coleridge-Taylor in cantatas such as the *Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé* and *Meg Blane*), is the universal one of ill-fated love, and in that sense, bears the *verismo* element of Puccini's *Madame*

⁶ Alfred Noyes, *Two Worlds for Memory*, (London, 1953), 78.

⁷ Berwick Sayers, 282.

⁸ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, *Genius & Musician: a memory sketch or personal reminiscences of my husband* (London, 1942/3), 51; Avril Coleridge-Taylor, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London, 1979), 87.

⁹ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 51.

Butterfly: The heroine of the piece, Kimi San (soprano), is introduced as the niece of the artist and teacher Yoichi Tenko (baritone), who has looked after her since her father was lost at sea. She falls in love with a talented artist, Sawara (tenor), when he enrolls at her uncle's school. However, before long, Yoichi Tenko advises Sawara that he has surpassed everything he can teach him, and it is now time to leave the school. Although Kimi urges Sawara to take her with him, he leaves alone, but does not forsake her, pledging to return to marry her and asking her to wait patiently for him. For three years she prays for and anticipates his return, until her uncle cruelly dashes her hopes, when, seizing an opportunity to marry her to an affluent merchant for a good price, Yoichi Tenko deceives Kimi by fabricating a story that Sawara is already married. Heartbroken, she runs away, and in the meantime, Sawara returns to Tenko's school (again on a 'milk-white mule'!) In this penultimate section (VI), Tenko encourages Sawara (who has already forgotten Kimi) to marry someone else, 'under the silvery willow-tree'. Inevitably, whilst in search of the perfect setting for a picture 'worthy of Hokusai'¹⁰, he accidentally chances upon Kimi, and ironically reveals that he now really is married. In the same manner as Margaret, in the *Blind Girl of Castél-Cuillé*, Kimi dies of a broken heart, in his arms.

Earl Miner, in his definitive analytical study of *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature*, aptly describes the piece as 'a long narrative poem [which] amply illustrates the familiarly uneven course of true love, and talks boldly about art conquering "Time and Fate", but its only excuse for its demands upon the reader's credulity seems to be that the events occur in far distant Japan where anything may happen'.¹¹ Coleridge-Taylor set the poem more or less in its entirety, although, interestingly, the small amount he chose to leave out betrays a tendency to

¹⁰ Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849), outstanding Japanese landscape painter and wood engraver.

¹¹ Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature*, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1958), 40.

disregard the less savoury notions. He excluded the last seven lines of Section VI which describe Kimi's unattractive 'twisted nose' and face 'as dull as lead'; more notably, he also omitted the final verse, where Sawara sketches the dead Kimi to show his teacher Tenko (who then concludes the poem with the exclamation 'you have conquered Time and Fate! Hokusai is not so great! This is art'¹²), which Noyes, as he revealed in his autobiography, regarded as the main *dénouement* and focus of his work:

The "Two Painters" was afterwards set as a cantata by Coleridge-Taylor, under its sub-title "A Tale of Old Japan". It was produced with great success at the Albert Hall by the Royal Choral Society, and since then has been performed on innumerable occasions. The rather savage conclusion of the poem, of which Barry Pain [writer, and friend of Noyes] approved so highly, was, however, omitted entirely from the cantata. Possibly this was right from the musical point of view, but the satirical note at the conclusion was intended to emphasize the point of the poem, that human affections are more important than art. The death of O-Kimi-San is depicted in the music of Coleridge-Taylor with more beauty than I could hope to give it in verse; and there the cantata closes. But the point of the poem, in the omitted conclusion, is that the great painter Sawara, with complete unconcern, makes a picture of the dead girl who had loved him, and wins the master's approval for it.¹³

Coleridge-Taylor divided the poem's seven sections into two distinct parts, separated by an orchestral interlude (as was the common habit of many English choral works of this time, notably those written for the Birmingham Festival) that provides punctuation in the middle, summarised in the table below. The first half, which incorporates the central love aria with chorus, moves from B minor to D major; the second half and the inexorably looming tragedy, begins in B flat major and, as if to emphasise the greater sense of drama and discord, makes the Neapolitan shift back to B major for its conclusion:

¹² Alfred Noyes, *The Two Painters (A Tale of Old Japan)*, see 'Collected Poems' Vol. II (London, 1916), 317.

¹³ Noyes, *Two Worlds for Memory*, 156.

Table 1: A Tale of Old Japan

| Page no. ¹⁴ | Texture | Narrative extracts | Key/Comments |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| First Half | | | |
| 1 – 2 | Orchestra | Prelude | B |
| 3 – 5 | Baritone (as narrator)/ Chorus/Baritone (as narrator) | <i>Yoichi Tenko the painter, Dwelt by the purple sea / Kimi, the child of his brother, Bright as the moon in May</i> | b [G] b |
| 6 – 18 | Chorus | <i>Peonies, peonies, crown'd the May/ Clad in blue and white array Came Sawara to the school</i> | C [a, A,(F#)] G Waltz/dance section. |
| 19 - 29 | Quartet (soloists)/ Soprano (as narrator) & Chorus/ Baritone Solo (Yoichi Tenko) | <i>He could paint her tree and flow'r/ Yoichi Tenko, wond'ring, scann'd All the work of that young hand/ I can teach you nothing more/ He could not understand why she wept</i> | g [A b, f#, G] e Waltz idea returns again. Lament from orchestral prelude now in e. |
| 30 - 45 | Soprano Solo (Kimi)/Chorus/ Alto Solo (narrator)/ Tenor Solo (Sawara)/ Chorus/ Soprano Solo/ Duet & Chorus | <i>So, in her blue kimono, Pale as the sickle moon/ Take me with you Sawara/ You are my king, Sawara, O, let me be your queen!/ So they plighted their promise</i> | b, [A,(V/D), d b] D Central love aria with chorus concludes 1 st part, in D major. |
| Orchestral Interlude | | | |
| 46 - 48 | Orchestra | — | Concludes in D Based on intro. material |
| Second Half | | | |
| 49 – 61 | Female Soli. & Chorus/ Alto Solo & Chorus | <i>Three long years while Kimi dreamed Under the silv'ry willow tree</i> | Bb [Ab Gb] e |
| 61 - 71 | Orchestral passage/ Male Chorus, Baritone Solo (Tenko)/ Chorus | <i>So, when the young rich merchant Showed him his bags of gold Yoichi Tenko the painter, Gave him her hand to hold Said, "You shall wed him, O Kimi:" Softly he lied and smiled, "Yea, for Sawara is wedded! Let him not mock you child"</i> | c Crux of the piece. Return of the opening material (baritone narrator) now in chorus a semitone higher; return of lament motif. |
| 71 - 78 | Chorus | <i>Peonies, peonies, thronged the May/ When in royal rich array Came Sawara to the school</i> | C [a, A, (F#)] Recapitulation for the return of Sawara |
| 79 - 87 | Baritone Solo (Tenko)/ Tenor Solo (Sawara)/ Chorus | <i>"Wed some other maid;"/ "Kimi, Kimi? Who is she?"/ He had come to paint anew</i> | G [D/b, f#] G |
| 87 - 99 | Baritone Solo (narrator)/ Chorus/ Soprano Solo (Kimi) & Tenor Solo (Sawara)/ Duet with Female Chorus/ Full Chorus | <i>Great Sawara, the painter, Sought, on a day of days, One of the peacock islands Out in the sunset haze/ Trembling she lifted her head, Then like a broken blossom It fell on his arm. She was dead.</i> | b[G, E, Eb, D,b,]B Opening material. Kimi's solo preceded by orch. theme from love duet (b.565) – now in E. |

¹⁴ Published vocal score (Novello, 1911).

The first idea - the 'lament' motif (characterised by its initial rhythmic spasm of two semiquavers, rest and poignant appoggiatura a seventh above) presented sequentially (a thumbprint of the composer) in the orchestral prelude in the home key of B minor - provides a central theme which, as can be seen from the above Table, recurs either as a whole or as an instrumental fragment at salient points in the piece (notably in E minor and C minor):

Music example 1: Tale of Old Japan, bb. 11 - 14



Other recurring ideas include a melancholy 'waltz' theme, which is used as a *ritornello*:

Music example 2: Tale of Old Japan, bb. 196 – 199 (see also bb. 283 – 286, etc.)



However, this material (perhaps disappointingly, given examples of Coleridge-Taylor's work elsewhere) is rarely subject to studied transformation; instead the composer relies on more literal repetition, often even in the same key (for example, see 'peonies peonies' in above table), which somewhat detracts from the work's symphonic potential. It is only in the central orchestral interlude that any convincing reconstitution and fusion of these thematic fragments is made, though it may have

been the composer's intention to throw this process into relief at this point, since it clearly represents the dramatic and, indeed, musical catastrophe of the plot (the transformation from a state of 'order' to 'chaos'). Nevertheless, given this musico-dramatic watershed, it is surprising that Coleridge-Taylor did not elect to present his initial ideas in a 'changed' light, such is the tragic context of the material. In fact, Coleridge-Taylor opted to reserve, outside the crisis of the orchestral interlude, the most dramatic moments – namely the false admission that Sawara was married, and of Sawara's confession to Kimi of his marriage – for the passages of recitative and arioso (see pp. 63 and 93 of the score).

Music examples 3 and 4: A Tale of Old Japan, bb. 975 – 7; and bb. 1316 - 8

[Molto moderato]

975 *mf* *f* *rall.*

"Yea, for Sa-wa-ra is wed-ded! Let him not mock you, child." —

1316 *mp*

"Ki - mi, I am wedded."

These are effective moments, and find telling 'Puccinian' expression in the accompanying orchestral rhetoric. Yet, the surrounding choral passages, for all their beauty, fail to express that sense of foreboding that will destroy Kimi's innocent world. One wonders whether Coleridge-Taylor had had occasion to hear Stanford's *Stabat Mater* first performed at the Leeds Festival of 1907. Here Stanford makes much play on the central orchestral interlude that stands dramatically between 'death' and 'transfiguration'. Its tonally tangential opening is mirrored by Coleridge-Taylor's

own opening to his orchestral interlude (on V of F sharp minor) and the tonally fluid, through-composed nature of Stanford's interlude, with its central crisis and closing sense of transformation are similarly echoed by Coleridge-Taylor's design.

Particularly striking is the expected cadence into E (a tempo, appassionato – p. 47) which instead moves to G sharp minor as part of an arresting sequential process, and it is the goal of this passage which finally settles on the dominant of D (and not the melancholic B minor of the opening) that closes off the interlude as a summary (and preview to the audience) of the cantata's tragic plot.

The first performance of what was to be Coleridge-Taylor's 'swan-song choral work'¹⁵, took place at Queen's Hall on 6 December 1911, with the London Choral Society, under Arthur Fagge. Although Coleridge-Taylor was 'bitterly disappointed that he was not asked to conduct on that occasion'¹⁶, further correspondence to Read shows that, although still incredibly busy, he did get to conduct the second performance at Birmingham (Town Hall) on 15 February 1912 (Birmingham Festival Choral Society /Birmingham Festival Orchestra; soloists Miss Percival Allen, Miss Grainger Kerr, Mr. Frank Mullings and Mr. Robert Radford), in a programme that included Samuel Wesley's motet *In exitu Israel* and Beethoven's Choral Symphony:

I'm afraid I've been doing too much conducting lately (sometimes nine rehearsals a week) & have had to knock off a bit, so really I don't think I should consider any proposal to conduct again at Eastbourne!

Tree has just asked me to do some music for "Othello" & this has delayed my "Hiawatha Ballet" for some time....

We had a really wonderful performance of "Old Japan" at Birmingham. The orchestra was really magnificent – by the way the London Choral is repeating the performance at Queen's Hall on April 18th. I am anxious for you to hear it.¹⁷

¹⁵ W.C. Berwick Sayers, 'The Choral Works of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor', *Music Student* (Jul. 1917, 9 no.2), 313.

¹⁶ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 51.

¹⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 27 Mar. 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (56)*.

A Tale of Old Japan, dedicated to Mr. & Mrs. Stoeckel ('with happiest remembrances of the White House, Norfolk, Conn. U. S. A., and the people I met there'),¹⁸ was not heard in America until the beginning of June, where Alma Gluck, Margaret Keyes, Lambert Murphy and Clarence Whitehill took the solo parts. Unlike the *Musical Times*, which, reminded of the 'melodic, harmonic and rhythmical idioms' of *Hiawatha*, accurately predicted 'a wide popularity for the new cantata'¹⁹, the American reviews were barely lukewarm. Whilst *Musical America* opined that 'it is not what may be described as great music, but it has prettiness, grace and suavity to commend it; it is written with undeniable musicianship, even though there is nothing exotic or characteristically Japanese about it'²⁰, Richard Aldrich, in the *New York Times*, doubted even whether its immediate appeal would endure.²¹

The cantata (which also shared the bill with the first performance of Chadwick's symphonic fantasie *Aphrodite*) was followed by the première of Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Concerto. This was the first of many of the trail-blazing American violinist Maud Powell's recitals of his concerto²², which, from this date onwards, invariably headed her programme.²³ In her pre-concert publicity interviews,

¹⁸ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 92.

¹⁹ 'A Tale of Old Japan. New Choral Cantata.' *Musical Times* (1 Oct. 1911), 655.

²⁰ 'Prestige of Norfolk's Festival Aably Maintained', *Musical America*, 15 Jun. 1912 (n.p.n.).

²¹ 'New Compositions Heard', *New York Times*, 9 Jun. 1912, 8.

²² The work otherwise received very few performances and became practically forgotten, hence Jessie Coleridge-Taylor's much later request to the violinist Clarence Cameron White: 'If it be possible I do so wish that you would arrange to play Coleridge's Concerto – you of course know it – so far it has had very few complete performances, & coming from you, it would most certainly sink deeply into your listeners' hearts. Do think this over, & let me know what you think that you could do'. Letter from Jessie Coleridge-Taylor to White, 20 Feb. 1930, *US-NYpsc R-2474*.

²³ See US reviews of her subsequent concert tours, for example: 'Music lovers hear famous violinist' *Times (US)* (15 Oct. 1912); 'A Musical treat by Maud Powell', *Daily Commonwealth* (17 Oct. 1912); 'Maud Powell Concert', *Democrat* and 'Musical', *Wisconsin State Journal* (20 Oct. 1912); 'Maud Powell in great concert', *Daily Journal*, (22 Oct. 1912); 'Premier violinist is claiming new laurels', *Daily Gazette* (30 Oct. 1912); 'Maud Powell at Oswego', *The Eclipse* (4 Nov. 1912); *Phoenix* (5 Nov. 1912); 'Music and Musicians: Maud Powell delights', *News Press* (8 Nov. 1912); 'Many listen to Maud Powell', *Gazette* (8 and 10 Nov. 1912); 'New Triumphs for Powell' and 'Mme. Powell wins friends in Hawaii', *Musical America* (2 Nov. 1912 and 25 Jan. 1913); 'Maud Powell wins and holds big audience in opera house', *Star Bulletin* (3 Dec. 1912); 'Maud Powell plays for steerage passengers', *Musical Leader* (30 Jan. 1913).

Powell notably recognised and referred to the intriguing circumstances surrounding the genesis and development of this work, explaining that ‘its history has an interest of its own’.²⁴

(ii) VIOLIN CONCERTO

The idea of writing a concerto for Powell was conceived during the 1910 Litchfield Festival²⁵, and was originally centred around the African spiritual ‘Keep me from sinking down’, which Coleridge-Taylor had heard Ellen Stoeckel playing after supper on the same day that he had made his first sketches for *Old Japan*. He obviously saw the potential for further development in the tune, requesting ‘do let me take it down, I will use it sometime’²⁶; Stoeckel immediately commissioned a violin concerto, with the suggestion that each movement of the work be based on three different characteristic African melodies, and the plan was to use the melody ‘Keep me from sinking down’ in the second movement:

²⁴ ‘Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto’, *Commercial Advertiser*, 19 Apr. 1912 (n.p.n.).

²⁵ See *Musical America*, ‘Norfolk’s Picturesque Festival brings Coleridge-Taylor to this Country’ (11 Jun. 1910), 4 (also reproduced on page 1206 of *The Strad*, Nov. 2002), for a group photograph which includes Arthur Mees, Maud Powell and Coleridge-Taylor. Coleridge-Taylor had in fact already made Powell’s acquaintance, in England, some years before; she had also previously introduced two numbers from his *Gypsy Suite* op. 20 for violin and piano during one of her American tours.

²⁶ Stoeckel, *US-NH*.

Music example 5: Keep me from sinking down

Oh, Lord, Oh, my Lord! Oh, my good Lord! Keep me from sink-ing down. 1. I
2. I

tell you what I mean to do; Keep me from sink-ing down: I
look up yon-der, and what do I see; Keep me from sink-ing down: I

mean to go to heav-en too; Keep me from sink-ing down.
see the angel beckon-ing to me; Keep me from sink-ing down.

However, Coleridge-Taylor found that he could not use the tune in this context, replacing it instead with another African spiritual, ‘Many thousand gone’, and using ‘Yankee Doodle’ - an American rather than *African* melody (which Dvořák, in 1893, had adapted as a theme in the finale of his *New World Symphony*) - as the basis of his final movement. Stoeckel and Powell were in receipt of the score by May 1911, but both were somewhat dissatisfied with the first and last movements, which they found ‘rather sketchy and unsatisfactory’.²⁷ Stoeckel procrastinated in breaking the news to Coleridge-Taylor; however, reading between the lines, it would seem that Powell’s letter of receipt to the composer impalpably conveyed her unease to him, hence her euphemistic observation that: ‘perhaps my letter of thanks was not as warm as it might have been’.²⁸ Coleridge-Taylor rewrote the work ‘at white heat’²⁹; by the September of that year he told Read ‘I have already started revising the first movement of the Concerto in my mind, and as soon as it is in shape I’ll have a fiddle part copied of the whole thing and we’ll have a meeting’.³⁰ The revised work was virtually an entirely new creation, as it retained ‘nothing but the opening subject

²⁷ Stoeckel, *Family Papers, US-NH*.

²⁸ ‘Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto’, *Commercial Advertiser*, 19 Apr. 1912 (n.p.n.).

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 25 Sept. 1911, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (50)*.

(which was my own)³¹, and Coleridge-Taylor instructed Powell to return the original one (also requesting that Stoeckel burn his copy), as he had ‘reconsidered it, and decided never to publish the work or to have it performed’³². He considered the new work ‘a hundred times better than the first composition’³³, although Powell, anxious to preserve the original second movement in some form or other, persuaded Coleridge-Taylor to arrange ‘Keep me from sinking down’ (see music example above) as a separate piece³⁴ (see Appendix 1, section L). Stoeckel, too, wrote to Coleridge-Taylor in December 1911 to ask if the composer could ‘see if it would make over into a short salon piece for violin (or cello) and piano’.³⁵ He wrote again in the New Year with another suggestion:

I would like to use the little air “Keep me from sinkin down” as an encore to the concerto, and with this end in view could you arrange a little orchestral accompaniment as we have no room for piano on stage.³⁶

Less than two months later, Coleridge-Taylor sent this arrangement along with the second Concerto in short score. In his correspondence with Read he noted that ‘the Concerto (in its new form) is in the hands of Maud Powell, but I shall have it by the end of this month to score, and as I am probably coming to spend a few days at Eastbourne during Easter, I shall be able to let you look at it’.³⁷ Powell was pleased with the new version, although she had difficulty in deciphering the score:

It reached me the other day, she told an interviewer on the New York Times last week, and is in the hands of the copyist. A manuscript by Coleridge-Taylor is almost impossible to read, the writing is so fine. Even the copyist is having his troubles, and he is an expert. I read the work over once, tried the themes and found it interesting. In fact, I at once wrote Mr. Stoeckel, who gives the Norfolk festival, that I would play it. The new work, however,

³¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 26 Dec. 1911, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (46)*.

³² ‘Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto’, *Commercial Advertiser*.

³³ Stoeckel, *US-NH*.

³⁴ ‘Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto’, *Commercial Advertiser*.

³⁵ Letter from Stoeckel to Coleridge-Taylor, 23 Dec. 1911, Stoeckel Family Papers, *US-NH*.

³⁶ Letter from Stoeckel to Coleridge-Taylor, 31 Jan. 1912, Stoeckel Family Papers, *US-NH*.

³⁷ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 27 Mar. 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (56)*.

has nothing to do with the American Negro. It is pretty, melodious music – like a bouquet of flowers. That is the comparison that comes to my mind.³⁸

She recommended a few alterations, evident from Coleridge-Taylor's lengthy and detailed reply to her, reproduced in full below:

So many thanks for your letter and the suggestions which I much appreciate. Unfortunately the first two movements were already in the copyists [*sic*] hands - & so the orchestral parts must remain, but I don't think your little alterations affect the orchestra by any extra bars etc at all.

In the Finale I have adopted nearly everything you suggest – you'll see one other improvement I've made also – I'm sending you the paragraph on separate M.S. as this last movement is now being copied.

I've got as near your end as I could – & hope it will be all right.

The full score of the first movement I am sending you tomorrow – the 2nd movement on Thursday & the last with all the parts at the end of the week.

What is the exact date of the Concert? First week in June I understand, but of course Dr. Mees will want to glance at the score some days before.

The following are about the metronome rates

First Movement

Allegro maestoso ♩ = 108 to 116

Piu agitato (after C) ♩ = [crotchet] but a shade faster

Allegro molto after cadenza ♩ = 100

Slow movement.

Andante semplice ♩ = 104 (6 in a bar)

Con moto at B ♩ = 116

Listesso tempo at D ♩ = 104 (4 in a bar)

Finale

Allegro molto ♩ = 120 (1 in a bar)

At 7 (2/4) ♩ = ♩ (2 in a bar)

The movement will be quite clear as regards tempi if one remembers that all through the beat remains practically the same i.e.

♩ of 3/8 is same as ♩ of 2/4 and ♩ of 3/4 so that there is apparently no change of motion. And in the slow movement the 4/8 is similar – I mention these points because I know how easy it is to do a thing in two quite different ways, & even Adolf Schmid the Mus. Director of

³⁸ 'Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto', *Commercial Advertiser*.

His Majesty's [Theatre] thought the 4/8 in No. 2 was twice as fast as it should be! – but I fancy he saw it marked 2/4 as you have it in your original copy!!

I have been over the wind parts of numbers 1 & 2 & the 1st of all string parts so I hope there will not be many mistakes - & I have only had eight first & eight seconds done, though Mr. Stoeckel asked for more. We do Concertos with fewer strings over here & you may find it advisable to ask Dr. Mees to only have four desks (eight players) during the actual accompaniments – the rest joining at tuttis. I have scored it with this idea in mind. Wishing you all success.....

P.S. There are two bars slightly altered in 1st & 2nd movements – kindly refer to score.³⁹

The performance took place (alongside *A Tale of Old Japan*) on 4 June 1912, against the backdrop of a life-size portrait of the composer,⁴⁰ and Coleridge-Taylor sent Read the news that it - in his absence- had gone well: 'You'll be pleased to know that from a cable I received yesterday the Concerto was a great success in America. I shall doubtless hear details later'.⁴¹ A more cautious note is evident in the US press reviews. Richard Aldrich's report in the *New York Times*, comparing the work with *A Tale of Old Japan*, noted:

Of somewhat stronger fibre is the violin concerto, which Miss Powell played with intense conviction and that apparent determination to make it appear music of the highest rank that there has been plenty of opportunity to admire when she has been playing other music in the past. Of the highest rank this music is not. It has some evident affinity with the Japanese idyll that preceded it on the programme and was obviously composed at very nearly the same time. Perhaps it would have been heard to better advantage after a longer interval.⁴²

Musical America drew the same conclusions, stating:

On Wednesday evening Maud Powell played Coleridge-Taylor's new Violin Concerto.... the Coleridge-Taylor work is fascinating, if not great music. It contains interesting melodic material and piquant rhythms, and it is gratefully written for the solo instrument. Miss Powell played it with all the consummate artistry of which she is mistress, and there were wonderful fire, dash and rhythmic feeling in her delivery of the last movement. As long as it is played in so inspiring a manner, this concerto cannot fail to produce a highly favourable impression.⁴³

³⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Maud Powell, 4 May [1912], *US-MPs*.

⁴⁰ See Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 56 – 7. A photograph of the stage setting, taken by Powell's husband, was sent to Coleridge-Taylor just before he fell ill.

⁴¹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 9 Jun. 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (54)*.

⁴² 'Norfolk Festival a Choral Triumph', *New York Times*, 9 Jun. 1912 (n.p.n.).

⁴³ 'Prestige of Norfolk's Festival Ably Maintained', *Musical America*, 15 Jun. 1912 (n.p.n.).

Although this was ‘the last full-scale concerto which Powell introduced to the world’⁴⁴ (and one which she joked was, indeed, ‘Taylor-made’ for her)⁴⁵, she herself, questionably, reserved judgement on its title, acknowledging:

I wish somebody would suggest some name besides that of ‘concerto’ to be attached to a composition which is not too serious in its nature. I had a pretty composition which I often played at one season’s concerts which I dubbed ‘concerto de salon’, but I can’t do that with a work by Coleridge-Taylor. Still, it is not quite a full-grown concerto, nor is it yet a suite.⁴⁶

Maud Powell’s observation that the work had ‘nothing to do with the American Negro’ (see page 264) is, again, questionable. Although the new version of the work was no longer based on a specific spiritual melody, the opening subject of the first movement is haunted by an interesting element of modality – the flattened seventh – that is keenly reminiscent of negro spirituals. For example, the flattened seventh (F) in the third bar of the first subject (bar 35) is strongly characteristic in such songs:

Music example 6: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, bb. 33 - 36

⁴⁴ Karen A. Shaffer, *Maud Powell: Pioneer American Violinist* (Iowa, 1988), 249.

⁴⁵ Philippe Graffin, Coleridge-Taylor Violin Concerto, CD AV0044, sleeve notes.

⁴⁶ From the *New York Times*, re-quoted in ‘Maud Powell Will Play New Concerto’, *Commercial Advertiser*, 19 Apr. 1912 (n.p.n.).

The harmonic language of dominant 7ths, 9ths, 11ths and 13ths, their secondary equivalents, and the mixing of major and minor modes, also shares an affinity with negro spirituals. Take, for example, the dominant seventh (bar 39), thirteenth (bar 40) and ninth (bar 43) during the second phrase of the first subject (which follows the first of several arabesque figures):

Music example 7: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, 1st subject, bb. 39 – 44

The musical score shows two staves: Violin (Vln.) and Piano (Pf.). The key signature is two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 39. The Violin part starts with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a sixteenth-note run. The Piano part provides harmonic support with chords and triplets. Dynamics include *mf* and accents.

The secondary lyrical paragraph of this theme occurs after a modulation to G flat major (bar 80), a tonal divergence the composer had used more than once in other works. Although the music appears to be established in the supertonic minor (A minor) by bar 107, Coleridge-Taylor ultimately treats this key as transitional. He moves away instead, for the entry of the second subject at bar 131, to the key of D major (of which A ultimately functions as the secondary dominant) but without tonicising, immediately repeating the first phrase in the Neapolitan, E flat major.

Music example 8: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, 2nd subject, bb. 131 – 146.

As expected, the second subject is highly fluid in terms of its tonal behaviour. Bar 147 brings us to the dominant of B (F sharp), before finally cadencing into B minor (the relative of D major) at bar 165. Consequently, an awareness of two tonics is created in this section (exploiting in this use of D major and B minor - as in Coleridge-Taylor's much earlier *Variations* for 'cello and piano - the dualism of exactly the same tonal areas as Brahms' *Clarinet Quintet*). Ten bars later, the music is once more back in A minor (used, as before, as the dominant of D major), but again, Coleridge-Taylor does idle in this tonal area very long, repeating the same process again by moving to the dominant of G flat major (a key already touched on in the transition to the second-group material), though this is deftly converted enharmonically to V of D by exploiting the pivotal presence of D flat/C sharp. This dominant of D is, rather arrestingly, abandoned at this point, and the tonality is left in mid air as, first, a dominant of C major is announced (bar 200) which appears to vie for dominance with V of E (bar 210). Finally, after both keys are alluded to a second time (bars 215 and 217), Coleridge-Taylor allows C major to mark the outset of the developmental phase. This procedure of an extended delay of tonicisation throughout the exposition (and its ultimate denial – D major is never tonicised), which had been so expertly handled in

the chamber works, is rediscovered in this work with a new and more mature panache. Indeed, the composer reveals not only his consummate understanding of this organic process, but has now learned to handle more unconventional key relationships and enharmonic divergences with a new and personal proficiency.

The length of the extensive development section (beginning at bar 225) shows that despite the emphasis on pieces of a shorter nature imbued with a strong lyrical streak in much of his work, Coleridge-Taylor was still able to retain a profound sense of musical structure and an innate ability to handle large-scale structures and material symphonically (shown not only in this work, but also in his Symphony and Symphonic Variations). The main key area of the initial part of the development is C major (first subject material), before a move to the dominant of A around bar 279 (first and second subject material); the music swiftly passes through the dominants of E flat and G, becoming more tonally fluid as Coleridge-Taylor exhibits a delight in experimenting with the rich combinations and juxtapositions of harmonies that he clearly relished:

Music example 9: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, Development section, bb. 296 - 300

The musical score for measures 296-300 of the Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, Development section, is presented in two staves. The top staff is for the Violin (Vln.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pf.). The time signature is 2/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The violin part starts with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and continues with a melodic line that includes a crescendo marking. The piano part consists of a series of chords and a triplet of eighth notes at the end, also marked with a crescendo.

Although Coleridge-Taylor had already proved himself perfectly adept at writing counterpoint - evinced most clearly in his early works (see Chapter 2) - his evident joy in harmony, manifested in the predominance of Dvořákian harmonic formulae and appoggiaturas, far outshines it; take, for instance, the bar immediately preceding the above example:

Music example 10: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, Development section, b. 295

(See the beginning of the third movement in Dvořák's Ninth Symphony).

The move towards G minor for the truncated recapitulation of this movement (there is no recapitulation of the second subject) arguably begins at bar 332 with the violinist's restatement of a version of the opening material above a long dominant pedal. This partial restatement, however, is only a faint, for the real recapitulation occurs at bar 356, and the extended dominant pedal is later resumed as an accompaniment to the cadenza which occurs thirty bars into the recapitulation as a new and transformed version of the expository material; Coleridge-Taylor's harmonisation (see music example below) of the bars leading into the accompanied (timpani and bass on a D pedal) cadenza - which is written out - brings to mind Delius' harmonies at the end of

Appalachia, though the manner of the accompanied cadenza has definite resonances of the final movement of Elgar's Violin Concerto, written two years before.

Music example 11: Violin Concerto, 1st Movement, Recapitulation, bb. 382 - 6

The image shows a musical score for measures 382-386 of the first movement of Elgar's Violin Concerto. The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The music consists of chords and triplets. The tempo marking is 'mf poco rit.'

The second group idea, absent from the recapitulation, is now stated (bar 434) in 2/2 metre, during the coda, and the movement finishes with the soloist playing the first subject.

The second movement, *Andante semplice*, is through-composed in a long and almost seamless lyrical 'song' structure. The arrangement of the principal theme (muted strings) as outer octaves filled with harmony, at the very outset of this movement, relates to the same stylistic ilk as Puccini (see Chapter 5, pp. 192 - 3). This texture of inner harmonies within the peripheral octaves of the tune also has much in common with that of Grieg (and also some of the early works of Delius who was much influenced by his Norwegian contemporary) not only, as already noted on page 82 (Chapter 3), his 'Solitary Traveller/Lonely Wanderer' and 'To Spring' (*Lyric Pieces Set III Op. 43*), but also the 'trio' of 'Wedding day at Trolldhaugen' (*Lyric Pieces Set VIII Op. 65*):

Music example 12: Violin Concerto, 2nd Movement, bb. 1 – 8.

Andante semplice

Perhaps the most striking feature of this movement is the sense of tonal fluidity.

Within the expansive paragraph of the first subject, the composer effortlessly visits a range of tonally distant keys – e.g. the divergence to C# minor (b. 26) and F# minor (b. 28) – and also makes use of arresting modulatory ‘sidesteps’ by use of sequence (e.g. bb. 28-29). This technique is subtly used at b. 29 to carry us to the dominant of G (prophetic of the later modulation to the second subject), but again any move to G is averted by a switch back to V of B flat (b. 33) and a veiled reprise of the opening material (veiled in the sense that it seems like a reprise but is actually part of sequential phase that is transitional – to the second subject). The statement of G *major* (and not G minor, the closer relative) is heralded by full orchestra and ‘ff’ at bar 44. G minor, however, does emerge at b. 66 but now as an agency of modulation. Here again, Coleridge-Taylor’s arresting power of tonal ‘plasticity’ is in evidence as we move from G to F major, and sequentially from its minor to E flat major. Further examples of the ‘stepwise’ modulation subsequently occur as we shift from E flat to D flat (bb. 72-5), then to C (bb. 76-9) and to A flat (b. 83). These attitudinising

modulations also set the mode of tonal recovery in bb. 88-96 in both the chromatic descent of the bass (bb. 88-90) and the remarkable shift from G flat (bb. 92-4) to B flat (b. 96). The return to B flat is also noteworthy for the reprise, *not* of the opening material but of the second subject, though this time it is heard not as a ‘fanfare’ but as a hushed gesture. The first subject ultimately follows (b. 111) but not before an interjection and ‘memory’ of G (by its dominant – b. 109) is heard *en passant*.

The third movement, like the first, is in sonata form. Although in G major, it begins on the dominant of E minor (B):

Music example 13: Violin Concerto, 3rd Movement, bb. 1 – 4

With the arrival of the second subject in *E minor* (b. 153), greater significance is given to the tangential opening statement (on the dominant of E minor). The second subject itself is typical of the composer’s expansive melodic ideas (as one finds for example in *Solemn Prelude*). Here, however, the melodic sequences are given additional piquancy by their phraseological irregularities created by the ‘suffix’ of the 3/4 bars (bb. 155 and 156), which disrupt the periodic flow (and which is further disrupted by the additional bars of the soloist – see bb. 185-6). The recurrent driving force and character of this idea, however, is created by Coleridge-Taylor’s rich use of appoggiatura as part of a cycle fifths (and note the appoggiatura as climax – bb.173 and 205):

Music example 14: Violin Concerto, 3rd Movement, bb. 193 - 196

The image shows a musical score for measures 193 to 196 of the Violin Concerto, 3rd Movement. The top staff is for the Violin (Vln.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pf.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The Violin part begins at measure 193 with the instruction 'a tempo'. The Piano part begins at measure 193 with 'mp' and 'poco più mosso'. Both parts have 'poco accel.' markings at measures 194 and 195, and 'rit.' markings at measures 195 and 196. The score ends at measure 196 with a forte (f) dynamic marking.

A hint of sonata rondo is made by the recurrence of the first theme at bar 239, though subtly Coleridge-Taylor subsumes this statement within a sequential passage that embarks from E minor (b. 215). The development itself, dominated by the soloist, presents the opening idea of the first movement transformed in augmented form (bb. 299-370). Extensively developed, this material culminates in a climactic statement of the original idea from the first movement in b. 371, in C minor. This initiates not only a memory of the first movement but also the ‘heraldic’ material of the second movement (b. 379) in a minor form. The development closes by gravitating to the dominant of E, just as at the beginning of the movement (perhaps to suggest a return to E of the second subject?), but this is negated by the return of G major in b. 405 and the tonic is reinforced by the return of the second subject in G minor (b. 549). A reprise of the developmental material (which referred back to the first movement) provides the conduit to the final statement of the concerto’s opening material at b. 647 (echoing the process of the whole development), which concludes the work.

The Concerto’s eventful history encompassed a number of anxiety-inducing misfortunes that befell the manuscript itself. Complications concerning the transportation of the Concerto’s score and parts to and from America set in twice; first of all, the full set of orchestral parts apparently went down on the ‘Titanic’ on 15

April 1912⁴⁷, and had to be re-done post-haste in order to be despatched before the premiere (Coleridge-Taylor was quick to write a cheque for ten shillings as his subscription to the Wesley Woodward Memorial at Eastbourne following the disaster⁴⁸ – Woodward, a former member Eastbourne’s Duke of Devonshire Orchestra, was cellist in the orchestra on the ‘Titanic’). There was further confusion when the return of the treasured full score and parts from the US, following the concerto’s first performance, was delayed. It is evident from Coleridge-Taylor’s correspondence that, aside from a requisite and irksome ‘copyright’ rendition, a performance in England was planned for one of Henry Wood’s Promenade concerts at Queen’s Hall, with Arthur Catterall (who led the Queen’s Hall Orchestra from 1905 to 1914) as soloist:

My dear Read

I want to make use of you and am therefore writing.

It is most possible that Wood is going to do my Concerto at one of the Proms as well as my Othello Suite at Earl’s Court.

Unfortunately he will not hear of anyone playing the Concerto except Catterall – whom I hear is excellent.

But Catterall lives right up in Cheshire, & I have to get a copyright “performance” before June 4th to save performing rights.

I’ve told Catterall that if he came up before June 4th to do it for me – but he seems to think he cannot – in which case can you do it? Would you do it rather?

As you know it is only a farce, only a half dozen people need be present & you need only play a few bars from each movement – but it must be advertised on one bill – I’ll come to Eastbourne if you like or would you rather Croydon?

Of course you needn’t practise it – it only need be read through, but the “audience” will of course be personal friends – if you can do this please let me know your best day – not Monday’s nor Saturday’s.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Karen A. Shaffer, ‘Like a bouquet of flowers’, *The Strad* (Nov. 2002), p. 1209, notes that at the end of May, Powell commented on the loss of the concerto’s parts to a reporter from the *Morgen Journal* who was interviewing her at her home in New York: ‘Oh, his [Coleridge-Taylor’s] works are so full of melody, I call him the African Dvořák. I will play this piece for the first time at the Norfolk Festival on the 4th of June. And can you imagine – the music for the whole orchestra (all the orchestra parts) were on the Titanic and sank with it. We were all very anxious about it!’

⁴⁸ Cheque from Coleridge-Taylor, 16 Apr. 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (63)*.

⁴⁹ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 20 May 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (52)*.

Amidst the tensions and pressures of an increasing workload, noticeably revealed in much of Coleridge-Taylor's correspondence during the summer months, he also harboured plans for the Concerto to be done by Read at Bournemouth, under Dan Godfrey:

My dear Read

I don't know what you'll think of me. I've simply been working against time.

You may expect to see me one day next week as Mrs. Coleridge-Taylor is going to stay with her sister for a few days.

I want to arrange for you to do the Concerto for me at Bournemouth unless Godfrey has made other arrangements – this is only between ourselves at present.⁵⁰

Anxious for the return of the score and parts from America, Coleridge-Taylor wrote separately to Powell, and to her manager and husband H. Godfrey Turner at the beginning of August, enquiring as to the whereabouts of the material. Turner replied a week later:

Many thanks for your letter of the 9th. Madame Powell heard from you yesterday about the score and I have taken it this morning to the copyist. We are dividing the work among a number of men and hope to mail it on the evening of Tuesday, the 27th, so that you shall receive it in time for September 8th.

I will make every enquiry about the missing parts and have no doubt we can trace them. You shall hear more from me later, but my time now is very short, as we are leaving this afternoon on a motor trip through the White Mountains.⁵¹

The Prom concert⁵² was now confirmed for 8 October, and two performances in Germany under the composer had been lined-up for November, but another pressing reason for the score's immediate return was the composer's negotiations for the Violin Concerto's publication with Metzler:

⁵⁰ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Read, 15 Jul. 1912, *US-NYpm MFC C693.R284 (55)*.

⁵¹ Letter from H. Godfrey Turner to Coleridge-Taylor, 16 Aug. 1912, *Maud Powell Society Archives*.

⁵² See Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London, 1938), 358.

Dear Mr. Lucas,

Is it any use my coming to discuss my new *Violin Concerto* with you, with an idea of Metzlers publishing it?

It has recently been performed by Maud Powell in America and she has five performances booked already for next season, including the New York Philharmonic and also Chicago – Thomas Orchestra.

Wood does it here at Queen's Hall on October 8, and I conduct it twice in Germany, at Berlin and Dresden.

If you like, I could bring you some of the correspondence I have on the matter.

I could, if you thought favourably of it, hand you the full score and a large set of parts in MS., and a fee of £6 is to be paid to me for each of the American performances, part of which would, of course, go to you in the event of your doing it.

But I do not wish any performing fee to be charged in England, as I am sure it will hurt rather than help.

The work is not very long and not very difficult.⁵³

Eventually, the work was despatched from America; however, compounded by a mislabelling of the composer's address, the expected package was still missing at the end of August, and Coleridge-Taylor's extreme state of agitation generated by its non-arrival is crystallised in his daughter's account of events, who relates:

I well remember seeing my father journey time after time on foot to the parcels office at the local railway station to enquire about the missing parcel. Each time he was informed the parcel had not arrived his disappointment and anxiety increased. As a consequence of this delay his growing anxiety over the possibility of the cancellation of the first London performance under Sir Henry Wood affected him very deeply. Only those who have suffered experiences of this kind will appreciate just how vital such a loss is to a creative artist. Whether or not he had braced himself to accept the situation will never be known, for sudden illness overcame him.⁵⁴

He collapsed at West Croydon station on Wednesday 28 August, on his way to visit the Chinese Exhibition at Crystal Palace. Distressed that no one had seen him or come to his aid, he recovered enough to make it home alone, where he struggled upstairs to bed. Although showing signs of delirium, his condition during the next few days was not initially thought to be serious. Still preoccupied with the *Violin Concerto*, he was able, together with Jessie, to check through and prepare the parts of the long awaited parcel (ready for the forthcoming concert) that had now finally arrived. She affirmed:

⁵³ Letter from Coleridge-Taylor to Charles Lucas (Metzler & Co.), 14 Aug. 1912, quoted in Berwick Sayers, 299.

⁵⁴ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 77.

.... this proved to be the last task we undertook together, for whilst he called out the names of the various instruments, I checked them. In the middle of this the doctor was announced, and when I said "I hope I am not doing wrong, but my husband was so anxious to find out whether the parcel from America contained the right number of parts", Dr. Collard said, "That's splendid, let him go on".⁵⁵

That evening, however, brought a turn for the worse and a diagnosis, the following morning, of acute pneumonia. Coleridge-Taylor died later that day, Sunday 1 September (two months before he was due to have conducted his concerto in a much anticipated trip to Germany), reportedly 'conducting' the concerto (which - apart from the copyright performance when he accompanied Read – he had never heard) with an hallucinatory orchestra during his final moments.

Telegrams arrived the following day from, amongst others, Smither Jackson, the Petherick family, Casely Hayford, Dr. & Mrs. Renner, Herbert Cairnbank Dunbar and Herbert Walters, who wrote that 'the news came as a great shock to me. Am feeling his death acutely.'⁵⁶ Messages from musicians included those from Henry Wood, Landon Ronald, Irene Scharrer, Hamish MacCunn, Dan Godfrey's Bournemouth Municipal Choir & Orchestra, Adolf Schmidt, His Majesty's Theatre Orchestra, Mr & Mrs. Stoeckel, Metzlers, The Thornton Heath Carnavon Choral Society and William Read. Homage was also paid in the many letters of sympathy at his tragically early death – amongst a wide range of those who sent their condolences was Berwick Sayers, Adolph Reiss, Cecil Forsyth, Duse Mohammed, Joseph Leete, Howard B. Humphrey, secretaries of the Readers Research Club, the Alpha Phi Literary Society of Washington, Alexandra Palace Choral & Orchestral Society, Central Croydon Choral Society, The Handel Society, New Symphony Orchestra, The Tonic Sol-Fa Association, The Orchestral Association, University of London Musical

⁵⁵ Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 60.

⁵⁶ *GB-Lcm*, Portraits Dept.

Society, Sheffield Musical Union, Walsall Philharmonic Union, Huddersfield Choral Society, Boosey, The Copyright Protection Society (with whom Coleridge-Taylor had registered as a member, on 25 July 1912), Arthur Cowen & members of the Twickenham Philharmonic Society, Rhymney United Choir, The Morrison 43rd Annual Eisteddfod, Crystal Palace School of Art, Crystal Palace Choral & Orchestral Society, the Stock Exchange Orchestral & Choral Society and the London Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁷

The funeral service, led by Canon R. W. Hoare, took place on 5 September at St. Michael and All Saints Church in Croydon. His daughter, who was only the tender age of nine- and -a -half at the time, later recounted the event:

I shall ever remember the day of my father's funeral. My father had always expressed his dislike of mourning – especially for young children – and I was accordingly dressed in white, except for a narrow black velvet ribbon round the edge of a large brimmed hat. When the cortège set out I sat next to Mother, my brother opposite, and Julien Henry, who had so often sung for my father, sat next to him. Hundreds of people had gathered to pay their respects; many even climbed on the railings outside to get a better position. Inside every available space was occupied. Father's setting of Christina Rossetti's words, "When I am Dead my Dearest", was sung by Julien Henry, and the slow movement from his violin concerto was played by William J. Read. H. L. Balfour, Organist of the Royal Choral Society, played the accompaniments, and also some excerpts from Father's works.⁵⁸

These selections included music from *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, and the Funeral March from *The Death of Minnehaha* that concluded the solemnities, and crowds thronged the three-mile route of the funeral procession from the church to Bandon Hill Cemetery for the committal.⁵⁹

There was an effusion of tributes in the press at home and abroad, including 'A Tribute from Sir Hubert Parry', which was printed in the October issue of the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 98.

⁵⁹ See *The Croydon Advertiser* (7 Sept. 1912), held at Croydon Local Studies Library, for a detailed report of the event, including the order of service, list of chief mourners and the names of the overflowing church congregation, details of the numerous floral tributes and messages of condolence, a tribute from the Central Croydon Choral Society, and extracts of 'appreciations' in the *Daily Telegraph* (Landon Ronald) and *Daily News*.

Musical Times.⁶⁰ Of the commemorative concerts, the principal Memorial Concert, attended by H. R. H Princess Louise, H. S. H. Princess Louise of Battenberg and the Duke of Argyll, was held at the Royal Albert Hall (filled to capacity) on 22 November; during the run-up to the occasion it was announced that ‘all the well-known leaders of the profession are giving the scheme their support, and Lord Alverstone (the Lord Chief Justice), the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Earl of Plymouth, Sir William Bigge, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Mr. J. Ernest Palmer, Mr. William Boosey, Mr. Arthur Boosey, Mr. H. A. Daniell, Mr. J. Fuller Maitland, and other noblemen and gentlemen have joined the general committee.’⁶¹ The *Musical Times* was able to report that the event was ‘an unqualified success’⁶² (which, it noted, was ‘very largely due to the labours of Col. H. Walters, V. D. and Mr. Julien Henry’)⁶³ and gave a full account of the programme and performers: the choir, numbering around 1,100 was a composite of the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society (Sir Frederick Bridge), the Alexandra Palace Choral Society (Mr. Allen Gill), the London Choral Society (Mr. Arthur Fagge) and the Crystal Palace Choir (Mr. W. Hedgcock); the orchestras were the London Symphony, the New Symphony, the Royal Amateur, the Stock Exchange and the Handel Society; solo artists were Carrie Tubb, Esta D’Argo, Ada Crossley, Ben Davies, Gervase Elwes, Julien Henry and Robert Radford, and the conductors were Stanford, Bridge, Schmid and Ronald. The selected programme comprised *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast/Death of Minnehaha*, Ballade in A minor, ‘Unmindful of the Roses’ (from *Six Sorrow Songs* op. 57), ‘Big Lady Moon’ (from *Five Fairy Ballads*), ‘My Love’ (from *Five Southern Love Songs*), ‘Over the Hills’ (from *Seven African Romances*), two of the *Four Characteristic Waltzes* (Valse de la

⁶⁰ *Musical Times*, 1 Oct. 1912, 638.

⁶¹ ‘Coleridge-Taylor Memorial Concert’, *Musical Times* (1 Nov. 1912), 716.

⁶² ‘The Coleridge-Taylor Memorial Concert’, *Musical Times* (1 Dec. 1912), 793.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Reine and Valse Bohémienne), 'Spring had come' (from *Hiawatha's Departure*), 'Thou art risen, my beloved' (from *Songs of Sun & Shade*) and the Bamboula (Rhapsodic Dance) for orchestra.⁶⁴

Although, with hindsight, the signs of the inevitable strains inflicted by an exhausting and punishing workload are manifested in his letters during the summer months of 1912, the bombshell of Coleridge-Taylor's sudden death, curtailing what might have been, was summed up by Parry in the opening sentence of his encomium:

The regret and even astonishment at the sudden cutting short of a life brimming with artistic activity will be so widely diffused that it would be [a] waste of words to dwell on it.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 'A Tribute from Sir Hubert Parry', *Musical Times*, (1 Oct. 1912), 638.

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