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'A SURVEY OF NEW TRENDS IN ENGLISH MUSICAL LIFE 1910 - 1914'

A thesis based on research undertaken in the
Music Department of the University of Durham
and submitted to the University of Durham
for the qualification of Ph D

by

Richard Charles Hall

In two volumes

VOLUME TWO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 1

Chapter 1	Politics, Society and the Arts in early Georgian England	p 5
Chapter 2	The English Musical Renaissance	p 50
Chapter 3	Music and Musicians in Edwardian England	p 78

Volume 2

Chapter 4	Early Georgian Musical Life	p 3
Chapter 5	English Composers and their Works 1910 - 1914	p 79
Chapter 6	Conclusion	p 254
Bibliography		p 266

CHAPTER 4 Early Georgian Musical Life

In 1910 a book by William Johnson Galloway called 'Musical England' was published, and in an introductory chapter the author explains his purpose as being "to show to those, who do not realise it, what is being done all over the country in the cause of music"[1]. The work has its weaknesses: Galloway is extremely cautious about appearing to pass critical judgement on any of his contemporaries, and his fixation with National Opera is tiresomely intrusive. Nevertheless,his book gives a comprehensive if unfocussed picture of English music at the time, and thus makes a good starting point for a survey of early Georgian musical life. A continuing picture has been built up from a collation of references from individual studies of musicians and musical institutions which touch on this period,and by examination of the pre-War musical seasons as revealed in the pages of the musical press. The survey is not restricted to London alone but is extended to three provincial centres, Manchester, Birmingham and Bournemouth, each very different but all musically important, and further light is shed on music-making in the provinces by consideration of the provincial festivals. Thus Johnson Galloway's sketch is amplified into a detailed survey of English musical life on the eve of the Great War.

The musical season in London at this time ran from October to June, with particularly dense periods of activity before Christmas and in the late spring and early summer. In the provinces the concert season displayed a similar shape, although festivals often focused intense activity at other times of the year. London's main out-of-season music was provided by the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts which ran from mid-August until late October, thus forming something of a prelude to the season proper. The Proms will make a convenient starting point for this survey.

1 'Musical England' (1910) p 3

By 1910 the Queen's Hall Proms had become such an accepted landmark in the season's activities that Galloway claims that they "are almost too well known to need describing"[1]. Nevertheless, he does devote two pages to a discussion of them, emphasising especially Wood's continued pursual of a doubly educative policy, helping the public to an appreciation of the best standard and classical works and also introducing new music by both foreign and native composers. (Up to the end of the 1909 season he had produced some five hundred new compositions, of which about one third were by English composers.) In his choice of new music Wood kept well abreast of all the latest trends, commissioning works from the most avant garde English composers and introducing works by the most up-to-date continental musicians. One of his boldest ventures, regarded by posterity as something of a coup, belonged to September 1912 when he gave the first ever performance of Schönberg's 'Five Orchestral Pieces', a work not only in a remarkably advanced idiom but also of extreme difficulty. The fact that it was violently hissed by some members of the audience demonstrated, amongst other things, that Prom audiences were by no means uncritically enthusiastic for whatever Wood cared to give them. It is worth mentioning that when the work was repeated at a Queen's Hall Symphony Concert sixteen months later under the composer's direction, "the performance drew a large and appreciative audience"[2]. Other continental composers whose works were introduced to England at the pre-War Queen's Hall Proms included Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Glazounov and Enesco; and new British works from the pens of Bax, Dale, Harty, Frank Bridge, Quilter, Scott, Harrison, Goossens, Dunhill and Vaughan Williams, amongst others, were brought forward.

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1 'Musical England' (1910) p 123

2 Henry Wood: 'My Life of Music' (1938) p 272

That Wood was able to introduce a large amount of new music as well as keep up a regular supply of standard works says a great deal for his meticulous and highly-organised method of rehearsal during the Prom season. The orchestra played for approximately two thirds of every concert, in other words provided about twelve hours of music per week; but for this Wood allowed himself no more than three three-hour rehearsals, only in exceptional circumstances exceeding this amount. Everything possible was done to economise on rehearsal time. The orchestra always played from Wood's own sets of parts, heavily annotated in thick blue pencil with his own interpretive markings; and, having been driven to distraction by delays in rehearsal due to mistakes in manuscript parts, Wood took to checking himself every note of every part of each new work to be performed. Nothing was too much trouble to him to secure the smooth running of this series of concerts which he regarded as his own special province.

The pattern of the week's concerts in the pre-War years had hardly changed since the early days. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday were still 'Popular Nights', Wednesday was now unashamedly described as 'Symphony Night', Friday's concert always featured a major work by Beethoven, and above all Monday remained 'Wagner Night'. In terms of number of items played, Wagner was by far the most popular composer in all the early Georgian seasons, with one hundred and twenty-one items in 1911 and one hundred and sixteen two years later; his nearest rival was Beethoven with about one third as many items in each case. The most popular English composer was, predictably, Elgar with twelve items in 1912 (equalling Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Dvořák) and two more in the following season when he was on a level with Handel, Schubert and Grieg. About one eighth of the music performed at the Promenade Concerts at this time was by English composers, a very much higher propor-

tion of native music than was played in any other orchestral series in the country; and Wood drew special attention to the fact that the great majority of the soloists engaged to appear at the Proms (there were seventy-eight of them in 1911, eighty-seven in 1913) were of British origin. Wood was no chauvinist; it was merely another aspect of his educative policy that he wished to demonstrate to the general public that modern English composers had something to say and the technical equipment with which to say it effectively, and also that the best native players and singers compared very favourably with their continental rivals.

The preponderance of English artists and the comparatively large proportion of English music in no way gave the Proms a parochial air; Wood's programmes were fully representative of the European classical and modern repertoire. He was accused in some quarters of a bias in favour of Russian music,for his style of conducting was well suited to its strength, clarity and passion, and Russian composers often wrote in such a way as to show off his highly-trained orchestra to its best advantage. But Herman Finck spoke the truth when he affirmed, in reply to a question about Wood's specialities as a conductor, that "(he) specializes in everybody"[1]. His interpretations were founded on a scrupulous regard for the composer's intentions, drawing out what was already in the music rather than imposing a personal interpretation on it. Eugene Goossens spoke for a whole generation of Queen's Hall Orchestra players when he said that "Under no other conductor could a more thorough and authentic grounding in the orchestral repertory have been obtained."[2]

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[1] quoted by James Agate in 'Sir Henry Wood: Fifty Years of the Proms' (1944) p 59

[2] 'Overture and Beginners' (1951) p 90

For many people the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts answered a keenly-felt need, and this largely explains the enormous success of the series. Of those who benefited by the venture, firstly one should mention the concert-goers, the new audiences who were attracted to the Queen's Hall. For the Proms, as well as providing a varied and comprehensive programme of music which was financially within reach of students and less-well-off music lovers, introduced classical orchestral music to a great many people who would never have dreamt of sampling an orchestral concert in the normal course of events. C E M Joad, a self-confessed Prom convert, wrote as follows: "speaking ... for thousands of others, I thank (Henry Wood) because it was he who set our feet, led us and accompanied us upon the paths of musical pilgrimage"[1].

Newman's original premise that there existed in London a large potential audience for classical music had been perfectly correct, and Wood's method of wooing the support and holding the interest of this audience had been entirely successful.

Secondly, the young English composers had good reason to be thankful to Wood for his Promenade Concerts. Since the demise of August Manns' Crystal Palace Concerts in 1901, very few young composers had been able to gain a hearing for their works in any of the concert series of the professional orchestras, the only conductors to show real interest in their works being Dan Godfrey and Henry Wood. Therefore the latter's policy of introducing two or three new British works every week at the Proms was a great encouragement to young composers, especially since he ensured that all new works were given first-class performances; Ethel Smyth quoted him as saying, having decided to devote more rehearsal time

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1 '<u>Sir Henry Wood: Fifty Years of the Proms</u>' (1944) p 51

to a novelty than to a standard classic, "Mozart will survive a performance that would kill poor X's tone poem"[1]. Wood was always quick to respond to the wishes of his audience, and if they expressed special enthusiasm for a new work he was always ready to give it a second performance later in the series. The testimony of Eugene Goossens in this matter was particularly interesting, for not only was he one of the young composers who benefited from Wood's enlightened policy, but also he played in the Queen's Hall Orchestra for four years and so had inside knowledge of Wood's attitudes to, and methods of dealing with, the new works he brought forward. Goossens says quite simply: "The debt owed him by the last two generations of English composers ... is a fantastic one."[2]

The Prom seasons were of great benefit to players and singers too. They provided work at an otherwise slack time of year, and an engagement to appear at a Prom was of considerable value in terms of the advancement of the career of a young musician. George Baker, who earned his first three guinea fee at a Prom in 1910, claimed that "we young singers never had a better friend than Henry Wood"[3]. There was keen competition among young orchestral players to obtain a position in the Queen's Hall Orchestra, for as a member of it one gained a remarkably quick but very thorough grounding in the standard and modern repertoire, and it was the Prom seasons in particular which were responsible for the huge range of music undertaken and the speed with which it had to be learnt. No other group of players undertook a similar amount of concentrated work under one conductor, thus a place in Wood's orchestra provided a unique initiation for a young musician into the world of the professional orchestral player.

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1 'A Final Burning of Boats' (1928) p 82

2 'Eugene Goossens' op cit p 91

3 quoted in 'Sir Henry Wood' by Reginald Pound (1969) p 111

In 1914, after the second performance of his 'Five Orchestral Pieces', Arnold Schönberg was very explicit in his praise of the orchestra, especially commending "the unexcelled qualities of your 'ensemble', the precision, beauty of sound, and noble taste and careful thoroughness of every detail, which are the merit of every single one of you and the success of all of you together" [1]. He went on to say that the only two continental orchestras worthy of comparison with the Queen's Hall Orchestra were the Amsterdam Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic. The qualities which Schönberg singled out for special mention all point to Wood's methods of training the orchestra, his obsessive care over balance and intonation, and to the general excellence of his players. The performance of the 'Five Orchestral Pieces' was doubtless something of a special occasion, with extra rehearsal time devoted to it; but the tenor of Schönberg's remarks appears again and again in the contemporary reports of the Queen's Hall Orchestra's concerts. One criticism sometimes levelled at the players, that they were entirely dependent upon Wood's leadership, is refuted by the praises of Strauss and Schönberg, both of whose remarks were prompted by performances which they conducted themselves.

It would be foolish to claim that Wood's orchestra was the best in early Georgian England. Suffice it to say that in the opinion of a number of critics of note it was considered to be if not the very best, then certainly one of the best. What is indisputable is that in its own particular territories, most notably those of English music and contemporary music, it was without equal.

The ten-week Prom season marked the busiest period of the year for Wood and his orchestra, but some idea of the extent of their other undertakings is given by Wood's own summary of his activities for the year 1911, on his own admission "a gigantic

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[1] quoted in "My Life of Music" by Henry Wood (1938) p 273

year of work ... There were twenty-nine Sunday afternoon concerts; thirty-eight of various artists in London and of certain provincial societies; sixty-one Promenade concerts; twelve symphony concerts. That makes a total of one hundred and forty concerts. In addition there were the festivals at Sheffield and Norwich; also the Empire Festival in the Crystal Palace at which I directed four out of the six concerts as well as the London Musical Festival. Besides the necessary rehearsals for these London concerts, I directed some forty chorus rehearsals in the Provinces."[1]

After the Proms, the most important part of the year's activity for the Queen's Hall Orchestra was the series of symphony concerts given at three o'clock on Saturday afternoons roughly fortnightly from mid-October until mid-April. In format the programmes were standard symphony concert fare: a symphony, a concerto and two or three smaller orchestral pieces. In content they were more distinctive, being typical Wood mixture of popular favourites and less familiar modern works. Among the more important works introduced to England during the pre-War series were 'The Divine Poem' and 'Prometheus' by Scriabin (the latter work being given twice in the same programme on 1st February 1913) and Stravinsky's 'Fireworks', given on 14th February 1914 and repeated a fortnight later "by request". The works of Richard Strauss featured prominently, as did those of Tchaikovsky and Brahms. The branch of composition most poorly represented was native music, which at first seems surprising bearing in mind Wood's enthusiastic championing of English music in his other series. In 1911, he gave the first performance of Walford Davies Symphony in G, in the 1912/13 season he brought forward three small-scale English works (Grainger's 'Green Bushes', 'Cockaigne' and Balfour Gardiner's 'Shepherd Fennel's Dance') and the following winter saw the produc-

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1 quoted in "My Life of Music" by Henry Wood (1938) p 246

tion of only Parry's Fifth Symphony (given its second performance under the composer's direction on 1st November 1913) and, three months later, the Delius''Dance Rhapsody'. This neglect of native music had its roots in commercial considerations. By this period the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts were well established and had an assured, safe audience, so that Wood was able to present a large amount of unknown native music without fear of a decline in audience numbers; but with its winter series the Queen's Hall Orchestra was in direct competition with the other London orchestras for the support of a more cautious and conservative type of concert-goer than that which made up the Queen's Hall audiences on late summer evenings. Subscribers to the Symphony Concerts would not relish being educated to an appreciation of English music; if they felt there to be too much of it in the prospectus, they would simply take their custom elsewhere to one of the other orchestras' winter series. The Symphony Concerts had to be made to pay their way; it was for this reason that Wood was forced to restrict his novelties to large-scale continental works which were likely to arouse interest and attract large audiences, and also to limit the amount of English music in the programmes.

The Sunday Afternoon Concerts were very different, for here Wood pursued much the same policies as with the Proms. In order to counter the objections to concerts being given on Sundays, the educative nature of the series had had to be stressed at first, but as opposition to Sunday concerts gradually weakened, so did adherence to the original educational and philanthropic aims. Care had been taken to build up a regular body of subscribers, not a difficult task to accomplish because of the lack of any serious competition in this field; thus by 1909, when the Royal Albert Hall Sunday Concerts came into being, Wood had established a regular faithful following, and the two series were able to run side by side. By 1910 the programmes had come largely to resemble those of the

Proms, but with one important difference. As Wood himself put it " ... we rarely performed novelties as the concerts had to be given without rehearsal and therefore contained repertoire material" [1]. In this series Wood followed his natural inclination to serve the interests of the native composer; since he had a relatively safe audience to deal with, he included one British work at every Sunday concert without fail, sandwiched in between classical works and popular favourites.

An interesting picture of a Queen's Hall Sunday Concert appears in the fifth chapter of E M Forster's 'Howard's End', published in 1910. The varied programme is there (Brahms' 'Four Serious Songs' flanked by Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and a 'Pomp and Circumstance' March) as is the mixed audience; the clerk Leonard Bast attends the concert in the hope of improving himself, while the Schlegels are there because a Queen's Hall Sunday Concert is part of the round of a moneyed, liberal middle class family. (The two German cousins slipping out early to avoid the English work is probably an accurate touch, but it is interesting to note that Herr Liesecke claims to have heard the work twice already in Germany.) The Sunday concerts had a less distinctive flavour than either of Wood's other series; in fact their most notable chacteristic was their non-specialisation and broad general appeal. They had no particular importance from the orchestra's point of view, but they filled a gap in London's concert life and attracted considerable support.

The three principal series apart, Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra continued to undertake a great many other engagements. Foreign singers and instrumentalists visiting London (artists of the standing of Kreisler, Ysaÿe, Kubelik and Casals) often chose Wood and his orchestra for their concerto concerts, knowing that they could rely on the utmost sensitivity in the conducting and

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[1] ibid p 279

the playing (Casals was later happy to play concertos under Wood with no rehearsal). In London there were the festivals mentioned by Wood in his summary of his 1911 activities and similar events such as the twelve concerts given at Earl's Court the following year in conjunction with a 'Shakespeare's England' exhibition, and the short series of concerts of modern music given by F B Ellis at Queen's Hall in April 1914. This group of concerts (two were orchestral and the other presented chamber music) was made ever memorable by its including the first performance of Vaughan Williams' 'A London Symphony', but more new English music of stature was brought forward: orchestral works by Bax, Butterworth and Delius and chamber music by Vaughan Williams and Grainger, all being given for the first or second time. This was one of the few occasions when Wood relinquished the rostrum for more than the performance of a single work, for the conducting of both the orchestral concerts was shared between Ellis, a highly gifted, wealthy amateur who financed and organised the whole venture, and Geoffrey Toye, one of the most gifted of the young English conductors to emerge just before the War.

Outside London Wood's activities were centred upon his involvement with the festivals at Norwich and Sheffield to which he took his own orchestra and, in the case of the latter, for which he acted as chorus master as well as principal conductor. From January 1912 there were also a series of Promenade Concerts given (mostly with the Queen's Hall Orchestra) at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, and in addition there were regular tours of the Midlands and the North.

Towards the end of his life Henry Wood became the object of great sentimental affection, a species of regard which was well-intentioned but which tends to cloud one's view of the early stages of his career. Then sentimentality was the last emotion which he inspired; to be associated with him and his orchestra in the

years before the Great War was to be at the very centre of things, to be involved with not only some of the best musicians in England but also with new ideas, new methods and, above all, new music. Johnson Galloway sums up the position of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1910 as "probably the most important and certainly the most popular and educative"[1] of the London orchestras, responsible to a large extent for "the striking increase of orchestral activity during recent years in London"[2]. By 1914, this was still substantially true, although Thomas Beecham's increased activities had stolen some of the glamour which had previously surrounded Wood and his work. But in the musically exciting world of Georgian London, the man at the centre of much of the excitement was Henry Wood.

Johnson Galloway tactlessly refers to the London Symphony Orchestra as "an offshoot of the Queen's Hall Orchestra"[3]. Historically, he was perfectly correct, of course; but from the very outset of its career, the new orchestra had striven to establish its own identity, adopting methods in its overall policy and day-to-day management which were very different from those of Wood and Newman. These differences largely explain why, according to the young amateur William Maitland Strutt, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Queen's Hall Orchestra "were patronised by very different audiences", the former "attracting a far more cultivated and discriminating public than their rivals"[4]. To talk of rivalry between the two orchestras gives a somewhat false impression; it had been noted that Wood was an enthusiastic member of the audience at the new orchestra's inaugural concert,

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[1] Musical England pp 122/3 [2] ibid p 119

[3] ibid p 125

[4] W M Strutt: Reminiscences of a Musical Amateur (1915) p 39

and since there was more than enough work for the two orchestras to do, they were able to co-exist on friendly terms.

Each orchestra presented a wide variety of music, but there were differences in the way the programmes were built. Whereas Wood took risks with big new and unfamiliar works and counter-balanced them with well-tried favourites by Wagner and Tchaikovsky, the London Symphony Orchestra (in the concerts it promoted itself) steered a middle course: there was little enterprise in presenting large-scale progressive works but also less reliance upon the safe drawing power of popular favourites. Something the same could be said of its policy when engaging soloists; it gave an unusually large number of concerts without solo artists, but those who were engaged tended to be serious, committed players rather than fashionable *virtuosi*.

A practice which was rigidly upheld was that of engaging a large number of different conductors. The giants of the profession, men of the stature of Richter and Nikisch, appeared fairly frequently, but otherwise there was a constant variety of English and foreign conductors engaged for one or two concerts in the season. This practice had its effect upon the musical character of the orchestra, making for enormous sensitivity and responsiveness in the playing. The policy of self-government and shared responsibility engendered fierce pride and scrupulous concern over the maintenance of high standards. Indeed, it was the pursuit of excellence that became the ordhestra's hallmark; all other considerations, such as any sense of responsibility towards the native composer or performer, were held in lesser regard. Thus in matters of programming, each London Symphony Orchestra season tended to have its own flavour depending upon the tastes and methods of the conductors engaged.

The 1910/11 season saw the retirement of Hans Richter from English musical life and thus marks something of a landmark in the orchestra's unfolding career. The seven symphony concerts which Richter conducted before his farewell concert on 10th April 1911 showed the usual preponderance of works from the German classical and modern repertoire, although there was also a remarkably large quantity of French music for a conductor of such pronounced anti-Gallic sentiments: a Chopin concerto and selections from Berlioz's 'Romeo and Juliet' on 13th February and the latter's 'Faust' three weeks later. There had been more Berlioz at the opening concert of the series on 24th November, but the 'Roman Carneval' Overture was conducted on this occasion by Thomas Beecham (his first appearance with the orchestra), as was Holbrooke's 'Dylan' Overture. English music was to be heard at all thirteen concerts of the series (barring the two which presented single large-scale choral works), Coleridge-Taylor, Bridge, Harty, Holbrooke and Elgar conducting their own compositions. It was Elgar who was invited to follow Richter as principal conductor of the orchestra in the spring of 1911, and it was he who conducted the last two concerts of the season, each of which included a performance of his Second Symphony. Other conductors who had appeared during the course of the symphony concert series were Arthur Nikisch and Professor Müller-Reuter of Krefeld.

The symphony concert series apart, the London Symphony Orchestra gave sixty-nine other concerts during the season under consideration, some isolated events, others grouped into festivals or short series. In the latter category were twelve Sunday afternoon concerts given under Arbós at the London Palladium (a venture that was found to produce insufficient financial returns), eight concerts at the Gloucester Festival in early September, seven in

Cardiff ten days later and in mid-October a crowded four days at the Leeds Festival, with two lengthy concerts each day.

The following season was dominated by "one of the most important events of the orchestra's ... history" [1], the three weeks' tour of Canada and the USA. It was Nikisch who had been engaged by a group of American music-lovers to make this tour: the choice of the orchestra he was to bring was left up to him. At the time he was principal conductor of both the Berlin Philharmonic and Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestras; that he chose the London Symphony Orchestra in preference to either of these is a remarkable testimonial to the high standard reached by the new English orchestra in only eight years. The tour, which involved giving twenty-eight concerts in twenty-one days, was an unqualified success and did much to boost the orchestra's already considerable foreign reputation.

At home the principal winter series consisted of thirteen concerts, six of them under Elgar and the remainder with Safonoff, Mengelberg, Steinbach and Gustave Doret. Among the soloists who appeared with the orchestra during the 1911/12 series were Casals, Paderewski, Donald Tovey and Elena Gerhardt. Two English premières were given (Rimsky-Korsakoff's 'Russian Easter Festival' Overture and Paderewski's Symphony in B minor), works by Mackenzie and Harty were given their second performances, but otherwise there was little of note in the programmes. The orchestra's other activities during the season included a tour of the Midlands under Elgar, participation in a huge concert at the Albert Hall in aid of the victims of the sinking of the 'Titanic' and the making of its first recordings.

The L S O's winter series in the 1912/13 season comprised twelve concerts given in Queen's Hall at eight o'clock on Monday evenings. The conductors engaged were Fritz Steinbach (for three

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[1] Hubert Foss and Noël Goodwin: London Symphony (1954) p 59

concerts), Elgar and Mengelberg (two concerts each), Harty and Safonoff (one each) and Nikisch (for the last three concerts of the season). The programmes as a whole were typically varied: a few were decidedly safe, none could be considered adventurous, most containing at least one concession to popular taste, a Tchaikovsky symphony or a Strauss tone poem. Almost all the new music played was English: brand new were four orchestral songs by Ethel Smyth and Somervell's 'Thalassa' Symphony, new to London were Elgar's 'The Music Makers' and Harty's Variations for Violin and Orchestra, and new to England was Glazounov's 'Symphonic Picture "Spring" '. The outstanding concert of the season was that given on 9th June 1913; 'The Music Makers' sung by Muriel Foster and the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus aroused great enthusiasm, and Nikisch concluded the concert with a glowing performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Surrounding these twelve concerts was the usual multitude of outside engagements: four strenuous days at the Bristol Festival in October, a slightly less hectic week at Hereford, appearances with the London Choral Society (including a marathon concert at which all three parts of Bantock's 'Omar Khayyám' were given), a concert at Queen's Hall, sponsored by the Patron's Fund, presenting six new English works, a three-hour programme of works by Josef Holbrooke at the same hall in March, other appearances in London at concerts ranging from the commonplace (a Wagner programme under Mengelberg at the Royal Albert Hall) to the obscure (a performance of Plewka-Plewczynski's 'Oratorium Symphonicum "Res Ultimae Quattuor" ' conducted by the composer at Queen's Hall in May 1913), the customary provincial tour arranged by Percy Harrison, a week's visit to Ireland and many more.

The following season was no less busy. The Monday evening winter series was the cause of considerable controversy, for not only was the number of concerts reduced to nine but also five foreign conductors were chosen (Steinbach, Mlynarski, Mengelberg, Safonoff and Arbós who stepped in to replace Mlynarski in January), Strauss and Saint-Saens were the only living composers whose work was represented in the programmes, and not a note of English music was played. Even the soloists engaged were all foreigners, except Agnes Nicholls who sang at a Wagner evening on 11 May 1914. This neglect of English music was a marked change of policy for an organisation which, in Johnson Galloway's words, was "not unmindful of its duty to the native composer" [1]; taken in conjunction with the reduced number of concerts and the very unadventurous nature of the programmes, one suspects financial considerations as the reason. It is known that the concerts given by Harty and Elgar in the previous season had lost the orchestra money, and the type of patron which the orchestra attracted valued foreign music and foreign artists more highly than the home product. This "blow to British music" was the cause of considerable adverse criticism in the musical press, but the 'Musical Times' quoted a statement from the orchestra's directors to the effect that their policy had been "triumphantly vindicated at the first two concerts, for Queen's Hall was practically full on both occasions" [2].

Controversy of a different kind was aroused by the five-concert Beethoven Festival given under the Belgian conductor Henri Verbrugghen in April 1914; the woodwind doublings and alterations to the string parts made in the interests of achieving a more satisfactory orchestral balance caused offence to the purists,

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1 'Musical England' p 126

2 'Musical Times' Vol LIV (1913), p 816

but the Festival as a whole was a considerable artistic and financial success. In addition to this London festival, the orchestra undertook its customary appearances in the provinces, playing at Gloucester in September 1913, Leeds in early October and undertaking the usual Harrison tour of the Midlands the following spring. Many of the orchestra's single engagements were for concerts given by soloists wishing to present concerto programmes: the Polish violinist Bronislaw Hubermann gave such a concert at Queen's Hall in February 1914, playing the Beethoven and Mendelssohn concertos under Carl Schuricht, and the following month a pianist by the name of Vera Brock played no fewer than three concertos at a single concert, Safonoff conducting.

The London Symphony Orchestra did not play at the annual Patron's Fund orchestral concert that year, but, as if to atone for its recent neglect of English music, it put forward a plan which, had it been adopted, would have been of great benefit to native composers and performers. It was proposed that a 'London Symphony Orchestra Rehearsal Society' should be formed to organise and fund weekly rehearsals of new English works during the eight-month season (using native artists where necessary and possible) "with a view to their being placed in a London Symphony concert under one of the Continental conductors of repute, so as to present them to the public under the best possible conditions"[1] - an ambitious plan, but one which stood a fair chance of succeeding in the prosperous, enthusiastic world of early Georgian music. This idea was discussed at length at the orchestra's tenth Annual General Meeting held on July 25th 1914, as was the proposal for a second American tour to take place in 1915 or 1916. But within a fortnight these plans, along with countless others, had been subjected to

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[1] Hubert Foss and Noël Goodwin: '<u>London Symphony</u>' (1954) p 76

indefinite postponement.

The New Symphony Orchestra, the second permanent London orchestra to emerge during the Edwardian decade, had prospered under the guidance of its new director, Landon Ronald, having quickly gained a new and distinctive quality and also a very much wider reputation than it had enjoyed under its previous conductor, Thomas Beecham; writing in 1910, Johnson Galloway asserted that it had "won for itself a position out of all proportion to the length of its existence" and that it was "proving a strong rival to older organisations"[1]. There were two main reasons for the orchestra's winning a wider public under Ronald's conductorship: firstly, he encouraged it to undertake a great deal more work - a winter symphony concert series, weekly Sunday afternoon concerts at the Royal Albert Hall for eight months of the year as well as a great many miscellaneous engagements - and secondly, he made it policy to court a mixed audience. For the regular concert-goer he provided polished performances of the classics as well as a large amount of new English music, but he also set about attracting the musically unsophisticated with cheap seats and popular programmes; one infers from the banality, even vulgarity, of his own compositions that he had no scruples about deliberately aiming at the least sophisticated stratum of the musical public. Different from Beecham in almost every way, Ronald nevertheless proved himself a worthy successor, and the New Symphony Orchestra had good reason to rejoice in its association with him.

The quantity and variety of the work undertaken by the orchestra can be gauged from an examination of its activities during the pre-War seasons. Symphony concert series were given

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[1] Musical England pp 126/7

at Queen's Hall presenting programmes which were decidedly popular, a great deal of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, the best known of Elgar's orchestral works, familiar Wagner excerpts and appealing new works of the type of 'Mock Morris' and 'Shepherd Fennel's Dance' making up much of the diet. Very little brand new music was played; on 6th February 1913 Felix Weingartner's 'Lustige Overture' was introduced to England, and in November of the same year Elgar's 'Falstaff' was given its first London performance one month after its <u>première</u> at the Leeds Festival. Despite his unfortunate confession to John Barbirolli that he could not "make head or tail of it" [1], Ronald, as the work's dedicatee, did his best for 'Falstaff': he gave it again at Queen's Hall two weeks after his first performance and on 14th December included it in one of his Sunday afternoon programmes at the Royal Albert Hall. By this time these Sunday concerts had become the New Symphony Orchestra's special province. Wood ran a somewhat similar series at Queen's Hall, but the lack of rehearsal specifically for these concerts had its effect upon the choice of programme and the standard of its performance. The London Symphony Orchestra similarly never rehearsed its Sunday programmes, but Ronald, on accepting the Council of the Albert Hall's offer of a contract for a weekly series, insisted upon provision being made for rehearsals on Sunday mornings with the result that the concerts were transformed from variety shows (in which the orchestra took its turn with singers and instrumentalists) into programmes "worthy to rank with any of the great Symphony concerts given in London" [2]. After the London Symphony Orchestra abandoned Sunday concerts at the Albert Hall in the autumn of 1909, the New Symphony Orchestra had this particular

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[1] quoted by Michael Kennedy in <u>Portrait of Elgar</u> (1968) p 214

[2] Landon Ronald: <u>Myself and Others</u> (undated) p 37

field largely to itself and built up a very large and faithful following.

Early in his career Ronald had fulfilled many engagements as a society pianist; one gathers from his autobiographical writings that he valued the connections with the rich and the titled which he formed thereby. Later he was able to put these connections to good use by procuring much work for the New Symphony Orchestra players at society concerts and private functions of all sorts. Another valuable connection which Ronald formed while he was still a young man was with the infant Gramophone Company. As its first Musical Adviser, he wielded considerable influence upon the company's policy concerning serious music, and he was also directly involved with a great many records, appearing as both accompanist and conductor. In the words of Fred Gaisberg, "Ronald contributed the best orchestral records of the pre-electric days" [1], and the unnamed groups of players who constituted "The Symphony Orchestra" on these early records of his must surely have been drawn from the ranks of his own orchestra. Having once acquired a permanent orchestra of his own, Ronald channelled much of his considerable energy into the furtherance of its interests. The orchestra's faith in its conductor was such that, while retaining its co-operative ideals, it elected him chairman of its Board of Directors, a position which one feels it would never have offered to Beecham. All in all, Johnson Galloway's prediction of 1910 that "While (the New Symphony Orchestra) is controlled by Mr Ronald it should go far" [2] had been amply justified by 1914.

The New Symphony Orchestra did not often appear under conductors other than Ronald, but important exceptions to this

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[1] Music on Record (1946) p 144

[2] Musical England p 127

general trend were provided by the two series of concerts of modern British music sponsored by Henry Balfour Gardiner in 1912 and 1913. Arnold Bax called this venture "the most ambitious plan for the encouragement and dissemination of native work that had ever been devised" [1], for the programmes presented a remarkably comprehensive selection of modern English music, much of it being played for the first or second time. First performances in the 1912 series (four concerts given at Queen's Hall between 13th March and 1st May) included Bax's 'Enchanted Summer' and 'Festival Overture', Holst's 'Beni Mora', Gardiner's own 'News from Wydah' and several works by Percy Grainger, while the second and third of Vaughan Williams' 'Norfolk Rhapsodies' and works by Delius and Grainger were played in London for the first time. The 1913 season was even more remarkable with _premières_ of works by Dale, Grainger, Bax, Holst, Delius and Frederic Austin and the performance of recent major works by Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bantock, Delius, McEwen, O'Neill and Grainger. Older composers were not forgotten (Elgar's Second Symphony was included in the first series, Parry's Fifth in the second) and performers of the highest calibre were engaged: besides the New Symphony Orchestra, the London Choral Society, the Oriana Madrigal Society, Gervase Elwes, Campbell McInnes and Frederic Austin were among those taking part. Ironically, one of the least satisfactory aspects of the venture was Balfour Gardiner's own conducting; his methods and attitude aroused considerable bad feeling among the orchestral players, and it was this animosity (which he took as a lack of co-operation) that he gave out as the reason why a third series of concerts was not given in 1914. Gardiner's methods were obviously very different from those of Landon Ronald and such large doses of difficult and totally unfamiliar music must have

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1 _Farewell, My Youth_ (1943) p 92

put the players under considerable strain. Casual concert-goers too must have found the prospect of so much modern English music all at once very forbidding, but the series was nevertheless of great benefit to the cause of native composition; as Bax continued "Vaughan Williams, Holst, Percy Grainger and I owed him a debt of gratitude impossible to repay. He had saved Holst from neglect and a weighty sense of personal failure, and had fairly launched me on my orchestral career" [1]. In later years, Balfour Gardiner found many other ways of using his wealth for the benefit of his fellow musicians, but his two pre-War concert series were his most conspicuous and influential acts of patronage.

Of the other rich men actively engaged in the patronage of music in the early Georgian years, five names stand out: Lord Howard de Walden, Sir Edgar Speyer, Sir Ernest Palmer, Walter Willson Cobbett and Sir Joseph Beecham. Lord Howard de Walden has already been mentioned in connection with the generous allowances he gave to Josef Holbrooke, but his gift of £1,500 to the London Symphony Orchestra "for the purpose of furthering the interest of British compositions at the Annual Series of Symphony Concerts"[2] was but one of a number of similar acts. Sir Edgar Speyer, a German-born banker, was known to the musical world as the chairman of 'The Queen's Hall Orchestra Ltd'; less well known was his annual meeting of the deficit on the Queen's Hall Proms, an expenditure of some £4,000 each season. Sir Ernest Palmer's most considerable act of patronage was the establishment in 1903 of the Patron's Fund, the proceeds of which were devoted to the public performance and public rehearsal of British works not previously performed in London. A number of orchestral and chamber concerts were given each year at the Royal College of Music for

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[1] ibid p 93

[2] Hubert Foss and Noël Goodwin: 'London Symphony' (1954) p 57

which professional performers were engaged; eighteen such concerts were given between 1904 and 1912 at which works by sixty-nine composers were played [1]. The Fund also gave assistance to young musicians in a number of other ways, such as the provision of travel grants, help with the cost of publication and loans for the purchase of instruments.

The name of W W Cobbett occurs frequently in both the previous and the following chapters of this survey in connection with chamber music, the area of musical activity of which he was passionately fond and to which he devoted a large part of his considerable wealth. The competitions he organised for the composition of chamber works (of which there were four between 1905 and 1914) were the activities for which he was most widely known, but there were also the commissions to eighteen leading British composers for works in his beloved phantasy form, the editorship and financial responsibility for a chamber music supplement given away free with every copy of the magazine 'The Music Student' between June 1913 and November 1916, the establishment of prizes for chamber ensembles at the music colleges and for the best violins made by British craftsmen, and active involvement in the promotion of chamber music concerts. (His most lasting work, the two-volume 'Cyclopoedic Survey of Chamber Music', belongs to the post-War years.) Joseph Beecham (created baronet in 1914) also is remembered for his financial involvement in one particular branch of musical activity, the seasons of Russian opera and ballet in London in 1913 and 1914; but from 1910 onwards he had placed a large part of his fortune at the disposal of his son Thomas, and so was patron of the latter's musical activities in all their diversity. One of the first and most important beneficiaries of the father's generosity was the Beecham Symphony Orchestra.

[1] Statistics from the '<u>R C M Magazine</u>' Vol 9, No 2, p 56

It is more than likely that Beecham had evolved plans to form a new orchestra of his own before he had severed his connection with the New Symphony Orchestra, for within ten weeks of his parting company with the latter, he had picked and trained a new eighty-strong body of players which made its _début_ at Queen's Hall on 22nd February 1909. The Beecham Symphony Orchestra had been recruited from several different musical _strata_: a number of players had been drawn straight from the colleges of music, others (like the leader Albert Sammons) had come from restaurant and theatre bands, and others still had left positions in the major London orchestras. It was a young orchestra, full of enthusiasm and open to new ideas, happy to serve under Beecham's benignly autocratic rule, and above all possessing a very high degree of technical accomplishment: "tradition has it that the Beecham Orchestra was by far the best of the three orchestras which he raised and owned" [1].

At first the orchestra limited its activities to one major concert per month in London. Even under Beecham's magnetic influence, it took time for the new body of players to settle and establish the vital _esprit de corps_, and Beecham wisely decided that the shaping and moulding should be done in private rehearsal rather than in the public engagements a new orchestra might have been tempted to accept in order to establish itself. For a new body of players to make its mark in the already crowded world of orchestral music in London, it had to have some clearly distinguising feature, and Beecham seems to have resolved that refinement and sheer brilliance should be the hallmarks of his orchestra. Accordingly at first it appeared only rarely and, when it did, gave glowing and meticulously-polished performances

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[1] Alan Jefferson: '_Sir Thomas Beecham_' (1979) p 68

of works almost all of which were unfamiliar; apparently during its first half-season the orchestra performed not a note of music by Beethoven, Brahms or Tchaikovsky, restricting itself to composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Berlioz, Franck, D'Indy, Delius and many of the younger Englishmen. The press was lavish in its praise, but predictably the new orchestra failed to win a wide public following. This magnificent disregard of popularity and commercial considerations was a huge gamble on Beecham's part for, due to a long-standing family quarrel, he was at this time denied access to the Beecham Pill fortune; thus for the first six months of its life the new orchestra was supported by his own small private income and a modest allowance from his father-in-law. But in July 1909, Beecham and his father were reconciled and the latter became the enthusiastic and open-handed supporter of his son's musical activities.

Shortly after the last concert of its first monthly series (the first complete performance of Delius' 'A Mass of Life'), the Beecham Symphony Orchestra made its _début_ in the opera house, an environment in which it was to appear frequently in the years before the Great War. The occasion was the English _première_ of Ethel Smyth's 'The Wreckers', which was given at His Majesty's Theatre at the end of June 1909 and ran for five performances. The tone of the reviews was generally favourable, and the part played by Beecham and his orchestra won universal praise. Thus it was no surprise when a season at Covent Garden was announced for the following spring with Beecham as chief conductor and the Beecham Symphony Orchestra in the pit. 'The Wreckers' had stretched the players only in the sense that they had had to learn it in a very short space of time, but the Covent Garden season included two works in an unfamiliar and advanced idiom which taxed the powers of even Beecham's orchestra. In both

Strauss' 'Elektra' and Delius' 'A Village Romeo and Juliet', the orchestra carries much of the musical burden, but the adjective 'superb' to describe the playing at the performances of both these operas occurred in more than one review. Beecham's conducting was singled out for even more generous praise; the success of the opening night of 'Elektra' (which he conducted from memory) helped enormously to dispel the opinion prevalant in some quarters that he was no more than a talented amateur who had talked and bought his way into a position of prominence. The 'Musical Times' said quite simply that "by his success (he) has placed himself in the front rank of living conductors" [1].

Beecham did not resume regular symphony concerts in London in the autumn of 1909 but instead branched out into other areas of musical activity. He took his orchestra on an extended tour of the lesser provincial centres, towns as far apart as Kendal, Norwich and Torquay, during which he earned considerable censure for his performances of a truncated version of Elgar's First Symphony. There were also visits to the principal northern cities, occasions when provincial complacency was disturbed as much by the youthful orchestra's love of practical jokes as by the brilliance of its playing. Like Ronald, Beecham was a popular (if elusive) figure in London society, and he too was able to procure work for his orchestra at private functions organised by his friends and acquaintances; he also happily accepted engagements for the orchestra to share concerts with eminent vocalists or instrumentalists - in short, he lost no opportunity of seeking out work for his orchestra which was slightly off the beaten track, finding gaps to fill rather than competing directly with the other London orchestras by giving regular series of symphony concerts.

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[1] issue for March 1910, p 158

1910 was to have seen another provincial tour and (according to Johnson Galloway) a visit to the United States in an attempt to popularise modern British orchestral music there, but the Covent Garden season mentioned above precluded the realisation of these schemes, and indeed for much of the rest of the year the Beecham Symphony Orchestra found itself playing in the opera house rather than the concert hall. Beecham conducted a seven-week season of 'opéra comique' at His Majesty's in May and June, and thirteen weeks of opera at Covent Garden in the autumn, during which eighty-five performances of nineteen different works were given. Neither of these series restricted itself to straightforward works drawn from the standard repertoire: most of the operas presented were neglected and largely unknown masterpieces from the past or else equally unfamiliar modern works. The presence in the pit of a body of players of the calibre of Beecham's orchestra was vital to the success of such works as Strauss' 'Salomé', but it did encourage in Beecham the tendency to allow the orchestra to dominate his productions in terms of both the time and attention devoted to it during rehearsals and of the balance between singing and playing during performances. (To err in this way was in itself something of an innovation; the day was not long past when it was standard practice for an opera conductor to devote his attention almost exclusively to the stage and leave the players to struggle on as best they might!) It must have been similarly unhelpful to the stage action to precede 'Salomé' by a performance of the tone poem 'Ein Heldenleben', as did Beecham on New Year's Eve 1910.

After the hectic activity of 1910, 1911 was a comparatively quiet (though far from uneventful) year for Beecham and his orchestra. There was no opera playing to be done - in the face

of the threat from Oscar Hammerstein's London Opera House (see below p 64), Beecham had temporarily thrown in his lot with the Grand Opera Syndicate, the body which regularly mounted a three-month summer season of mainly French and Italian opera at Covent Garden. His work for the Syndicate was, however, restricted to that of an advisory and managerial nature: thus he had time to undertake a considerable amount of concert work. This was the period when Beecham began to receive invitations to conduct other English orchestras: his first appearance with the London Symphony Orchestra was in October 1910 and for the Philharmonic Society two months later. With his own orchestra there were the usual engagements in London and the provinces and, towards the end of the year, a new venture in a series of popular concerts on Sunday evenings at the London Palladium, then one of the capital's leading music halls. The series drew a mixed audience (some Palladium regulars, some Beecham followers and some attracted by the popular tone of the programmes) and was extended into February and March of the following year. But the event which overshadowed all others in the 1911 London season was the first appearance of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet: on Beecham's advice they were incorporated into the Covent Garden summer season, and in the pit on ballet nights the Beecham Symphony Orchestra was to be found for, as Beecham remarked, "the addition of a dozen or more unfamiliar pieces to the normal programme of work would be too much of a strain upon the regular body of players engaged for the opera itself"[1]. Certainly much of the music in Diaghilev's repertoire was of the type which needed _virtuoso_ playing and the orchestra acquitted itself admirably in this new and exacting role. Beecham too had had no previous experience of working for a ballet company, and so was content to be an onlooker most of the time,

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[1] in _A Mingled Chime_ (1944) p 106

learning by watching the experts such as Pierre Monteux in action. By the end of the season, however, he felt sufficiently at home to take over the direction of one performance and thus earned a personal share in the avid interest and swooning adulation with which London greeted the Russian company.

Diaghilev and his dancers returned the following summer, and Beecham's players found themselves once again in the Covent Garden pit. The new works performed during this visit were 'Thamar' by Balakirev, 'Narcisse' by Tcherepnine and Stravinsky's 'L'Oiseau de Feu', and, despite their reputation for innate conservatism, London audiences responded warmly to all three works, the last-named in particular. The orchestra's already considerable prestige was further enhanced by the ease with which the players were able to absorb this novel and exacting music, and Beecham conducted more frequently than he had during the dancers' previous visits to London.

The Beecham Symphony Orchestra opened its activities in the 1912/1913 season not in England but in Germany. The Russian Ballet was presenting a season of performances in Berlin and Diaghilev had engaged Beecham's orchestra to play under Monteux for the full five weeks of the series, it being the only orchestra in Europe at the time to have the whole of the Russian Ballet repertoire "at its finger-ends"[1]. This was the first occasion upon which a British orchestra had played in the German capital, and the critics were full of praise, especially for the speed with which the orchestra absorbed 'Petrushka', Stravinsky's most advanced and complex score to date. Beecham travelled to Berlin for the end of the series and then gave two concerts with the orchestra at the Hochschule, presenting programmes largely made up of new English music. "Independent accounts tell of large

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1 'A Mingled Chime' (1944) p 106

audiences, stormy applause and flattering receptions"[1], the Berlin critics bestowing equal praise on conductor and orchestra.

During the first weeks of 1913, the orchestra gave another series of concerts at the London Palladium, and English music featured prominently in these programmes too, as on 12th January when three works which had also been played in Berlin were given: 'Brigg Fair', 'In the Fen Country' and 'Mock Morris'. Beecham shared the conducting of this series with Hans Schilling-Ziemszen, a young _protégé_ from Frankfurt, who also assisted with the winter season of German opera and Russian ballet which Beecham presented at Covent Garden from 29th January to 8th March. This season included two major works not previously heard in this country, 'Der Rosenkavalier' and 'Petrushka'. The former's huge success was only to be expected (the work showed all the richness and brilliance of 'Elektra' and 'Salomé' but lacked their hysteria and violence), but that of the latter, in an idiom considerably more advanced than that of 'L'Oiseau de Feu', was something of a surprise even to Diaghilev. Not only did the work prove to have a broad general appeal but it also made a great impression upon the musical profession; Beecham was by no means the only English musician to consider 'Petrushka' finer than anything Stravinsky produced later.

Only two days after the close of this season, the Beecham Symphony Orchestra found itself back in the Covent Garden pit, but in very different company; on this occasion it was joined by the North Staffordshire District Choral Society in a performance of Delius' 'A Mass of Life'. The comparative failure of this concert cast no discredit upon composer, conductor or executants but was due to lack of adequate rehearsal and the unsuitability of Covent Garden for the staging of such a performance.

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[1] Charles Reid: '_Thomas Beecham_' (1961) p 123

Originally planned to take place in Queen's Hall, this was to have been one of the orchestra's rare appearances on the concert platform, events which were largely precluded at this time by Beecham's deep involvement with opera and ballet. Two orchestral concerts given that summer were, however, deemed worthy of notice in the musical press: on 2nd June Beecham conducted a concert to mark Saint-Saëns' seventy-fifth birthday, during the course of which the old man played two piano concertos, one by Mozart, the other his own in B flat major; and eleven days later the orchestra appeared at Queen's Hall in a programme which contained, besides some characteristic French and Russian music, Stanford's Seventh Symphony (being performed for the second time), a work with which one feels that Beecham can have had but little sympathy.

Beecham's unnatural alliance with the Grand Opera Syndicate came to an end in the spring of 1913, and his orchestra exchanged Covent Garden pit for that of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The first production to be mounted there, 'Ariadne auf Naxos', required the participation of the orchestra not only in the operatic section of the work but also to play the incidental music which Strauss had composed for the shortened version of Molière's 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' which opened the entertainment. The disappointing response to 'Ariadne' was soon forgotten in the welter of excitement which surrounded Beecham's proper summer season at Drury Lane, which ran from 24th June to 25th July and presented not only Diaghilev's company in yet more startling ballets but also soloists and chorus singers from a Russian opera company which had been performing in Paris. The impact of this sudden appearance of Russian opera in London will be discussed later in this chapter in the section dealing with opera in England before the Great War; suffice it to say here that the Beecham Symphony Orchestra had once more to come to terms quickly with a large amount of unfamiliar,

difficult music (all three operas given during this season were new to this country) and yet again acquitted itself magnificently. On opera nights, the orchestra shared with the singers a warm and enthusiastic response from the audience, but in his choice of ballets for this season Diaghilev had overstepped the boundaries of the sympathies of the London public. 'Jeux' by Debussy and 'La Tragédie de Salomé' by Florent Schmitt elicited little enthusiasm, while 'Le Sacre de Printemps' met with an almost total lack of comprehension and not a little hostility. There was nothing to match the riot which had attended the Paris première of the work, but there was some hissing in the auditorium on the first night and the critics made no attempt to hide their dislike of the piece: "To say that much of it is hideous as sound is a mild description ... Practically it has no relation to music at all as most of us understand the word" [1]. Diaghilev had taken care to balance these three novelties with a dozen ballets familiar from previous seasons, including works of a romantic type which was particularly popular in London, and on the whole the season was deemed a commercial and artistic success; plans were immediately laid for both dancers and singers to return to Drury Lane the following year.

Beecham's players never enjoyed a steady, reasonable workload; periods of fantastic overwork alternated with spells of total inactivity when they were free to seek casual engagements elsewhere. Such was the loyalty and devotion that the conductor inspired that his players cheerfully bore this oscillatory existence, always rallying to their leader however unexpected his summons and gargantuan his projects. At times the demands he made on his players were quite unreasonable: different novelties appeared on consecutive evenings at Drury Lane and stories are

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1 Musical Times Vol LIV (1913), p 535

told of players working for thirty out of forty-eight hours and of rehearsals which started at nine in the morning and continued right up until the moment when the doors of the auditorium were opened to admit the audience. In return Beecham paid generously, if not always punctually, and his players rejoiced in their association with one of the finest, most exciting and most enterprising musical concerns in Europe.

The opening of the 1913/14 season was a period of very little corporate activity for the orchestra. Beecham was involved with the Denhof Opera Company's provincial tour in the autumn of 1913, assuming almost total control when the company ran into grave financial difficulties halfway through its itinerary. Among the sixty-five strong orchestra engaged for this tour a number of Beecham Symphony Orchestra players were to be found - it was always Beecham's practice to take a nucleus of his own players with him when fulfilling engagements with provincial orchestras, as when he shared the conducting of the Torquay Festival and presented the sedate Devon audiences with three Strauss symphonic poems, excerpts from 'Salomé' and Holbrooke's 'The Children of Don', and Stravinsky's Symphony in E flat, never before performed in this country. These appearances at Torquay in mid-April are the first of Beecham's activities in 1914 to be reported in the musical press; much of the winter and early spring seems to have been spent in assisting his father with negotiations for the purchase of the Covent Garden Estate and in preparing for the summer season of opera and ballet, this year to be on a grander scale than ever before. Indeed, this two-month season at Drury Lane overshadowed all other of the Beecham Symphony Orchestra's activities in 1914: only two appearances in the concert hall have been recorded, an all-Delius concert at the Royal Academy of Music in early July and, ten days previously, an appearance at the

Albert Hall in a huge charity concert in aid of the survivors of the sinking of 'The Empress of Ireland'.

The Drury Lane season opened on 20th May. The first week, a prelude to the season proper, consisted of performances of 'Der Rosenkavalier' and 'Die Zauberflöte', each highly successful, the former predictably so, the latter quite unexpectedly, being at that time the least performed and appreciated of Mozart's operas. The Russian singers arrived first, opening on 30th May with a revival of 'Boris Godounov'. They brought six other operas with them, three of them new to England, the most successful of which was Borodin's 'Prince Igor'. This was first presented on 7th June by which time the ballet company had also arrived, for it was their appearance in the Polovtsian camp scene coupled with Chaliapin's hypnotic performance that made such a "tremendous impression on the London audience" [1], the like of which Beecham claimed never to have witnessed before or since. Diaghilev had twelve ballets in the repertoire at the time, of which the most lavishly presented and eagerly anticipated novelty was Strauss' 'The Legend of Joseph', a work which, despite a modest success with the public, was castigated roundly by critics and musicians alike, Parry finding it "vulgar, stupid and lascivious" [2]. The most universally admired of the season's novelties was Ravel's 'Daphnis and Chloë', although, by judicious mingling of the popular and the unfamiliar, Diaghilev secured a sympathetic hearing for all the new works.

Beecham conducted thirteen opera performances and three ballets, sharing the rostrum with five other conductors. But there was, of course, no such rota for the players: the deputy system was resorted to only in cases of illness, otherwise each player was expected to be at his post every evening and for as

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[1] Serge Grigoriev: The Diaghilev Ballet 1909 - 1929 (1953) p 110

[2] A diary entry quoted by C L Graves in Hubert Parry (1926) Vol 2 p 66

many rehearsals as Beecham saw fit to arrange. Charles Reid states that life in the BSO "called for uncommon musicianship as well as for uncommon stamina. Most of the music (the orchestra) had to play was hard to understand and technically tricky. Feats of sight reading and assimilation were performed which have never been surpassed."[1] This final statement is impossible to substantiate, but otherwise Reid's assessment is very fair. Without Beecham's flair, musicianship, organising ability and bottomless purse, the visits of the Russian dancers and singers would probably never have taken place; but the success of these and Beecham's other ventures owed much to the excellence of his orchestra.

Beecham's legendary inconsistency is nowhere more evident than in the pages of "A Mingled Chime". At the close of Chapter 27, describing the prevailing mood as the Drury Lane season came to an end in late July 1914, he writes " ... to few of us came even a fleeting apprehension that the current of our lives would not remain unchanged for years to come"[2], while on the very next page he heaps scorn upon the English nation on account of its unpreparedness for the outbreak of war. But until the outbreak of hostilities, he himself saw no reason to restrict his plans for the autumn and winter of 1914; in fact by a stroke of irony it was projected that the Beecham Symphony Orchestra should open its 1914/15 season with a three-week tour of Germany and visit St Petersburg and Paris before returning to London to begin preparations for another summer season of Russian opera and ballet. Another interesting project which had been made public by the summer of 1914 was the plan for Beecham and his father to build and

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[1] Thomas Beecham (1961) p 150

[2] Thomas Beecham: A Mingled Chime (1944) p 130

manage a theatre in London designed primarily to accommodate the modern operatic repertoire. It would have been fascinating to see whether Beecham could have succeeded where so many others had failed and establish in England a permanent opera house on a secure footing. The scheme was not entirely frustrated by the War (the Beecham Opera Company came into being in October 1915), but the opera house was never built, the plan being one of the many that were swept aside by the outbreak of war. In the autumn of 1914 Beecham turned his attention to orchestras other than his own, and for a whole year the Beecham Symphony Orchestra ceased to exist.

To turn from the hectic life of Beecham and his orchestra to the ordered world of the Philharmonic Society is to juxtapose the extremes of English orchestral activity in the early Georgian years. Within two years of the outbreak of the War the two were to become closely bound up, but at the close of the Edwardian decade their aims and methods were sharply contrasted. Yet even the Philharmonic responded in its own way to the progressive mood of the pre-War years, consolidating and extending the innovations inaugurated at the end of the Edwardian decade.

The 1910/11 season opened with one of the major events of the Society's recent history, the first performance of Elgar's Violin Concerto with the composer conducting and Fritz Kreisler as soloist. The work was rapturously received ("Probably there has never before been at a Philharmonic concert such a scene of enthusiasm"[1]) and the programme of the next concert in the series was immediately rearranged to allow for a repeat performance, again given to a crowded house. After such an auspicious start, the remainder of the season's programmes seem curiously flat and

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1 Musical Times Vol LI (1910), p 782

shapeless. On 23rd February Albert Coates conducted a strange programme of eight short pieces of which the only one of any substance was a Saint-Saëns piano concerto, and two weeks later Safonoff replaced Vincent D'Indy at short notice to direct an extremely conventional concert consisting of a Mendelssohn overture, 'Francesca da Rimini', a Mozart aria, Grieg's Piano Concerto and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The only programme of any interest was that given by Beecham (conducting for the Society for the first time) on 7th December: 'Paris', D'Indy's 'Sinfonie Montagnarde', a Mozart symphony and a new English work (W H Bell's 'The Shepherd'), with the 'Flying Dutchman' Overture as the only concession to popular taste.

The following season was the Society's hundredth, and in celebration of this a prospectus of seven varied and interesting programmes was drawn up with a different conductor engaged for each. In addition, nine leading English composers were invited to write works to be performed during 1912 (the actual centenary year); all took up the invitation but not all fulfilled the commission within the specified period. Stanford was the first to respond with his Seventh Symphony, performed under his own baton at a concert in February the rest of which was conducted by Landon Ronald, the programme on this occasion also including four of Ronald's songs sung by Alice Wilna and Buhlig playing the Schumann Piano Concerto and two unfamiliar pieces by Debussy. Three other famous pianists appeared this season: Rachmaninoff introduced his third concerto to England under Mengelberg at the first concert of the series, Cortot played Beethoven's fifth concerto under Elgar in February (in a programme which also included the 'Enigma' Variations and Percy Pitt's Symphony in G minor) and Busoni played three Liszt works on 21st March. This last concert was conducted by Mackenzie, erstwhile conductor of

many complete Philharmonic seasons, and included the first performance of his specially-written 'Invocation'. The series concluded brilliantly with a Beethoven programme under Nikisch at which the final item was the 'Choral' Symphony, a work commissioned by an earlier generation of Philharmonic Society directors.

Mengelberg and Safonoff each conducted twice during the next season, the remaining concerts being allotted to Cowen, Ronald and Pitt. A number of composers, however, elected to conduct the premières of their own works: Walford Davies his suite 'After Wordsworth', Norman O'Neill his 'Introduction, Mazurka and Finale' and Parry his Symphony in B minor. This last work was given at the concert on 5th December, the occasion upon which it was announced that the Society was henceforward to be allowed to call itself the Royal Philharmonic Society. The programmes this season were even more varied and enterprising than they had been the previous year; three Strauss symphonic poems were given together with symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, Glazounov and Scriabine whose first symphony was given its English première but felt to be unsatisfactory without its choral finale. Financially as well as artistically, the affairs of the Society were now in good order; the end-of-season report announced that the call upon the guarantors had been smaller than in any year within recent memory and might have been avoided altogether but for the fact that exceptionally large orchestras had been needed for many of the concerts. To help meet this expenditure in future seasons, a Foundation Fund was established, based upon the annual five-guinea entrance fee paid by the three hundred members of the Society.

The last of the pre-War seasons opened on 4th November 1913 with a mixed concert under Mengelberg most noteworthy for the huge body of ninety-six string players assembled for the first

English performance of Strauss' new 'Festliches Praeludium'. The second concert of the series provided "a startling innovation"[1] in that a substantial part of the programme consisted of the Oriana Madrigal Society singing Tudor madrigals and modern partsongs. All the music given on this occasion was English, orchestral works by Bax, Vaughan Williams, Holst and Frederic Austin being conducted by Holst and Balfour Gardiner. An all-Russian programme under Safonoff followed with works by Tchaikovsky, Ippolitow-Ivanow, Glazounov and Rimsky-Korsakov. The first concert of the new year presented the first premières of the season, the two Delius pieces for small orchestra 'On hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' and 'Summer Night on the River', sandwiched between conventional fare: a Mozart overture, a Rachmaninoff concerto and a Beethoven symphony. There was a similar shape to the February concert with repertoire works ('Ein Heldenleben', the Schumann Piano Concerto, the 'Egmont' Overture and Berlioz's 'Marche Hongroise') flanking the first performance of Stanford's Irish Rhapsody No 4. At the end of the previous season, English composers whose works had not yet appeared in the Society's programmes had been invited to submit suitable pieces to the reading committee; one who did so was Frank Bridge, whose 'Dance Poem' was given on 16th March together with works by Mendelssohn, Strauss, Franck and Cornelius. But there was no English music at the final concert of the series, nor anything of special note; Frederic Lamond played the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto (its second performance this season), Muriel Foster sang an aria by Max Bruch and Mengelberg conducted 'Les Préludes' and the 'Eroica' Symphony.

As this survey will have demonstrated, orchestral music in London on the eve of the Great War was abundant and flourishing. Nothing short of a revolution had taken place over the preceding twenty years, infusing enormous health and vigour into what had

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1 'Musical Times' Vol LIV (1913), p 808

been one of the least satisfactory areas of music-making in this country. During the first of these two decades of expansion and improvement, the developments had been largely restricted to the activities of one man, Henry Wood; but since 1904, the growth had been on a broader front and had been increasingly swift and sure as all five of the professional London orchestras had caught something of the progressive spirit of the early Georgian years. The Royal Philharmonic Society had finally cast off the parochial, stuffy air which had previously hung about it, the London Symphony Orchestra had broadened its sympathies and its activities under Elgar and Nikisch, the Queen's Hall Orchestra had shown great enterprise in its presentation of major modern works by both English and foreign composers, the New Symphony Orchestra had entered full maturity under Landon Ronald's leadership and the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, a product of the early Georgian period, had, by its identification with the works of Richard Strauss and the Russian opera and ballet repertoire, astonishingly quickly won a place in the vanguard of modern European orchestral development. It is pointless to debate the course the continuing evolution might have taken and wonder whether something approaching saturation point had been reached in this area of musical activity; for the orchestras were affected as seriously as any musical institution by the changes brought about by the War, and thus the trend of their development was seriously deflected.

Choirs flourished in much the same way that orchestras did in the early Georgian period. The ablest large choirs were still to be found outside London, in the Midlands and the North, bodies of this kind not infrequently visiting London to perform with the principal orchestras, especially when a particularly taxing modern work was to be given. But the standard of the metropolitan

choral societies continued to rise, and London now boasted two excellent small choirs whose activities broadened the choral repertoire enormously and did much to make known the works of the younger English composers.

The Royal Choral Society's publicity material proudly announced "Band and chorus, one thousand performers" and this indicated much of the character of its performances. Its conductor, Sir Frederick Bridge, had no illusions about its capabilities: "Subtle nuances of interpretation and ethereal delicacy of vocal effects that are features of much modern choral writing are ... impracticable in the vast auditorium of the Albert Hall, and with the huge forces employed. Hence in a measure the general adherence of the society to those works in which the choral picture may be painted in bold, rich, moving outline and mass."[1] Three concerts each season never varied: 'Elijah' opened every series and 'Messiah' was given twice, at New Year and close to Easter. A performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' also became an annual event from 1912, and around these fixed points Bridge presented as varied a programme as his forces would allow, ranging from the B minor Mass and the 'St Matthew Passion' to the 'Hiawatha' trilogy and selections from 'Parsifal'.

The Alexandra Palace Choral Society was at this time even larger than the Royal Choral Society (in late 1914 it numbered nine hundred and seventy-four voices[2]) but because of the outlook and abilities of its conductor, Allen Gill, and also the more favourable acoustics of the building in which most of its concerts were given, it pursued a more enterprising policy. At least seven concerts were given every season, thus a number of

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[1] Sir Frederick Bridge: 'A Westminster Pilgrim' (undated, c 1918) pp 273/4

[2] Statistic from 'Who's Who in Music' 2nd edition (1915) p 353

repertoire works recurred frequently in the programmes: 'Elijah' and 'Messiah', of course and 'Hiawatha', but also the B minor Mass, Berlioz's 'Faust' and 'Omar Khayyám', each of which was given more than once in the four pre-War seasons. Modern English music was well represented every year and two brand new works (James Lyon's 'The Man of Sorrows' and 'Llewelyn' by Cyril Jenkins) were given during the period in question. Occasionally Gill's plans had to be modified in the light of financial considerations (a proposal to perform Handel's 'Solomon' in 1910 was ultimately considered too great a risk and was abandoned), but in general the Society was able to balance its books (the 'Who's Who' entry quoted above asserted that its audiences numbered between five and seven thousand). In Johnson Galloway's opinion, the Alexandra Palace Choral Society could "claim to be the finest choral body in the metropolitan district"[1].

Arthur Fagge's London Choral Society continued its conspicuously resourceful policy of presenting new English music and neglected continental works with only an occasional passion or standard oratorio as a concession to popular taste. The first two concerts of the 1910/11 season set the tone of the choir's activities for the early Georgian period: first performances were given of Ethel Smyth's 'Sleepless Dreams' and 'Hey Nonny No!', first London performances of Bantock's 'Sea Wanderers' and Stanford's 'Songs of the Fleet', and the programmes also included short works by Elgar, Reger and Bertram Shapleigh, and 'Hiawatha's Wedding Feast'. The following season saw the première of a more substantial work, Coleridge-Taylor's 'A Tale of Old Japan', which proved to be the composer's most successful and popular composition since 'Hiawatha'; in addition there was another new

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1 "Musical England p 118

work by Shapleigh, 'The Dream of Gerontius', the Brahms 'Alto Rhapsody', Bach's Mass in F and the 'Missa Solemnis'.

The 1912/13 season opened with a concert which passed into the annals of choral history - the first (and apparently only) complete performance of 'Omar Khayyám', an event which, although it had been prepared for by frequent performances of various sections of the work over the preceding seasons, was nonetheless a considerable feat of stamina and concentration. Five weeks later 'A Tale of Old Japan' was given again, along with recent works by Bax and Grainger and a brand new piece by Hugh Hulbert. A Beethoven concert followed, and then participation in a Balfour Gardiner concert at Queen's Hall which involved the choir in first performances of two folk-song settings by Grainger and Holst's 'The Cloud Messenger', and also the London première of Vaughan Williams' 'Fantasia on Christmas Carols'. The final concert of this remarkable season was on 9th April when Wolf-Ferrari's 'La Vita Nuova' was given in England for the first time and also the 'Grail Scene' from 'Parsifal' was performed.

The choir's final pre-War season was slightly less hectic. 'La Vita Nuova' and 'A Tale of Old Japan' were repeated, there was another all-Beethoven programme and the first performance in English of 'Parsifal' was given. The most characteristic programme was that given on 3rd December 1913 which brought forward seven modern English works, all but one being given for the first time. Thus ended the finest period of the Society's history for, in company with all similar bodies, its activities were seriously disrupted by the War but, unlike some others, Fagge's choir never retained anything like its former eminent position in the post-War period.

For the first two seasons of the new decade the Bach Choir largely stayed on familiar territory with performances of the two Passions and the B minor Mass; its only unusual venture was the English première of César Franck's 'The Beatitudes'. In 1913, however, other enthusiasms of its conductor, Hugh Allen, were revealed, and the choir found itself introducing Vaughan Williams' 'A Sea Symphony' to London; the 'Musical Times' called this "a long-delayed act of justice" [1] but was tactfully reticent about the standard of the performance, implying merely that the work showed signs of inadequate rehearsal. The following December the choir gave another programme of unfamiliar works (Stanford's 'Stabat Mater', Parry's 'Ode on the Nativity' and the Vaughan Williams' 'Fantasia on Christmas Carols') semi-privately at the Royal College of Music, but for the remainder of the season it returned to the works of Bach, giving the 'Magnificat' at Queen's Hall and the B minor Mass in Westminster Abbey.

The Oriana Madrigal Society too began the new decade with concerts very much of the usual pattern: old carols, Christmas motets and a Bach cantata at Leighton House in December 1910 and madrigals and a Purcell ode at the Bechstein Hall the following April. In August, however, came something of a change of policy; the choir was enlarged from sixty to about one hundred voices and from then on, both its repertoire and the number of concerts it gave expanded considerably. Most noticeable was its closer identification with modern English music. It sang in both the Balfour Gardiner series in 1912 and 1913 and also took to giving concerts on similar lines of its own accord; sometimes it gave only recent works, as when in March 1914 it presented a mixed choral and orchestral programme at Queen's Hall which included 'Sea Drift', new works by Gardiner, Grainger and W G Whittaker

1 Vol LIV (1913), p 175

and a brand new work ('Hymn to Dionysus') by Holst, while at other times the old was mingled with the new, as when two months later it sang madrigals by five Tudor composers and partsongs by six moderns at the Royal Academy of Music (sharing the programme with a viol trio and a singer of modern songs). Even the annual Christmas concert began to reflect the new outlook: in December 1913, as well as the usual folk-carols and polyphonic motets, seasonal works by Vaughan Williams, Holst, Dale and Frederic Austin were given.

Standards of performance were conspicuously high: a report of the concert given in March 1914 spoke of the choir's showing " ... virtuoso powers. Fine resonant tone, clean unified attack, ability to expand to great sonority, capability of great delicacy on the technical side, and skill and insight in interpretation were all there"[1]. These are the qualities which have ever been sought by choirmasters, but Charles Kennedy Scott was one of the first to show how they could be achieved in a medium-sized mixed choir. It was with the pre-War Oriana Madrigal Society that Scott evolved the methods of which the influence on later "standards of choral technique would be hard to over-estimate"[2]. Martin Shaw said simply "He has done more for English choral singing and composers than any man alive"[3].

Edward Mason was an active figure in pre-War English musical circles, combining leading the cello section of the New Symphony Orchestra with playing in the Grimson String Quartet, teaching at Eton and conducting the choir which bore his name, This diversity of activity may explain why his choir usually only gave one concert per year, but it speaks for the impact it made that it should have earned such a wide reputation on such a limited

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1 Musical Times Vol LV (1914), p 248

2 Robert Elkin: Queen's Hall 1893 - 1941 (undated c 1944) p 65

3 in Up to Now (1929) p 32

amount of activity.

The concerts were given at Queen's Hall in the early spring, and in his programmes Mason held fast to his original resolve of specialising in modern English music: the performances of Franck's 'Psalm 100' and Weber's 'Oberon' Overture in 1914 were rare exceptions to this policy. Holst was the composer most favoured by Mason: all four of the pre-War concerts included performances of groups of 'Rig Veda Hymns', on three occasions the works being given for the first time. Otherwise the composers whose works were presented were those one might have expected: Bax, Delius, Grainger, Boughton, Holbrooke and Balfour Gardiner. The participation of the New Symphony Orchestra at the choir's concerts ensured that fine performances could be given of elaborately-scored works such as 'Sea Drift' and 'Toward the Unknown Region' and also that substantial orchestral works could be included in the programmes: Holbrooke's 'Byron' and Wallace's 'Villon' were given in February 1913. The choir extended its activities a fortnight after this concert by taking part in a programme of Holbrooke's works given at Queen's Hall by the London Symphony Orchestra under Beecham and the composer, but was only required to sing in the closing sections of 'Queen Mab' and 'Apollo and the Seaman'.

Mason had not Scott's zeal or ability as a choir trainer, yet reports of his choir's performances spoke of a high level of accomplishment. The importance of the Edward Mason Choir, however, lay not so much in the manner of its performance, more in the matter it performed; its activities were a reminder to the London musical public of the excellence of the choral music being written in England at the time. When Mason was killed in the trenches in May 1915, his choir having been immediately disbanded on his joining the army in September 1914, the writer of the obituary

article in 'The Times' pointed out that "the younger British composers ... by his death have lost a very good friend"[1].

The activities of Scott and Mason marked a considerable innovation, the constitution and methods of their choirs being quite unlike those of other contemporary bodies of singers. Composers were responding to these innovations,and much of the newest English choral music was being written with choirs of the type of the Oriana Madrigal Society in mind - modestly-sized groups of intelligent, versatile singers. Choral activity of this sort, however, was at this time restricted to London; in the provinces, previous practice was upheld with the large, well-drilled choirs which prided themselves on their ability to thrill the listener by sheer weight of sound. But there had been changes here as in London. The North Staffordshire District Choral Society had disappeared from the national platform on its chorus master (Whewall)'s death in November 1909 and Coward's Yorkshire choirs were no longer unequalled. Through his deep involvement in the choral competition movement,Granville Bantock had acquired a thorough knowledge of choral activity in the Midlands and the North, and in choosing the Hallé Choir and the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union as the dedicatees of his two unaccompanied choral symphonies, generally acknowledged as the most difficult choral works to date from the pen of an Englishman (see below p 142), he must have been singling them out as the ablest choirs he knew of. Choirs of all types were decimated by the Great War, but the large choirs were hit harder than the small ones, none of them ever regaining their pre-War size and level of accomplishment. Thus the zenith of an important branch of choral activity was reached in the early Georgian period; after the War, for sociological as well as musical reasons,choral singing of the type fostered by Scott became the norm.

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[1] quoted in the 'Musical Times' Vol LVI (1915), p 351

Johnson Galloway has little to say about the state of chamber music and recitals in England in 1910; indeed, it could easily be inferred from a reading of the couple of pages he devotes to the subject in 'Musical England' that the reason for his reticence was a lack of anything to write about. But there must have been some other cause, for in truth there was an embarrassingly large amount of material open to him. The most casual glance at a copy of any of the musical journals produced during the early Georgian period, particularly those appearing during the busy months of the year (November/December and March - June), reveals a welter of activity.

The senior series, the 'South Place Sunday Popular Concerts', continued to provide weekly concerts of chamber music from October to March. The philanthropic motive behind the foundation of the venture was not wholly forgotten; admission was free to the unreserved seats and a small charge only was made for a reservation. The programmes, however, resembled those of any other broadly based chamber series, offering representative works from all periods, ancient, classical and modern, with concerts featuring the music of one composer something of a speciality. All the players who performed at South Place were well known and many were among the most eminent of the day: the London String Quartet, the Schwiller String Quartet, George Henschel and Johanne Stockmarr were among those who first appeared there during the early Georgian period, and the long-standing association with the John Saunders Quartet, the most respected senior English ensemble, was continued. When Saunders retired from professional playing in 1919, it was calculated that he had appeared at South Place two hundred and thirty-nine times, two hundred and four of these concerts being with his quartet.

The 'Classical Concerts Society' also engaged the finest English and European players: Casals was a frequent visitor, as were the Klingler Quartet, Fanny Davies, Leonard Borwick and the Rosé Quartet. The works of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms continued to form the backbone of the society's programmes, but as the new decade progressed a little more variety was introduced; for instance, the autumn season of 1913 presented songs by living French composers, Bridge's 'Three Idylls', 'On Wenlock Edge' and a concert devoted entirely to the works of Ravel and Scriabine in addition to the more usual fare. The music critic of 'The Atheneum' was able to "note with pleasure that the scheme is more elastic than formerly" [1] and the financial success of the new policy encouraged the organisers to give a second short series (with similar mixed programmes) in the spring of 1914.

For personal reasons, Donald Tovey severed his connection with the 'Classical Concerts Society' in 1911 but continued his own series, the 'Chelsea Chamber Concerts', for another two seasons. These concerts too favoured the German classics, but Tovey's enormously wide knowledge of music both well-known and obscure often produced interesting and unusual programmes such as that given on 19th March 1913: wind serenades by Mozart and Julius Rontgen flanking a Schubert piano sonata. But whatever their interest to musicians, programmes of this type had a limited appeal only to the general public; the concerts failed to attract large audiences and had to be subsidised by Tovey and his friends. An attempt was made to give the series more standing by moving it to the Aeolian Hall, but even a short season there in the spring of 1913 lost money heavily and shortly afterwards the whole project was given up.

Thomas Dunhill's chamber concerts, however, continued to flourish. Steinway Hall (smaller and cheaper to hire than the

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1 'The Atheneum' for 11th October 1913 p 387

Aeolian Hall) was used and only short series (usually three concerts) were given, presenting programmes made up almost entirely of British music, much of it being given for the first or second time. Among the works to receive their premières during Dunhill's four pre-War series were violin sonatas by John Ireland and Nicholas Gatty, string quartets by Charles Wood and R O Morris and James Friskin's Phantasy Piano Quintet; and recent works by composers as different in age as Stanford and Hurlstone, Ernest Walker and Harold Darke were rescued from the neglect which often overtook English works after their first performances. The composer who benefitted most from Dunhill's activities was John Ireland, whose compositions were given repeatedly and whose reputation was thereby considerably increased.

Both Dunhill and Tovey arranged for occasional performances of their own works to be given at the chamber concerts they organised, but neither was sufficiently worldly-minded to capitalise on the opportunity this allowed for self-advertisement. Joseph Holbrooke, however, showed no inhibitions in this matter. Few of his concerts passed without several of his compositions being given, and it was not unknown for the whole of a lengthy programme to be made up of his own works, as on 28th February 1913 when his Phantasy String Quartet, his Sextet for piano and strings and a large number of his songs were performed. The inclusion of works by established composers (among them Elgar, Delius, Ethel Smyth and Cyril Scott) must have helped to give the concerts more appeal, for large numbers of compositions by extremely obscure composers were brought forward: the names of Edward Mitchell, Richard Cleveland and Wilfred Kershaw seem to be known only from their appearances in Holbrooke's programmes. Audience numbers at

these concerts varied considerably (Holbrooke's periodic diatribes against his much-despised "deadheads" seem to have proved something of a discouragement), but standards of performance were uniformly high and the series were well-known features of the London musical calendar.

These were some of the more obvious features of the chamber music activity of early Georgian London, annual or biannual series known for a particular policy and attracting regular subscribers. Surrounding these fixed points, however, was a huge number of other concerts, either single events or else short series, at which ensembles of every shade of background, age and ability shared platforms with a similarly varied array of instrumentalists and solo singers. Then, as now, an appearance at one of the small London halls was de rigueur for the aspiring young artist or ensemble, and was considered equally vital to the maintenance of the reputation of more established musicians. Consequently the season from late September to early July was densely packed with chamber concerts and recitals of all types: the issues of the 'Musical Times' for the relevant months in 1913/14 mentions some three hundred and thirty events of this kind (in addition to the various regular series) taking place at the Steinway, Bechstein, Aeolian and Small Queen's Halls.

There were some new additions to the world of English chamber music during the early Georgian period. The first English piano quartet, named after its founder and pianist, Lily Henkel, was established in 1910 and gave its first concert in January 1911; it soon made a name for itself and established a regular series of concerts at Bechstein Hall, specialising in the performance of the many recently composed works for piano and strings by native composers. A short-lived ensemble of considerable promise was

the British Chamber Music Players, a piano quintet comprising Albert Sammons, Eugene Goossens, Thomas Peatfield and the father and son Herbert and Cedric Sharpe; this gave its first concert at Bechstein Hall in November 1913 and appeared regularly in London over the next eight months, but was disbanded shortly after the outbreak of war. A new series of chamber concerts established in February 1914 had a longer career, being able to rise above the difficulties of war-time concert-giving. The series, known as the Leighton House Chamber Concerts, set a very high standard from its inception; during the first season, the Rosé, Brodsky, Brussels and London String Quartets appeared, the last-named ensemble creating something of a sensation by its performance (with two extra players) of Schönberg's 'Verklärte Nacht'.

Schönberg's chamber music was to be heard elsewhere in London during the winter of 1913/14. The First String Quartet was introduced to England by the Flonzaley Quartet (one of the leading American ensembles) at a Bechstein Hall concert in November, a performance which "overshadowed all other recent events in the realm of chamber music"[1]. Then 'Verklärte Nacht' was given at the Grafton Galleries in January and repeated twice at Bechstein Hall before the Leighton House concert in March. (The day before this last performance it was even given by an enterprising sextet of students at the Royal College of Music). The players on each occasion were the augmented London String Quartet, whose performance was warmly praised by the composer at the English première, and this was the ensemble which introduced the Second String Quartet to England in June 1914. The general public seemed genuinely interested in this advanced music; press reports

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1 'Musical Times' Vol LIV (1913), p 817

often spoke of large audiences and an enthusiastic response. Those who disapproved most strongly were the more conservative minor composers.

The spectrum of chamber music to be heard in early Georgian London was extremely wide, as wide as chamber music itself. The standard classics had never lost favour and were still constantly played, the more modern works of Brahms, Dvořák and the Russians being performed hardly less frequently; British music was given a very fair hearing, with a number of series and ensembles largely devoted to its performance; the 'Societe des Concerts Français' saw to it that all periods of French chamber music were represented at its monthly concerts; baroque music was being reintroduced to the repertoire by the Chaplin sisters, Arnold Dolmetsch and others; and avant garde German music was being performed in this country as well and as frequently as it was in Germany.

Writing in 1924, Arthur Eaglefield Hull noted that "the taste for chamber music ... has undergone a sudden and remarkable growth in Britain since 1914, and a whole school of gifted and interesting native composers responded to the stimulus"[1]. Chamber music did indeed experience something of an expansion during the war years, but this seemed much larger than it really was because of the marked decline in almost every other branch of musical activity at the time. Its main period of growth belonged before the War, a steady increase apparent since the turn of the century which had led to the great richness of the early Georgian period, and Hull's remark about a school of native composers is more applicable to the pre-War situation than that of the post-War years.

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[1] 'A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians' (1924) p 63

Opera was a subject very close to Johnson Galloway's heart; a whole chapter in 'Musical England' is devoted to it, outlining its history, describing its unique qualities and discussing its curious position in contemporary English musical life. Like all enthusiasts for opera, Galloway had ideas as to how the situation might be improved: state subsidy, performances in English and a fully comprehensive repertoire were among the practical suggestions he put forward. Writing in 1910, he singled out two recent events which seemed to promise well for the future: the short season of opera in English given by the Covent Garden Grand Opera Syndicate early in 1909 and Thomas Beecham's first season at Covent Garden exactly one year later. How the subsequent turn of events must have gladdened his heart, for it was the widening of the Grand Opera Syndicate's repertoire and, more importantly, the activities of Thomas Beecham which were largely responsible for making the early Georgian years one of the brightest periods in English operatic history.

Beecham began his first Covent Garden season with something of a coup, the first English performance of Strauss' 'Elektra', then hardly more than one year old and the talk of the operatic world. The work aroused enormous public interest (much of it far removed from the music) and all nine performances were played to full houses. The standard operas in the season were also well attended but 'The Wreckers' and 'A Village Romeo and Juliet' drew good audiences only for their opening nights. The financial results of the venture were of little concern to Beecham (recently reconciled with his father and allowed free access to the family fortune); of more importance to him were the overall artistic success of the whole venture, the proof it gave that winter-time grand opera at Covent Garden was a viable concern and the

enthusiasm with which his first concentrated spell of operatic conducting had been received.

A season of opéra comique at His Majesty's Theatre followed, chiefly memorable for the presentation of four Mozart operas, 'Il Seraglio', 'Il Impresario', 'Le Nozze di Figaro' and 'Così fan Tutte'; the modern revival of interest in this last-named work dates from this production, for previously it had scarcely been known in England. As usual with Beecham, the series was varied and interesting; other works given that summer included Strauss' 'Feuersnot', Stanford's 'Shamus O'Brien' and Massenet's 'Werther'. English singers were employed for many of the leading roles, Maggie Teyte making her very successful operatic début as Blonde in 'Il Seraglio'.

The next winter season was planned on an ample scale (eighty-five performances of nineteen operas) with the English première of another sensational Strauss work as its centrepiece. 'Salomé' proved as much of a draw as 'Elektra' had and overshadowed the rest of the season's repertoire, a representative selection of largely unfamiliar French, German and Italian works of the nineteenth century. The years of the Grand Opera Syndicate's reactionary policies were now taking their toll for the general public, quite unused to operatic novelties in any number, gave the season scant support. "It certainly began to look as if the incessant clamour that had been filling the press for recent years for longer and more varied seasons of opera had very little substance in it" [1].

It was at about this time that Oscar Hammerstein made public his exact intentions for the following season (see below p 64) and in the face of this possibly serious competition, Beecham temporarily abandoned his independent seasons and threw in his

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1 Thomas Beecham: A Mingled Chime (1944) p 100

lot with the Covent Garden Syndicate. Beecham's role at Covent Garden was entirely advisory rather than practical, and it was on his advice that the Syndicate invited Diaghilev and the Imperial Russian Ballet to share the summer seasons of 1911 and 1912 with the usual programmes of French and Italian operas.

Beecham did not return to the opera house until after the final collapse of Hammerstein's venture in August 1912; when all threat of possible competition was removed, he severed his connection with the Grand Opera Syndicate and began to prepare for a new independent season to be given at Covent Garden in the early spring of 1913. Once again there was a major Strauss work ('Der Rosenkavalier') to be introduced to London, and once again this was a huge success. Other Strauss works were revived (but proved far less appealing than on earlier appearances), and 'Tristan' and 'Die Meistersinger' were also given; German opera had been conspicuously absent from the Grand Opera Syndicate's previous two seasons and London audiences were glad of the opportunity to hear Wagner's works once again.

The summer season at His Majesty's Theatre opened with yet another new work by Strauss, the curious amalgam of 'Ariadne auf Naxos' and 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme', the lukewarm reception of which was quickly forgotten when Diaghilev's company returned to London, this time accompanied by a group of singers from the St Petersburg and Moscow opera companies. Three operas were given ('Boris Godounov', Khovanchschina' and 'Ivan the Terrible') and the new, immensely attractive music, the magnificence of the singing and the splendour of the productions proved irresistible to English audiences; the visit left an indelible mark on the artistic life of London.

During the autumn and winter of 1913/14 Beecham was distracted from the presentation of opera in London by his involvement with Ernst Denhof's touring company, but in February 1914 the prospectus appeared of another full season of Russian and German opera and ballet to be given at Drury Lane and to include first performances of 'Prince Igor' and 'Le Coq d'Or' and revivals of 'Der Rosenkavalier' and 'Die Zauberflöte'. Once more, the London public was swept off its feet and the season was a great success, marred only by disappointment in the new Strauss work 'The Legend of Joseph' and Holbrooke's 'Dylan', both of which in their different ways proved somewhat of an embarrassment.

A word should be said concerning the ballets which Beecham included in his pre-War seasons. Ballet had occupied a very lowly position in late Victorian and Edwardian England, being given only in the opera house (introduced into various standard operas, often with doubtful congruity) or else as one of the turns at the music hall. This explains why the ballets which Diaghilev brought to London from 1911 onwards made such an enormous impact and "changed the artistic outlook of London in a night" [1]; here was virtually a new art form, highly developed, subtle and of great beauty, being presented with enormous skill and great virtuosity. It was the romantic ballets, 'Les Sylphides', 'Thamar', 'Swan Lake' and 'Schéhérezade' which were most popular in London, but various of the new works too, 'L'Après-Midi d'un Faun', 'Firebird' and 'Petrouchka', met with an enthusiastic reception. The serious appreciation of ballet in England dates from these first visits by Diaghilev, and the movement was born

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[1] Compton Mackenzie: 'My Record of Music' (1955) p 50

which was to lead to the birth of the English ballet companies in the early 1930s.

It is difficult to imagine what impression Thomas Beecham might have made upon English opera before the Great War had he still been denied access to his father's fortune; but, important as the part which money played in the success of his ventures undoubtedly was, it was only one of a number of factors which made him such an influential figure. His money allowed him the means of exercising his abilities; it never bought him anything that was not fully merited by his gifts as a conductor and impresario. By the exertion of his artistic influence he transformed the whole aspect of English opera, by his realisation of the quality and appeal of Diaghilev's company he provided London with an outstanding aesthetic experience and by his determination to secure just recognition for native talent he initiated a movement in English opera the repercussions of which were felt for many years to come.

Beecham's activities in the pre-War years are apt to overshadow all others in the realm of opera, such was the aura of glamour and success which surrounded his undertakings. But all the major operatic enterprises which had flourished before the advent of Beecham continued in operation after his arrival upon the scene, so that the early Georgian years witnessed a greater amount of operatic activity in London than for many years previously.

The peripatetic companies remained largely unaffected by Beecham and his doings; his methods of production and presentation were obviously far different from theirs, as was the type of audience which he courted. The Carl Rosa and Moody-Manners companies continued in their policy of touring the provinces and the London

suburbs with repertoires made up of standard favourites and a fair number of recent works, all sung in English by casts made up largely of English singers. A typical venture was the Carl Rosa Company's forty-third season which ran from September 1913 to May 1914, opening at the Marlborough Theatre in North London and then touring the south coast before moving to Birmingham and the northern centres. The repertoire included much that was totally familiar from the German, French and Italian schools but also 'The Magic Flute' (then a considerable rarity) and 'The Tales of Hoffman', a work only recently introduced to England by Beecham. The increased operatic activity in central London discouraged the touring companies from their erstwhile practice of giving occasional West End seasons, although the Moody-Manners Company was three weeks into a seven-week season at the Prince of Wales' Theatre when war broke out and the venture was terminated.

The Grand Opera Syndicate, however, could hardly fail to regard Beecham as a potential, if not an actual, rival, and was thus forced into something of a reappraisal of its methods in order to provide strong competition for the continued support of the traditional Covent Garden audience. No major change of policy was initiated but great care was taken to maintain and even increase the quality, variety and extent of both the repertoire and the company.

Although it could not hope to rival Beecham in the production of the type of novelty that made a considerable stir in the musical world at large, the Grand Opera Syndicate brought forward a number of new operas between 1910 and 1914 in an attempt to keep abreast of the times: in 1911 Massenet's 'Thaïs' and Puccini's 'La Fanciulla del West' were given in England for the first time and

two years later new works by Humperdinck and d'Erlanger were brought forward. But, as ever, the Covent Garden season consisted largely of works from the standard repertoire, revivals of recent successes and exhumations of operas from the earlier part of the nineteenth century which, by their style, seemed likely to prove attractive. A trend emerged whereby the French and Italian part of the repertoire was separated from the German part, the former being given during the principal summer season, the latter during the winter series which, following Beecham's example, the Syndicate ran from 1911 onwards. But the last of the pre-War seasons presented two complete 'Ring' cycles, three more of Wagner's operas, twenty Italian and five French works,

It was in its adherence to the policy of engaging 'stars' that the Grand Opera Syndicate was able to rival Beecham most effectively. The latter engaged magnificent singers, but often they were young and relatively unknown (or else from the unfashionable British ranks of the profession); the Syndicate, however, regularly secured the services of the great names of the contemporary operatic world, Tetrazzini, Melba, McCormack, Destinn and Caruso, and matched them with conductors of the eminence of Richter, Nikisch and Albert Coates. With the preponderance of coloratura operas in the repertoire, the employment of singers of this type was, of course, entirely appropriate and proved attractive to audiences whose interest lay not so much in what was being sung but more in the manner in which it was being sung.

Being the most prominent and prestigious operatic organisation in England, the Grand Opera Syndicate often had levelled at it the type of criticism which should only have been aimed at a National Opera House: that it paid scant attention to native

talent, that it adhered too rigidly to the 'star' system and that it showed little spirit of enterprise in the planning of its programmes. It was frequently forgotten that the Syndicate was no more than a commercial concern, answerable firstly to its shareholders. In this it was quite alone among the world's major opera houses, every other one of which received some measure of support from state funds. Viewed in this light, its methods seem more justifiable, and its continued flourishing in the unstable operatic conditions of pre-War England proved that it answered a need of the English opera-going public.

As a postscript to this consideration of early Georgian English opera, mention should be made of Oscar Hammerstein and his London Opera House, the venture that was the cause of the temporary alliance between Beecham and the Grand Opera Syndicate. Hammerstein, an American businessman with a highly successful career behind him as a builder and manager of opera houses in his own country, secured a site in London's newly-developed Kingsway and spent a quarter of a million pounds in building a theatre specially designed for operatic purposes. For all the brashness and pomposity of his pronouncements, Hammerstein had at heart a desire remarkably close to that of Beecham, " ... to present masterpieces by British composers and writers, who will find the London Opera House the goal of their highest ambition"[1]. His first season opened in November 1911 and was a disaster; the repertoire was small, the singers by no means well-known, and the public response very poor. His two seasons cost him very much more than the £45,000 he admitted to having lost, and by August 1912 he had returned to America and his opera house was up for sale.

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[1] quoted by Allan Jefferson in 'Sir Thomas Beecham' (1979) p 124

Like many others, he had totally misunderstood the unique position of opera in England and ignored the fact that, unsatisfactory as it might seem in comparison with foreign practice, the system in which opera was presented in this country provided adequate supply to the modest demand. The means of increasing that demand was not to be imposed from the outside but had to grow from within, and something of this internal evolution had been initiated by Beecham and by the activities of such composers as Gustav Holst and Rutland Boughton.

Turning from the musical life of London to that of the provinces, one finds many of the same trends and forces at work in the early Georgian period; the same plethora of activity, the same growing concern for the interests of the native musician and the same continuing rise in aims and standards. Some aspects of provincial musical life had given evidence of the renaissance at much the same time as had music-making in London; others had been slower to develop and progress, and were only now in the first full period of growth. All, however, showed a similar degree of richness and vitality in the immediate pre-War period.

The early Georgian decade opened with the affairs of the Hallé Orchestra in a slightly confused state. Richter's eleven-year rule had had an excellent effect upon the standard of its playing and the level of its reputation, but over the previous half-decade there had been a growing chorus of criticism of his programmes, and the subscription list to the annual series had gradually declined since 1905. Speaking of this period, Michael Kennedy points out that "For the Hallé, this was a period of consolidation; for the rest of musical England it was a time to expand" [1]. Whatever Richter felt in private about the equivocal

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[1] in 'The Hallé Tradition' (1960) p 142

nature of the regard in which he was held in Manchester at the turn of the decade, in his public life he did not allow it to affect his policy or his methods in any way. His programmes continued to reflect his own predilections (the works of Wagner, Beethoven, Brahms, Strauss and Elgar) with a sprinkling of works by other composers of different traditions.

The 1910/11 season proved to be Richter's last with the Hallé. In February he announced his retirement because of ill-health and failing eyesight, and on 23rd March he conducted in Manchester for the last time. His departure marked the end of the most illustrious period in the Hallé's history and the beginning of a time of transition and instability.

During the next season's principal series, eleven conductors (six British and five German) appeared in programmes of a remarkable diversity. It appears that each was allowed to have some say in the works he directed so that, as this was in some senses a public audition to fill the vacant post, the candidates might reveal something of their tastes as well as their methods. By January 1912, however, it had been announced that Michael Balling, Richter's nominee, had been appointed principal conductor, and thus the perpetuation of many recently-established traditions was assured.

Balling had worked in England before (as musical director to Frank Benson's Shakespearean company and as conductor of early performances of 'The Ring' in English), but by birth, training, outlook and sympathies he was a thorough German, and his long association with Bayreuth ensured that the Richter tradition would be maintained. In some respects his programmes were very similar to those of his predecessor; the works of Wagner, Strauss and Beethoven predominated and a host of insignificant German

novelties were given besides. But a number of the lacunae in the Hallé's repertoire under Richter were filled in; music by Mahler, Verdi, Holst and Ravel made its first appearance, and among the recent works given was a great deal more progressive music (as opposed to new music by conservative composers) than had been customary under the previous regime.

Balling was a man of genuine ability and broad vision; the strengths as well as the weaknesses of his background and upbringing were evident in his methods and his outlook. Had he been able to remain in Manchester for longer than two seasons (the outbreak of war caught him on holiday in Bavaria, and, of course, he did not return to England), it seems probable that he would have achieved much. As it was, during the two years he spent in Manchester he expended a great deal of time and energy in attempting to establish a firmer financial base for the Hallé Orchestra, putting a very forcible case for assistance from public funds. Little, however, could be accomplished in only two years; but, if the orchestra did not make a great deal of progress under Balling's short conductorship, neither was any of Richter's good work undone.

Something of Balling's ideal asfar as the financing of an orchestra was concerned was to be found in operation in Bournemouth, for there the orchestra was funded entirely from public sources. The drawbacks as well as the advantages of municipal music were encountered there, however; the orchestra which Dan Godfrey was able to maintain numbered only some fifty players, and there were constant battles of words in the Town Hall over the relative claims of artistic standard and economy in the public interest. Furthermore, although it is for his 'Symphony' and 'Classical' concerts that Godfrey is remembered, he also had to direct his

orchestra in programmes of light music and dance music every day of the year. Nevertheless, in an age which was recognising more and more that support for musical activity should come, in part at least, from public funds, Bournemouth was upheld as an example and was not without its influence upon similar ventures in Leeds, Brighton and elsewhere.

The Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra had been entirely created by Dan Godfrey and, in the pre-War period, was as firmly under his control as ever. He saw to its day-to-day running, he alone planned its programmes and he conducted all its performances, except on the occasions when a visiting composer chose to direct his own work. An eminently practical musician, Godfrey knew to an inch the capabilities of his fifty players, and, under circumstances which would have crushed the resolve of many another conductor, pursued a remarkably enterprising course with regard to repertoire and artistic policy. In terms of its size (to name only the most obvious factor) the Bournemouth Orchestra could not be compared directly with any of the other English orchestras; set against any of the London bodies, it must have sounded rough and ready. And yet the eminence of the soloists who were happy to travel to Bournemouth again and again for concert work, and of the composers who, despite their works already being in the repertoires of the leading orchestras, were delighted to be asked to Bournemouth to direct concerts of their compositions, these considerations say more than a little about the nature and quality of Godfrey's performances.

As had been the case previously, and was to remain true for many years to come, it was for his services to English composers that Godfrey was best known. At the close of the 1910/11 season, for instance, it was calculated that, out of two hundred and

forty-one works performed at the major concert series, sixty were by British composers, twenty-nine of which were being given for the very first time [1]. The proportion had decreased slightly by the immediate pre-War season, with forty-eight out of the three hundred and eight works being by native composers, but these are still remarkable figures bearing in mind that they refer to works on the scale of Somervell's 'Thalassa' Symphony and of the complexity of Bridge's 'The Sea'. When, in May 1911, a dinner was given to Godfrey by a group of appreciative English musicians, Stanford made a speech which summed up the situation: "Mr Dan Godfrey (has) proved himself to be the greatest friend of the British composer since the days of the late dear Manns, and no greater compliment could be paid him than this." [2]

Novelties of other nationalities were not neglected, however; during this 1913/14 season, Stravinsky's 'Fireworks', Ravel's 'Mother Goose' and Sibelius' Fourth Symphony were played, the last-named work being given only its second performance in England. Among the eminent foreign soloists to appear in Bournemouth during the pre-War period were Kreisler, Casals and Paderewski, and Godfrey proved as good a friend to young English singers and instrumentalists as he did to native composers.

Like Henry Wood, Dan Godfrey was a great musical educator. He deliberately cast the net of his programmes very wide with the intention that someone attracted by a popular work might be induced to stay on and listen to a symphony or a modern British work. This was an important reason why his concerts were well attended; seven of his orchestra's first twenty-one seasons made a profit and the average loss on the others was in the region of

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[1] statistics from '<u>The Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra: twenty-one years of municipal music</u>' by Hadley Watkins (undated) p 49

[2] ibid p 14

only £300. Influential friends on the Town Council sided with him at meetings to discuss financial matters but, however attractive municipal patronage might seem from the outside, the life of a Director of Music operating under such a system could be very difficult.

Musical life flourished in Birmingham as it did elsewhere during the early Georgian period, but there still was no regular series of orchestral concerts to be heard there which was firmly established and well supported; as the 'Musical Times' commented, "the concerts in Birmingham are being constantly increased in number, but few really pay their way, and not even artists of the first rank in the musical world draw large audiences here" [1]. By the beginning of 1911, there were only two indigenous semi-professional orchestras to be found in the city, the Birmingham Philharmonic Society and the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. The former was the more eminent but the less secure; in 1912 an attempt was made to restore its flagging fortunes by halving the number of concerts it gave and engaging conductors of the calibre of Safonoff, Balling, Beecham and Ronald to direct the four remaining. Mixed programmes were presented, rehearsed to a high standard, but still heavy losses were incurred, and the series was discontinued after February 1913. This left only the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Julian Clifford (the able and enterprising musical director at Harrogate), with its popular monthly concerts given on four Saturday nights between November and March. All other orchestral music was imported from outside, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Queen's Hall Orchestra paying occasional visits to the city and Landon Ronald forming an _ad hoc_ orchestra, largely made up of London players, for the annual series of Promenade Concerts given at the Theatre Royal every June. Even these events lost money; a visit of the Queen's Hall Orchestra to the Town Hall in December 1913 drew a good

[1] Vol LIII (1912), p 807

audience in the cheaper seats but hardly anyone elsewhere, and the June Proms continued steadily to lose their promoters' money.

Choral activity in the city flourished, however. Johnson Galloway, having noted that Birmingham boasted "some two dozen bodies which give concerts with uniform regularity", goes on to admit that "the greater part of this musical enterprise is devoted to choral work" [1]. Of the half-dozen choirs whose doings were chronicled in the musical press, most gave four or five concerts each season and were well supported by a public with a keen interest in choral music. But comparing the repertoire of these choirs with that of their metropolitan counterparts, one is struck by the cautious conservatism of the provincial organisations; 'The Dream of Gerontius' and occasional works by Parry and Walford Davies were the most recent major choral compositions performed in Birmingham during the pre-War seasons.

A J Shelton claims that much of the reason for the curious musical conditions which prevailed in Birmingham at this time was the "paralysing influence of the (Triennial) Festivals" [2]. It seems strange that the festivals should have been considered to have had such a strong influence for bad as this statement implies; clearly the current of music-making in the city would have been severely disrupted for the immediate period of the festival, but neither the machinery of musical life nor the tastes and inclinations of the general public can have been seriously affected during the rest of the three year period between each meeting. Two points, however, should be borne in mind: firstly, it might be more than a coincidence that orchestral activity in Birmingham was placed on a secure footing only in 1920, by which time the festival had been in abeyance for

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[1] 'Musical England' pp 134/5

[2] the article on 'Birmingham' in 'Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians', third edition (1927) Vol 1 p 379

eight years and the likelihood of its being restarted had become very remote; and secondly, the Birmingham Festival, like many of the other provincial festivals, reached its apogee in the pre-War period, and was thus an institution of enormous stature and influence.

What proved to be the last of the Birmingham Triennial Festivals was held in early October 1912. Eight concerts were given in four days, with Henry Wood as principal conductor and an orchestra of one hundred and forty players drawn mainly from Queen's Hall. Wood ensured, of course, that the purely orchestral side of the programme was varied and interesting: Sibelius came to conduct the British première of his Fourth Symphony, recent substantial works by Strauss and Scriabine were played, the revised version of Bantock's 'Fifine at the Fair' was brought forward (the composer conducting), and more traditional works by Bach, Haydn, Rossini, Liszt, Wagner and Beethoven were given. But the choral side of the meeting was even more full and varied; the special choir of three hundred and fifty-one voices gave two brand new works ('The Music Makers' and Walford Davies' 'Song of St Francis'), 'The Apostles', 'Sea Drift', Requiems by Verdi and Brahms, the St Matthew Passion and the inevitable 'Messiah' and 'Elijah'.

Public support for this venture was obviously not half-hearted; total receipts of £10,831 were recorded, but of this only £1,549 could be counted as profit. The complaint that had first been raised in 1909, that the expenditure was too heavy and the balance to be handed over to charity too slight, reappeared, even more strongly voiced; there was a growing body of opinion within the city which felt that the festival had outgrown itself. Artistically, however, it had lost nothing by Richter's departure; Wood had breathed new life into the programmes and ensured the highest

standards of performance attainable within the festival system.

Three weeks later, it was the turn of Bristol to hold its festival, a meeting which, this year more than ever, displayed the distinctive qualities which set it apart from the standard provincial festivals. There were no new works and very little English music, only 'Caractacus' and Percy Pitt's 'English Rhapsody'. Choral music too played a very small part in the proceedings; apart from the Elgar work, there were only 'Messiah' and 'Elijah', and the choral portions of the most remarkable feature of the festival, a complete concert performance of 'The Ring'. The orchestra engaged by George Riseley for the 1912 festival was the London Symphony Orchestra and the 'Musical Times' wondered "whether the orchestral side of the work has ever been better given in this country" [1], but, in spite of a strong cast of singers, the popular nature of many other of the four days' programmes and the presence of instrumentalists of the eminence of Kreisler and Paderewski, the festival as a whole was very poorly attended and financially was something of a disaster.

The Cardiff Festival had lapsed after its 1910 meeting, but in 1913 was replaced by something of an experiment which proved successful and was repeated in the following year. The South Wales Musical Festival took place over four days in four separate towns, Swansea, Neath, Mountain Ash and Newport. The Queen's Hall Orchestra was engaged both years, but most of the conducting was done by local men. The programmes mixed popular orchestral works with modern British choral music, and the venture as a whole was a conspicuously successful adaptation of the festival system to suit the needs of one particular area.

The pre-War Yorkshire festivals too initiated some innovations. In Sheffield in 1911, the festival was moved from the autumn to the

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[1] Vol LIII (1912), p 793

spring, but of more importance was Henry Wood's engagement to conduct the whole of every performance and all the preliminary choral rehearsals too. The unity of style and interpretation obtained thereby was remarkable, although some doubts were cast on its desirability. Wood's drilling of the choir was phenomenally thorough, and the technical aspects of the performance of the choral works ('Messiah', the Mass in B minor, the St Matthew Passion, the 'Song of Destiny', the first part of 'Omar Khayyám', Georg Schumann's 'Ruth' and Wagner excerpts) received eulogistic praise in the musical press. Orchestral music found only a small place in the programmes; this was a choral festival _par excellence_ in the home of some of the finest choral singing in England.

A repetition of this experiment was not envisaged, however. Detailed plans were laid for a festival to be held in November 1914 with Michael Balling as conductor-in-chief and Rachmaninoff and Scriabine as celebrated visitors. The only new work was to have been Bantock's 'Ode to Pan', and the only other English work 'A Sea Symphony'; otherwise a very varied selection of continental music, much of it quite recent, was to have been presented. But, like all the other provincial festival committees, Sheffield abandoned its plans in August 1914, and this was one of the festivals not to be resurrected after the War.

A four-day Leeds Festival was held in October 1913. "New music, a new personnel and a new spirit" was how the 'Musical Times' summarised this event,[1] for there had been a marked change of atmosphere since Stanford's last festival three years previously. Elgar, Nikisch and Hugh Allen were the conductors in 1913, a sensible plan whereby expert direction of the different types of work was ensured, and also an interesting variety of approach.

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[1] Vol LIV (1913), p 736

Elgar had charge of the opening concert of the festival, the centre-piece of which was 'The Dream of Gerontius', and also of the evening concert on the following day, at which 'Falstaff' received its première. Nikisch conducted most of the other orchestral works in the festival (symphonies and concertos by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, a Strauss symphonic poem, short pieces by Weber, Berlioz, Stanford and Butterworth, and generous Wagner selections) and one of the choral novelties, 'On a May Morning' by Basil Harwood. The major choral works (the Verdi Requiem, the Mass in B minor and 'Elijah') were directed by Hugh Allen. A meeting of this type showed the early Georgian provincial festival at its best with a very varied programme (including new works from both established and rising English composers) and a very high standard of performance.

The last of the pre-War Norwich Festivals was held in 1911, with Wood as its conductor, Rosenthal and Ysaÿe as its principal guest instrumentalists. Compared with Leeds, the Norwich meeting was on a more modest scale, and the standard was more variable (a visit to London, by the Norwich Festival Chorus in 1912 to sing 'The Dream of Gerontius' at Queen's Hall was not a great success). In 1911, the principal works performed were 'The Kingdom', Mozart's Requiem, the 'Hymn of Praise', 'Messiah' and 'Everyman'. The prospectus for October 1914 looked rather more adventurous, with new works by Bax and Harty, and recent works by Bantock, Parry and Ethel Smyth; but this was another festival which never took place.

The early Georgian Three Choirs Festivals followed much the same course as the Edwardian meetings had done. Visiting composers directed their own works, but otherwise the conducting was undertaken by the organists of the three cathedrals, Sinclair at Hereford, Brewer at Gloucester and Ivor Atkins at Worcester. The

works of Parry and, especially, Elgar were well represented: the Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony at Worcester in 1911, two new orchestral songs and the suite from 'The Crown of India' at Hereford the following year, 'Gerontius' and the E flat Symphony again at Gloucester in 1913. New works were commissioned from Stanford, Bantock, Walford Davies and Vaughan Williams, and recent compositions by Sibelius, Strauss and Saint-Saëns were brought forward. Because of these festivals being rooted very firmly in their own area, they encouraged a strong sense of local involvement and were very well supported. In Gloucester, for instance, in 1913, ticket sales were well up on the previous Gloucester meeting and £1,750 was raised for local charities. Although quieter in character than the great midland and northern festivals, the Three Choirs meetings fulfilled what they set out to do with conspicuous success.

The major provincial festivals reached the zenith of their influence during the ten years before the Great War. The quality of the performances they presented and the quantity and variety of music offered made them a focal point for what was sometimes sporadic and uneven local musical life, and this high standard of concert-giving, coupled with the intense interest they attracted on a national level, made the environment they provided ideal for the production of new music, especially new choral music. It was generally agreed that the system had its faults, but these were reckoned to be fewer in number and of less importance than its virtues; an important point in the festivals' favour was that they were capable of change in response to new influence and also variation according to local demand. Few critics took their disapproval as far as did Rutland Boughton who, in a pamphlet published in 1913 entitled 'The Death and Resurrection of the Musical Festivals',

decried the whole movement and confidently predicted its imminent decline. Within a year, of course, the whole festival system lay in ruins; but, whatever internal decay was present before the War and its attendant devastation came, it was an external force which was the cause of the collapse.

In the final chapter of his book, Johnson Galloway claims to "have tried to show how at home every form of musical activity, except opera, is flourishing and vigorous"[1]. This he has done quite successfully, but how much easier his task, and now much more evidence would he have had to support his contention, had he been writing not in 1910 but during the first half of 1914, after four remarkable years of progress and development, during which even his beloved opera had been given a massive injection of life. No such thorough survey of music in England on the eve of the Great War exists as Johnson Galloway's of the situation at the end of the Edwardian decade, but a musician of broader outlook and more progressive inclination summed up early Georgian musical life as follows: " ... Then there were the concerts, notably the Queen's Hall Symphony Concerts on Saturday afternoons under the direction of Henry Wood, who introduced us to all the most interesting new music with an energy and an accuracy too often forgotten nowadays. Conductors of the calibre of Nikisch, Safonov, Richter were proud to come and conduct the excellent London Symphony Orchestra. All the best chamber music players, all the best singers visited London. Every year or so you could take your choice of sampling a new work by Strauss, Puccini, Debussy or Ravel. There was no need for that continual, pathetic delving into the past for the resurrection-pie menus

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1 '<u>Musical England</u>' p 236

characteristic of music between the two World Wars. Music as an art was alive - very much alive."[1]

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[1] Francis Toye: 'For What We Have Received' (1950) pp 89/90

Chapter 5 English Composers and their Works 1910 - 1914

Francis Toye has something pertinent to say concerning the composers of early Georgian England too: "Those were the golden days of London as a musical centre, with Elgar rising to fame, with Vaughan Williams being discovered, with the esoteric young Cyril Scott and the vital young Percy Grainger respectively titillating our sensibility and quickening our pulse. There was that brilliant collection of young men just finishing their studies at the Royal College: Frank Bridge, Eugene Goossens, Harold Samuel, my brother himself (Geoffrey Toye), who revolved around that old curmudgeon Stanford, a first-rate teacher of composition and a far better composer than is generally admitted. Never, I think, has that exasperating, because so frequently promising, bud which is English music been nearer breaking into actual bloom. As a matter of fact, but for the '14 war, I am convinced it would have done so."[1] That he is speaking here of the half-decade preceding the Great War, one gathers from a previous paragraph rather than from the internal evidence of the passage quoted, for his chronology is very confused. (One can scarcely talk of Elgar as "rising to fame" after the middle of the Edwardian decade for by then his fame was quite assured; furthermore, Frank Bridge left the Royal College in 1903, and Harold Samuel was his exact contemporary, whereas Geoffrey Toye was just ten years younger than they, and Goossens, who remained at the College until 1912, was four years younger again.) But however confused his evidence, Toye's first assertion is perfectly correct; the early years of George V's reign were indeed a golden age for music in London. There was a considerable demand for music and an enormous supply of talent upon which to draw. One wonders why Toye felt that

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[1] Francis Toye: 'For What We Have Received' (1950) p 89

English music was only on the threshold of a flowering at this time; the previous chapter demonstrated something of the enormous vigour and richness of pre-war musical life in England,and this chapter will show how native composers, stimulated both by the thriving musical environment and the contemporary air of experiment and unrest, continued and intensified the ameliorative trend inaugurated by the English musical renaissance. The quantity and quality of their musical activity make the early Georgian years a pinnacle in English musical history.

Two events which took place in the summer of 1911 provide useful indicators of how the Georgians themselves viewed their composers. The Coronation of George V was a very different affair from the Congress of the Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft, but both provided a public platform for the native composer, and aimed in their different ways to present a cross-section of contemporary composition.

The Coronation took place on 22nd June, and, as one might expect, the music for the occasion was selected mainly from the works of the older, established composers. The two most substantial specially-commissioned works came from Stanford and Parry: the former provided a 'Gloria' and the latter an elaborate 'Te Deum', both works for soloists, choir and orchestra. Parry was also represented by his anthem 'I Was Glad', the work which had made such a profound impression at the previous Coronation ten years earlier. Elgar too contributed two works, an Offertory 'O Hearken Thou' and a Coronation March which formed part of the programme of orchestral music which was played before the service began. This part of the proceedings included in addition Mackenzie's 'An English Joy-Peal' (another specially-written piece), Edward German's 'Coronation

March and Hymn' and a march which had been written by Cowen for Edward VII's Coronation in 1902.

Other contemporary composers represented were Frederick Bridge, Walter Alcock, Henry Walford Davies and Frederick Cliffe. Bridge had some reputation as a composer of church music and choral cantatas, but he appears in the list mainly by virtue of his position as organist of Westminster Abbey and thus director of the musical arrangements for the Coronation Service. Similarly Alcock, his assistant, appears ex officio. Something has been said already of Walford Davies' reputation; one feels that his music was included in the programme as representing a slightly younger generation of composers, but at the same time maintaining an air of complete respectability. The reasons for the inclusion of a work by Frederick Cliffe are hard to fathom at this distance; in 1911 he was known as a minor concert pianist and senior professor of the piano at the Royal College. His few major compositions belonged mainly to the 1890s, his latest (and last) success being with an 'Ode to the North-East Wind', produced at Sheffield in 1905. After this he seems to have abandoned serious composition; so one suspects some personal reason, now forgotten, for his inclusion alongside his more celebrated contemporaries. Otherwise the list is what one would expect for such an occasion - the names are mainly those of the respected, middle-aged, established composers.

The Fourth Congress of the Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft, a gathering of some one hundred and fifty leading musicians from a score of countries, had taken place in London three weeks earlier. Alexander Mackenzie, President of the Society and thus host to the members, admitted that "This great gathering promised a rare chance of making our visitors from afar acquainted with the works of

living British composers and of informing them definitely as to our progress in the art."[1] In spite of Mackenzie's conservative inclinations therefore, one can reasonably expect the programmes of modern works given during the Congress to be fully representative of contemporary English composition.

A large proportion of the members of the Musik-Gesellschaft were musicologists and musical historians; accordingly most of the papers read to the Congress were concerned with old music, especially English music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and three of the seven concerts given were devoted largely to music of this period. It must be borne in mind that much of this old music had only recently been rediscovered and begun to be issued in modern performing editions; Fuller Maitland and Barclay Squire's pioneering publication of the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book' was only twelve years old in 1911, and Edmund Fellowes and R R Terry had only just embarked upon their resuscitation of the English choral music of the Tudor period. Thus, paradoxically, there was considerable novelty in the performance of this music three centuries old.

Of the other four concerts given for those attending the Congress, three were wholly concerned with new music, and one, a reception given at the Grocer's Hall, was designed largely as a picture of English music from the sixteenth century to the present day. Starting with music by Robert Johnson and Richard Dering, the latter part of the concert included songs by Coleridge-Taylor and Charles Wood, piano music by Balfour Gardiner and Norman O'Neill, and two movements from Edward German's Flute Suite.

The Congress opened on 30th May, and in the evening an orchestral concert was given at Queen's Hall by the Queen's Hall

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[1] A C Mackenzie: 'A Musician's Narrative (1927) p 229

Orchestra, the programme consisting entirely of music by living English composers, all of whom except Josef Holbrooke conducted their own works. The concert opened with the 'Norfolk Rhapsody No.1' by Ralph Vaughan Williams, a work written six years previously and the first of Vaughan Williams' orchestral works to make any mark. Mackenzie, wishing the four British countries to be represented in music at this opening orchestral concert, tells how he asked Stanford to conduct one of his Irish works, but his appeal "was unsuccessful, for he preferred to conduct the fine prelude to his 'Stabat Mater'"[1] of 1906. Next came two first performances: Act II, Scene 2 of Frederic Corder's opera 'Ossian' was given in concert performance, and Mackenzie's specially-composed Third Scottish Rhapsody entitled 'Tam O'Shanter'. Parry conducted a performance of his Symphonic Variations and Walford Davies five numbers from his orchestral song-cycle 'The Long Journey'. Works by the two youngest composers represented concluded the concert: Adam Carse's symphonic poem 'In a Balcony' (first given at the 1905 Queen's Hall Proms) and a poem for orchestra with chorus, 'Byron', by Josef Holbrooke, which was conducted by Dan Godfrey.

Two days later, the London Symphony Orchestra gave another concert of recent English music, the centrepiece of which was the second performance of Elgar's Second Symphony under the baton of the composer. The work seems to have met with a somewhat mixed reception similar to that which had greeted its <u>première</u> the preceding week. Before the symphony came W H Bell's symphonic poem 'The Shepherd' and Cowen's 'Phantasy of Life and Love', both works conducted by their composers, and a new realisation of Purcell's 'Mad Bess' and 'Dido's Lament' arranged and conducted by Stanford. After the Elgar symphony, Dan Godfrey conducted

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[1] Ibid p 231

Coleridge-Taylor's 'Onaway! Awake Beloved', Ethel Smyth directed the overture to her opera 'The Wreckers', and two movements from Edward German's 'Symphonic Suite in D minor' were given. The concert ended with William Wallace's 'Villon', a work which had been performed very widely since its first appearance two years previously.

On the following day, 2nd June, a chamber concert was given in the Aeolian Hall by the Wessley Quartet with Myra Hess and the contralto Grainger Kerr, two performers noted for their interpretations of modern music. The concert was arranged by the Society of British Composers, and all the composers whose works were played were connected with the Society in some way. The quartet played the 'Idylls' of Frank Bridge and J B McEwen's A minor Quartet, and Myra Hess played the Bax Piano Sonata and short pieces by Paul Corder, Tobias Matthay and Cyril Scott. Songs by Hubert Bath, Norman O'Neill, Ernest Walker, Arthur Hinton, Richard Walthew and Roger Quilter were given, and Lionel Tertis played the Adagio from Benjamin Dale's Viola Suite, accompanied by the composer. The concert ended with a performance of York Bowen's Septet for strings, wind and piano.

These were the composers who, in Mackenzie's eyes, represented contemporary English music at its best. Even to a student of the period, several of the names are unexpected, and there are a few surprising absentees from the list, most notably Granville Bantock, who, despite having been something of a rebel during his student days at the Royal Academy, had remained on excellent terms with Mackenzie and by 1911 had earned for himself a wide reputation as a choral and orchestral composer. In a speech at the final banquet, one of the French delegates to the Congress remarked upon the great

variety of the modern English music which had been played, almost all of it written during the previous decade; and in reply, Mackenzie asserted quite truthfully that, had there been more time available, then the diet of contemporary music might have been more extensive and more varied.

Of the quartet of musicians who made up the oldest generation of composers active in early Georgian England, Stanford was the most considerable figure at this time. Parry and Mackenzie were composing far less than he largely because both were still deeply involved with administrative and teaching work, and Cowen was writing even less than they, partly because he recognised that his music was out of tune with the taste of the time, and partly because he too was heavily committed elsewhere. But Stanford was still at the height of his powers as a composer, and produced some of his finest and most lasting works at this time.

He was careful to organise his life in such a way as to allow adequate time for composition, something which Parry never managed to do. Stanford was still one of the principal composition teachers at the Royal College of Music, and had direction of the First Orchestra and the Opera Class there. He also retained the Cambridge Professorship, but, as Basil Maine put it, " ... his busy life did not allow him to be overburdened with responsibilities there" [1], much of the day-to-day administrative and teaching work in the University being undertaken by a team of able deputies headed by Charles Wood and Cyril Rootham. At the turn of the century Stanford had been very active as a conductor, but gradually he undertook less and less in this field, relinquishing the direction of the Bach Choir in 1902 and the Leeds Festival in 1910. This lessening of teaching and conducting duties left more time to

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[1] Basil Maine: "The Best of Me (1937) p 83

be devoted to creative work of all types; his first two autobiographical volumes appeared in 1908 and 1914, and his treatise on musical composition in 1911. Even at the busiest periods of his life, he had always maintained a steady output of compositions, and the beginnings of his withdrawal from public life allowed him to devote more time to composition, which was his first love and was what he clearly regarded as his most important activity.

Stanford's finest works in a number of genres date from this pre-War period, two volumes of piano music which appeared in 1913, the 'Six Characteristic Pieces' and the 'Five Caprices', being a case in point. Less ambitious but altogether more satisfactory than their nearest rivals, the 'Three Rhapsodies from Dante' of 1904, the Caprices are substantial works demanding an advanced playing technique. The style is distinctive and the figuration effective and highly pianistic. The second movement, a powerful lament with octave declamation and sweeping arpeggio accompaniment, is particularly strong. The following movements show a fertile imagination at work; the material is constantly being varied, teased into a different rhythm, nudged into an unexpected harmonic progression, but all with an easy flow and perfect naturalness. A waltz concludes the set - a real waltz with a fine lilt to it and many witty turns of phrase. The 'Characteristic Pieces' are on a much smaller scale, but are equally successful. Each explores a particular mood or formal device, the first being an interesting experiment in writing in the dorian mode without resorting to an archaic style, and the third a study in quintuple time. The other movements are more conventional in language, but beautifully written and slight only in their dimensions, not in their standards of integrity or workmanship.

Stanford's finest single song is the justly famous "Fairy Lough" from the 1901 cycle 'An Irish Idyll'. The remaining songs in the group are quite undistinguished; indeed, their mediocrity is underlined by the presence of a small-scale masterpiece among their number. For a consistently high level of inspiration, Stanford never surpassed the cycle 'Cushendall', Opus 118, which is dated "March 1910". The gems of the set are the third and seventh numbers: the former, from which the cycle takes its name, has an expressive vocal line set against an interesting harmonic scheme which constantly hovers between minor and relative major, while the latter, 'Night', in which the voice drifts gently down to rest on the pedal harmonies and the piano subtly alludes to earlier material, forms a serene conclusion to the whole work. The more lively songs are equally fine. 'How Does the Wind Blow?', with its varied accompaniments suggesting the four points of the compass, has an infectious vigour, while the fourth and fifth songs, respectively 'The Crow' and 'Daddy-Long-Legs' are genuinely witty settings of gently absurd Irish whimsy. The high quality of the individual songs, coupled with a well-planned overall scheme and the strengthening device of cross-reference, make 'Cushendall' the finest of the song cycles with piano. A slightly later group, 'A Sheaf of Songs from Leinster', completed in July 1913, was a favourite with Harry Plunket Greene, the singer for whom Stanford wrote many of his baritone roles; it contains some fine things, most notably 'A Soft Day', another of Stanford's brilliantly simple small-scale masterpieces, and 'The Bold Unbiddable Child', a virtuoso amalgam of patter-song and hop-jig. But the effect of the latter in the cycle is greatly weakened by its being preceded by 'Thief of the World', a song

dangerously similar in mood and style, though not so good. The opening song, 'Grandeur', presents an interesting idea, a recitative-like voice part set against a gently flowing chordal accompaniment; but the cleanness of Stanford's setting cannot mask the sentimental flavour of the text, the song is too long, and once again the composer weakens the overall effect of the cycle by including another very similar song, not so rambling but with an even more mawkish text. 'A Fire of Turf', another cycle to Irish poems by W M Letts completed only a few weeks after 'A Sheaf of Songs from Leinster', displays some felicitous touches amongst much that is commonplace: 'Scared' is wittily spooky, 'The Fair' has an infectious vigour and 'The West Wind' simply but vividly evokes the rising and dying away of an Atlantic gale, but 'Cowslip Time', 'Blackberry Time' and 'The Chapel on the Hill' are very ordinary songs, showing the danger inherent in a technique so easy and fluent as Stanford's.

At first sight, 'The Songs of the Fleet' of 1910 seem nothing more than an attempt to repeat, in the atmosphere of growing Dreadnought fever, the huge success of 'The Songs of the Sea' written six years earlier, for once again Stanford set five of Henry Newbolt's nautical poems for baritone, chorus and orchestra. But whatever the motives for its composition, in many ways the second set is an improvement over the first. Once again, the later group is of a more consistently high level than the earlier: the chorus has a vital obbligato role to play, whereas in the first set it does little more than tag along behind the solo part, amplifying it rather than complementing it, and in general the new songs show a surer and more subtle hand at work. It is the more vigorous of the 'The Songs of the Sea', especially 'Drake's Drum'

and 'The Old Superb', that come off best; the slower numbers suffer from over-elaborate textures and a lack of very distinctive material. The three slow 'Songs of the Fleet' are much more successful. The opening 'Sailing at Dawn' is a most striking song, a broad flowing melody with a rich but uncluttered accompaniment; despite Vaughan Williams' strictures,* the staggered entries of "Lead the Line" in the final section are quite unforced and highly suggestive of the ships disappearing into the distance. The third number "The Middle Watch" is beautifully simple; the orchestra plays gently undulating triplets over a pedal bass and the chorus provides a rich framework of slowly-moving harmonies through which the baritone weaves his expansive and expressive line. The effect is magically atmospheric. Between these two songs comes the rollicking 'Song of the Sou'Wester', in which the storm-tossed baritone is buffeted about on the choppiest of accompaniments and submerged by the howling, tearing chorus, simple descriptive writing of a very high order. The audience at the Leeds Festival of October 1910 was delighted with these new songs which very soon were rivalling 'The Songs of the Sea' in popularity. And it was no mere passing success; thirteen years later, when Stanford undertook his second and last recording session, it was 'The Songs of the Fleet' which were the works chosen to be recorded.

Stanford's Seventh Symphony is dated "1911", and was first performed at a Philharmonic Society concert in February 1912 under the composer's baton. Early critics of the work were confident that it would frequently be repeated, and their prophesy was partially correct; the work certainly received more performances than either of his two previous symphonies, but it failed

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* "Sometimes he could not resist adding a clever touch which marred the purity of his inspiration, as in the sophisticated repetition of the words "Lead the line" at the end of the otherwise beautiful song 'Sailing at Dawn'." (National Music' p 195)

to establish any permanent place in the repertoire, despite being in an attractive style and of modest dimensions. A similar fate befell the Second Piano Concerto, completed in July 1911. An appealing work (despite a rather lumpy last movement), it had to wait until 1915 for a first performance, when Harold Bauer played it in America; Henry Wood put it down for performance at the Queen's Hall Proms the same year, but the plan did not come to fruition and the work was not heard in this country until April 1919, when Moiseiwitsch played it in Bournemouth. Scores and parts of both the symphony and the concerto were published, but neither work made any lasting impression.

In November 1913, Stanford completed the score of what is generally reckoned his finest orchestral work, the Irish Rhapsody No 4 in A minor, known as 'The Ulster', and subtitled "The Fisherman of Lough Neagh and What He Saw". Thomas Dunhill, a not uncritical pupil, expressed his enthusiasm for the work in the following manner: "If I wanted to impress a foreign unbeliever with the real beauty of British music at its best I should take him to hear a performance of the 'Ulster Rhapsody ! ... "[1]. This is an interesting suggestion coming from the pen of an ardent admirer of the works of Elgar and Vaughan Williams (amongst others), writing in 1927, by which time there must have been many more obvious contenders for such a position in the national musical showcase. But the 'Ulster Rhapsody' is indeed a most attractive work, distinctive in flavour, impeccable in workmanship, beautifully proportioned and scored with great imagination. During the composer's life-time, this work was overshadowed (much to his annoyance) by the considerable success of the First Irish Rhapsody. A comparison between the two works shows how Stanford had matured

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[1] quoted in H Plunkett Green: Charles Villiers Stanford (1935) p 225

as a composer in a matter of a dozen years; the first rhapsody is indeed striking and imaginative in its way, but lacks the poise and subtlety of the later work.

These are the finest of the large-scale works which Stanford wrote in the years preceding the Great War. But much else besides belongs to this period - church music, chamber music, organ music, a concerto, part-songs and single solo songs, amongst which there are more fine things. The two best of his many part-songs, 'The Blue Bird' and 'Heraclitus', date from 1910,and the beautiful Irish lament from the Clarinet Sonata was written in the following year. There were also less successful works: a string quartet (No 6) and a piano quartet which appear to have been performed only once, and did not achieve publication,and an 'Irish Rhapsody' for cello and orchestra which seems never to have been played in public at all. But no attempt need be made to excuse these comparative failures; they in no way detract from the other more successful works, and do not lessen Stanford's position as a composer of considerable repute in early Georgian England. His innate conservatism was horrified by some of the _avant garde_ musical trends of the time, but his dislike of much modern music had not the air of despair about it which surround Parry's expressions of a similar point of view, nor did it reveal Mackenzie's sense of simple bewilderment; he still had the vigour to fight back, by direct example in his own works and by the precepts which he instilled into his pupils. If his early Georgian works failed to reflect positively the progressive artistic trends of pre-War England, neither were they the lifeless effusions of a tired musical intellect. Stanford's new music was lively and engaging; creatively as well as mentally and physically, he was still in his prime.

Hubert Parry's situation during the pre-War years was very different. Since his school days he had been troubled by a weak heart, and by 1910 this trouble had developed into a serious disability. Again and again during the next few years his doctors and friends begged him to relinquish some of his myriad activities, and from time to time his condition forced him temporarily to heed their advice; but he made the least submissive of invalids, and within a few weeks was always back at work as hard as ever. He attempted a phenomenal amount for a man in his mid-sixties and not in good health, much of which work, most notably his continued Directorship of the Royal College of Music, he despatched with singular success. But in other directions, his powers were clearly failing. An anonymous "intimate friend" is quoted in Graves' 'Life': " ... on some occasions his health did not permit of his conducting in an adequate manner ... I used at times to be exasperated beyond measure when I saw that the great music did not 'come off' as it ought to have done"[1], and Plunket Greene speaks of a hair-raising performance of 'The Pied Piper' at the Leeds Festival of 1910. Parry had suffered a bad heart attack on the day of the performance, but insisted on conducting in the evening, with Stanford positioned in the front row with a full score, ready to take over at a moment's notice should it prove necessary.

Whatever his physical condition, mentally he was still as alert as ever. He had always had a very enquiring and receptive mind, and even in old age was still thirsty for new experiences, in music as much as in other areas. Plunket Greene, his son-in-law, speaks of his "loving" a ragtime show given by a negro company at the Shaftesbury Theatre in September 1913, and Parry's diary for

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[1] C L Graves: '_Hubert Parry_' (1926) Vol II p 53

the following year contains two particularly interesting entries:

"June 23 - To Drury Lane to hear Strauss's 'Legend of Joseph'. Quite disgusted - vulgar, stupid and lascivious, without any spring in it ...

June 29 - Went to see 'Joseph' again to test my unfavourable impressions of the first time. They were amply confirmed. But I enjoyed Stravinsky's 'Rossignol' immensely ... "[1]

The compositions dating from this stage of Parry's career are comparatively few in number. Original work had to be fitted in in the few remaining unoccupied moments in his crowded time-table, or else undertaken during the short periods of enforced relaxation and convalescence. Neither of these situations was conducive to first rate work on a large scale.

1910 saw the production by Landon Ronald of the largely rewritten version of Parry's E minor Symphony of 1889, and the only composition of any size written in the following year was the Coronation 'Te Deum', a work which seems to have made an unfavourable impression upon those who first heard it. If it had been only the performance at Westminster Abbey which was at fault, then Edmund Fellowes would scarcely have dismissed the work as being "far from effective"[2], and even the loyal Fuller-Maitland could only commend it as being "of appropriate dignity and festal rejoicing"[3]; in calling it "perhaps the most important of Parry's contributions to Anglican church music" he was saying very little, for Parry wrote scarcely any church music of note. It is an agreeable work, written with a sure hand and a sensitive ear to

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1 ibid p 66

2 'Memoirs of an Amateur Musician' (1946) p 115

3 J Fuller-Maitland: 'The Music of Parry and Stanford' (1934) p 96

4 ibid p 95

the different moods of the text - too sensitive perhaps, for the chief weakness of the work is its general shortwindedness, although it also lacks melodic material of special distinction.

At the Hereford meeting of the Three Choirs Festival in 1912, Parry conducted the first performance of his setting of Dunbar's 'Ode on the Nativity' for soprano, chorus and orchestra. This is, without doubt, the finest of the late works for chorus and orchestra; a number of critics justly liken it to 'Blest Pair of Sirens' in its perfection of design and sureness of touch. The counterpoint is characteristically rich and inventive, but at the same time perfectly in accord with the simple tenderness of the words, and through the whole work runs a gentle pastoral theme, constantly varied but providing the lengthy single movement with a solid backbone. Later in the same year, Parry conducted the first performance of his Symphonic Fantasia '1912', subtitled 'a symphony in four linked movements', the most considerable of his pre-War works. By giving it the general title '1912' and labelling the last movement 'Now' (the others bear the more self-explanatory titles 'Stress', 'Love' and 'Play'), the composer clearly intended the work to reflect something of the spirit of the times*. In general terms this intention manifests itself in a certain conciseness and a taut, austere feeling about the counterpoint (in a letter Parry described the prevailing mood of the work as "stern"), but there are also stylistic innovations which, if not out and out experiments, were new to Parry and English music in general. The most striking of these were the casting of the work in a single span playing without a break and the use of a simple musical cell as a unifying <u>motif</u>, opening and closing the symphony, appearing frequently at joins between sections and cropping up in

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* It can have no special relevance to the year 1912 for it was played through at the Royal College of Music as early as March 1910.

various guises throughout the work. This was no mere innovation for its own sake. It represented the determination of an alert and original musical thinker to continue to develop and extend his musical language, and as such was highly successful; the work is a happy example of reasoned and controlled experiment. It made a strong and favourable impression, being performed three times in the following year (twice in London and once in Bournemouth), a good record for an English symphony at the time.

Parry revised a number of his earlier works in the years before the Great War. At the Gloucester meeting of the Three Choirs in September 1913, a version with English words of the Latin 'Te Deum' of 1900 was given, and the following year the new arrangement of the ode 'The Glories of our Blood and State' was produced by the Bach Choir. Of more substance and more interest is the Symphonic Poem 'A Vision of Life' for soprano and bass soloists, chorus and orchestra, composed for the Cardiff Festival of 1907 but then withdrawn and revised for the Norwich Festival due to be held in October 1914. This was one of the festivals to be cancelled on the outbreak of the War, and the work was not heard until October 1924, six years after Parry's death; but the revision was completed and the vocal score printed by the summer of 1914, so it must be considered as belonging to the pre-War period. For this, as for a number of the other late cantatas, the composer acted as his own librettist. A greater poet than Parry might well have failed in the task he set out to accomplish - to sum up the whole humanist/agnostic ethic in a text suitable for a modestly-scaled oratorio. The intention is admirable, but the sentiments are naively expressed and the poetic style is pedestrian and portentous. It is hardly fair to judge the text purely as a

piece of poetry (many an oratorio libretto reads far worse), but the music cannot be said to save the situation; it is a similar case of noble ideals unrealised in the execution. Clearly the composer did not wish to sweeten the mood of grim despair which pervades much of the text; but most of the music which Parry produced is merely grey and characterless, and at times positively bathetic. There is an attractive solo descriptive of the dawn, followed by a fine chorus "To us is the glory of beauty revealed", but both these occur early on in the work, and much of what follows is dreary and commonplace. Again a motto theme is used, but it does little to strengthen the rambling structure.

It must be admitted that in this work Parry was branching out into unknown territory. He had not previously attempted a work in this spiritual vein on such an extended scale, and direct parallels in the works of other contemporary composers are hard to find. (Similar philosophical ideas pervade several of Vaughan Williams' works, most notably 'Toward the Unknown Region' and the last movement of 'A Sea Symphony'; but both these are more successful largely because they are of more modest dimensions and have more vigorous texts.) The ethics of 'The Vision of Life' were daring enough to be unacceptable to the ecclesiastical authorities at Hereford who refused to sanction a performance of the work at the Three Choirs Festival of 1909. In writing to sympathise with Parry about this, Elgar expressed admiration for the work, calling it "really strong bracing stuff"; and writing to his friend Jaeger he said "I say, that "Vision" of Parry's is fine stuff and the poem is literature; you must hear it some day."[1] So 'The Vision of Life' was not without its supporters, although it never achieved any popularity;

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[1] quoted by Michael Kennedy in A Portrait of Elgar (1968) p 126

contemporary criticisms of the Cardiff performance had been couched in terms of respect rather than enthusiasm,and the first performances of the revised version in Leeds in October 1924 and in London two years later excited no comment at all in the leading musical journals.

As well as these substantial works, there are a number of small-scale pieces which belong to this period of Parry's career: the first set of 'Seven Chorale Preludes' for organ, some of the 'Shulbrede Tunes' for piano, a setting of Psalm 46 written for the choir of St Paul's, and the inevitable unison and two-part songs. Some of these works are very slight in content as well as in form, though, like Stanford, Parry could focus his gifts on the smallest object and produce miniature works of great depth and beauty, several of the 'Shulbrede Tunes' and the organ 'Elegy in A flat' being cases in point. Immediately before the outbreak of the Great War, Parry was at work on an 'English Suite' for strings,which shows him both at his best, as in the powerful sarabande, and at his worst, as in the facilely hearty opening and closing movements.

Parry's diaries for this period of his life do not make happy reading. He had always been prone to fits of deep depression which he was accustomed to dispel by sheer hard work; but, as worsening health began to sap his once boundless energy, he lost this antidote to these fits of melancholy, fits which were aggravated by the lack of enthusiasm shown for his new compositions. He had no difficulty in getting his works performed, and performed well ("the band played up wonderfully" is a frequent diary entry), but he was well aware of the unenthusiastic note in the press criticisms, and was saddened by the general lack of positive response to works by which he set great store. His integrity and strength of personality

still won for him universal respect and deep admiration from friends and acquaintances of all ages; and as a teacher and administrator he was still a powerful influence for good. But despite his retention of an open mind to new musical experiences and his awareness of the necessity of continually developing as a composer, his creative powers were less sure than they once had been and his new works no longer added to his reputation.

Parry and Stanford continued to develop as composers right up to the time of their deaths,and this is one of the most important distinctions which set them apart from other mid-Victorian composers. For there was no such stylistic growth in the output of either Mackenzie or Cowen, each of whom evolved a congenial musical style early in his career and then stuck to it, doggedly making no attempt to extend or refine it. Their work already seemed dated to young musicians at the turn of the century, and the change of taste which marked the beginning of the Georgian era made their music seem irrelevant, even archaic. In the face of this unfortunate fact, Cowen began to write less and less; but Mackenzie pushed steadily on, producing as many works as his crowded life gave him time to create. His output would probably have been more extensive had he not been particularly busy with other matters at this time. As we have seen, the Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft met in London in 1911, and Mackenzie, as President, was deeply involved with the planning and execution of the Congress; then, almost immediately the delegates had left London, serious work began on moving the Royal Academy of Music from its old site in Tenterden Street to the new building in the Marylebone Road, which was formally opened on 22nd June 1912. Mackenzie was still Principal of the Academy and, like Parry at the College, was no mere figurehead; he taught and conducted and in

every sense directed both the musical and administrative affairs of the institution. These primary activities, coupled with deep involvement in the running of the Associated Board and a continuing career as a choral conductor at provincial festivals, took their toll of Mackenzie's time and energies, allowing little of either to be directed towards original composition.

Among Mackenzie's most popular works had been his oratorios and cantatas, and he continued to produce works of this type right up to the Great War. In 1910 his cantata 'The Sun God's Return' was produced at the Cardiff Festival and in the composer's own words "had a warm reception from a large audience. The verdict of the critics... was, however, so unfavourable that it had only one other performance in England."[1] His obvious resentment at the hostility of the press was tempered to some extent by a very successful performance of the work given in Vienna early in 1911. It is typical of Mackenzie's ingenuousness that in his autobiography he quotes with obvious pride three extracts from the Austrian musical press which, while seeming to enthuse over the work, on closer examination offer only the faintest of praise couched in the most carefully chosen words. The measure of acclaim accorded the work in Austria says more about the state of choral singing and choral composition in that country than about the intrinsic quality of the composition, which is a cantata very much of the old school, four-square, melodious and dull. Mackenzie's last large-scale choral work was a full-blown three-part oratorio 'The Temptation', based on Milton's 'Paradise Regained'; its composition occupied "the leisure of several years"[2] just before the War, but the work never saw the light of day either in performance or in published form.

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[1] A C Mackenzie: A Musician's Narrative (1927) p 227

[2] ibid p 244

There are several orchestral works dating from this stage of Mackenzie's career. 'An English Joy-Peal' was commissioned for the 1911 Coronation and given by Dan Godfrey in Bournemouth a year later. Godfrey was a loyal friend to Mackenzie and frequently invited him to Bournemouth to conduct his own music; but the only first performance which Mackenzie gave to Godfrey's orchestra was of an 'Air de Ballet: La Savannah' which appeared in April 1911. Eleven months later Mackenzie conducted the première of his 'Invocation' for orchestra at a Philharmonic Society Concert. Earlier in his career he had been principal conductor of a number of the Philharmonic's seasons, but this was the last occasion upon which he appeared for them in that role and one cannot but feel that the inclusion of a new piece by him must have been largely bound up with his engagement as conductor for the remainder of the concert. Certainly the work received scant praise from the critics. A trend noted in the previous chapter with reference to his earlier works still holds good at this stage of his career: a Scottish flavour lent distinction to his music. Certainly the best press notices which he received at this time were the reviews of the first performance of the 'Tam O'Shanter' Rhapsody given at a concert for the international Congress over which he presided.

These are the only works of any dimensions which Mackenzie produced in the pre-War years. The rest of the catalogue is made up of solo songs, part-songs and little piano pieces, all capably written but totally undistinguished. Just as he found no good in the most up-to-date music of the pre-War period (his elephantine joke at the expense of Strauss' 'Elektra' is quoted on pages 221 and 222 of 'A Musician's Narrative'), so musicians and the general public showed little interest in his own music. Few of his once-popular

early works retained a place in the repertory; apart from rare occasions in Bournemouth and at the Queen's Hall Proms, his works were hardly ever played except at the Royal Academy, the Royal College where Stanford kept his name alive with performances of 'Colomba' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' or at concerts which he had a hand in himself. And if his old works were losing what popularity they once had, his new works made singularly little impression, and did nothing to stem the neglect which was fast overtaking his music.

It is evident from the list of his compositions and from his autobiography that Mackenzie did not bow before the changes in taste which led to the decline of his popularity, He continued in his accustomed style, producing new works with a stolid obstinacy. But Cowen's reaction to similar circumstances was quite different. The increasingly large amount of provincial conducting which he undertook during the Edwardian period, coupled with a decrease of public interest in his works, had already somewhat lessened the flow of his compositions when in 1910 overwork led to a complete breakdown in his health. This was the year of his last major work, the oratorio 'The Veil' produced under his own baton at the Cardiff Festival. Contemporary accounts are polite rather than enthusiastic about the work itself (which is highly coloured and dramatic but very sentimental) but make no secret of the success of the first performance. The Welsh have always been conservative in their musical tastes, so it is no surprise that Cowen's reactionary style should appeal to them so strongly.

On recovering from his breakdown, Cowen resumed some of his conducting duties, including regular work with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Crystal Palace Handel Festivals, the Bradford Festival Choral Society and occasional guest appearances at

the Royal Philharmonic and elsewhere. But as a composer, he had practically dried up. A few part-songs and piano pieces such as the suite 'The Months' appeared; they were apparently newly composed, but there is nothing to distinguish them in any way from the pieces he was writing forty years previously. A second 'Language of Flowers' suite was completed during 1914, quite indistinguishable from the first suite of 1880; there is the same charm, fluency and utter conventionality. In 1913 he produced a volume of autobiography in which, unlike Mackenzie, he does not rail against the latter-day developments in music which have led to his own compositions being elbowed out of the repertoire, but seems merely to sigh uncomprehendingly and turn back to another gently amusing anecdote of the 'seventies or 'eighties, just as as a composer he seemed to shrug his shoulders and content himself with producing another well-turned part-song or ballad.

Edward German's position was somewhat similar at this time. Although he was invited to compose a March for George V's Coronation and two of his works appeared in the programmes of the concerts for the International Congress, his career as a composer was largely over by 1911. He continued to be greatly in demand as a conductor of his own music, for his earlier works lost little of their popularity; as he wrote himself (in a letter dated 30th March 1914): " ... it is certainly a comfort that what one has written seems to go on living."[1] Furthermore, the urge to compose was still there, but it manifested itself only in a few songs and part-songs; no works of any dimensions progressed beyond the sketch stage. A number of light opera librettos were submitted to him in order to try and

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[1] quoted by W H Scott in <u>Edward German: an intimate biography</u> (1932) p 163

tempt him back into composing for the stage, and the commission to write an orchestral work for the Royal Philharmonic Society was kept open for him. But nothing came of the plans for a successor to 'Tom Jones' and 'Fallen Fairies', and it was not until 1919 that the Philharmonic commission was fulfilled with the 'Theme and Six Diversions'. German had always been ruthlessly self-critical and had maintained an inflexible rule that each new work should be an improvement upon the last. But he was beginning to feel thoroughly out of tune with the times; and while it would have been unthinkable for him to modify his ideals to bow to the dictates of fashion, he no longer had the energy or inclination to fight back on his own terms against the new tendencies. His acute awareness of the changes in the artistic climate are revealed in a number of his letters: for instance he wrote in August 1911 "I seem petrified by the modern trend in Art ... There is a fashion at present, and that fashion is to pretend that you enjoy that which is incomprehensible. Of course I ought to be strong enough to disregard it all ..."[1] It was in these terms that Edward German ceased to be a living force amongst the English composers, although he still pursued a very active career as a conductor, an examiner and an adjudicator.

Edward Elgar found himself in somewhat similar circumstances on the eve of the Great War in that his continued popularity rested on the works which he had already written. He too felt ill at ease with the new artistic atmosphere, but here all parallels between his position and German's cease, for Elgar found himself at the height of his powers as a composer and continued to produce works on the largest scale. Posterity has judged these works as the crowning achievements of his career, but they added little to his reputation

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[1] ibid p 147

at the time of their composition. He was acutely aware that he had partially lost the public ear, and on a nature as highly-strung and hypersensitive as Elgar's, this awareness could not fail to have its effect.

His first real intimation that the public attitude to his music was changing came at the first performance of the Second Symphony in May 1911: as he left the platform on that occasion he said in baffled bewilderment to Henry Wood who was standing in the wings, "Henry, they don't like it, they don't like it." [1] Next day the newspapers spoke of "an hesitating response" and "much enthusiasm", but there had been nothing like the rapture which had greeted the first performances of the A flat Symphony and Violin Concerto. Both these works have rabble-rousing endings, guaranteed to whip up an audience into excitement; but, despite the resignation of the closing bars, there is quite enough red blood in the last movement of the E flat Symphony to prevent an audience from feeling inhibited about a display of enthusiasm. Elgar was largely right when he said that the audience didn't like it; but part of the trouble was that it was not what they were expecting and they could not grasp it at all at first hearing. Truly there must have been a striking contrast between the mood of this music and the general atmosphere of London in the late spring of 1911, with glorious weather and the excitement of the Coronation only four weeks away; the token period of mourning for the old King was over and done with, and England was eagerly anticipating the new reign of the comparatively young George V. But here was a work inscribed to the memory of the late King, with an avowedly elegiac slow movement and nothing in the way of the "massive hope for the future" which Elgar had given out as the key to the First Symphony. The response of the majority of an audience

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[1] quoted by Wood in 'My Life of Music' (1938) p 251

to a new work must be largely emotional rather than intellectual, and so on this count the lukewarm reception of the première of the E flat Symphony can be explained.

What is harder to account for is that Queen's Hall on that occasion was far from full. Michael Kennedy[1] gives two possible reasons for this: firstly, he points out, on Richard Capell's evidence, that the seat prices were very high, and he goes on to remind his readers that the programme contained two other first performances, the works in question being Bantock's symphonic poem 'Dante and Beatrice' and Walford Davies' 'Parthenia Suite'. But neither of these reasons seems adequate in itself. In reply to the first, it should be made clear that Elgar had a considerable following amongst the wealthy upper-middle class, though it seems strange even to consider high ticket prices as being a possible deterrent to the potential audience for such a noteworthy event as the première of a new Elgar symphony. At the first performance of the Violin Concerto, there had been a great many people happy to pay a guinea merely to stand at the back of the auditorium. As for the matter of the other items in the programme, had Elgar shared the concert with Holbrooke and Bax, it might well have been that some members of the audience would have been discouraged; but in 1911 Bantock's music was eliciting keen interest, and no-one seriously contemplating an Elgar première could possibly have been put off attending by a work by Walford Davies. Rosa Burley, in her unconventional study of the composer 'Edward Elgar: the Record of a Friendship', offers a different reason for the meagre audience. She reveals that Elgar was deeply wounded by something concerned with the arrangements for the Coronation music; whether it was the

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[1] in 'Portrait of Elgar' (1968) pp 200/1

size of the contribution he was asked to make, or something connected with the fee that was offered, she is unable to say, but she reveals that he felt sufficiently aggrieved to boycott the Coronation Service, and also to forbid his wife to attend, despite the fact that the new King had conferred the Order of Merit upon him only five days previously. Miss Burley suggests that news of Elgar's hostile attitude had leaked out and was enough to cause him temporary unpopularity, but this would seem a more likely explanation for the empty seats at Queen's Hall on 25th May had the new symphony appeared after the Coronation rather than six weeks before it. Miss Burley's revelation throws interesting light on Elgar's acute sensitivity, but does little to explain his sudden loss of support. Whatever the reasons, the small size of the audience on that occasion is indisputable, and its unfavourable reaction to the new work was further confirmed by Henry Wood who spoke of Bantock being "more fortunate than poor, dear Elgar for (Dante and Beatrice) was very well received" [1].

The subsequent career of the Second Symphony before and during the Great War was similarly disappointing to the composer. The second public performance was given by the London Symphony Orchestra a fortnight after the première, and on that occasion the audience was described as "miserably small". It was played once by the Hallé in the following November, then not again by them until 1926. The Philharmonic Society did not include the work in their programme until 1916, when Elgar himself conducted it at short notice. Dan Godfrey, who had given the Violin Concerto in Bournemouth within ten days of its first performance, waited eleven months before playing the new symphony, and then did not repeat it until after the War.

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[1] H J Wood: op cit p 251

The E flat Symphony is altogether a more complex work than its predecessor, despite having an apparently simpler musical surface; it is harder to play, harder to conduct and harder to penetrate,and is much more susceptible to poor performance - in the wrong hands it can seem quirky and rambling. And whereas the First Symphony, if it appeals to the listener at all, makes a great impact on first hearing, the second does not give up its riches easily but needs repeated hearings before it can begin to be understood. Of the conductors at work in early Georgian England, very few possessed both the technique and the musical perception needed to make the symphony come off completely. A workaday conductor like Dan Godfrey must have given a very superficial reading, and Henry Wood's performances cannot have been wholly satisfactory, not so much because of lack of gifts on his part but because he always worked to such tight schedules, allowing himself absurdly little rehearsal time for the amount and complexity of the work he undertook. Beecham's situation and abilities would have made him the ideal person to cope with the work, but by 1911 he had quite lost his passing interest in Elgar's music. Until the advent of Adrian Boult towards the end of the Great War, the composer himself was the only English conductor who could do the work full justice; yet we have the testimony of a number of orchestral players that Elgar was not always reliable as a conductor, even of his own works, and the awareness that the symphony was not making its full mark probably did little to encourage his most inspired conducting.

It was not only the general public that was baffled by the new symphony; the critics did not know what to make of it either. So divergent were the opinions of the work voiced by contemporary writers that it is hard to believe that they were talking about the same piece of music. R A Streatfield of 'The Daily Graphic' found

that for him the E flat Symphony "completes his great symphonic trilogy (the two symphonies and the Violin Concerto) in the happiest fashion. Struggle and contemplation give way to Joy, and the Symphony in E flat is filled with heady transports of delight"[1] while to Rosa Burley, a life-long friend of the composer and a perceptive critic of his works, "the prevailing mood ... of the symphony was very largely one of revolt ... a protest which arose at times to something like a snarl."[2] Samuel Langford of the 'Manchester Guardian' could "hardly say that the work contains any melody in the full sense of the word"[3], a comment which would seem to suggest that the Hallé performance he had heard did less than full justice to the work.

Thus, with a coolly-received première and then infrequent performances of inconsistent quality, Elgar's E flat Symphony stood little chance of receiving the recognition it deserved in the early Georgian years; it was not until after the Great War, when there was an all-pervading mood of reappraisal, that it fully came into its own. For it is indisputably one of Elgar's very finest works, and posterity has accorded it a higher position than that of the First Symphony. Thus its composition was an important milestone in Elgar's career, for not only did it mark a technical advance in subtlety of method and clarity of expression, but also it heralded the end of his period as England's musical laureate. From now on his relationship with both the critics and the general public was to become increasingly equivocal.

The rest of Elgar's output for the year 1911 consisted of an edition of Bach's 'St Matthew Passion', undertaken with Ivor Atkins,

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[1] R A Streatfield: 'Musiciens Anglais Contemporains', translated by V Waite (undated) p 10

[2] Rosa Burley: 'Edward Elgar, the Record of a Friendship' (1972) p 190

[3] quoted by Michael Kennedy: op cit p 201

and the two Coronation works already mentioned. On a number of occasions after completing a large-scale work, Elgar experienced a period when inspiration confined itself to slight works, and this was such a time, for the composition of the Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony in very quick succession had left him drained and exhausted. The next work of any size to appear was the masque 'The Crown of India', given at the Coliseum in March 1912, a work which meant little to Elgar; he put it together in four weeks, using odds and ends from sketch books and themes from abandoned projects. It was written to celebrate the royal visit to India, and Henry Hamilton's libretto must have been crudely chauvinistic, for Elgar, not always renowned for his sensitivity to the political overtones of his texts, complained in a letter about there being "_far too much_ of the political business"[1] and refused to set the most extreme passages. The most important thing about the work was that it paid well; this was the only reason why Elgar accepted the commission to write it in the first place, and agreed to conduct the whole run at the London Coliseum (then only eight years old and famous as London's most grandiose music hall). A concert suite was extracted from the masque and given at the Hereford Festival that autumn.

A great many of Elgar's works were planned and sketched over a long period of time, although the writing of the final versions was often accomplished quite quickly. His setting of O'Shaughnessy's Ode 'The Music Makers' for contralto, chorus and orchestra, is a case in point: it was first planned in about 1903, although the final version was not completed until mid-July 1912. The composer conducted the first performance at the Birmingham Festival that autumn, and soon afterwards it was given further performances in the North-East by Nicholas Kilburn (its dedicatee), in Brighton, and in London by

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[1] ibid p 146

the Royal Choral Society. The critics were enthusiastic, although there was none of the excitement that had greeted 'The Apostles' or 'The Kingdom'; at this time it was still hoped that Elgar would complete his projected trilogy of oratorios with a work on 'The Last Judgement', and, set against a project of this magnitude, 'The Music Makers' must have seemed almost an irrelevance. Nevertheless the work found a positive response in pre-War England, and it clearly meant a great deal to the composer himself; in a letter of 29th August 1912 he says: " I have written out my soul in the concerto, Sym. II and the Ode ... in these three works I have shewn myself."[1] Early critics were not as disturbed as later generations have been by the musical quotations from the Variations, 'Sea Pictures', the symphonies, 'Gerontius' and the Violin Concerto to be found in it. Self-quotation is an apt device to be used in such a self-consciously retrospective work, and the borrowed motifs are woven into the new material with great skill. The text is by no means great poetry; technically it leaves something to be desired, and its short-winded, four-square phrases have not always been transcended in Elgar's setting. But one can well see why the poem appealed to him, especially at this stage in his career; it speaks of the artist as a dreamer set apart from other men, an egocentric attitude which Elgar found very congenial, and it mingles optimism with a passionate regret and nostalgia, conflicting emotions which dogged the composer throughout his early and middle life, and which find expression in many of his writings, both verbal and musical.

Earlier in 1912 Elgar had undertaken a tour with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducting it in London and a number of provincial cities, and while staying in Leeds he had been approached by the Festival Committee who invited him to conduct for them at

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[1] ibid p 213

the 1913 meeting, and also to contribute a new work. At first he was uncertain what form the new piece should take, but early in 1913 he decided to revive an idea that he had first considered eleven years previously, that of writing a large-scale work concerned with Falstaff. The work was written during the spring and summer, and the composer conducted the first performance in Leeds on 1st October. There are conflicting reports about its reception on that occasion; in general the musicians present seem to have recognised it as a masterpiece (Arthur Nikisch, perhaps the most respected conductor of the day, was particularly enthusiastic), but the general response was respectful rather than warm. At subsequent performances in London and Manchester, it was the familiar story of meagre audiences and lukewarm applause.

'Falstaff' needs even more expert conducting and unstinted rehearsal time than does the E flat Symphony, conditions which were simply not to be had in the hectic world of early Georgian provincial festivals and orchestral series. On 23th November 1913, Elgar sent a score of the new composition to Hans Richter, then living in retirement in Bayreuth, with the words "How I wish you were going to conduct this work !"[1] This was no mere complimentary greeting, but a heartfelt plea, for even the composer's own conducting technique was hardly a match for a score of this complexity and Landon Ronald, the work's dedicatee and something of a champion of Elgar's music at the time, confessed to John Barbirolli in the 1920s that he could not "make head or tail of it". Thus the work's lack of success must once again be ascribed largely to the mediocre quality of the early performances it received, although it must be added that it is another work that rarely appeals greatly on first hearing; it needs repeated performances of a high standard to be truly appreciated, and this is exactly what it did not receive.

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[1] ibid p 215

'Falstaff' is the greatest English symphonic poem and Elgar considered it his finest orchestral work. For its subtitle he chose the words 'Symphonic Study', and 'study' is indeed the right word to use for such an elaborate piece of musical characterisation. The composer regarded himself as something of a Shakespearean scholar, and he prepared an elaborate programme for the work, published as a preview before the first performance. To follow the programme and the score side by side is a delight; the musical characterisation is beautifully apt, not only of the individual protagonists but also of the events of the narrative such as the farcical Gad's Hill robbery and the death of Falstaff. A technical study of the score is also richly rewarding; the transformation,, development and contrapuntal combination of the themes is brilliant and the writing for orchestra is masterly even by Elgar's standards.

But in the concert hall the work is only partially successful. Without close reference to the programme, it seems overlong and scrappy, for the themes themselves are very short, and, regarded purely musically, they lack distinction. To be successful, a symphonic poem needs a pleasing and clear musical shape regardless of that imposed upon it by its programme. In 'Falstaff' (a single movement playing for about half an hour), however, the overall design and the broad brush strokes are lost; each tile of the mosaic is overloaded with beautiful detail so that when one steps back to take in the whole work, one is confronted not by a clear picture but by a bewildering confusion. This explains the mixed reception accorded the work at its *première*; the musicians in the audience appreciated its technical qualities, but the layman, brought up on the attractive and lucid symphonic poems of Richard Strauss, could neither follow the thread of the programme nor give himself up to pure enjoyment of the music.

Once again Elgar followed a large work with several smaller ones: 1914 saw the composition of some magnificent part-songs, two extended anthems and two essays in his light-music vein, 'Carissima' and'Sospiri'. But,as usual,larger projects were under consideration: there was some correspondence with Thomas Hardy concerning the possibility of using one of his works as the basis for an opera, a letter of July 1913 speaks of "a scheme for an allegorical affair on a huge scale", and there were sketches for a piano concerto. After a performance of 'The Apostles' in Canterbury Cathedral in June, Henry Ebleton, patron of the Leeds Choral Union, made one of his periodic approaches to Elgar concerning a possible commission for the third oratorio to complete the unfinished trilogy. This was one of the schemes that was uppermost in the composer's mind during his summer holiday in Scotland, a holiday that was interrupted by the outbreak of the Great War.

In 1914 Elgar was fifty-seven,and the position he occupied in the English musical world was a curious one. He was, without question, our leading composer, recognised as such both at home and abroad; yet, in Diana McVeagh's words, he "ruled no institution, guided no disciples, shed no discernable influence".[1] He was at the height of his powers as a composer, further developing and refining his art, but the interest and enthusiasm of the general public which he had previously enjoyed in full measure suddenly fell away as his new works were given a highly equivocal reception,and the rapture which had greeted his earlier works was modified into a warm if somewhat fitful enthusiasm. His music was still played and sung a good deal, he continued to be in considerable demand as a conductor, a composer of <u>pièces d'occasion</u> and as a social figure, and he retained the

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[1] D McVeagh: '<u>Edward Elgar, his life and music</u>' (1955) p

loyal support of a large following of enthusiasts; but he had lost the common touch and was never to regain it.

Hardly any of the reason for this sudden waning in Elgar's popularity can lie in any change in his composing methods. His early Georgian works have a distinctive flavour about them largely on account of the air of wistful melancholy, encountered in his music from the beginning of his career, becoming very much more predominant, but 1911 witnessed no radical change in his style; even 'Falstaff', which stands alone to some extent because of its explicit programme and unique form, speaks the same language as the other mature works. It is hardly to be supposed that a nature of so conservative a bent as Elgar's should have responded positively to the prevailing mood of change and experiment. It was public taste that had altered in the wake of the change in the current artistic climate. Many links with the past were severed at the end of the Edwardian decade, and, whatever else the new reign might stand for, it was decidedly forward looking. At this critical moment, Elgar produced a work that was consciously retrospective, and the decline in his popularity began. This distressed Elgar greatly; he knew that he was writing great music, but could not understand why the public was turning away from him. He took the criticism implicit in the poor support and lukewarm response as a personal slight against himself and his music, not recognising it as merely one manifestation of a much larger general trend as public taste in music, as in the other arts, began a process of radical change.

Throughout his life Elgar was a deeply confused and unhappy man. His early feelings of insecurity and frustration are easy to understand and sympathise with, but his enormous artistic, material and social success during the Edwardian decade did little to ease his psychological imbalance; even at the very pinnacle of his popularity, he could never allow himself to relax into confidence and self-assurance. Although well aware from an early age of the nature of

his gift, he felt impelled to erect an array of explanations and excuses to fall back on if the work in hand were not progressing as it should, or if no new project appeared to be forthcoming. His insecurity further manifested itself in hypochondria, in a tendency to exaggeration, and in a hypersensitivity to adverse criticism or what he felt to be a lack of due regard. Although he claimed never to read press criticisms of his music, he was quite well aware of what the critics thought of each new work, and in the latter period the empty seats and lukewarm applause spoke for themselves.

There were other causes for unhappiness at this stage in Elgar's career. His life-long ambition to live in London as a composer pure and simple was satisfied at the beginning of 1912 when he installed himself and his family in an opulent Hampstead mansion. But the move proved to be something of a disaster; the expense of maintaining an establishment on such a scale was a constant source of worry, but an even more serious drawback was that Elgar did not find the atmosphere at Severn House at all conducive to composition. Always highly sensitive to _genius loci_, he found cause for bitter regret in having temporarily cut himself off from close association with his native West Country. Thus what was intended to be the crowning success of a life of struggle and frustration turned out to be a hollow achievement, and added to Elgar's worries rather than easing them. Always prone to hypochondria, he had real cause for concern about his health during the pre-War years, and his spirits were further depressed by the death of several close friends. It was at this period that Elgar began deliberately to cultivate new friendships far away from the world of music, and to avoid discussing music with all but a handful of his closest friends. Both these traits became much more marked after the Great War, but their

appearance in the early Georgian years point to the fact that Elgar was beginning to distance himself from the musical profession at exactly the same time as the musical world began to lose interest in him.

Bernard van Dieren introduced his obituary article on Frederick Delius for the 'Musical Times' of July 1934 with the following sentence: "Less than twenty years ago I could still begin an article with these words: 'Very few people have more than a vague notion who Delius is'". In the face of the historical facts this opinion is highly questionable; because of the general neglect of his own music, van Dieren was quick to brand the English musical public as irredeemably philistine and totally antipathetic to modern music. But if ever there were a period in English musical history when his comment on Delius' reputation was unjustified, it was the very years of which van Dieren was speaking, i.e. about 1914: at this time, a great many people knew as much about Delius as they did about any other contemporary composer, and, what is more important, they knew and appreciated his music. His work had not the broad popular appeal of that of Stanford or Elgar, but, as well as being of great interest to all who were sympathetic to new artistic trends, its beauty and poignancy spoke directly to the open-minded musical layman. In early Georgian England, Delius' music lacked neither tolerably frequent performance nor a sympathetic response.

His most constant and hard-working champion was Thomas Beecham. Immediately before the Great War Beecham's name was so inextricably bound up with the activities of the Russian Ballet and with the introduction to England of Strauss' most recent operas that one is apt to forget that he was still actively concerned with the presentation of 'ordinary' orchestral concerts, not only with his own orchestra but also with the London Symphony Orchestra and the New Symphony Orchestra.

Delius felt somewhat neglected by his friend at this time, his feelings of resentment being fired by his hatred of Diaghilev and his jealousy of the latter's huge success. But not only did Beecham insert works by Delius into many of his programmes, he also ensured that these performances were meticulously and lavishly rehearsed, a service which he did not always bestow on the English works he conducted. It was not only in London that he kept his friend's music before the public; he directed performances in provincial centres from Manchester to Torquay.

Other conductors were active on Delius' behalf at this time. Henry Wood always included several of his works in the programmes of the Queen's Hall Proms, and was also responsible for performances at the Sheffield and Birmingham festivals; Balfour Gardiner included music by Delius in both his series of orchestral concerts in 1912 and 1913, as did Bevis Ellis in his similar series in March 1914 and Charles Kennedy Scott conducted both choral and orchestral works by Delius at the Oriana Madrigal Choir's regular London concerts, events which were on a much larger scale than the name of the choir might suggest. Considering that Delius only visited this country for very short periods, was published exclusively in Germany, and was at this time giving public utterance to his opinions as to the hopeless state of musical affairs in England, he could not fairly claim that he was being unjustly neglected by English musicians.

The bitterness of his outlook at this time was caused largely by his deteriorating health. He had contracted syphilis in the 1890s, and from 1910 his physical condition showed a marked deterioration, in consequence of which he embarked upon a tour of the sanatoriums of Europe, engaged in a fruitless search for a successful cure. At this stage his illness had little direct bearing upon his career as a composer; it merely sapped some of his energy and increased his natural tendency to nervousness and irritability.

Indeed it is probable that he turned to work in order to distract his mind from his illness, for the years before the Great War proved to be some of the most productive of his whole career.

In 1910 he completed the score of what was to be his last opera, 'Fennimore and Gerda'. From the vocal score it appears to be a most interesting and attractive work, but it had to wait nine years for its first performance which took place in Frankfurt, and has been performed only very rarely since. The libretto was clumsily extracted by the composer from a novel by the Danish author J P Jacobsen, and as drama is jejune and feeble. But the form of the opera is an interesting foreshadowing of later practice, it being cast in eleven short scenes, each linked to the next by an orchestral interlude. The failure of the work in the opera house is largely due to the imbalance in length and content between the dramatic scenes and the interludes; the latter contain much of the best and most powerful music, and in scale over-balance the short dramatic sections.

The first draft of another Jacobsen inspired piece, 'Arabesque' for baritone, chorus and orchestra, was completed in the following year. It is one of Delius' most powerful and sinister works, with none of the serenity or elemental optimism with which he invests much of his music. The dark vision of Pan as representing "the object of a sensual passion which leads to madness and death" [1] is matched by music of a sombre intensity, although at least one critic has claimed to find it "ninety-ish (and) morbid". [2] The work was subjected to several revisions before its first performance in 1920, but has scarcely been performed at all since, apart from its appearances at Beecham's two Delius Festivals of 1929 and 1946.

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[1] from a programme note by Philip Heseltine for a performance at the 1929 Delius Festival

[2] Frank Howes: The English Musical Renaissance (1966) p 210

A choral work which is held in much greater general esteem is 'The Song of the High Hills' for wordless chorus and orchestra, completed in 1911. Beecham called this Delius' "longest and most impressive work written in a single movement"[1], and, since its first performance under Albert Coates at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in February 1920, it has been given with tolerable frequency. It is a work of enormous breadth and power, qualities which draw the listener's attention away from some stylistic weaknesses. There are passages of strikingly stodgy rhythm, at least one rhythmic device being used with tiresome persistency, and and there is a curious diversity of harmonic styles, ranging from a bland 'white note' effect to cloying chromaticism in the space of thirty bars. The scoring is highly atmospheric but slightly unusual for Delius in that the instruments are largely segregated into families which results in a somewhat monochrome effect. The integration of the wordless chorus into orchestral texture is very skilfully managed, and the voices are used very sparingly, thus throwing great emphasis on the choral climax which occurs two-thirds of the way through the piece, where the voices in ten parts dominate the texture for forty bars of Delius' richest chromatic counterpoint. There is a certain amount of organic unity in the construction of the work, but its main strength lies in the spiritual unity by which every musical device is made to serve its purpose in the depiction of the composer's beloved Norwegian mountains.

The score of 'The Song of the High Hills' specifies an orchestra of one hundred and three players, and many other of Delius' orchestral pieces are similarly lavishly scored. On the advice of Balfour Gardiner, in 1911 and 1912 he wrote two short works for comparatively modest forces (double woodwind, two horns and strings)

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[1] Thomas Beecham: Frederick Delius (1959) p 168

in the hope that they might attract the attention of smaller, even amateur, orchestras. The experiment was a success: 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' and 'Summer Night on the River' quickly became the most frequently performed of Delius' orchestral works, first given at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in January 1914 under Mengelberg and published in the same year. In the first of the pieces, Delius uses a Norwegian folk-song, but in a way quite unlike that which he had employed in 'Brigg Fair' and 'Appalachia'; rather than being a formal set of variations, 'The First Cuckoo' is what Percy Grainger would have called "a ramble" on the tune, a very free treatment in which the main melody does not appear until one-fifth of the way through the piece when it grows imperceptibly out of the preceding harmonies and thereafter is repeated and modified with endless variation. In 'Summer Night on the River' Delius is at his most impressionistic. The structure and texture of the piece are of the simplest, a broad melody for solo cello being taken up by other solo strings and gradually truncated on its subsequent appearances; this main melodic material is enshrouded by chromatic decoration, swaying ostinati and tiny flourishes.

Concurrent with this exploration of a new and original sound-world was the final revision of a composition which deserves to be mentioned if only because, in a letter written to his publishers Tisher and Jegenberg in about 1912, Delius called it "my best orchestral work"[1]. It first appeared as 'La Ronde se Derroule' at the St James' Hall concert of 1899; by the time of a performance in Dusseldorf five years later, it had been revised, expanded and renamed 'Lebenstanz'. Then, in 1912, it was further revised, fitted with a new ending and performed (under the same name) with some success in Berlin; and in this version it was given at one of Balfour Gardiner's concerts at Queen's Hall in February 1913. It is an attractive work, but to hear it in close conjunction with the other works of the pre-

[1] quoted by Eric Fenby in a sleeve note for the 1975 recording of the work

War period shows how far Delius developed as a composer over the fourteen years separating the first draft and the final version. As its title suggests, it has great vigour, and it is richly scored; but, in comparison with the refinement and subtlety of his later works it seems very four-square and some of the effects appear almost crude. For some reason it has remained completely unknown and unperformed, it being one of the very few of Delius' works that Beecham appeared to take no interest in; it did not even appear in the programmes of either of his two Delius Festivals, occasions on which almost all of the composer's more recondite works were given a hearing.

One of Delius' most substantial works for orchestra alone was completed just before the outbreak of the war. The 'North Country Sketches' written in France in 1913 and 1914, and first performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under Beecham in May 1915, evoke a specifically English scene, the moors around Bradford which the composer knew and loved in his boyhood. The four movements are musically quite self-contained but are bound together by following the turn of the year in the changing seasons. The first two, 'Autumn: the wind soughs in the trees' and 'Winter Landscape' contain a degree of musical pictorialism unusual in Delius' music; we hear the soughing of the wind in the restless parallel chords and see the winter landscape in the stark, widely-spaced string writing and the woodwind ostinati in consecutive fourths. The third section, called simply 'Dance', contains the most energetic music in the whole work and, placed where it is, suggests the stormy equinoctial transition from winter to spring; there are moments of calm where warmth returns to the music, but it is not until the final movement, 'The March of Spring', that the music finally loses all traces of stark sombreness. Delius' musical geography is remarkably precise,

for what is depicted in this music is not the gentle, drowsy spring of Northern France but the Yorkshire spring, sunny but bracing and vigorous.

Most of Delius' songs belong to the early part of his career, but four belong to this period of his maturity. 'The Nightingale has a Lyre of Gold', dated 1910, is one of his very few songs to English texts, being a setting of a poem by W E Henley. It is written in a rich chromatic idiom, and concentrates upon catching the general mood of the poem rather than following the natural rhythms and inflections of the text. The song was published with an unattributed German translation, and internal evidence would suggest that it was the German version which was originally set, the music then being slightly adapted to fit the original English words. There is no such possibility with 'I-Brasil', composed three years later. It is slightly surprising to find Delius so responsive to one of Fiona MacLeod's conventional Gaelic effusions, a vision of the Irish Atlantis. At first sight, his use of scotch snap rhythm and an almost modal vocal line seem ill-matched with the piano's lush chromatic harmony; but the overall result is one of the composer's finest songs, highly atmospheric in a very original way.

Beecham draws attention to the "uninterrupted flow" of Delius' creative activity between the completion of 'A Mass of Life' (in late 1905) and the summer of 1914, singling out 1911 and 1912 as years during which he wrote "some of his most remarkable and characteristic works"[1]. He produced fine compositions at all stages of his career, but often at isolated intervals; there is, however, a remarkable grouping of some half-dozen fine works in the pre-War years. It is perhaps more than a mere coincidence that

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[1] op cit p 166

this period also marks one of the most settled and calm stretches of his not untroubled life, a period marred only by increasingly frequent spells of ill health. His protracted battle with Harmonie, the publishing house responsible for a number of his major works, had reached a temporary lull; there was no longer the worry and distraction of the affairs of the Musical League to interrupt his work; and furthermore, for the first time since he had taken up music as his full-time profession, he was making an adequate income, largely as a result of the increase in popularity of his music and hence larger returns from royalties and performing rights. The largest source of these royalties was Germany, for that was still the country where his music was held in the highest esteem; Beecham goes so far as to state that before 1914 "there he was one of the two men of the hour" [1].

But Great Britain was beginning to rival Germany in enthusiasm for Delius' music. It must be remembered that it was only very recently that his works had become known at all in England; before the late summer of 1907, hardly anyone here had even heard his name let alone any of his music. Thus by 1912 or thereabouts the initial upsurge of interest in his music was not yet over, and there was still considerable novelty attached to his musical language. Such beautiful and consciously appealing music won supporters quickly; Sidney Grew speaks of the idiom of 'Brigg Fair' as being "puzzling" when the work first appeared in 1908, but within a few years "it struck one as exquisitely natural" [2]. As audiences became more familiar with Delius' style, which was quite unlike anything heard before in England, it took less and less time for his works to make their mark here.

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[1] ibid p 176

[2] 'Our Favourite Musicians from Stanford to Holbrooke' (1922) p 117

Delius' reclusive lifestyle and tenuous connections with the machinery of musical performance led to there often being a considerable delay between the completion of a new work and its first performance. Thus the 'Songs of Sunset', completed in 1907, were not heard until Beecham produced them at Queen's Hall in June 1911, the year in which 'A Song of the High Hills' was finished, a work which had to wait nine years for its first performance. Had Delius spent more time in this country, it is probable that this time lag would have been reduced; but after the demise of the Musical League in 1910, he largely restricted his visits to England to the occasions when his own major works were being performed, events which, ironically, would have occurred more frequently had he visited this country more often.

Early in 1915, the 'Musical Times' carried a four-page article on Delius by Philip Heseltine, newly appointed music critic of the 'Daily Mail'. Despite its tone of youthfully uncritical adulation, the article as a whole is an interestingly perceptive piece of work for a twenty-year-old with little formal musical training. Much of it is given over to descriptive analysis of individual works, but the final paragraph gives an interesting assessment of Delius' position in the English musical scene at the outbreak of the Great War. Heseltine wrote: "He is not a composer whose works achieve an instantaneous success and widespread popularity ... His reputation is growing slowly but surely, with that section of the musical public who estimate sincerity and intensity of feeling in music more highly than sensationalism ... " (a hit at those who had flocked to witness the gorgeous spectacle of the Russian Ballet in the three pre-War seasons). " ... There are many indications at the present that he is coming to his own, in his native land, as he has already done in Germany. And I am sure that I am not alone in my sincere

conviction that there is no composer in Europe today of greater significance than Frederick Delius ... ". This is clearly the voice of the uncritical apologist speaking; but the 'Musical Times' was then, as now, a circumspect and conservatively-toned periodical, and that the editor allowed Heseltine's final sentence to stand would suggest that it expressed a reasonable point of view regarding Delius' reputation and significance in the contemporary musical scene.

In the chapter devoted to the music which appears in Christopher St John's biography of Ethel Smyth, Kathleen Dale writes: "(She) was an erratic composer. She worked by fits and starts all her life, now concentrating fiercely for a few months, or a couple of years, then suddenly throwing up musical activity altogether for some other absorbing pursuit and eventually returning to composition with unabated zeal and new ideas but with a rusty technique."[1] In writing thus, Mrs Dale may well have had the years before the Great War particularly in mind, for in 1910 Ethel Smyth was drawn into the movement for women's suffrage and, with characteristic whole-heartedness, was soon a confirmed suffragette and a close friend of the Pankhurst family. The strength of her convictions led her to join stone-throwing parties, and, for breaking windows in the house of a Cabinet Minister, she was arrested and imprisoned in Holloway Jail for two months in late 1911. In all, she devoted two years of her life to the cause of female suffrage, her self-appointed term of service coming to an end in the summer of 1913. During this period, she by no means abandoned all musical activity, but relegated it to the small amount of time not taken up by W S P U work. In composition at this time she restricted herself to small-scale works, and at these she was able to work only fitfully.

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[1] Christopher St John: '<u>Ethel Smyth</u>' (1959) p 303

In 1910 she produced two short works for chorus and orchestra, settings of Rosetti's 'Sleepless Dreams' and 'Hey Nonny No', a sixteenth century drinking song. It is surprising that she wrote so little choral music, for early in her career the Mass in D had given ample proof of her skill in choral writing, and the handling of the chorus in her operas was unfailingly commended. 'Sleepless Dreams' is a well constructed movement, uncharacteristic only in its prevailing mood of tranquility. Its companion piece is considerably more striking, an unconstrained and intoxicating dance movement whose starkness and harmonic acerbity (open tritones are reiterated with numbing insistency), in conjunction with the relentlessly driving rhythm, create a decidedly primitive mood. The vigour of the work filled Percy Grainger with "boundless delight and admiration" [1], and, after a performance in Vienna, the 'Neue Freie Presse' spoke of "its vastness, its overwhelming strength ... ". Both works were first given by the London Choral Society under Arthur Fagge in October 1910 but were not taken up by any other leading choral societies or festival choirs until 1914 when it was put down for performance at the ill-fated Norwich Festival.

Something of the vigour of 'Hey Nonny No' is found in 'The March of the Women' from the 'Songs of Sunrise' written in 1911, three songs for female voices (two of which have orchestral accompaniment) directly precipitated by the composer's suffragette activities, and dismissed by her in a catalogue of works drawn up later as "of antiquarian interest only". The 'March' has a fine, swinging melody derived partly from an Austrian folk-song to which a rousing text was added after the music had been completed. It was given a magnificent send off at a huge Suffragette rally held in the Albert Hall,

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[1] ibid p 153

and quickly became the official anthem of the women's suffrage movement. '1910', the second song of the group, the composer described as "A Medley: being a faithful chronicle of remarks frequently heard, and liable to repetition _ad libitum_, on a current question." The composer wrote her own text, descriptive of a Suffragette raid in Trafalgar Square, in which the singers represent successively suffragettes, anti-suffragettes, friendly men and unfriendly men. Christopher St John describes the work as "a complete flop"; not even the Suffragette choirs took it up with any enthusiasm. The other song in the group, 'Laggard Dawn' for unaccompanied voices, similarly made no mark.

The same year, 1911, saw the addition of a lengthy andante and an energetic fugal movement to the String Quartet in E minor, the first two movements of which had been composed some nine years earlier. Two performances of the complete work were given by its dedicatees the London String Quartet, in 1912 and it appeared at one of Josef Holbrooke's chamber concerts in May 1914, but was not given with any regularity until it was taken up by several of the leading continental ensembles after the War. It is a distinctive and original work and, though standing squarely in the German romantic chamber music tradition, is not strongly reminiscent of Brahms in the way that her earlier, largely unpublished chamber works are. The performances of the work most highly esteemed by the composer were those given by the Rosé Quartet of Vienna and the Bohemian Quartet; when it was given by the Philharmonic Quartet (one of the leading English ensembles) in November 1920, Ethel Smyth recorded in her diary: "A glib surface rendering. They ... have not the remotest idea of what the music stands for."[1] As with much of the rest of her music, the personal element is evident mainly in the

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[1] ibid p 175

contrapuntal skill and the vigorous rhythms; early reviewers commended the work for its "close reasoning" and "virility". Ethel Smyth did not write a great deal of abstract music, but this quartet is easily her finest work in this branch of composition.

No new music appeared from her pen in 1912, but the following year saw the publication of three new works, all collections of small-scale pieces. 'Five Preludes for Organ' was issued by Novello in the summer of 1913, the first of her works to be published in England since the appearance of the Mass twenty years previously. Here the composer's awareness of classical precedent is strongly evident; this music immediately puts one in mind of works in a similar mould by Brahms. It is severely contrapuntal and, as an early reviewer quaintly puts it, "the tonality is guarded, as is proper and necessary" [1]. Ethel Smyth was too well-equipped technically as a composer to be inhibited by strict forms and limited tonal resources; strong is once again the apt adjective to apply to this music, even though it largely lacks the vigour and passion of her more charcteristically exuberant works.

The 'Three Moods of the Sea' are settings for voice and orchestra of poems by Arthur Symons entitled "Requies", "Before the Squall" and "After Sunset". So utterly different are they from the chorale preludes that it is hard to conceive that they are contemporary works from the same pen. 'The Wreckers' contained some fine, if rather heavy-handed, sea music, but the evocation of the sea in these orchestral songs is at once more subtle and more varied; the scoring is less opaque and the harmony less bound by strict diatonic conventions. In style the songs recall those with chamber music accompaniment of 1907/08 with their richly chromatic harmony, freely declamatory vocal line and strong French flavour. They were given

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[1] Musical Times, Vol LIV (1913), p 524

a fine first performance by Herbert Heyner and the London Symphony Orchestra under Nikisch in June 1913, and were issued in vocal score by Universal Edition in the same year, but, despite favourable reviews, failed to be taken up by any other singers. No second performance can be traced until May 1915.

1913 saw the publication of another set of three songs, settings of unrelated poems by Maurice Baring and Ethel Carnie. The third, 'On the Road', a grim march which makes reference to the ubiquitous 'March of the Women' theme, was arranged for voice and orchestra and given at the same concert as the première of 'Three Moods of the Sea', but it is not known when the others were first performed; the composer makes no reference to this set in any of her autobiographical volumes. The first song, 'The Clown', is the most successful; its simplicity and irony put one in mind of Mahler, whose songs Ethel Smyth must surely have encountered in Germany (they were practically unknown in England at this time). It is only weakened, as is 'On the Road', by too frequent repetition of certain lines of the text to fill out the musical paragraphs.

Ethel Smyth's interest in opera had in no way abated since the composition of 'The Wreckers'. Several possible librettos were considered and in 1913 she went so far as to open negotiations with J M Synge's executors to obtain permission to make an operatic version of 'Riders to the Sea', but this project was abandoned before long in favour of an old idea, that of turning W W Jacobs' short story 'The Boatswain's Mate' into an opera. The composer spent the six months from November 1913 in Egypt and it was there that the libretto and much of the music were written. On her way back to England in the late spring of 1914, she stopped off in Germany to try to arrange for the production of the new work; with

remarkably little trouble this was fixed to take place in Frankfurt in the spring of 1915, and a production of 'The Wreckers' was arranged to be given in Munich a few weeks earlier. " ... by the middle of June the goal was touched towards which I had been stealthily moving for eight years. The work by which I stand or fall, 'The Wreckers', was to be dragged out of the pit again, and would, as produced by Bruno Walter after Christmas in the finest opera house in Europe, be safe - so I believed - for all time. And without hesitation the Director at Frankfurt-am-Main had accepted and fixed the première of 'The Bo'sun' for fourteen days after 'The Wreckers' production in Munich ! My wild dream had come true; in the coming winter two of my operas would be running simultaneously at two of the finest opera houses on the Continent! Both contracts in my pocket I left Frankfurt, not unnaturally in a state of delirium; and oh! how the gods, seated up aloft and looking on, must have split their sides!"[1] For both these plans were, of course, aborted by the outbreak of the Great War.

When 'The Boatswain's Mate' was eventually produced (in January 1916 in London's Shaftesbury Theatre), a number of critics expressed their surprise at the composer's choice of what George Moore called a "very trite and very vulgar little story"[2] for the basis of her opera. But Kathleen Dale claims that after the composition of 'The Wreckers', Ethel Smyth began to feel that light opera was better suited to English composers than grand opera was, and that "eventually she came to the conclusion that, after the ardours and endurances of the two years she had recently devoted to the Women's Suffrage campaign, her greatest need was for laughter"[3]. The appeal of this particular humorous short story must have been largely its reflection of her newly-adopted creed, for it is a tale of inept male plotting frustrated by a woman's resource ; but, whatever the

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1 Ethel Smyth: Beecham and Pharoh (1935) p 178

2 ibid p 133

3 Christopher St John op cit p 300

reasons for its choice, this new libretto demanded very different musical treatment from that employed in her other dramatic works.

That the composer was not entirely at ease with this new branch of operatic composition is suggested by the curious mixture of musical methods which she employed. The first half of the libretto is set in a straight-forward comic opera style, with passages of spoken dialogue alternating with fast-moving quasi-recitative and more lyrical solos and ensembles (Beecham judged this section of the work "perfect in style and structure" [1]), whereas the second part is provided with a continuous musical setting although there are portions of the text which cry out for the speed and immediacy of speech. The quotation of two folk-tunes in the orchestral interludes was a perfectly acceptable device for creating a rural atmosphere; but to fit 'Lord Rendal' with new words and use it as a principal aria was more questionable. An even more self-conscious piece of quotation occurs in the overture, which is based largely on 'The March of the Women'; the use of a tune with such strong political overtones in such inappropriate surroundings must have seemed strangely incongruous to contemporary audiences. But, despite its inconsistencies and solecisms, the music is witty and apt and the piece comes off well on the stage. It was only moderately well-received when it was first given in 1916, but there were a number of very successful revivals in London and the provinces soon after the War, and it became one of its composer's most popular works.

Ethel Smyth's life altered considerably during the four years which preceded the Great War. She admitted (in 'Female Pipings in Eden') that before 1910 her attitude to the suffragettes had been one of "indifference tinged with distaste"; but at the comparatively late age of fifty-two she underwent a total conversion which altered

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[1] Thomas Beecham: 'A Mingled Chime' p 85

her whole outlook and style of life and had considerable influence upon her career as a composer. The works directly thrown up by her association with the Women's Social and Political Union were few in number and of slight importance, but the changes in the course of her musical career which were brought about as a result of this association were far from negligible. As has already been mentioned, for two years she allowed her suffragette activities to have first call upon her time and energy, a course of action which, although it did not preclude all musical activity, rendered impossible any sustained work at composition. It also caused the composer largely to retire from musical public life and temporarily to cease all agitation on behalf of performances of her works; the only major exception to this general trend was the concert of her own works which she gave at Queen's Hall on 1st April 1911 with the London Symphony Orchestra. This two-year interruption came at a crucial stage in her career. The success which had attended the performances of 'The Wreckers' in London in 1909 and 1910, combined with the increasing popularity of the chamber music songs, meant that in 1910 her reputation as a composer stood at its highest point so far, and the award of an honorary doctorate in music by the University of Durham in the same year set an official seal upon this increase in recognition and popular esteem. But by temporarily eschewing almost all musical activity, she threw away the advantages she had gained in winning recognition for her art, and, as became evident later, did permanent damage to her professional career and to her reputation.

Her espousal of the cause of women's suffrage doubtless won her some new friends and supporters amongst the ranks of the suffragettes and their allies, but in the wider field of the musical profession her extreme attitudes must often have counted

against possible performances of her works. As the actions of the suffragettes became increasingly violent, so public disapproval of the movement hardened. It has already been pointed out that a number of her contemporaries regarded her as something of a crank, and by her adoption of a violent and even lawless way of life she did little to counter this unfortunate impression. Even after the end of the two-year close association with the leaders of the movement, Ethel Smyth remained an enthusiastic and vociferous supporter of suffragette ideals and as such encountered a share of the abuse and opposition which was meted out to the suffragettes by their more hostile opponents. Throughout her life she maintained that the advancement of her career was being thwarted by male obstructionism, but she consistently overestimated both the extent and the influence of this form of opposition; it was only during the immediate pre-War years, the period of her close involvement with the feminist cause, that it had anything like the important influence upon her career that she imagined it to have. At this stage more than at any other time in her career, accurate objective appraisal of her achievements and stature in the musical world is rendered difficult both by her fitful application to musical pursuits and by the prejudice and hostility aroused by her extra-musical activities.

Musical composition must rank as Ethel Smyth's most important single activity, despite the erratic nature of her work in this field and the uneven quality of what she produced. The same cannot be said of Arthur Somervell, for while he maintained a much more steady and regular output of compositions, it was for his work in musical education that he was best known and for which he was eventually to receive a knighthood in 1929. (This

work, although unglamorous, was by no means dull; his tireless advocacy of the use of national songs as the basic diet for school music-making, itself a novel and controversial idea, involved him in altercations both with other educationalists and with the official folk-song movement headed by Cecil Sharp.) The period of his greatest influence came after 1920, the year in which he was appointed Principal Inspector of Music for the Board of Education, but during the previous two decades he lost no opportunity in pressing for the adoption of his ideas; his editorship of a number of widely-used anthologies of folk-songs and traditional songs designed especially for use in schools was but one example of his activity in this field.

As a composer Somervell pursued something of a dual course. Throughout his career he produced educational works of the highest quality, part-songs, unison songs, instrumental music and miniature dramatic works, all of limited technical scope but of total integrity and impeccable workmanship. An extension of this vein of gebrauchsmusik is to be found in the small-scale oratorio 'The Passion of Christ', published in 1914, a laudable attempt to provide an alternative to the ubiquitous 'Crucifixion' of Stainer, technically no more demanding but written in a purer, stronger style. The resulting work, a succession of narrative recitative and arioso, reflective choruses, short arias and hymns, is modest in every parameter but soundly constructed and effective in performance.

Aside from this music written especially for students and amateurs, Somervell continued to produce more substantial works written to take their place in the musical world at large. Reference has already been made to his highly conservative musical language. This in no way altered as he grew older; he continued to compose in exactly the same style as that which he had evolved at the outset of his career in the early 1890s, but what did change

were the moulds into which he chose to cast his music. Before the middle of the Edwardian decade the majority of his works, including those that were most widely acclaimed, were for chorus and orchestra or for solo voice and piano, but after 1907, the year in which he produced his setting of Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality' for chorus and orchestra and his Browning cycle 'James Lee's Wife', he largely abandoned these two genres, turning instead to large-scale instrumental forms. The wisdom of this change of direction was questionable. A retrospective style is no severe handicap to the success of a choral work; amateur singers are often delighted to encounter a new piece which is in a totally familiar idiom. It is altogether more unusual to find a successful major orchestral work employing a markedly reactionary idiom; yet Somervell produced several compositions of this type in the pre-war years.

The most considerable was the 'Thalassa' symphony, dated "August/September 1912" and first performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under Nikisch at Queen's Hall in February 1913. The work was not unfavourably received; as H C Colles put it "It was recognised as a sincere and undeniably beautiful piece of writing in a style which would have been perfectly familiar to audiences of 1850 or thereabout." [1] This concert also brought forward the 'Normandy' variations for piano and orchestra, with Donald Tovey as soloist, and other large-scale works dating from this period include a 'Concertstück' for violin and orchestra, a piano concerto and a clarinet quintet. These last two compositions were not performed until after the War and remained unpublished, but the 'Concertstück' and the variations, together with the symphony, were published and

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[1] Grove's Dictionary, Third Edition (1927) Vol IV p 806

and were performed on a number of occasions: for instance, Dan Godfrey gave 'Thalassa' three times in Bournemouth between 1914 and 1923, and Jelly d'Arányi, dedicatee of the 'Concertstück', gave the première of the work in Aachen in 1913, then introduced it to London in the following year. The 'Concertstück' may be taken as typical of these works. It is a powerful single movement presenting themes that are pleasing without being especially memorable clothed in harmonies which would not have given Mendelssohn a moment's hesitation and cast in a very orthodox sonata form complete with lyrical second subject neatly recapitulated in the tonic major key. From these well-tried musical conventions, Somervell forged a remarkably distinctive style, for, despite using their tools, he in no sense imitated the language of the older composers; honesty and integrity shine through every bar that he wrote, qualities which breathe life into what otherwise would be bloodless, hollow effusions. Audiences appear to have enjoyed these works, doubtless finding their "frank simplicity of design, beauty of melody, and ... complete freedom from affectation of any kind" [1] something of a relief after the complexities and contrivances of much modern orchestral music. The critics on the whole were less enthusiastic, scarcely veiling their contempt for such an outdated idiom.

Somervell shared a number of characteristics (both musical and personal) with his mentor and idol, Hubert Parry; not the least of these was an inability to set aside sufficient time for composition in a crowded life. Because of the nature of their respective gifts, this was more to be deplored in Parry's case than in Somervell's; but the latter's urge to compose was strong and his gifts such that he was able to produce a small amount of work of the highest quality, nothwithstanding his use of such a restricted stylistic palette.

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[1] 'Royal College of Music Magazine', Vol IX No 2 (1913), p 62

It is possible that had composition been his chief activity he might have evolved a less conservative manner. As it was, his unquestioning acceptance of traditional practice became increasingly remarkable as public taste began to embrace the music of younger more progressive composers. By the early Georgian period, Somervell's music did not seem so irredeemably anachronistic as to prevent audiences from deriving considerable pleasure from occasional performances; but its extreme conventionality was cause for comment and was largely responsible for robbing his large-scale works of a place in the regular repertoire.

Towards the end of the Edwardian decade, at the same time as Somervell was largely abandoning the composition of choral music, so this was coming to be the particular musical province associated with Henry Walford Davies. Up until the outbreak of the Great War he continued to produce substantial quantities of orchestral, instrumental and vocal music, but it was his works for soloists, chorus and orchestra which were most frequently performed, most enthusiastically received and which showed his talents as a composer to their best advantage.

None of his later works (barring the ubiquitous 'Solemn Melody') equalled the popularity of 'Everyman', of which the publishers could claim in all honesty that it was "performed by all the leading choral societies". But the frequency with which it was performed in the half-decade following its production in 1904 proved to be a mixed blessing to the composer's reputation, for it was not a work which could stand frequent repetition and still appear fresh and strong. H C Colles, Walford Davies' highly sympathetic biographer, admits that "when it was given at the Norwich Festival of 1911, ... people were evidently beginning to weary of it".[1]

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[1] H C Colles: 'Walford Davies' (1942) p 83

None of the festival choral works which followed 'Everyman' had a similar success, but the 'Song of St Francis', written for Birmingham in 1912, came nearest to equalling it. It was the composer's last essay in the grand manner, being in eight movements, scored for four soloists, chorus and orchestra, and written in a rich and intricate style. The diversity of the "certain praises of the Lord" is contained by the use of a constantly-evolving musical idea which receives its final and fullest treatment at the opening of the last movement, and also by the appearance of the same Latin tag at either end of all the movements, a device which verbally and musically eases the link between one "praise" and the next. More emphasis is placed on contrapuntal manipulation and less on rich chromatic harmony than in earlier works, a practice which accords better with the natural bent of Walford Davies' mind.

For the previous year's Worcester Festival he had written a short cantata for tenor, chorus and orchestra entitled 'Five Sayings of Jesus'. Stylistically this work marks a quite new departure, the modesty of its physical dimensions being matched by a marked simplicity, almost austerity, of texture. Early critics and audiences mistook the simplicity for sketchiness, imagining that the busy composer had not had time to elaborate his ideas on a broader scale. But the evidence supplied by hindsight would suggest that this was the true voice of the composer speaking, and that all the earlier grandeur and elaborateness had been something of a pose. Certainly after the composition of the 'Song of St Francis', it was the new simpler style which he adopted for his choral works, a style perfectly matched to the short, straightforward texts which he chose. Thus the 'Five Sayings' proved to be a quiet landmark, laying the foundations of the manner which he was to adopt more and

more during and after the War. Unfortunately for his immediate reputation, this new style did little to further his popularity; set against the attractive vigour and richness of the earlier choral works it must have seemed disappointing, even drab.

Walford Davies had never been totally happy when writing in the larger abstract instrumental forms. The full list of his compositions makes an interesting comparison with the official catalogue of performed and published works which appears in Colles' biography; the former contains a large amount of orchestral and instrumental music which does not appear in the latter at all - an early symphony, two overtures, a set of orchestral variations, three string quartets, three piano quartets and a piano trio. These works all belong to the old century, but there are also two large orchestral works which were written later. The four-movement 'Festival Overture' was composed for the 1910 Lincoln Festival, given twice at the Queen's Hall Proms a few months later and included in the same orchestra's winter series later the same year. It met with a generally favourable reception on all these occasions, the 'Musical Times', after hinting at its undue length, calling it a "powerful and scholarly composition". Less enthusiastic was the reception accorded the Symphony in G, composed in the following year, announced for performance under Nikisch in May but in fact not produced until the following November when Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra gave the work its only known performance. According to Colles, it suffered from the laborious treatment of very simple material, and of this work and the Festival Overture he simply says that they "both ... dropped dead".[1]

Much more successful and better received were the slighter orchestral works, the 'Parthenia' suite of 1911, the 'Wordsworth'

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[1] ibid p 91

suite of the following year and the 'Conversations' for piano and orchestra of 1914. These works, unencumbered by the elaborate development of the themes which Walford Davies' symphonic style demanded, were all the finer for aiming less high but realising their aims with conspicuous success. The 'Conversations' were singled out by Henry Wood as one of the two most outstanding novelties produced by the Queen's Hall Orchestra during 1914; the success of the première was partly due to the composer's highly idiosyncratic performance of the solo part, but the work was taken up by other pianists and conductors, as were the two orchestral suites. The small-scale orchestral pieces gave vent to Walford Davies' vein of slightly facile musical banter, a style of writing which delighted contemporary audiences but which very quickly became dated and robbed the works of any more than a passing popularity.

At all stages of his career, Walford Davies produced vocal and choral miniatures. For much of his life he was active as a church musician, and this involvement was responsible for his composing a great many hymns, carols, motets and anthems; but there were also secular part-songs (with and without accompaniment), children's songs and a large number of solo songs. In much of this music, to quote Sir Jack Westrup, "the palpable sincerity and musicianship do not rise to anything urgent"[1]. But the pre-war period yielded some small-scale gems including the tiny sacred part-song 'God be in my Head', the vigorous 'Love is a Torment' and its serene counterpart 'Love's Tranquility', both of which have independent piano accompaniments. 'These Sweeter far than Lilies are', an unaccompanied motet of slightly larger dimensions, was written for the 1914 Morecambe Competitive Festival and was designed to test the abilities of the crack northern choirs, with its elaborate texture,

[1] Ernest Walker: A History of Music in England 3rd edition (1951) p 343

chromatic harmonies and constantly shifting metre. A sympathetic text could always produce a felicitous setting from one who thought so naturally in terms of a choir; his habit of addressing orchestral string players as "trebles, altos, tenors and basses" was no mere affectation.

The majority of the composers encountered so far in this survey did not make composition their only activity; most combined it with work in other areas of musical endeavour, and at least one temporarily turned aside from it to pursue a distinctly unmusical course of action. In the pre-War years Walford Davies proved no exception to this general trend. A leading article on him which appeared in the 'Musical Times' for June 1908 discussed the dual nature of his career both as a composer and as a church musician, a description which would still have been applicable in 1914. During and after the War, new spheres of activity in the fields of education and administration presented themselves to him, and in overall importance they soon eclipsed his creative work; but, to paraphrase a reviewer of his setting of Milton's 'Ode on Time', in the years before the Great War "everything that came from the pen of the composer of 'Everyman' had claims upon the attention of musicians"[1].

Granville Bantock was another composer who continued to be best known for his choral music during the early Georgian years: the only large-scale orchestral works to come from his pen at this time were revisions of two earlier pieces. 'Dante and Beatrice', a substantial reworking of the tone poem 'Dante' of 1901, was first given by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under the composer's baton at the London Festival of May 1911. (This was the work which created a much more favourable impression with the audience than did Elgar's Second Symphony, the first performance of which took place at the

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[1] 'Musical Times': Vol L (1909), p 172

same concert.) Similarly 'Fifine at the Fair', first performed and published in 1902, was later subjected to sufficiently radical revision to warrant its announcement as a new work at the 1912 Birmingham Festival; and after its introduction to London the following March at one of Balfour Gardiner's orchestral concerts, it started on its modestly successful international career in the wake of the more popular 'Pierrot of the Minute'. These two orchestral poems show different methods of organisation, for 'Fifine at the Fair' illustrates a detailed narrative programme (based on a poem by Browning) while 'Dante and Beatrice' is concerned more with the interplay of character and its musical representation. The latter is more successful as a purely musical argument, the former is the more brilliant and vivid, and both works give ample evidence of the composer's imaginative and resourceful handling of the orchestra.

The most striking of Bantock's early Georgian works were for unaccompanied chorus - not part-songs, but what he described in two cases as "choral symphonies". 'Atalanta in Calydon' and 'The Vanity of Vanities', two of the composer's most original works, were the outcome of his admiration for the abilities of the great Northern choirs whom he had encountered at competitive festivals and, significantly, each is dedicated to the chorus master and members of a choir of this type: the former to R H Wilson and the Hallé Choir, the latter to Harry Evans and the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union. The works were first performed by their dedicatees, 'Atalanta' in January 1912 under the composer, 'The Vanity of Vanities' in February 1914.

The former work was the more ambitious (Ernest Newman claimed that it "set English choirs the stiffest task they have ever had

given them"[1]) but the less successful. It consists of a setting of four of Swinburne's odes, the first for twelve-part male chorus, the third for a similarly-proportioned female choir, and the remaining two for mixed voices in five independent groups, each of three, four or six parts, forming a texture of twenty separate vocal strands. These huge forces are employed not so much to increase the contrapuntal possibilities open to the composer but to enable him to 'orchestrate' for voices: quite simple musical material is presented in a highly elaborate way, with frequent doubling of voices at the same pitch on leading themes and enormously intricate dynamic markings to ensure correct balance. In this matter of the manipulation and presentation of the music, Bantock shows considerable ingenuity and assurance in territory which had never previously been explored. But what of the musical material itself? Its simplicity in comparison with the complexity of its presentation has been criticised; it is indeed surprising to glance from the maze of individual vocal strands down to the simple reductio at the foot of the page, but many a complex orchestral score is similarly straightforward when stripped of all doublings. The fatal weakness of the work is its shapelessness.

Sydney Grew, the work's first analyst, took pains to underline the large-scale structures of the work, the following of the standard four-movement symphonic plan, the use of sonata form in the first movement and ternary form in the second etc. But none of this is apparent to the listener who is faced with an endless succession of attractive but unrelated details. Bantock is too sensitive to each nuance of the text; every slight change of mood is reflected in the musical setting, giving a very fragmented and

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[1] quoted in 'The Mirror of Music' (1947) p 135

uneasy effect. Such sensitivity to words makes for magnificent part-songs but is fatal to a work on this scale; 'Atalanta' is nothing more than a hugely inflated part-song and to call it a 'choral symphony' is to raise expectations which are totally unfulfilled.

The problem of over-inflation of modestly-scaled material is less acutely felt in 'The Vanity of Vanities', in which everything is of more manageable dimensions. The work is in seven detached movements, none lasting more than seven minutes, and requires more modest forces, being laid out for a single twelve part choir throughout. Vocalisation is used in a number of places and provides welcome variety, as does the use of a richer harmonic palette. As in the earlier work, there is a certain restlessness of mood and pace about the music, but in this instance it accords more closely with the nature of the text and is less obtrusive. In every way the later work marks an improvement over 'Atlanta'; an early reviewer noted that "Profiting by experience (Professor Bantock) has greatly improved his plan ... it was evident that twelve singable vocal parts provide amply sufficient variety of tone colour." [1] 'The Vanity of Vanities' was obviously a more approachable work than its predecessor and, but for the outbreak of the War and the subsequent decline in choral activity, seemed likely to be taken up by many of the larger choral societies.

A pendant to these two works is provided by a third extended composition for unaccompanied chorus, 'A Pageant of Human Life', eight poems by Sir Thomas More set as a suite for male, female and children's voices. In style, layout and dimensions it is much more modest than either of its two predecessors, the longest movement containing no more than fifty bars and the full eight voices coming

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[1] ibid

together only in the final section. Within these comparatively modest confines Bantock achieves great variety of texture and tone following the changing moods of the text, matching particularly aptly the simple sober dignity of More's verse. Although published in 1914 this was one of those works whose first performance was delayed by the outbreak of the War.

The same fate befell another major work, one which drew together several strands of Bantock's activity as a composer. 'The Great God Pan', described as a 'choral ballet', is a large-scale work for soloists, chorus and orchestra written to a dramatic libretto by the composer's wife. The first section, 'Pan in Arcady', due to have been given at the Sheffield Festival in November 1914, was first performed in December 1919 by the Glasgow Choral Union; the second part, 'The Festival of Pan', was never published or performed and was later transformed in the orchestral 'Pagan Symphony' of 1927/28.

Helen Bantock's libretto is very stagy; the verse itself subsists largely upon the platitudes of conventional romantic poetry and the stage directions abound with "mad ecstasy" and "demonic frenzy". The music, however, is considerably more original; there are passages of extreme chromaticism and also a very much freer use of discord than the composer had employed previously. A large and extremely able choir is called for; the full chorus is never in fewer than six parts and the work opens with a lengthy unaccompanied choral prelude in twelve parts quite as elaborate and taxing as anything in 'The Vanity of Vanities'. The instrumentation is equally lavish, the score giving free rein to Bantock's love for, and skilled manipulation of, brilliant and varied effects.

If not as original in conception as the two unaccompanied choral symphonies, stylistically 'The Great God Pan' is without

question in advance of any of the composer's previous works. It cannot be said to mark any major evolution, the originality still lying more in the manner than the matter of the music, but there is clear evidence that Bantock was not averse to modest experimentation, especially in the harmonic aspect of his work. Edward Dent, reviewing the first performance for 'The Athaneum', felt it necessary to identify the various composers whose works he considered to have had a strong influence upon the musical language of 'Pan in Arcady' (a very easy exercise to indulge in when dealing with so eclectic a composer as Bantock), claiming that its more adventurous aspects were derived from the repertoire of the Russian ballet; but the composer's friend and biographer H O Anderton rushed to his defence [1], pointing out that the work had been completed before Diaghilev's company paid their first visit to England. (A further example of fortuitous similarity to modern Russian music is encountered in the fairground scenes of both 'Fifine at the Fair' and 'Petrouchka', Bantock having completed his work before he could have had an opportunity of hearing the Stravinsky piece.) By the time of Dent's review (the very end of 1919), a strong flavour of the Russian ballet was to be heard in much contemporary English music, but even if his claim that Diaghilev's repertoire had influenced Bantock in the composition of 'The Great God Pan' were true, it would have shown on Bantock's part a responsive sensitivity to new stimulus remarkable among the composers of the middle generation before the Great War. Derivative or original, 'Pan in Arcady' is one of the most interesting and accomplished works of a fruitful period in the composer's career.

Doubtless it was Bantock's Scottish ancestry that gave him such enthusiasm for the folksongs of Scotland; from 1909 (the date

[1] 'Musical Times' Vol LXI (1920), pp 167 - 170

of the publication of Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser's first collection of 'Songs of the Hebrides') onwards he made a great number of arrangements of these melodies for various vocal and instrumental combinations. The 'Raasay Lament', a setting of massive simplicity for four-part choir, and 'The Death Croon', a more elaborate arrangement in which five voices vocalise a sonorous wrap of chromatic harmony around a contralto solo, both date from the immediate pre-War years; each combines sensitive treatment of a simple melody with imaginative and effective choral writing.

Bantock also used Scottish folksong as the melodic raw material for works on a larger scale, a practice which eventually led to the composition of the 'Hebridean Symphony' in 1915 and the opera 'The Seal Woman' in 1924. A good early example of this type of composition is the 'Scenes from the Scottish Highlands' for string orchestra, first performed in Sheffield in November 1913. No attempt is made in this work to develop or elaborate the melodies; the composer's skill is shown rather in the imaginative and atmospheric settings in which they are placed. The second movement, 'Dirge: The Isle of Mull', is a most beautifully spacious and sonorous piece of string writing, while the final 'Reel', with its driving rhythm and constantly varying accompaniment, has much the same feel about it as Grainger's 'Mock Morris'. A similar contrast of Celtic moods is to be found in the contemporary 'Celtic Poem' for cello and piano or orchestra, and the 'Scottish Rhapsody' for orchestra alone, a work which presents several compatible Gaelic tunes in each of its three movements.

Scottish folksong was not Bantock's only musical enthusiasm in the years before the Great War. At about this time he began to become absorbed in old English music, an interest which bore fruit in his editorship of volumes of keyboard music by Byrd,

Gibbons, Bull and Farnaby published in 1912, and the publication in 1914 of seven pieces by Farnaby arranged for strings and piano. There was also a passing interest in music reflecting socialist ideals; at Keir Hardie's suggestion a 'Song of Liberty' for voices and orchestra and a 'Festival March' for brass band (a work remarkable for the slenderness of its themes and the amplitude of its episodes) were written for the Labour Party's coming-of-age celebrations held in Bradford in April 1914. Former enthusiasms were not forgotten: the fascination for the East was never to be denied for long, as the 'Choral Suite from the Chinese' for male voices of 1914 shows, and continued concern with the competitive choral singing movement was the stimulus for the composition of some magnificent part-songs.

Bantock was a figure of the first importance in Georgian musical life. His vigorous and unconventional direction of the Midland Institute and the Faculty of Music in Birmingham University aroused great interest, attracting many students of progressive inclination to the Midlands away from the more conservative schools of music in London, although the haphazard and indisciplined methods of study which prevailed there robbed his well-intentioned methods of any particularly fruitful results. (Cecil Gray, who studied under Bantock for a year from September 1914, went so far as to describe the Midland Institute as being "in a state of complete anarchy"[1].) He was known to Midlanders as the conductor of several leading amateur orchestras and choirs and further afield as a conductor of his own and others' works. His contemporaries among the British composers knew him as one of the moving spirits behind the Musical League although, through no fault of his own, this concern had proved to be very short-lived and expired before

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[1] Cecil Gray: 'Musical Chairs' (1948) p 97

it had had time to make any lasting mark. But it was mainly by his compositions that he had won his measure of repute and esteem; as J C Hadden pointed out in his book of musical character-sketches published in 1913, "Mr Bantock is really first and last a composer"[1].

Before the Great War it was common practice to couple Bantock's name with that of Elgar as being the leading English composers, a view which obtained both at home and abroad. Of the two, Bantock was reckoned as being the more original if the lesser in stature, and, as Elgar's popularity decreased after the end of the Edwardian decade, so enthusiasm for Bantock's music grew. He was of genuinely progressive inclinations, and his choral music in particular was felt to be opening up new territory both in its technical aspects and in the sources from which it drew its inspiration. The sense of novelty in his orchestral music rested largely upon his use of exotic and unusual programmes as _stimuli_; in an age which invariably looked for the story behind the music, this lent an air of innovation to his work and drew attention away from the conventional grammar and syntax of his musical language. A novel manner of dealing with not unfamiliar matter sums up much of his musical activity and accounts for some of his popularity at a time when artistic experiment was in the air. Gerald Cumberland spoke for a large proportion of musical opinion when he wrote soon after the outbreak of the Great War: "At the present moment there are only two names that are of vital importance in British creative music - Sir Edward Elgar and Granville Bantock"[2].

Without in any way belittling Bantock's gifts and abilities, it would not be unfair to say that his attainment of a position of eminence in the early Georgian musical world was helped by circum-

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1 _Modern Musicians_ (1913) p 45

2 '_Set Down in Malice_' (1920) p 246

stance. The background from which he sprang, the temperament with which he was endowed and the way in which his life unfolded were all helpful in the furtherance of his career as a composer. Havergal Brian, a musician with whom Bantock was closely connected at this time, was equally gifted as a composer (and perhaps more gifted as a musical innovator), yet was frustrated in the satisfactory progress of his career by serious handicaps of environment, character and circumstance. Having enjoyed a meteoric but well-earned rise to fame in the latter half of the Edwardian decade, he quite failed to consolidate this position in the ensuing years; by the outbreak of the Great War his career had markedly regressed.

Robinson's allowance to Brian of £500 per year began at the end of 1910 and Brian took to prosperity quickly and easily; he lost no time in surrounding himself with the trappings of a life of moneyed ease. His conspicuous gifts had already begun to set him apart from his erstwhile friends amongst the semi-professional musicians working in the Potteries and his newfound affluence accelerated this trend. It also raised something of a barrier between himself and other composers; the only musician (and at one time practically the only person) with whom he remained on intimate terms was Granville Bantock. Brian and his wife were an ill-matched couple and under the strain of adjustment to their new way of life their relationship began to disintegrate, a turn of events which caused Brian to start drinking heavily. The pursuits and pastimes of a moneyed man crowded out many musical activities, and unhappy domestic and social circumstances filled Brian with distress and resentment. Against such a background, it is scarcely surprising that he should have produced only a small amount of creative work.

A symphonic poem 'In Memoriam' (originally called 'Homage to a Hero') was completed in 1911. Brian was remarkably reticent

about this work, scarcely mentioning it in his correspondence and never bringing it to the notice of the conductors whom he was continually canvassing for performances of his music. It was given twice by the Scottish Orchestra under Landon Ronald in Edinburgh and Glasgow at Christmastime in 1921, but had to wait until 1974 for a third performance. The programme note for the première described it thus: "It mourns without whining, it grieves ... bitterly, but grimly and without tears ... The orchestration throughout is that of one who knows his materials and how to use them to the best advantage."[1] It would seem from this description that the work might have stood a good chance of a sympathetic reception during the Great War; but during the War years, Brian's circumstances were such that there was little opportunity for him to agitate on behalf of performances of his own music, and the affairs of his publishers (Breitkopf and Härtel) were in a state of considerable disarray. Add to this the fact that the composer virtually disowned the work soon after its completion, and the neglect that it suffered is largely explained.

Different in almost every way was its companion piece, a comedy overture entitled 'Dr Merryheart'. This work, more a set of variations with the structure and programme of a large-scale symphonic poem than a true overture, was completed shortly after 'In Memoriam'. One feels that its mood and subject matter (the fantastic and farcical adventures of an eccentric astronomer) were far more congenial to the composer than those of the earlier work. Certainly Brian showed great pride in 'Dr Merryheart': nine years after its completion he still considered it one of his two best works, and he continually pressed its claims upon any conductor who expressed an interest in his music. But, in spite of the composer's

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[1] quoted by Reginald Nettel in Ordeal by Music (1945) p 96

well-founded enthusiasm, the work had little more success in the concert hall than did 'In Memoriam'. It was first given in Birmingham on 3rd January 1913 under Julius Harrison at the second (and last) festival organised by the Musical League and appeared at a Queen's Hall Prom in the following October. It then seems to have remained unplayed for more than twenty years, the next performance that can be traced being in January 1934 in a concert broadcast from Bournemouth. The work made a considerable impression at its first two performances, but of the two readings Brian was far more enthusiastic about Harrison's than Wood's. Dan Godfrey was later to find that "Merryheart only revealed himself after an hour's rehearsal" [1]; if this were true then no wonder that the Birmingham performance, carefully prepared under the auspices of the Musical League and Incorporated Society of Musicians, realised the composer's intentions more fully than did the later performance, occurring as it did towards the end of a hectic and exhausting programme of Queen's Hall Proms. Ample rehearsal time would be required merely to penetrate something of the denseness of the score, for not only is the work heavily scored but it is packed with incident, some straightforwardly narrative, some rather cleverly humorous. At least one early reviewer complained of the superabundance of narrative detail and claimed to be unable to tie up the unfolding scenes of the story with their musical representation.

Although these two works were the only large-scale compositions which Brian completed during the four years of Robinson's full patronage, other projects were undertaken: he made the revision of the 'Fantastic Symphony', distilling it into the two independent movements 'Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme' and

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[1] quoted by Reginald Nettel op cit p 93

'Festal Dance', and also wrote a first draft of a setting of Heine's 'Pilgrimage to Kevlaar', a work which was begun in 1912 and petered out shortly before the Great War and was subsequently lost. All we know of this composition is from Brian's own description: "It is going to be a great thing with plenty of spunk in it. I'm using a very large orchestra so that it can only be performed on special occasions ..."[1], words which did not appear reckless in the expansive atmosphere of pre-War music making.

There are also a handful of songs and part-songs dating from this time. A setting of Longfellow's 'Daybreak' was used as the principal test-piece at the Midland Musical Festival in 1912, and in the previous year three Herrick settings for female voices and orchestra were written, two of which had to wait until 1976 for performance. Of the solo songs, one of the most striking was 'The Mad Maid's Song', again to words by Herrick, in which the obsessively oscillating vocal line and the turbulent, distracted accompaniment are a fine realisation of the poet's picture of innocent derangement. Further contemporary Herrick settings included "Why dost thou wound and break my heart?" and "A Night Piece", another essay in what Joseph Holbrooke called a "hard (sans emotion) ... feeling"[2]. Brian's songs never achieved wide popularity, but several of them found a lasting place in the repertoires of a number of distinguished singers; Lia Rosa frequently sang 'The Mad Maid's Song' at her recitals right up to the Second World War.

By the end of 1913 the breakdown of Brian's social and domestic life was very nearly complete. His tactless comments in the press about the standards of local performances and the quality of works by other composers in the area had led to his being ostracised by

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[1] quoted by Kenneth Easthaugh in Havergal Brian (1970) p 103

[2] in Contemporary British Composers (1925) p 124

the musical community in and around Stoke. His marriage had foundered completely and his family had broken up. Robinson, although he made no secret of his disappointment at the meagreness of Brian's recent musical output, still continued the financial support; but when news reached him of the birth of a child (of which Brian admitted to being the father) to an ex-servant of the Brian household, he lost patience and cut off the allowance completely. (After several months of persistent acrimonious correspondence, matters resolved themselves into Robinson paying Brian's estranged wife £16 per month and allowing the composer himself £6 per month, an arrangement which continued until Robinson's death in 1923.) In the wake of this sudden reversal of his material fortunes, Brian abandoned the wreck of his home in Stoke and fled to London.

Bantock had advised Brian to take this step with the encouraging assurance that there were friends in London who would help and support him; accordingly Brian had high hopes of obtaining work either as a critic or else in a music publishing house. But his numberless appeals to everyone concerned with music with whom he could claim even the remotest acquaintance proved to be entirely fruitless, as did his distribution of copies of his work to all the leading critics, conductors and concert promoters. The thriving world of early Georgian musical life had no place for him, even at the humblest level. By June 1914 he was answering advertisements for clerks and gardeners, but even here was totally without success.

Although greatly disheartened by not being able to find any regular employment and by the complete lack of response on the part of the London musical world, Brian continued to compose and even managed to earn a small amount of money composing unison and

two-part songs which he sold to publishers for a few guineas apiece. But even this meagre source of income soon dried up, as before long the publishers had as many of his works of this type as they could cope with for some considerable time. He also wrote a number of modestly-proportioned works which he hoped would find performance easily and thus keep his name alive in musical circles, works such as the 'English Rhapsody' for orchestra, a military march for brass band entitled 'Red May', and a children's operetta commissioned by Augener's; but none of these works achieved the desired performances and all were subsequently lost or destroyed. Once he realised that these small-scale pieces were of no use to his purse or his reputation, he vowed that he would write no more pot-boiling "trifles" but work only at the substantial compositions which he felt befitted the nature of his musical gifts. For the time being, however, his disturbed emotional state rendered him quite incapable of any sustained creative work.

Although it was a considerable relief to him to have turned his back on the ruins of his former life in Stoke, the months between December 1913 and August 1914 were a very difficult period for Brian, living from hand to mouth in a hostile environment. Almost the only comfort which London brought him was the opportunity of frequent attendance at concerts of new and exciting music which he found greatly to his taste; he wrote in 1919: " ... my greatest moments were during that wonderful season of 1914 ..." [1], singling out 'Der Rosenkavalier', 'Boris Godunov', 'Le Rossignol' and Charpentier's 'Louise' as having made a particularly strong impression upon him. This music can have had little or no effect upon the songs and part-songs which are his only surviving works from this period; what we know from his own admission is that

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[1] quoted by Kenneth Easthaugh op cit p 147

musical impressions from this time were stored up and had their influence upon later works, particularly the opera 'The Tigers' of 1917 - 1920. Had circumstances been different, his striking and innovative music might well have been enthusiastically received in the progressive artistic climate of the pre-War years; but as it was, he had little to offer the musical world at this time, and the musical world gave little back to him other than the exciting stimulus of other men's music. The outbreak of the Great War could not dislocate his career any further; in fact it provided a convenient solution to some of his personal problems and by 25th August 1914 he had enlisted as a private in the Honourable Artillery Company.

Despite living within forty miles of one another for six years and both being close friends of Granville Bantock, Havergal Brian and Rutland Boughton seem to have had very little to do with one another. After Boughton left Birmingham in 1911, the development of their respective careers was vastly different and they were led into widely separated musical circles, but there is one common factor which provides a circumstantial link between the two men in the early Georgian period; both left their wives and set up new homes with younger women, thereby setting up a chain of reactions which resulted in considerable setbacks to their careers. In Brian's case, this was merely another link in a chain of disruptive events, but for Boughton it temporarily frustrated a long-cherished ambition which was on the point of coming to fruition.

It was public condemnation of Boughton's open liaison with Christina Walshe which caused the couple to leave Birmingham early in 1911. After two months in Germany they settled in London obtaining work (largely through the intervention of Bernard Shaw) as

critics for several daily newspapers. Shortly after this Boughton obtained employment as amanuensis to a wealthy amateur composer, being generously paid for the performance of very light duties. In idyllic rural surroundings and with ample free time at his disposal Boughton was able to turn once again to teaching, lecturing and serious composition.

After the success of his choral works in 1909, he did not choose to consolidate his position by composing more works of this type. In the Spring of 1911 he did write two further works for chorus and orchestra, but neither could be said to follow up his earlier success for neither was at all suited to festival or city choirs. The 'Song of Liberty' (with a text by Mrs Bantock) and the 'Choral Songs of England', settings of verses by John Drinkwater, are straightforward and concise, with sturdy rhythms, attractive melodies and clear textures. This was a time when the composer was planning the foundation of a community dedicated to farming and artistic activity (with regular performances of his Arthurian operas as its ultimate artistic aim), and these two choral works would have ideally suited the sort of choir which such an enterprise might have thrown up: a group of enthusiastic but musically uneducated people of socialist persuasion. But nothing came of this plan, and the new choral compositions did not come into their own until after the Great War when they were published and performed under the banner of 'The League of the Arts'.

Boughton was a firm believer in the healthy influence of folk-music upon a composer; "Any school of music must be national before it can be universal" he wrote in an article[1] published in 1910. His own involvement with folk-music, begun in 1905 with the first set of choral variations, continued right up to the Great War,

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[1] 'English Folk-song and English music': Musical Times, Vol LI (1910) p 428

although he never chose to identify himself with the activities of Cecil Sharp and the official folk-song movement. In 1910 he had published two further choral folk-song arrangements, 'Early One Morning' and 'Bronwen', more straightforward than the earlier variations but equally imaginative and felicitous, and in July 1912 he wrote 'Three Folk Song Dances' for strings, little pieces which, by leaving the melodic material intact and not varying it in any way, never achieve the interest and appeal which enlivens the choral folk-songs.

A score each of solo songs and partsongs belong to the early Georgian years, all written with the expert hand of a gifted singer and choir-trainer. Few of the partsongs are in the least elaborate, but a number are highly distinctive in a quiet way, as for instance 'Holy Thursday', a miniature for two voices and piano which manages to be genuinely affecting without being in the least sentimental. The five partsongs composed in 1914 and published as opus 39 display a great variety of mood and treatment ranging from the ethereal quality of 'Early Morn' to the robust humour of 'Little Billee', which is set as a hornpipe shanty for male voices. 'Pan', described as a "choral dance", is the most extended number in the set, much of it consisting of sprightly wordless patterning which suddenly grows ecstatic as the sopranos soar up to high B; the harmony is modal with only a few chromatic touches and the texture clear and very varied.

Boughton's solo songs are less consistently interesting. Poems appealed to him by their meaning rather than by their musical suggestiveness and his treatment of them underlines general moods at the expense of the poet's felicities of nuance and varied rhythm. Even at this stage in his career when he was evolving a strikingly personal idiom in other genres, in his songs he did not always escape the strong influence of other composers; as Michael Hurd

points out [1], Boughton's knowledge of and admiration for the songs of Schumann is very evident in the 'Songs of Womanhood', settings of poems by Christina Walshe composed in 1911 and published in the following year. Neither do his songs always rise above the trivial; both the 'Songs of Childhood' of 1912 and the two Drinkwater settings of the following year amount to very little considering the nature of Boughton's gifts. There are however a few first rate songs dating from the early Georgian period: 'My Grief' stands out from the remaining 'Five Celtic Songs' as does the single song 'Immanence' of 1914 with its static vocal line and meandering chromatic ostinato.

The work which overshadows all else in Boughton's output in the years before the Great War was another music-drama, a setting of Fiona Macleod's celtic play 'The Immortal Hour', composed in 1912 and 1913 and first performed in its entirety at the first Glastonbury Festival held in August 1914. The work was very well received in the sheltered surroundings of Glastonbury where the audiences were made up largely of men and women sympathetic to Boughton's aims and ideals; but there was a similarly favourable response when it was given in Bournemouth the following January, and over the next seven years it won a great many enthusiastic admirers as it made a triumphal progress through the Midlands and the West Country. When it eventually reached London in 1922 it ran for longer than any other serious English opera up to that time.

It is by his music-dramas that Boughton's reputation as a composer must stand or fall, and 'The Immortal Hour' is unquestionably one of his most important works. At the time of its composition it was strikingly original, both in its subject matter and its musical method; the only opera with which early critics felt they

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[1] ine Immortal Hour (1962) p 132

could make even a superficial comparison confidently was Debussy's 'Pelléas et Mélisande'. By this stage in his career Boughton had outgrown his period of unquestioning allegiance to Wagner's operatic methods; he still used representative themes but in a novel and relaxed manner. The harmony of 'The Immortal Hour' is richly chromatic but has a transparcney and sprightliness which is largely the result of the pentatonic nature of much of the melodic material which in its turn gives the vocal lines the feeling of expanded and extended folk songs; the style is highly expressive but has little in common with the high-flown musical language usually associated with opera at the time. As in 'The Birth of Arthur', the chorus has an important role to play both within the drama, representing Druids and warriors, and also outside the stage action as the Chorus of Unseen Spirits who close both acts with the ubiquitous 'Faery Song'. There is a powerful simplicity about the musical setting assa whole which perfectly matches the elusive yet far from nebulous quality of Fiona Macleod's drama, and which doubtless helped to give the work its enormous appeal to the musically unlettered general public. Yet it is interesting to note that musicians as dissimilar as Ethel Smyth, Gustav Holst, Arnold Bax and Eugène Goossens were sufficiently interested in the work to attend more than one performance and to express their appreciation both to the composer and to fellow musicians.

The project uppermost in Boughton's mind in the years before the Great War was the foundation of an enterprise the primary activity of which was to be the staging of his operas. A plan for a summer school to study and perform the first version of 'The Immortal Hour' in August 1912 had to be abandoned through lack of support. The following year should have seen the inauguration of the Glastonbury Festival, but the scheme, which was well advanced and seemed likely to bear fruit, had to be postponed

another year because of local objections to Boughton's unconventional marital arrangements. In place of the projected festival a three-week summer school was held in Bournemouth in August 1913 culminating in the performance of extracts from 'The Birth of Arthur' staged in the open air and using such novel devices as human scenery which danced and sang. Encouraged by the success of this venture and the amount of interest shown in it, Boughton went ahead with plans for the festival to be held in Glastonbury in August 1914. The original ambitious scheme (which included the building of a Festival Theatre) had to be modified in the light of the modest sum of money subscribed, but even the outbreak of war less than twenty-four hours before the festival was due to being was not allowed to thwart the plans more than was absolutely necessary. The 'Festival of Music Drama and Mystic Drama' duly took place in the cramped conditions of the Glastonbury Assembly Rooms, with performances led by Boughton's pupils and friends and accompanied by a grand piano, the culmination of it all being the first three performances of 'The Immortal Hour' conducted by Charles Kennedy Scott. Boughton's zeal and persistence had overcome numerous and serious obstacles, and a start had been made on the realisation of the plans of more than a decade.

An unshakeable purposefulness characterised all Boughton's undertakings: it must have been largely this quality that attracted the support of a number of eminent musicians (Beecham and Elgar included) who one would imagine to have had little sympathy with the character of his work. But the line which divides single-mindedness from obstinacy is not always easy to draw, and on a number of occasions the advancement of his career as a composer

was thwarted by the intransigence of his views on politics and morality and the outspokenness of his advocacy of them. His friend and contemporary Gerald Cumberland called him an "artist-preacher" and admitted that "for some time I lost a good deal of my sympathy for him. I connected him with fads; I regarded him as a crank ..."[1]. The early Georgian years were a time when several of the causes dear to Boughton's heart (socialism, feminism and a more liberal outlook on morality in general) were receiving a good deal of public attention, not all of it hostile, and thus he was thoroughly in tune with the prevailing intellectual and spiritual mood. A fanatically hard worker, Boughton was deeply fulfilled at this time as the long-cherished plan of a festival devoted largely to his own operas at last began to show some concrete results, entirely on account of his own exertions. When he and Christina Walshe set up home together early in 1911 it was, in Michael Hurd's words, "for Boughton ... the beginning of a new way of life"[2], a way of life which was to lead to deep fulfilment and the composition of what was arguably his finest work.

Boughton's plan for a cycle of operas based on the Arthurian legends had not beenabandoned, only temporarily laid aside (it was to occupy him on and off for another thirty years, the fifth and last opera of the cycle,'Avalon', being completed in 1945). Although first conceived in direct imitation (both musical and dramatic) of Wagner's 'Ring' cycle, the composer's outlook and musical idiom changed enormously over the forty years it took him to complete the series and only the first opera of the cycle was composed while he was still fully committed to Wagner's methods. By coincidence at the same time as Boughton was working on 'The Birth of Arthur', Josef Holbrooke had also embarked upon a similar

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1 Gerald Cumberland: "<u>Written in Friendship</u> (1923) p 58

2 op cit p 36

venture, an operatic cycle which attempted to translate something of Wagner's aims and achievements into a British setting. Holbrooke never lost his allegiance to Wagner's methods and thus his cycle is stylistically more homogenous than Boughton's, but the result was far less interesting and in the opera-house Holbrooke's work was a dismal failure.

This one huge work, 'The Cauldron of Anwyn', dominated Holbrooke's composing career throughout the early Georgian period and beyond. 'The Children of Don', the first opera in the trilogy (but the second to be composed) was completed in 1911 and first given at the London Opera House under Nikisch in April 1912. 'Dylan, Son of the Wave' received its première two years later under Beecham at Drury Lane, by which time the composition of 'Bronwen', the third opera in the cycle, was well under way. (As it transpired the War delayed the completion of the work until 1920, and it then had to wait nine years before it was staged in Huddersfield by the Carl Rosa Company.) The composer clearly set great store by these works (the entry he submitted to the 1915 edition of 'Who's Who in Music' stated his favourite professional occupation to be writing operas) and their indisputable failure in performance must have been a blow both to him and to his admirers. For the first two operas were accorded a very hostile reception by the critics (the 'Times' went so far as to say that the première of 'The Children of Don' constituted "the most severe blow which the cause of struggling British opera has sustained for many years"), the public showed little interest in them, and Nikisch, engaged to conduct a short run of 'The Children of Don', withdrew his services after only two performances leaving the composer to direct the third and last. 'Dylan' too ran for only three nights and, apart from eight performances of 'The Children of Don' given in Austria in 1923, neither work has ever been revived in the opera house.

'The Cauldron of Anwyn' has all the strengths and weaknesses of Holbrooke's mature musical style, but the scale of the work tends to magnify the latter and minimise the former. As has been implied already, it was written very much under the shadow of Wagner both in terms of the basic musical language it employs and in terms of the way in which it is constructed; the leitmotiv principle is used exhaustively, some of the themes appearing in all three operas. The motifs do not lack distinction but not all seem capable of carrying the weight of the character they represent, the one associated with Math and his "primitive religion, sad kingship and gift of prophesy" [1] being particularly dull and bland. As for the musical idiom itself, it is the post-Wagnerian common currency of declamatory, freely-phrased vocal lines, rich chromatic harmony and restless, flowing rhythms, all handled with a certain flair but a lack of discipline and a disregard for the principles of overall structure and design. The work's two most original features are its instrumentation ('Dylan' calls for a vast orchestra including oboe d'amore, three saxophones, four saxhorns, four harps and "unlimited concertinas") and the use of a short piece of film depicting the flight of a flock of wild fowl to be projected during one of the orchestral episodes.

Some of the blame for the failure of 'The Cauldron of Anwyn' in the opera house must lie with the production teams, for on each occasion that one of the operas was produced there appear to have been serious shortcomings in the staging. But by far the most serious handicap to the success of the work was its quite impossible libretto, an absurdly convoluted and utterly uncompelling plot couched in high-flown poetaster's language. Beecham bluntly stated that "no one with the united talents of Mozart,

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[1] George Lowe: "Joseph Holbrooke and his work" (1920) p 253

Wagner and Verdi could have made an opera out of 'Dylan'" [1].
That Holbrooke failed in the trying is thus no surprise, and it is only fair to point out that he did not have a totally free hand in the choice of his librettist, for 'The Cauldron of Anwyn' was the work of his patron, Lord Howard de Walden, writing under the pen-name of T E Ellis.

Poet and composer had first met in about 1905, and before long the former had lifted the latter's burden of financial worries by the granting of a generous annual allowance. There is no evidence to suggest that his benefactor put any pressure on Holbrooke to make use of his poems and plays; it was probably as a token of gratitude that he so often turned to his patron's literary works as a source of inspiration. It does, however, show a considerable weakness in artistic judgement on Holbrooke's part that he should have considered 'The Cauldron of Anwyn' as worthy of and suitable for operatic treatment. Once again Beecham summed up the situation with ruthless honesty; "Holbrooke" he wrote "was ... a musician of natural ability handicapped by a poor aesthetic endowment and a total want of critical faculty." [2]
It was tragic that this natural ability should have been expended on so fruitless a task at this stage of the composer's career, for it was soon after this time that the deafness which was to become almost total during the 1920s began to afflict him.

Many slighter works from Holbrooke's pen appeared during the period dominated by the composition of the operatic trilogy. The ballet 'The Masque of the Red Death', which for its inspiration turned once again to the works of Edgar Alan Poe, is dated 'January, 1913', and was the composer's reaction to the sudden

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[1] A Mingled Chime (1944) p 129

[2] ibid

interest in ballet precipitated by the first visits of Diaghilev's company to London. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the Russian impresario took any interest in the work, and it is not known when, if ever, it was performed. 'Pontorewyn', a suite for small orchestra or piano, although it bears the early opus number '7', is dated '1914'. It comprises three movements of incidental music to another of T E Ellis' high-flown Celtic dramas, and shows Holbrooke at his most inept as feeble dramatic posturings alternate with clumsy settings of traditional Welsh melodies. The 'Grand Prelude and Fugue' for organ was composed in 1912, and takes a theme from 'Dylan' as its principal subject; in its heavy technical demands and dense counterpoint, it put one critic (Sydney Grew) in mind of the organ music of Max Reger and Julius Reubke.

Continental influence also lies behind the 'Four Futurist Dances' for piano, composed in 1914. 'Blast', the organ of the English supporters of Futurism, carried a black list of people and institutions antipathetic to the cause and upon this list Joseph Holbrooke's name appeared. The 'Futurist Dances' attempt a spiteful repost, using grossly distorted parodies of some of the trends to be found in the most _avant garde_ European music. But the humour in this music, as in much of the composer's literary work, is far too laboured to be truly effective: Holbrooke was too ill-at-ease with the modernistic devices which pepper the work (whole-tone scales, clusters, violent discords and the use of the "duodecuple scale") to be able to use them with any conviction, even in fun. Equally characteristic of the composer, but in an entirely different way, is the 'Serenade' Opus 61 B, an unpretentious piece in what verges upon a salon style whose simplicity and conventionality are disguised under a highly elaborate and impractical scoring for oboe d'amore, clarinet, basset horn, two saxhorns, viola, five saxophones and harp. Without the support of

Lord Howard de Walden's money such a work would obviously never have achieved publication; as it is,no performance can be traced. A similarly light and easy idiom was adopted for other works dating from the pre-war years: the 'Ten Mezzotints' for piano and two more orchestral ballets 'Coromanthe' and 'The Moth'. Despite all the scorn he poured upon the general public for its lack of enthusiasm for new music, Holbrooke was not above meeting public taste on its own terms with works deliberately designed to be pleasing and popular.

The 'Musical Times' for April 1913 carried a leading article on Holbrooke and his works. It outlines his career, lists his published works, quotes from his manifestos, but is quite unable to reach any definite conclusions: "Are we to look on Josef Holbrooke as one of the saviours of our native art? The answer to this question is in the lap of the gods ..." One of the few opinions delivered with any assurance was that he had not yet fulfilled the promise of his early career, and also that he had not yet evolved a distinctive personal style. Even more than his friend Bantock he preached respect for and encouragement of the most up-to-date musical trends, while in his own works remaining tied to the safe path of post-Wagnerian romanticism. The only real innovation in Holbrooke's music lay in his expansion of the orchestra to include unusual instruments of distinctive colour - the three concertinas in 'Pierrot and Pierrette', the sarrusophone in 'Apollo and the Seaman'. Otherwise his musical idiom consisted of a conventional syntax overlaid with a gloss of novelty provided largely by external trappings and the use of unusual and outré programmes and sources of inspiration. The uneven quality of his work was disconcerting (the writer of the Musical Times article generously described him as being "fitful as the sky itself and as constantly interesting") and, coupled with his ceaseless

barrage of abuse against the musical world at large and his equally untiring agitation on behalf of his own works, made both the man and the music difficult to evaluate. He seems to have been not unwilling for 'The Cauldron of Anwyn' to be compared with 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', but such a comparison can be made only at the most superficial level, for both the words and the music of the later work are totally lacking in the intellectual rigour and artistic stature of Wagner's music dramas. In dubbing Holbrooke "the Cockney Wagner", Hannen Swaffer probably had no such serious comparison in mind.

The early Georgian period had opened brightly for Holbrooke with the prospect of lavishly-staged productions of the works which were to be the crowning achievement of his career; having fulfilled his share in the venture as ably as the nature of his gifts permitted, it must have been a bitter disappointment when the performances turned out to be miserable failures. The composer was made to bear an unjustly large proportion of the blame for this and in consequence his reputation, which had never been at all assured, suffered a serious blow.

Although only five years younger than Holbrooke, Arnold Bax evolved a very much more distinctive and forward-looking musical idiom. Both had been pupils of Frederick Corder but whereas Holbrooke had never explored beyond the territory opened up by the early works of Richard Strauss, Bax, starting from very much the same standpoint, soon began to develop a style quite his own absorbing influences not only from Strauss and Liszt but also from contemporary French and Russian music. A practice which both learned from Corder was that of filling a huge canvas, but whereas one feels in Holbrooke's case that he was constantly inflating

modest ideas to fill the required space, Bax on the other hand had to learn to curb his soaring imagination which naturally worked on the largest scale.

The year 1910 opened with a period of major upheaval in Bax's private life, a passionate and fruitless love affair with a Russian girl with whom he travelled to Moscow and the Ukraine. In an interview which appeared in the magazine 'Musical America' some eighteen years later, the composer admitted that the whole raison d'être of his music was the "expression of emotional states", in view of which it is scarcely surprising to find that the music which he wrote at about this time reflects much of the spiritual wound which this affair inflicted upon him. But, apart from engendering something of an emotional crisis, his visit to Russia had two more positive consequences: it served to introduce him to an unfamiliar and enormously impressive landscape (Bax was ever highly susceptible to the influence of the natural scene) and also to a captivating and highly congenial musical culture. The account of this episode given in 'Farewell, My Youth' leaves us in no doubt as to the profound influence of his purely musical experience in Russia, the witnessing of performances of native opera and ballet in particular. Thus another exotic strand was added to an already complex musical personality which was about to settle into its first period of full maturity.

The year 1910 saw the completion of works which drew their inspiration from all three of the national cultures with which Bax was in close sympathy at this time: the Irish, the English and the Russian. The manuscript of an unpublished orchestral poem 'Rosc Catha', a companion piece to 'Into the Twilight' and 'In the Faery Hills' bears the date 'November 1910', but is one of a number of major works which have never been performed;

'Enchanted Summer', verses by Shelley set for two sopranos, chorus and orchestra in a melifluous and sensuous style, opened the very first Balfour Gardiner concert at Queen's Hall in March 1912; and first versions of the First Piano Sonata and the First Sonata for Violin and Piano, two works which reflect something of the mental turmoil he experienced during and immediately after the Russian trip, belong to 1910. The former bears the legend "Written in Russia, Summer 1910, revised 1917 - 1921", the third version being the one that was published by Murdoch in 1922. The mood which pervades most of this single movement is one of struggle and defiance culminating in an uneasy victory; if in its formal procedures it leans on the Liszt B minor Sonata, its melodic materialand harmonic idiom are original and wholly characteristic. The violin sonata was subjected to even more drastic revision. Of the published version, the second movement was written in 1920 and the third in 1915: only parts of the first movement date from 1910 and thus in the terms of this survey it can scarcely be called an early Georgian work. Suffice it to say that something of the troubled mood of the piano sonata is to be found in the central movement, while the outer movements are concerned with conscious beauty at times warm and passionate, at other times serene and infinitely sad.

Three works completed in 1911 show further influence of the Russian visit. The two tone picturesfor piano 'May Night in the Ukraine' and 'Gopak', are essays in musical realism remarkable for their use of primary colours and unsophisticated rhythms. The ballet score 'Tamara' was written under the direct influence of the impression created by Diaghilev's company with whom the composer renewed his acquaintance when they visited London for the first time in the summer of 1911. This is another work which never

reached performance, apparently largely by the composer's wish.

From late 1911 until the outbreak of the Great War, much of Bax's creative energy was expended in the production of a large number of orchestral works of which most achieved performance but only two publication and only one a place in the regular repertoire. This last was 'The Garden of Fand', a tone-poem completed in piano score in 1913, orchestrated three years later, first performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in October 1920, then introduced to England by the British Symphony Orchestra two months later. In April 1915 in a letter to Philip Heseltine the composer referred to 'Fand' as " ... one of my own most characteristic things ... "[1], and general critical opinion would endorse this view. The work has all the hallmarks of the mature Bax at his best "evoking the poetic conception with a virtuoso technique" as Colin Scott-Sutherland has put it[2]. The poetic conception is explained in a literary programme which prefaces the score (although Bax is at pains to point out that it is a programme of mood and scene rather than of detailed narrative) and the virtuoso technique is evident mainly in the masterly handling of the orchestra and the effortless flow of the material. 'In the Faery Hills' had been striking and unusual; 'Fand' was utterly original and perfectly assured. 'The Happy Forest', the other published tone-poem dating from this period, is warm and lyrical in mood; despite being apparently very much more straightforward than 'The Garden of Fand', it is still a subtle and accomplished piece of music.

Thirteen other orchestral compositions make up most of the remainder of Bax's output during the pre-War years. Some contain common material which, together with similar titles, suggest

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1 quoted by Lewis Foreman in his sleeve note for the 1972 recording

2 "Arnold Bax" (1973) p 93

several attempts to pin down in music a certain mood or scene, for example 'Dance in the Sunlight' of 1912 and 'Dance in the Sun' of the following year, 'Christmas Eve' of 1911 and 'Christmas Eve on the Mountains' of 1912. (Bax claimed to be describing the première of this last work in the long passage concerning a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in 'Farewell My Youth', but this is either a misremembering or else a deliberate composite picture of several premières for the work has never been given by the Royal Philharmonic Society, and was in fact first played at a Balfour Gardiner concert in March 1913 in a programme very different from that which Bax describes.) Four pieces, 'Pensive Twilight', 'Dance in the Sun', 'From the Mountains of Home' and 'Dance of the Wild Irravel', were given by F B Ellis in March 1914, the first and fourth having already been played at a Prom the previous September, but were subsequently withdrawn. 'Spring Fire', a work in four linked movements on a symphonic scale, was written in 1913 for performance at the Norwich Festival of the following year but like Parry and Bantock, Bax suffered a disappointment when the outbreak of war caused the cancellation of the whole festival. Lack of adequate rehearsal time precluded a performance arranged by the Royal Philharmonic Society for February 1916, and eventually the work had to wait until 1970 for its première. A programme note prepared by the composer in 1916 shows this to be another attempt to depict in music a scene of wild forest revelry, a vision which haunted Bax's imagination for many years, but a critic of the first performance found the "ideas ... not as interesting as their rich orchestral dress"[1]. The history of Bax's pre-War orchestral music, the labour expended in its production and the composer's circumspection in allowing its performance, counters the assertion

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[1] Musical Times, Vol CXII (1971), p 151

that he lacked discipline and over-wrote. The ample proportions of and superabundance of musical material in his large-scale works reflect not self-indulgence but rather the natural fertility of his creative gift, and it must not be forgotten that it was by his own wishes that some of his works lay unperformed (like the 'Prelude to Adonais' of 1912) or were given only once (like 'Nympholept', a 'nature poem' written in the same year).

This wealth of orchestral music largely exhausted even so fecund an imagination as Bax's: he produced little else besides between 1910 and 1914. Four short flute pieces and a toccata for piano were published later, but two more piano pieces remained in manuscript. Apart from these there were only songs. 'To Eire' and 'Your eyen two', written in 1910 and 1914 respectively, both speak of a passionate but unfulfilled love, another mood which Bax explored on many occasions. Three of the five settings of numbers from Vacaresco's 'The Bard of Dimbovitza' for mezzo-soprano and orchestra were completed in 1914 and first given by Dilys Jones at an F B Ellis concert in the same year; the other numbers were added to this cycle at a later date.

Bax's private life continued unsettled throughout the early Georgian period. Shortly after his return from Russia, he made a somewhat hasty marriage (a union which was to last only five years) and attempted unsuccessfully to settle permanently in Dublin, at that time a city torn by violent political strife. But for his musical career, the pre-War years were a time of steady advance and consolidation in terms of both his own creative work and his public reputation. His music made its mark on all branches of professional activity in England (barring opera), not only those with a special interest in modern music but also in the more conservative

spheres of the senior London orchestras and the provincial festivals; and by 1914 a fair proportion of it, including some quite substantial compositions had been published. No single work had yet captured the public imagination as 'Tintagel' and 'November Woods' were later to do, but his name was familiar to pre-War audiences and his music was regarded with approving interest.

In a strictly chronological survey, the name of John Blackwood McEwen (another Corder pupil) should have been introduced at the same time as those of Granville Bantock and Hamish MacCunn, who were his exact contemporaries. But although McEwen began to compose early (by the time he entered the Royal Academy of Music in 1893 he had already produced amongst other things three symphonies, a mass and several string quartets), he was slow to develop a mature style and even slower to make any public impression with his works; by the time he had reached his fortieth year in 1908, only a handful of his pieces were in print, and there had been very few performances of his major works. An unpublished viola concerto had been given a single performance in Bournemouth in 1901, the A minor String Quartet had been given several times in London and its slow movement singled out for special praise, and the Philharmonic Society had introduced his 'Coronach' under Cowen in April 1907. It was the successful première of the orchestral ballad 'Grey Galloway' at the Philharmonic in February 1909 that initiated McEwen's career as a composer of importance.

All accounts of McEwen's career draw attention to his marked lack of concern with the business of getting his pieces performed; he worked to get an increasing number of them into print but then left them to take their chance. Thus the works which did achieve a measure of popularity, such as 'Grey Galloway' and the 'Biscay'

string quartet, did so entirely on their own merits, unaided by the composer's considerable potential influence - as well as being a senior member of staff at the Royal Academy, McEwen held a number of professional appointments including the secretaryship of the Society of British Composers. His favourite media were the orchestra and the string quartet, and his output was considerable; in all he produced five symphonies, two overtures, two suites, two orchestral ballads, fourteen string quartets and a host of smaller pieces. This output was spread over a composing career of at least three decades, with the pre-Great War years as a particularly fruitful central period; to those years belonged, amongst much else, two of the three works which came to be his most widely played: the three-movement 'Solway Symphony', composed in 1911, first performed by Dan Godfrey and the Bournemouth orchestra in October 1922, published under the auspices of the Carnegie Trust and the first English symphony to be recorded, and the 'Biscay' quartet (published as No 8, but later revised as No 6), dated "June 1913" and first performed by its dedicatees, the London String Quartet, exactly two years later.

McEwen's musical language as revealed in his early Georgian works is interesting and original. It could be described as the style of a musician who had studied with both Stanford and Corder, although in fact he was taught by the latter only, from whom he learnt an easy spontaneity, a relaxed approach to structure, the desire and ability to create a strong sense of atmosphere and an appreciation of richly-coloured harmony. Yet works like the 'Biscay' quartet reveal many Stanfordesque characteristics - economy, clarity, a delight in musical craftsmanship and a deep respect for the principles of sonata form. To these were added some purely personal traits - a penchant for melodies and harmonic

colourings in the idiom of Scottish folk music and a willingness to experiment both metrically (the second violin sonata of 1914 dispenses with time signatures and uses staggered bar-lines) and harmonically (the last two 'Vignettes from La Côte d'Argent' for piano, another work inspired by McEwen's visit to the south of France in 1913, use different varieties of advanced harmonic idiom to depict evening twilight and the chugging of a motor boat). The resulting musical language was never less than fluent and highly personal, and at its best was also attractive and genuinely original.

Two other Academy-trained composers, both considerably younger than McEwen, made a less distinctive contribution than he to English music of the pre-War years; each had won fame very early in his career but had subsequently failed to live up to youthful promise.

In 1906 York Bowen had been referred to as "one of the most prominent and promising of the nation's young composers"[1], but nothing of what he produced during the early Georgian period merited similar praise. There were only two major works: the Second Symphony produced by Landon Ronald and the New Symphony Orchestra at Queen's Hall in February 1912, and the Violin Concerto in E minor which, written before the Great War, had to wait until 1920 for publication and performance. Audiences seem to have enjoyed these works, but the critics reacted with adjectives such as "agreeable", "graceful" and "reminiscent". Bowen's style, always conservative, was starting to become dated.

The rest of his pre-War output consisted of small piano pieces and a phantasie for violin and piano (dismissed by Ernest Walker as "a bit of first-class tasty confectionery"[2]) which was never published. Here the fluent, shallow style is more appropriate - indeed one expects it of pieces called 'Idylle' and 'Romance in G flat'.

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1 '<u>Musical Times</u>' Vol XLVII (1906), p 189

2 '<u>The Music Student</u>' Chamber Music Supplement for November 1918 p 21

The keyboard writing is of course highly idiomatic, and the variety of effects by no means limited; of their kind the pieces are excellent specimens. But Bowen's musical language was ossifying and by 1914 he had, in Michael Kennedy's words, "already made what mark was within (his) capacity"[1].

Benjamin Dale too remained untouched by the spirit of artistic innovation current in early Georgian England, his output dating from this period displaying exactly the same characteristics as his earlier works had done. There was the same rigorous self-criticism which suppressed all but a very few highly-polished works (Lionel Tertis labelled him "finical (and) ultra-fastidious"[2]), the same elegance and fluency and the same conventionality of harmonic and melodic diction.

The most considerable pre-war work was a phantasy for viola and piano commissioned by W W Cobbett and first performed at one of Josef Holbrooke's chamber concerts in March 1912. Dale's phantasy has more substance than Bowen's, its five sections being linked by a pleasantly spontaneous system of thematic cross-reference; but it is the expert workmanship which is the work's most distinctive feature, the musical language being purged of any distinguishing characteristics. 'Before the Paling of the Stars', Christina Rossetti's 'Christmas Hymn' set for chorus and orchestra, clothes insipid verse with cloying, sentimental music; for once a technical shortcoming is evident, for the words are set with persistent insensitivity. Other than these two works, Dale produced only three small carols and the 'Introduction and Andante' for six violas, a piece which the critics agreed to have been a remarkably successful solution to an extraordinary compositional problem.

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1 Portrait of Elgar (1968) p 223

2 Cinderella No More (1953) p 37

It was very unfortunate for Dale that his Opus 1 should have been such a remarkable composition for, for all their virtues, none of his subsequent works measured up to the standard set by the Piano Sonata; however well received, there was always a note of disappointment to be heard in reviews of his later works. Frederick Corder's claim that Dale produced "fewer and better works than any English composer of his generation"[1] makes a seriously false implication; Dale was an able composer who knew his limits and worked very well within them, but early Georgian England boasted a good many composers quite as talented as he and several whose gifts placed them on quite a different plane.

Such a one was Ralph Vaughan Williams, and if this was apparent to only a few in 1910, it had become clear to a great many more by the summer of 1914. For the intervening four-and-a-half years proved in two ways to be a remarkably fruitful period in Vaughan Williams' composing career: firstly, they witnessed the continued development and refinement of his musical language, the further welding together of the seemingly disparate influences to which he had been exposed during his long 'novitiate'; and secondly, they marked a notable growth in his reputation as performances of his works proliferated and more of his music became widely accessible through publication.

Three major works from Vaughan Williams' pen had first appeared in the autumn of 1909, and exactly the same thing happened the following year. On 1st September Henry Wood introduced his music to the Queen's Hall Prom audience when he conducted the only known performance of the orchestral 'Fantasia on English Folksong' (a work which has already been discussed); five days later the composer conducted the first performance of the 'Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis' in Gloucester Cathedral; and just over a month

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1 quoted by Edwin Evans in Grove's Dictionary, third edition (1927) p 2

after that, on 12th October 1910, 'A Sea Symphony' was first heard at the Leeds Festival with the composer conducting once again.

The 'Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis' was the first of four commissions the composer received from the organisers of the Three Choirs Festival in the years before the Great War. The theme which Vaughan Williams took was one of the tunes he had discovered and restored to circulation in the 'English Hymnal', a modal tune with the contours if not the rhythm of a folksong; therefore this work forges something of a link between the two major influences upon the formation of Vaughan Williams' style. It is one of the most striking examples of the composer moving forwards while glancing backwards; its form owes something to the Tudor 'fancy', its layout and scoring something to the Elgar 'Introduction and Allegro' of 1904, while its harmony, with its parallel triads and juxtapositions of diatonically unrelated chords, must have sounded very new and unfamiliar in 1910. As with 'Toward the Unknown Region', later generations are more aware of the work's retrospective elements than those which look ahead: present day audiences hear in the 'Tallis Fantasia' echoes of the fluid modal counterpoint and false-relation harmony of the Tudor period, but both Fuller Maitland and Samuel Langford invoked the name of Debussy in their reports of the first performance. The former critic was one of the few to give the work a full and enthusiastic notice; the 'Musical Times' despatched it in four dispiriting lines, and Herbert Brewer, the Gloucester Cathedral organist and principal conductor of the Gloucester Festival, dismissed it as "a queer, mad work by an odd fellow from Chelsea"[1]. Only one further performance was given (at one of Balfour Gardiner's concerts in February 1913) before the work was revised for publication in 1921. But among the stolid and largely unmoved

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[1] quoted by Michael Hurd in 'The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney' (1978) p 24

Gloucester audience in 1910 were two young musicians both of whom were profoundly and lastingly affected by the work. Herbert Howells calls the event a "revelatory musical experience" [1] and describes how he and Ivor Gurney were so excited by it that they were quite unable to sleep the following night. A seminal work of great strength and originality had appeared, but it was many years before more than a handful of people recognised it as such.

'A Sea Symphony' had a gestation period of at least seven years, during which time Vaughan Williams' musical language developed greatly; a work which grew so slowly over such a crucial period in the composer's development was bound to reflect something of the different phases through which his style passed. A duration of more than an hour made it his longest work to date and it was the first ever wholly choral symphony to be written in a recognisable symphonic mould. These three factors largely explain the work's weaknesses: it displays a distinct lack of stylistic homogeneity, it rambles and, as a symphonic structure it is not wholly satisfying. Stylistic virtues can be found - great melodic beauty, sensitivity to the text, magnificent choral writing and a sure command over a wide variety of mood and effect - which balance these infelicities and which give the work a rich surface entirely satisfying to all but those who are out of sympathy with either poet or composer. It is on the next level, that of overall design and large-scale organisation, that the work is least satisfactory. But penetrate to the very core of the symphony and its ultimate strength is revealed; it confronts spiritual issues with unflinching courage, and in its complete integrity and sureness of vision illumines areas of truth which only great music touches.

The composer once described the premiere of 'A Sea Symphony'

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[1] quoted by Christopher Palmer in Herbert Howells' (1978) p 11

as "a complete flop", but there is much evidence to suggest that this was far from true; all reports spoke of the high standard of the singing and the playing on that occasion and one specifically mentioned the warmth of the reception which the work was accorded. The critics were without exception enthusiastic. Some found small annoying flaws - over-complexity, too many loud climaxes and passages of dense scoring - but all recognised the strength and sincerity of the work and found much to praise in the sensitive treatment of Whitman's verse and in the expert handling of the choral forces. While Parry expressed only cautious approval, describing the work as "big stuff, but full of impertinences as well as noble moments"[1], Stanford was wholeheartedly enthusiastic; it was largely because of his eloquent advocacy that the work had been accepted by the Leeds authorities in the first place. Another musician who showed his faith in the work in the most practical manner possible was Hugh Allen who gave performances of it in Oxford and Cambridge and in London with the Bach Choir in February 1913. The great choirs of London and the provinces did not show particular interest in the work until after the Great War; its lack of any narrative element and its tone of radical agnosticism, as well as the novelty of its idiom, did not endear it to the majority of chorus masters in early Georgian England.

One could easily once again compile a list of the stylistic influences at work in 'A Sea Symphony', spotting the snatches of folk-song, and hearing echoes of Ravel in the orchestration, Debussy in the whole-tone passages, Parry in the trio of the scherzo and Elgar in the opening of the last movement. But to do so would be to deny Vaughan Williams the respect that by this stage of his career he unquestionably deserved. As a composer he had found himself

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1 quoted by Michael Kennedy in 'The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams (1964) p 131

and given tangible proof of the fact in this big, ambitious work.

Although the 'Tallis Fantasia' had met with a very cool reception at its first performance, Vaughan Williams was invited to write new works for the next three meetings of the Three Choirs. For Worcester in 1911 he completed the 'Five Mystical Songs', settings of poems by George Herbert on which he had been working for some five years. Campbell McInnes was their first interpreter, singing them with orchestral accompaniment in Worcester Cathedral on 14th September 1911, and two months later introducing them to London, but this time accompanied by a pianist. Vaughan Williams never wrote happily for the piano, and accompanied by the single instrument the work loses some of its stature and much of its subtlety; but in their orchestral dress these are great songs. Just as Herbert uses homely idioms in which to couch his unexpected images, so the composer takes familiar ingredients - simple triads, gentle melismas, stepwise-moving bass lines - and uses them in a quite new and very personal way. For the first time the note of quiet fervour inspired by a specifically Christian impulse had invaded his music, a mood which was to recur in the 'Four Hymns', 'Sancta Civitas' and, in its fullest flowering, 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

Campbell McInnes sang again the following year at Hereford, this time in the 'Fantasia on Christmas Carols' for baritone, chorus and orchestra. The carols used in this piece are all folk-songs, thus it belongs in the tradition of the Norfolk Rhapsodies and the orchestral folk-song fantasia. It is one of the most perfect and spontaneous of the composer's extended folk-song works, having none of the awkward joins or harmonic anachronisms which marred his earlier attempts at rhapsodising on folk melodies. The tunes merge one into another with an easy flow and the accompaniments grow effortlessly out of the tunes themselves. This is the first of

Vaughan Williams' published scores to bear evidence of his scrupulous care over the practicability of performance: on the one hand it is explained to the chorus that they are required to vocalise in three different ways as well as singing the words, and on the other three alternative versions of the orchestral accompaniment are provided to bring the work within the scope of small choirs with limited financial resources. Amateur musicians were beginning to show interest in his music and, without any hint of patronisation, he wished to clear as many obstacles from their path as possible.

The years before the Great War mark the zenith of Vaughan Williams' practical involvement with English folk-song. He was still very active as a collector and as an editor of folk music publications, and during this period he produced the first version of the work that was his most substantial tribute to the folk singers of England and the way of life they represented, the opera 'Hugh the Drover'. The dating of this work is not easy for by the time of its first production in July 1924,innumerable alterations and revisions both great and small had been made. (The composer was to continue tinkering with it for the rest of his life, a sure sign that it was a work which meant a great deal to him.) A working version must have been finished before the war, however, for in June 1914 two young friends of the composer sang and played the whole work to Vaughan Williams, his wife and the librettist Harold Child; and whatever the exact date of the work's completion, it belongs in spirit to the early Georgian years.

Another inference to be drawn from the constant altering of 'Hugh the Drover' is that something was seriously wrong with it; this was indeed the case, but the fault lay with the words rather than the music. Vaughan Williams had wanted to write a work on the

lines of Smetana's 'Bartered Bride', dealing with "English country life (real as far as possible - not sham) ... folk-song-y in character with a certain amount of real ballad stuff thrown in"[1], but Harold Child's first draft of the libretto was on very different lines, a townsman's view of rusticity, patronising and insensitive. By dint of much tactful but firm suggestion, some sort of working compromise was achieved along the lines of Vaughan Williams' original plan, but it was clear from the start that Harold Child was the wrong man for the job and that the venture was doomed to only partial success.

Musically the work is remarkably successful. Taking the letter and the spirit of English folk-song as his starting point Vaughan Williams evolved a language which blended folk and traditional tunes, material in folk style and freely-composed music (some of it of Puccinian intensity) in what can only be called a pure English idiom into a homogenous whole of perfect integrity capable of expressing a wide range of emotion and sustaining musical interest for upwards of an hour and a half. This was a strikingly original achievement, quite without precedent in recent English operatic history. When the work came to be performed in 1924, the professional singers of the British National Opera Company did not know what to make of it, so far removed was it from the standard operatic repertoire: their reading of the work was less sympathetic than that of the students of the Royal College of Music, who gave two private dress rehearsals five days before the public _première_. Less startlingly original than Holst's 'Savitri', 'Hugh the Drover' was a radical operatic experiment which, despite the unfortunate conflict of ideals between author and composer, achieved what it set out to do with conspicuous success.

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[1] A letter from the composer to Harold Child quoted by Ursula Vaughan Williams in '_R.V.W._' (1964) p 402

Pendants to this work were the incidental music which Vaughan Williams wrote for F R Benson's summer season of plays at Stratford in 1913 (much of which was based on folk music) and a number of settings of single folk and traditional songs, most of them for chorus, including a group of some of the best arrangements he ever made, the 'Five English Folk Songs' published by Stainer and Bell in 1913. These settings have all the drama and variety of Boughton's 'Choral Variations' but remain much truer to the spirit of the original melodies. They require expert singing, but it is the expertise born of committed and exhaustive rehearsal rather than of a brilliant vocal technique. Vaughan Williams was too sensitive to the spirit of folk-song to subject the tunes to more extensive and elaborate development than they could stand; these are virtuoso settings but of appropriately modest physical and technical dimensions.

Dating from the year before the 'Five English Folk Songs' is a work which proves that the composer had achieved complete assurance in another branch of musical composition. The 'Phantasy String Quintet', a modestly-proportioned work lasting no more than a quarter of an hour, maintains a consistently high level of inspiration throughout. It was written to a commission from W W Cobbett and, in compliance with Cobbett's stipulation, the four movements are played without a break; all use the same melodic material although any hint of contrivance or monotony is avoided. The choice of the slightly unusual quintet medium has probably counted against frequent performance and prevented the work from achieving the popularity it deserves; writing in the autumn of 1915, Ernest Walker rated it "one of the best of Vaughan Williams' works"[1].

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1 The Music Student Chamber Music Supplement for November 1915 p 25

The quintet was first performed by the London String Quartet with James Lockyer on 23rd March 1914 and, as happened so often in Vaughan Williams' career, another premiere followed almost immediately. 'A London Symphony', the greatest of his Georgian works and one of the very greatest of all his works, was performed four days later by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Geoffrey Toye.

The idea of writing a symphony was first suggested to the composer by his friend George Butterworth; (when the score came to be published in 1920 it was inscribed to Butterworth's memory). Anxious to forestall the contemporary enthusiasm for "finding the story behind the music", the composer was careful to point out that this new work was not a piece of programme music; it was a "symphony by a Londoner", a piece of absolute music in which "the life of London ... has suggested to the composer an attempt at musical expression" [1] and nothing more. One suspects that Vaughan Williams took this stand because he was very anxious that the work should be judged on its merits as pure music rather than as a piece of musical scene-painting, and once it had begun to make its mark in the wake of Albert Coates' memorable performance in May 1920, he relented slightly, acknowledging that a useful clue to the slow movement was "Bloomsbury Square on a November afternoon" and suggesting that the listener in the following movement should "imagine himself standing on Westminster Embankment at night, surrounded by the distant sounds of the Strand ..." [2]. The composer's first instinct was wise. Given the title of the work and the few unmistakable aural signposts such as the Westminster chimes and the jingle of hansom cabs, the listener could not help but hear the work in terms of the sights and sounds of the great

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[1] from a programme note by the composer prepared for a performance in 1920

[2] ibid

city; but better to leave him to supply his own programme than to tie the various sections of the work down to one locality and consequently one particular period. The work must have a special significance for those who knew Georgian London; but, just as the spirit of London remains fundamentally the same regardless of the passage of time, so this symphony can speak to later generations of the London they know.

Musically the symphony is as interesting and satisfying today as it was on the eve of the Great War. To say that it marks an advance over his previous works is not to belittle their stature but merely to underline the swiftness and sureness of Vaughan Williams' continued development. The middle two movements, a Lento and a Scherzo: Nocturne, show the highest level of inspiration and the finest craftmanship; both will stand up to the most rigorous formal analysis. The outer movements are less conspicuously well-proportioned, but they are tightly controlled on a very personal scheme. The proliferation of musical events in the first movement precludes development in the classical sense, but the spirit and shape of sonata form are present and the music is conceived on a truly symphonic scale. The solemn march in the Finale is interrupted by music which recalls but does not recapitulate earlier ideas, the first of these episodes being a grim musical discourse, the last a summatory epilogue which spiritually and musically sums up and finishes all that has gone before. But it is not only the conception and manipulation of the musical material that is so inspired and sure-footed; its presentation is nothing short of masterly. This work must counter the often-quoted assertion that Vaughan Williams was an habitually clumsy orchestrator. The instruments are handled with complete assurance, each of the myriad moods and flavours picked out in the appropriate

colour. The outer movements sound wonderfully full and rich, but never heavy; even at moments of climax there are many blank bars in the score, evidence that in his maturity the composer had recognised the truth of his old teacher Stanford's _dictum_ about letting windows into the music.

On the day after the first performance of 'A London Symphony', Gustav Holst wrote to the composer: "You have really done it this time. Not only have you reached the heights, but you have taken your audience with you." [1] Such a warm and sympathetic response was to be expected from so close a friend (although Holst never said anything unless he really meant it); but this was the tone of much of the press criticism as well. Earlier works had made a stir in their own particular spheres - at the provincial festivals or in the recital room - but 'A London Symphony' made a deep impression at the heart of the scene of the most advanced musical activity in England. Reviewers of first performances of English symphonies often expressed the polite hope of hearing a second performance before long; in the case of 'A London Symphony', it was an eager desire rather than a polite hope. Had the Great War not intervened, surely the work would have been heard again in London during the 1914/15 season. As it was, the second performance was given by Dan Godfrey in Bournemouth in February 1915 and it was not heard again in London until March 1918 when Adrian Boult gave it with the London Symphony Orchestra. A major reason for the slowness with which the work was taken up was purely practical. Having failed to interest any English publisher in it in the period immediately following the _première_, Vaughan Williams sent the only copy of the full score to Breitkopf and Härtel, publishers of some of his earlier works. When war became imminent and it seemed likely that

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[1] a letter quoted in '**Heirs and Rebels**' edited by Ursula Vaughan Williams and Imogen Holst (1959) p 43

this copy might not be returned from Germany for some time (in fact it was never seen again), a duplicate score was copied from the band parts and this remained the only copy of the work until 1917 when it was published under the auspices of the Carnegie Trust. Add to the difficulty of access to the score and parts the financial risk involved in performing a practically unknown fifty-minute work for large orchestra during the lean days of the War, and the reasons for 'A London Symphony''s slow start in life become fully evident.

The issue of the Royal College of Music Magazine which appeared at the very end of 1912 carried an article by Vaughan Williams entitled "Who wants the English composer?", a trenchant piece of writing, naive in expression but profound in its thought. As its title suggests, its first concern was with the lack of appreciation, or even serious consideration, accorded the native musician by his fellow countrymen, but it also roundly castigated the English composer who made no effort to "keep his part of the bargain", i.e. did not attempt to give his music a special significance and appeal to English audiences. As means to this end, the writer made a number of suggestions; the study of folk-song of course, but also the taking of "other incentives for inspiration ... the lilt of the chorus at a music-hall ... children dancing to a barrel organ, the rousing fervour of a Salvation Army hymn ... the cries of the street pedlars, the factory girls singing their sentimental songs ... forms of musical expression which we can take and purify and raise to the level of great art" [1]. (All these elements found a place in the music which the composer produced at about the time that he was writing the article and are nowhere seen more clearly than in 'A London Symphony'.) How much more intelligent was this approach to the problem of gaining just recognition for

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1 'RCM Magazine' Vol 9 No 1 p 13

native talent than the shrill hectorings in the same cause of Josef Holbrooke and Ethel Smyth; and how much more efficacious were Vaughan Williams' methods than theirs. For out of the plethora of gifted composers working in early Georgian England, it was Vaughan Williams who won the widest and most lasting reputation. This could not be called an acknowledged fact for another decade, but in 1914 it must at least have seemed a strong possibility on the evidence of the range and quality of the music which he had produced over the previous half-dozen years. Michael Kennedy says of this stage of the composer's career: "If he had been killed in the War, we should still have had enough of his work to accord him a special place in English music." [1]

Having enjoyed much the same degree of recognition for the first half-dozen years of the twentieth century, Vaughan Williams began to outstrip Holst in public esteem as the Edwardian decade neared its end, and the resulting imbalance between the reputations of the two composers persisted until the period immediately after the Great War. The nature of the relationship between the two men was such that neither attached a shred of importance to this temporary inequality of reputation, and certainly Holst was not deflected for a moment from his steady progress towards a completely personal and expressive style. This was eventually arrived at largely by the judicious amalgam of characteristics drawn from the different musical areas which he had previously explored, a drawing-together which became more noticeable and more successfully accomplished as the new decade progressed. But in 1910, the individual strands still remained largely separate.

Holst continued to work the Sanskrit seam in two more sets of 'Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda'. The third group, scored for female voices and harp, was written in 1910 and first performed

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1 'The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams' (1964) p 111

the following year by some of Holst's provincial admirers, Frank Duckworth and his Blackburn Ladies Choir. This is the most successful of the four sets of hymns. Technical devices such as quintuple and septuple metres and ostinati, which later at times became mannerisms, here appear fresh and natural, and where appropriate the harmonies are allowed to be richly expressive, as when the voices momentarily clash with the pedal notes in the accompaniment to point a striking verbal image. As in earlier works, sympathetic presentation of the words governs all; text and setting give every sign of having grown simultaneously, and each is of an equally high standard. The 'Two Eastern Pictures' of 1911 are scored for identical forces but employ a verbal and musical idiom which is perilously close to the drawing-room oriental style of Laurence Hope and Amy Woodforde-Finden, and the fourth group of choral Rig Veda hymns, for male voices, strings and optional brass, proves once again that in Holst's case a weak text invariably led to a weak setting. The metres and rhythms are square and pedestrian, subtleties of verbal accentuation are largely ignored, the accompaniment does little more than prop up the vocal line and the harmonies, especially in the first number, are sadly dull and conventional. Holst published this group at his own expense in 1912; the instinct of Stainer and Bell in refusing this work but accepting the two previous groups of Rig Veda hymns for publication is a true reflection of their respective merits.

Another Sanskrit work by which the composer set great store was 'The Cloud Messenger', an ode for chorus and orchestra completed in 1910 and revised two years later. The pattern of other of the composer's large-scale works is repeated; both words and music contain passages of great beauty and originality, but there

are also pages which plumb the depths of dull, conventional posturing. A serious drawback to this work is its length; it lasts nearly forty minutes, during which time the musical flow never ceases. The linking and balancing of the various sections of a work were problems to which Holst was not always able to find an answer; the ode loses impetus distressingly frequently, a fault which was brought home to the composer as he directed the first performance given by the London Choral Society at one of Balfour Gardiner's concerts in March 1913. The 'Musical Times', in its review of this concert, is tactfully reticent: "This composer always displays fancy, but it cannot be said that in this long piece he is at his best."[1] A revival of the work in 1920 by the Newcastle and Gateshead Choral Union under Holst's friend W G Whittaker elicited from the same periodical only the bafflingly irrelevant comment that "the horn passages ... did not always quite come off". By this time Holst had acquired a national and international reputation, and in comparison with the works that had earned him this fame, 'The Cloud Messenger' must have seemed dated and immature.

After 1912 Holst produced no more works which drew their inspiration directly from Sanskrit sources, turning instead to classical Greek literature and setting two short poems (in translations by Gilbert Murray) for female voices and orchestra. 'Hecuba's Lament' was written in 1911 but not performed until December 1922; the 'Hymn to Dionysus' belongs to 1913 and was given the following year by the Oriana Madrigal Society. The former is a familiar uneasy blend of stately neo-modal writing and breathless chromatic sequences used as an easy way to build

1 'Musical Times' Vol LIV (1973), p 255

climaxes. The latter is more satisfying and of more even quality. It is also forward-looking in the sense that it tries out a number of ideas which were later explored and exploited more fully: the monotone chanting of the opening of the 'First Choral Symphony', the exciting asymetrical dance of 'The Hymn of Jesus', and the rich harmonies of 'The Planets' all find their roots in this work. The spirit of the dance always drew fine music from the mature Holst, and the simple but effective structure of this substantial movement is that of a dance that grows more and more excited.

In a letter to Edwin Evans written early in 1911, Holst said: "I have something within me that prompts me to write quite light music every now and again ... (My works in this vein) are as genuinely part of me as the Veda hymns ... They are not pot-boilers ..."[1] One of the works to which he was referring was 'Beni Mora', an "Oriental Suite" for orchestra composed in 1910 and first given at a Balfour Gardiner concert in May 1912. This work is very much more impressive and considerable than Holst's description of it would suggest, for it is in a style far removed from the drawing-room oriental, the material is very original and its presentation totally assured. One reason was that it was the fruit of first-hand experience; in 1908 Holst spent a holiday in Algeria, and 'Beni Mora' not only reflects the impression which the visit made upon him but also quotes native melodies which he noted down at the time.

Two less successful orchestral works date from 1911. The first, 'Invocation' for cello and small orchestra, was given by May Muckle at the Queen's Hall but was suppressed soon afterwards; Imogen Holst dismisses it as being "not of any value in itself"[2]. The 'Phantastes Suite' was a longer and more significant work although its career was even shorter than that of the 'Invocation',

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1 quoted by Imogen Holst in 'A Thematic Catalogue of Gustav Holst's Music' (1974) p 108

2 'The Music of Gustav Holst' (Second edition 1968) p 36

the composer withdrawing it immediately after the first performance given under his own conductorship at a Patron's Fund concert at Queen's Hall in May 1912. Each of the four movements ('Prelude', 'March', 'Sleep' and 'Dance') was headed by a fantastic or humorous quotation, but apparently the humour in the music was crude and heavy-handed; the only virtue of the piece was the practice it gave in the use of exotic instruments and novel orchestral effects.

The best of Holst's pre-War orchestral music is to be found in two modestly-scaled suites both of which take folk-song as a starting point. The Second Suite for military band (a companion piece to the First Suite in E flat of 1909) was written in 1911. All its thematic material is drawn from Hampshire folk-songs, but instead of once again attempting the sophisticated treatment of the 'Somerset Rhapsody', the composer is content merely to lay the tunes side by side, fitting them out with simple but effective accompaniments and linking them with the simplest of musical ligaments; the resulting work is unpretentious but highly effective. In the final movement Holst achieved something which he had attempted many times before, the contrapuntal combination of two extant melodies. In this instance 'Greensleeves' and 'The Dargason' marry perfectly, a happy piece of good fortune which led him to use this movement again, rescored, as the finale of his other pre-War suite, the 'St Paul's Suite' for strings. This work, written for the orchestra he conducted at St Paul's Girls School, is very much more than mere school orchestra music. It is a fascinating compendium of the composer's musical past. The 'Ostinato' movement is a greatly-matured descendant of the early 'Suite de Ballet'; there is an echo of the Sanskrit works in the 'Intermezzo', and in the coda of this movement he bids farewell to the chromatic habits of his early manhood; the last movement contains folk-songs and

the first movement tunes in folk-song style. By 1913 when this suite came to be written his musical personality was strong enough to weld all these disparate elements into a satisfying whole. Straightforward in technique and style, this is nevertheless a work of great strength and total integrity.

The remaining works (partsongs and short choral pieces) which date from the early Georgian years were all written with pupils or amateur performers in mind. Holst was happy to give his attention to the smallest miniature scored for the most modest forces, and often the results were highly successful. A piece on a slightly more extended scale which must, however, be counted among his weaker works was 'Christmas Day', a short "choral fantasy on old carols" written in 1910 for his students at Morley College. This composition is unpretentious but its simplicity is feeble rather than strong and it contains some inept musical joinery. Two years later he wrote two psalm settings which also use old melodies but to far greater effect. The first, 'To my humble supplication', is modal in character but avoids archaism: the latter is an ingenious and imaginative set of choral variations on the hymn 'Lord who has made us for thine own'. It is surprising that works of this calibre should have had to wait until 1920 for publication and public performance while 'Christmas Day' was immediately issued by Novellos.

By a strange coincidence, the two principal compositions on which Holst was working in the early summer of 1914 were both concerned with war. It has been claimed that both 'Mars' and 'A Dirge for Two Veterans' express Holst's reaction to the outbreak of the Great War, but this is not so for the former was sketched out before August 1914 and it seems likely that the latter was finished slightly earlier still; the publication contract

between the composer and Messrs Curwen was signed at the end of June, evidence which Imogen Holst admits, refutes her earlier statement that the 'Dirge' was the first thing he wrote during the War. This work is one of the composer's small-scale masterpieces. Scored for male voices, five brass instruments and drums, it perfectly captures Whitman's powerful but restrained vision of the tragedy of war on a personal scale, the funeral of a father and son killed in battle. Two other English settings (by Vaughan Williams and Charles Wood) of the same poem take the form of a large-scale funeral march, a noble melody richly harmonised; but Holst's setting is characteristically original and economical. The march is there but only in skeletal form, a plodding bass line, trumpet fanfares and slow fanfare-like figures in the voice parts. The instruments remain largely rooted to the natural scale of C but the voices move to more distant harmonies, pointing key words with expressive discords. Two-thirds of the way through, the speed increases, the tonality of C is destroyed and a great climax is reached; but the animation swiftly subsides, the voices sing the last stanza unaccompanied and whispered trumpet fanfares conclude the work. There is no record of when the 'Dirge' was first performed. Its starkness and the lack of any note of consolation would have given it little general appeal during the war years; its mood was better suited to the unemotional detachment of the post-War period. As a deeply-felt statement of musical faith it was felt to be an appropriate work to be played at the memorial concert given after the composer's death in 1934.

'Mars' too is an original and highly characteristic work. A congenial extra-musical impulse had sparked ideas for which a suitable idiom lay to hand, "the result of twenty years' search ... Outside influences had helped. Stravinsky's music had let in a great light, and he had been impressed by a recent performance of

Schönberg's Five Orchestral Pieces. But ... most of 'The Planets' is written in Holst's own language, which had hitherto been heard in occasional snatches and isolated phrases ... (In 'Mars') for the first time in his life Holst had said what he wanted to say in a way in which only he could have said it ... the twenty years apprenticeship was over." [1]

Holst had no wide reputation before the Great War: his name was unknown in the sphere of the provincial festivals, in chamber music circles and amongst the promenaders at Queen's Hall. This was largely the result of his own course of action; his modesty was proverbial and a total lack of interest in, and even distaste for, worldly success was something he learnt from his studies of Hindu philosophy. He owed most performances of his music to the staunch championship of a handful of friends, chief among whom were Balfour Gardiner and Charles Kennedy Scott, and what reputation he had rested very largely upon his choral compositions. The more astute critics recognised his sincerity of purpose and originality of mind, but then, as now, there was a body of critical opinion which found nothing of real merit or lasting interest in his music. As to his reputation with the general musical public, this was not very high or very widespread. Reports of performances of his works rarely mention a warm response and Sydney Grew, speaking of a performance of 'Beni Mora' in 1913, remembered that "some people in the audience became restive and actually expressed their disapproval in open laughter" [2]. This is a startling reminder of the novelty of Holst's musical idiom to early Georgian audiences and underlines the precarious nature of his pre-War reputation. It was not until the first public performances of 'The Planets' and 'The Hymn of Jesus' just after the Great War that he achieved the public recognition he deserved.

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1 'The Music of Gustav Holst' (second edition 1968) pp 41 and 43

2 'Our Favourite Musicians from Stanford to Holbrooke' (1922) p 202

Holst's estimate of the value and importance of the study of folk music was as great as was Vaughan Williams', although he never occupied the latter's central position in the official folk-song movement. He was not a collector in the field; his role was as an arranger and proselytiser, and he was sure that "when the time came for the English musical history of the twentieth century to be written, Cecil Sharp's name would stand out above all others" [1]. For Sharp was the driving force behind the folk music movement in England. It was he who had transformed the Folk Song Society from an antiquarian body patronised largely by musicians of varying distinction seeking a relaxing diversion from real musical life into a vital concern committed to the vigorous pursual of a double policy of gathering the maximum amount of material in the field and then disseminating it as widely as possible. He antagonised a number of the Society's older members by his innovations, for he was never afraid to take issue with his contemporaries when he disagreed with their attitudes or actions where folk music was concerned. Nevertheless all who were sympathetic to the cause recognised the incalculable value of his work. When a new head-quarters for the English Folk Dance and Song Society was erected in 1930, it was named after Sharp and the foundation stone was inscribed: "This building is erected in memory of Cecil Sharp who restored to the English people the songs and dances of their country."

The Edwardian and early Georgian years marked the zenith of the English folk music movement's activities. The Folk Song Society was then at the height of its influence, regularly publishing fresh finds in its journal, agitating on behalf of the use of folk-song in schools, encouraging the inclusion of folk-song

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[1] quoted by Imogen Holst in 'Gustav Holst: a biography' (2nd edition 1969) p 28

classes in competitive festivals, holding biannual vacation schools under the auspices of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford, and generally stimulating a widespread interest in, or at least awareness of, the heritage of English folk-song. In 1911 the Folk Dance Club was transformed into the much larger and more influential English Folk Dance Society, a body which sought by demonstration and instruction to fan into flame the few dull embers that remained of the tradition of folk dancing in England. From 1911 until the outbreak of war, dances rather than songs were Sharp's main preoccupation and under his unflagging leadership the new society quickly made its mark. His efforts to dispel the tinge of antiquarianism which still lingered about the folk music movement were particularly successful in the case of the dances. He was convinced that the tradition was lying dormant rather than moribund, and in his presentation of the dances would countenance no hint of an olde worlde flavour. Under this influence, the folk music movement became a living issue in the years before the Great War; for a short period it even found a place among the fashionable pursuits.

Amongst English composers, an awareness of the potential importance of folk-song was limited to those under the age of about forty at the period in question. Parry and Stanford paid only lip service to the movement; Somervell recognised the importance of folk-music as educational material, but did not allow it to have any influence upon his own composing style; Ethel Smyth went so far as to quote folk-songs occasionally in her works but had no idea how to handle them sympathetically; and Elgar, having moved the adoption of the report at the first Annual General Meeting of the Folk Song Society, then dissociated himself entirely from the movement and eventually came to be of the opinion that any composer who

quoted a folk-song was shirking his job. It was the generation of composers born in the seventies - Vaughan Williams, Holst and Boughton - who were the first to recognise the importance of Sharp's work.* These three were all considered representatives of modernist trends in Georgian England, as were two slightly younger composers, George Butterworth and Percy Grainger, whose deep involvement in the folk music movement is reflected in the style of their works. Of the generation of composers born still later (i e during the 1890s), most of those whose works display folk-song influence acquired it at second hand from the music of the composers already mentioned; of this generation, only E J Moeran actually collected the folk-songs he used. Thus it was the composers who were in their late twenties, thirties or early forties in the early Georgian period for whom folk music was a matter of prime importance, one of the most interesting of whom was George Butterworth.

What made Butterworth unique was that his mature style sprang almost entirely from the idiom of folk-song. Others were influenced by folk music to a greater or lesser extent, but, even for those affected most radically, folk-song was an influence which acted upon an existing musical idiom, a style which, however unsatisfactory or derivative, was at least partly formed already. For Butterworth, however, folk-song was the major stimulus. His early works, written during his last years at Eton and while he was at Oxford, employ an anonymous style heavily influenced by Brahms and Schumann; recognising that there was nothing of value in them, in 1914 he destroyed everything that was more than three years old except one song and a suite for string quartet.

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* Not all were sympathetic; many would have joined Arnold Bax in endorsing Ernest Newman's scornful view of "solemn wassailing round the village pump".

It was while he was at Oxford that Butterworth first met Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams through whom he was drawn into the folk-song movement, collecting songs in Sussex and dances in Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, dancing in the display team of the English Folk Dance Society and arranging tunes for publication in 'The Morris Book'. He very quickly learnt the art of setting folk tunes sensitively; later Sharp was to admit that he could not always tell whether a particular arrangement had been made by himself or by Butterworth. All this time he continued to compose, stimulated especially by a short period of study at the Royal College in 1910, and gradually the influence of folk-song began to be felt in his original work.

The purest examples of folk-song influence in Butterworth's output were the 'Eleven Folk Songs from Sussex', songs from his own collection for which he provided imaginative but sympathetic piano accompaniments. In 1911, the year before these songs were published, Butterworth had completed the 'Two English Idylls', short orchestral folk-song rhapsodies which handle their themes with the ease and assurance of Vaughan Williams or Grainger at their best, and two years later a third idyll entitled 'The Banks of Green Willow' was written, a work of rather more substance using a richer harmonic language.

The two groups of songs using poems taken from Housman's 'A Shropshire Lad' are free of folk-song quotation but not of folk-song influence. Rutland Boughton, writing in 1913, recognised that "(Butterworth) has been so steeped in the spirit of English folk-song that he naturally and spontaneously expresses himself in similar terms"[1]. These songs made an instant impression, it being recognised immediately that the composer had provided "the

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1 "The Music Student", Vol VI No 4 (1913), p 85

inevitable musical counterpart to the verses"[1]. The style was highly original, eloquent but very spare, and quickly earned Butterworth the reputation of a first-rate song writer.

The most substantial of his orchestral compositions, the Rhapsody 'A Shropshire Lad', Butterworth described as being an epilogue to the two groups of Housman songs. All the principal thematic material is taken from 'Loveliest of Trees', the first song of the first set, and from this an eight-minute movement in an arch shape is moulded. Ernest Walker considered the work to be the composer's masterpiece; certainly it gives evidence of a sure and accomplished hand at work, as well as being very attractive. It made a strong impression under Nikisch in October 1913 in the crowded and brilliant environment of the Leeds Festival and again in London the following March.

Equally fine is the song-cycle 'Love blows as the wind blows', four poems by W E Henley set for baritone and string quartet. These songs use the same flexible and expressive musical idiom as the Rhapsody, at once disarmingly simple yet very subtle, and a common melody is used to brace the overall structure. These songs were apparently the last extant composition which Butterworth completed before joining the army in August 1914 (in the last months before the War he was occupied in rearranging them for voice and orchestra); they were not published until 1921 when they were seen through the press by Vaughan Williams, Butterworth's musical executor.

Butterworth's death in the trenches in July 1916 stimulated a burst of interest in his music but after the War his reputation declined. During the twenties and thirties his musical language, in a very debased form, was taken over by the light music composers, and it became fashionable for the more advanced of the serious

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1 W Wells-Harrison: 'Some Notable British Music'; 'The Musical Standard' Vol X (1916), p 81

composers to decry the activities of the folk-song school. To them, the use of folk-song seemed escapist, an avoidance of the issue of coming to terms with post-War musical developments. But before the Great War, a serious interest in folk-song was anything but escapist; Cecil Sharp's attitude had given an air of vitality and urgency to the whole folk music movement and the composers of repute who had shown interest in the cause were among the most progressive active at the time. At first these men (Vaughan Williams, Butterworth, Boughton, Grainger and Holst) did little more than deck out the tunes with appropriate accompaniments and then stitch them together into fantasias and rhapsodies. It soon became apparent, however, that quoting folk-songs and using modal harmony was not the whole story; there was much to be learnt from folk music in matters of directness of diction, economy of utterance and flexibility of rhythm. These were areas in which all five composers mentioned above made significant innovations with conspicuous success; and thus from folk music the highly individual idiom of each acquired distinctive qualities which were both radical in nature and of broad application.

A composer who combined an active interest in the most radical musical innovation with a wholehearted enthusiasm for English folk-song was Percy Grainger. Born in Australia in 1882, Grainger came to Europe in 1895 and enrolled as a student at the Hoch Conservatorium in Frankfurt. It was largely his friendship with his four English fellow students (Grainger was the youngest of the Frankfurt group) that decided him to settle in England at the end of his studenthood, and from 1901 until 1914 his home was in London. His early training had been as a pianist and it was largely in this capacity that he made his living during his years in this country, giving solo recitals in London and the provinces, undertaking foreign tours in the company of such artists as Adelina Patti, Charles Santley and Ada Crossley, playing concertos under Henry Wood, Dan Godfrey and

Hans Richter, and giving domestic recitals for London's society hostesses. The composers in whose work he specialised included Bach, Schumann, Debussy and Grieg (it was Grieg's enthusiasm for the young Australian's performance of his music that helped to earn Grainger an international reputation); his playing was well received by both the critics and the general public and his services as a pianist were greatly in demand. But his attitude to the piano and the concert pianist's life became increasingly ambivalent; absurdly hypercritical of his own performance, he had never taken himself seriously as a pianist and although he continued to make his living by playing, as the years passed he devoted more and more time and energy to other musical pursuits, chief among which were composition and folk-song collecting.

Before leaving Melbourne, Grainger had composed a few derivative trifles. In Frankfurt he studied composition first with Iwan Knorr, then with an amateur musician named Karl Klimsch; but his dislike of the former was so great and his lessons with the latter so unconventional that it is more truthful to describe him as being self-taught. As his friend Cyril Scott (a fellow student in Frankfurt) put it: "From the first, Grainger elected to go his own way and to be guided by his intuitions rather than the suggestions of a teacher." [1] It was about half way through his time in Frankfurt that Grainger began to evolve a distinctive musical style of his own. The works which survive from this period (the five orchestral pieces later published as the 'Youthful Suite' and the earliest of the Kipling settings) ignore many of the accepted canons of late nineteenth century German romanticism; they are pithy, concentrated and utterly direct, with rhythms that are strong and clearly marked and harmonies that are richly diatonic rather than chromatic. On the rare occasions when these early pieces were

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[1] Cyril Scott: The Philosophy of Modernism (undated) p 126

performed at the Conservatorium, they were greeted with laughter and contempt by both staff and students alike. This did not cause the young composer to modify his unconventional practices in any way; indeed his experiments became even more radical. Attempts to notate the beatless "free music" which ran through his head led to fantastic complexity in matters of pulse and metre, and his scoring became increasingly unconventional: whistlers, guitars and concertinas began to take their place among the varied assemblies of solo instruments (which he dubbed 'Large Room Music') for which many of his pieces were scored. His contemporaries' scorn gradually changed to respect and admiration under the influence of further performances of his works given after he had settled in London; but for several years these performances were restricted to trial runs given by a group of composers, performers and friends living in Kensington and Chelsea who met regularly in one another's houses to try out new compositions. It was not until 1905 that Grainger had his first independent performance when the Band of the Coldstream Guards tried through his setting of 'The Lads of Wamphray'.

It was in this same year that Grainger first became involved in the English folk music movement. He attended a competitive festival organised by the wife of the tenor Gervase Elwes in Brigg, Lincolnshire and in the folk-song class heard his first English folk-songs from the lips of an old countryman. His enthusiasm was fired and four months later he returned to Brigg and spent a week touring the district on a bicycle, noting down folk-songs. A year later he returned to Lincolnshire armed with an Edison Bell cylinder phonograph, a device which made collecting both quicker and more accurate (he was the first collector in the British Isles to make use of such a machine). He used a phonograph on all subsequent collecting trips over the next three years,

expeditions which took him to Gloucestershire and Worcestershire as well as back to Lincolnshire; and in Dartmouth and London he made a fine collection of shanties and sea songs. Despite publishing several essays and twenty-seven of his finds in the 'Journal of the Folk Song Society' in May 1908, Grainger never identified himself strongly with the official folk-song movement; many leading collectors frowned on his use of the phonograph and his personal relations with Cecil Sharp were never very good. However, students of the whole history of the folk music revival in England hold his name in high regard; he showed considerable musical intelligence in his collecting and presentation of the tunes,and his standards of scrupulous fidelity to the original performances were unequalled. His interest in folk music never abated but after about 1910 he transferred his collecting activities to less well-trodden paths in Scandinavia and New Zealand.

The most famous of Grainger's folk-song finds was 'Brigg Fair', a tune which he noted down on his first visit to Lincolnshire and set for unaccompanied choir the following year. This was among the batch of pieces which Grainger showed to Delius at their first meeting in the spring of 1907. The older composer was struck not only by the beauty of the tune but also by the remarkable likeness of Grainger's harmonic language to his own; it was this independently-arrived-at similarity of diction which first drew the two composers together. Delius' enthusiasm for the younger man's music helped to further the latter's reputation amongst professional musicians of a progressive inclination, and he was able to ensure that Grainger was invited to appear as both composer and performer at the first Musical League festival held in Liverpool in September 1909. The hugh success scored there by 'Brigg Fair' and the choral version of the 'Irish Tune from County Derry' marked the beginning

of Grainger's secondary career as a successful public composer.

For he was still very active as a concert pianist in the years before the Great War. As well as numerous solo recitals and concerto engagements in this country, every season he undertook a tour of Scandinavia and there were regular visits to other parts of North Europe. In November 1911 he played under Mengelberg at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and the following February he appeared with Beecham for the first time. In the autumn of 1913 there was a tour of sixty concerts in Norway, Russia and Finland, and a similar trip was planned for the following autumn. His works too were beginning to be played both at home and abroad, especially after the beginning of 1912 when, with financial help from Roger Quilter, he arranged with Schotts for the publication of some of his smaller pieces. Dan Godfrey introduced Grainger's work to Bournemouth in March 1912, and two months later the composer himself conducted a performance of 'Green Bushes' in Aachen. The following year saw his music played in three American cities and in February 1914 the Vienna Philharmonic gave 'Father and Daughter'. From 1912 onwards, Henry Wood regularly included his works at the Queen's Hall Proms, but the conductor who proved his truest friend at this time was Henry Balfour Gardiner; at his two series of orchestral concerts in 1912 and 1913 he gave no fewer than thirteen of Grainger's compositions, many of which were appearing in public for the first time.

Grainger was a scrupulous noter of dates when a composition was begun and finished, but often these dates are widely separated even in the case of a small-scale work. It appears that often a first draft would be tried through at an informal gathering, and then, in the light of this trial run and any subsequent private performances, alterations would be made until the composer was satisfied. Composition had to take its place in a timetable that also included practice, performance, a great deal of travelling,

folk-song work and a small amount of teaching; but it was natural inclination as well as practical considerations which led Grainger to produce mainly small-scale works. His ever-growing reputation as a composer during the early Georgian years led him to devote more and more time to composition, and after 1911 many previously half-finished works were completed and submitted to final revision for publication. Altogether the years 1910 to 1914 were some of the most productive of his **composing** career.

There are seven surviving original works dating from this period. 'Mock Morris' and 'Handel in the Strand' are affectionate tributes to the English folk dance tradition; each uses themes that have the cut of traditional tunes, and both capture the driving rhythm of clog dance and morris, but the material and its treatment are entirely Grainger's own. 'Arrival Platform Humlet' and 'The Gum-suckers' March', the outer movements of the suite 'In a Nutshell', were first performed in America in June 1916 but were composed in 1912 and 1914 respectively. The latter is an engagingly vulgar essay in Australian heartiness, but the former, despite its naive title, is highly original and of considerable interest. A single melodic line of wide range and irregular rhythm and metre is scored with great resource and perfect assurance for a large orchestra including an extensive section of tuned percussion instruments. 'We have fed our sea for a thousand years' and 'The Bride's Tragedy' are choral settings of Kipling and Swinburne, the latter being a highly characteristic blend of dashing vigour and heart-searching lament.

The remaining original work is 'Colonial Song', a short piece in which the composer sought "to express feelings aroused by thoughts of the scenery and people of his native land" [1]. It consists of a pentatonic tune subjected to an ever-increasingly lush harmonic treatment, producing an effect of extreme melodrama and

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[1] from a programme note by the composer appended to the published version

raw sentimentality. Clearly it meant much to Grainger; he published no fewer than eight different scorings of it, and frequently arranged for its performance. But the work has found few friends; the critic who reviewed its première (at a Balfour Gardiner concert in February 1913) for the 'Musical Times' felt it to be "scarcely worthy the occasion" and Beecham told Grainger the following year that he thought it was "the worst piece of modern times"[1]. Despite his itinerant mode of life, Grainger remained deeply attached to his native country and thus there is no doubting the unshakeable sincerity of the emotion that underlies 'Colonial Song'. One is forced to acknowledge the great strength of the work while at the same time recoiling from its over-blown vulgarity.

To say that the remainder of Grainger's published output dating from the pre-War period consists of arrangements is not to belittle the creative energy expended in its production. A number of his works of this type are on an extended scale, using folk or traditional tunes somewhat in the manner of passacaglia themes and thus allowing for great variety in their harmonic and contrapuntal treatment. Others are of more modest proportions and are more nearly strophic in their construction. But every one is totally individual (even in matters of scoring and no two are the same), each being a sensitive and imaginative treatment of simple musical material.

Of the large-scale folk-song pieces, the most impressive is 'Scotch Strathspey and Reel' begun in 1901, completed and scored ten years later and first performed (under Balfour Gardiner's direction) at an all-Grainger concert in May 1912. Once again the composer wrote his own programme note: "If a roomful of Scotch and Irish fiddlers and ... chanty-singing deep-sea sailors could be

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[1] quoted by John Bird in 'Percy Grainger' (1976) p 151

spirited together and suddenly miraculously endowed with the gift for polyphonic improvisation ...". The work is a contrapuntal tour de force combining six tunes of Celtic origin and the chanty 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?' in a rich melée of sound. The scoring for four mens' voices accompanied by five wind instruments, eight strings, two guitars, xylophone and concertina, is perfectly calculated and beautifully apt. Something of the same mood of infectious vigour is encountered in 'The Lost Lady Found', a Lincolnshire folk-song from Lucy Broadwood's collection set by Grainger in 1910. Although shorter and simpler than the 'Strathspey and Reel', this piece is equally resourceful in its constantly varying harmonisations and accompaniments. A basic ensemble of thirteen instruments joins a four-part choir in a setting in which inventive treatment never obscures the direct style of the original melody; in his "Hints to Performers",Grainger draws attention to the close connection between folk-song and folk-dance, and his setting emphasises the characteristic rhythm of the three steps basic to English folk-dance.

A very different mood pervades in 'My Robin is to the Greenwood Gone', a "room-music ramble upon the first four bars of the old tune of that name for Flute, English horn and six strings" written in 1912 and published by Grainger in his series "Settings of Songs and Tunes from William Chappell's 'Old English Popular Music'". This was another work which first appeared at the Grainger concert given in the Aeolian Hall on 21st May 1912; it scored an instant success on that occasion and became one of his most frequently performed pieces. The scrap of traditional tune provides both the lilting trochaic metre which permeates the piece and also the melodic seed from which the substantial movement grows, but the meat of the music is Grainger's own work. This is less

true of another in the same series of works, a setting of a traditional version of 'The Willow Song' for voice, guitar and four strings. Here the old melody is quoted in full and in unaltered form, the skill of the composer being shown in the varying harmonisation and scoring of each of the three verses. The simple poignancy of the dorian modality of the first two verses gives way to a more impassioned chromaticism in the third, which the singer is instructed to perform "impulsively and very feelingly".

Grainger was (and still is) pilloried for his practice of replacing the conventional Italian terms indicating the manner of performance by highly idiosyncratic English equivalents; but, however tiresome his quirky translations seem to the unsympathetic, this course of action makes his intentions unmistakably clear and was initially undertaken in the interest of ease of performance. His concern with practical considerations further led him to publish many of his pieces in several different scorings, short pieces for highly unconventional groups of instruments standing far less chance of performance than the same music scored for a standard instrumental grouping. These rescorings unfortunately seldom enhance the musical effect: in its original version for twelve solo instruments 'Shepherd's Hey', an extended setting of four variants of a Morris Dance tune, has an effortless sprightliness which is quite lost in the cumbersome arrangement for full orchestra made a few years later, and the same is true of the different versions of 'Mock Morris' and 'Molly on the Shore'. The 'Irish Tune from County Derry' is a rare exception to this general rule; the setting for strings and horns made in 1913 is more effective than the original version for wordless chorus written several years earlier, although the limited success of the latter- in performance may well owe something to the latter-

day practice of giving it with choirs very much smaller than those for which Grainger was writing.

The small-scale published pieces which date from the pre-War years exhibit as high a level of inspiration and workmanship as do the composer's more extended works. 'The Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol' for piano, 'Six Dukes went a'fishin' ', a Lincolnshire folk-song set with a piano accompaniment, and 'There was a pig went out to dig', a Lancashire nursery rhyme arranged for four-part women's chorus, are all, despite their modest proportions, highly imaginative and felicitous works in which clever treatment never over-burdens the unsophisticated spirit of the raw material. All are unmistakeably Grainger's own; his folk-song settings never attempted the timeless anonymity of those of Vaughan Williams, but are, in the best sense of the word, 'contrived', and belong very much to the time in which they were conceived. Some of Grainger's contemporaries set folk-songs using all the resources of late romantic chromatic harmony; but in their works of this type the traditional and the new were in no sense reconciled and the over-all effect was one of jarring solecism. Grainger was unquestionably a modernist, but also had a deep respect for, and understanding of, the spirit as well as the letter of folk-song. He saw no reason why his two enthusiasm should not be combined and his technique was sufficiently assured to enable him to mingle the two with conspicuous success.

Despite his abiding love for his native country and his boundless enthusiasm for all things Scandinavian, Grainger regarded London as his home from the summer of 1901 onwards, and it seems likely that he would have continued to do so but for the outbreak of the Great War. By 1914 his involvement in various branches of musical activity had led to his becoming something of a celebrity in this country; but it was his activities as a pianist and a folk-

music enthusiast that had first earned him fame, evidence of his gifts as a composer having only recently appeared. His works were in general well-received and their performance was becoming increasingly frequent, but they had not yet secured any permanent position in the repertoire: interest in them was still largely stimulated by the composer's striking presence or forceful participation in their performance. Proof of his popularity is given by the growing number of performances his music received in Georgian England, but the impermanence of his reputation is shown by the neglect his works suffered after his departure for America in the autumn of 1914.

The other members of the 'Frankfurt group' (Cyril Scott, Balfour Gardiner, Roger Quilter and Norman O'Neill) remained largely unaffected by the folk-song movement. Scott and Quilter were among those who published arrangements in which folk and traditional tunes are weighed down with cloying chromatic harmony, the former with his 'Old Songs in New Guise' for voice and 'British Melodies' for piano, the latter with his 'Two Old English Tunes' for piano trio. Balfour Gardiner showed a far greater sensitivity in his choral arrangements of 'And how should I your true love know?' and 'Sir Eglamore', but works of this type formed only a tiny part of his output; Grainger aside, none of Iwan Knorr's English pupils showed any real interest, understanding or appreciation of folk-song.

The catalogue of Scott's works dating from the early Georgian period is largely made up of small-scale pieces - songs, piano miniatures and short works for violin - although a piano concerto, a piano quintet and three orchestral works also belong to this stage in his career. The shorter works show a greater stylistic homogeneity; although not all are equally successful, the accusation of cheapness and vulgarity can no longer be levelled at many of them. The most serious weaknesses in many of them are their vapidity and triviality, stylistic flaws brought on largely by

Scott's over-production. As a reviewer of an 'Album of Six Pianoforte Pieces' published in 1913 remarked " ... it is not (Scott's) practice, it appears, to let composition wait upon inspiration, but to compose and hope for inspiration to come in the process. The hope is realised for several moments in the course of the pieces under review, but not with regularity, and there are passages in them whose sole function is to bear the signature Cyril Scott."[1] This is fair comment; Scott's style unfortunately lent itself to mannerism, and some of his small-scale works amount to little more than an attractive surface and are quite lacking in any urgency or distinction. There is very little substance to a piece like 'Sea Marge' which dates from 1914: a sequential pattern, repeated in part or in toto twenty-one times, is interrupted by a weak diatonic tune decked out with chromatic harmonies. There are traces of a personal touch in the lush harmonisation and the strings of perfect fourths in the sequential pattern; but the musical matter is spread extremely thinly, and for a musician of Scott's abilities it is a very lightweight piece of work.

Of more interest are 'Egypt' and 'Impressions from the Jungle Book', two five-movement suites brought out by Schott in 1912, and better still are the contemporary 'Poems' for piano. Although of modest dimensions, these pieces are of an artistic stature that raises them quite above the general level of his miniatures; the matter of the music is both stronger and more substantial, and its manner more accomplished in technique and more subtle in presentation. It is more than mere coincidence that all the best movements in these suites depict vivid and strongly atmospheric scenes; this gives the music a clear sense of purpose and raises

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1 'Musical Times' Vol LIV (1913), p 660

it above the level of "pleasantly superfluous aural titillation" [1]. The manipulation of harmony was the basic element in Scott's technique, and it is by means of rich chromatic chords that he makes his most remarkable and vivid effects. The 'Poems', with their passages of atonality, are the most interesting in this respect; each is preceded by a piece of the composer's own verse, and much of the strength and sureness of these pieces lies in the perfect unity between the verbal and musical evocations.

Some of the best of Scott's violin music dates from the years between 1910 and 1914. The Sonata with piano accompaniment, a substantial work varied in mood and advanced in technique, reached its final form in 1910 (an earlier version having been given by Ethel Barnes and the composer at a Bechstein Hall recital in 1908); Eaglefield Hull called it "unquestionably one of Cyril Scott's greatest works" [2]. Of lesser stature but greater popularity (partly on account of its comparatively modest technical demands) was the 'Tallahassee Suite' of 1911, three movements with a North American flavour. 'Bygone Memories' and 'After Sundown' are conventional Scott effusions, rather reminiscent of _genre_ pieces by Edward Macdowell; the finale, 'Negro Air and Dance' is more remarkable in being a rare incursion into the realm of ragtime. The 'Two Sonnets' which appeared in 1914 are described by Eaglefield Hull as "non-tonal", a curious use of the term since the two are labelled, quite justifiably, as being "in C" and "in E major". This is music which inhabits the dangerous borderland between the charming and the facile, although the exotic harmony lends them a certain distinction. Less happy are the sickly harmonies of the settings of two traditional tunes, 'Cherry Ripe' and 'Gentle Lass', which appeared in 1911 and 1912; here the naive melodies and the highly

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[1] from the passage on Scott in Christopher Palmer's _Impressionism in Music_ (1973) p 161

[2] _Cyril Scott: Composer, Poet and Philosopher_ (1921) p 115

sophisticated settings marry most unhappily.

The Piano Quintet of 1911/12 was a radical reworking of a sextet written some eight years previously, but never published or publicly performed. It was first given at one of Scott's concerts of his own compositions at Bechstein Hall in 1912, but had to wait some twelve years for publication, being issued by Stainer and Bell under the auspices of the Carnegie Trust in 1924. Even after publication it made remarkably little stir, and before the Great War the only performance that can be traced other than the public première was one given in Vienna in the autumn of 1913. Eaglefield Hull wrote about the work with great enthusiasm, particularly commending the way in which the four movements are integrated and braced by the use of common material. An inspection of the score reveals a substantial work not remarkable for its tautness of structure. There is Scott's usual relaxed chromatic harmony underpinned by diatonic points of reference: the metre is very fluid and the melodic material sinuous and expansive. The work's chief weakness is a certain monotony of texture: there are long paragraphs, especially in the first and second movements, where a single figuration or effect is used exhaustively, a characteristic which is made more unfortunate by the density of the texture in many of these passages. But despite this drawback, the quintet seems to be a strong work, conceived on a genuinely large scale and carried through with imagination and a sure touch.

The largest and most important of Scott's pre-War works, the Piano Concerto in C, uses a style similar to that of the quintet, but annoying blemishes in a work lasting a quarter of an hour become serious flaws in a work more than twice as long. The melodic material is strikingly anonymous, the overall structure of the work diffuse, and the harmony is weak-kneed and predictable by Scott's

standards. Even after repeated hearings no musical gesture of any size remains in the mind, only a succession of similar exotic flavours. The composer reckoned the first movement to sound like the work of a Chinese Scarlatti, but it exhibits no vestige of the wit and pungency of Scarletti's music,and the Chinese element is restricted to a few pentatonic flourishes and a frequent use of tuned percussion instruments. Kaikhosru Sorabji's waspish diatribe against Scott's Piano Sonata of 1908 applies to the concerto even more closely: " ... the astonishing creation ... which underneath its trumpery finery of ninths, elevenths, added sixths, joss-sticks, papier-Asia Orientalism and pinchbeck Brummagem-Benares nick-nackery, oozes with glutinous commonplace." [1]

The work never won a safe place in the regular repertoire. It was composed in the winter and early spring of 1913/14, and the premiѐre was planned to take place in Germany in the following autumn. The War frustrated this scheme, delaying the first performance until May 1915 when it was given at Queen's Hall with the composer as soloist and Thomas Beecham conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. A plan to take it to Russia soon afterwards fell through, and the only other war-time performance of the work was at Bournemouth in March 1917 with the composer as soloist once again. Indeed it was the presence of the composer as pianist that was, in the opinion of the 'Musical Times' critic, responsible for the good audience that attended the mixed all-English programme which included the premiѐre of the work. The review continues: "The new concerto is full of novelties; on the whole we found it amazing and at times more distressing than beautiful." [2] This is a salutary reminder of the novelty of Scott's idiom to audiences of sixty years ago. So many of his harmonic procedures became the

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[1] 'Around Music' (1932) p 63

[2] 'Musical Times' Vol LVI (1915), p 363

common currency of both serious and popular composers after the War that one is apt to forget that it was not for nothing that he was regarded as one of the _enfants terribles_ of music in early Georgian England. His small-scale works were accessible enough, but in his most advanced vein all but those of the most progressive inclination were daunted.

There is no doubt that Scott was a very gifted composer; he was also, in the early part of his career, a very successful one in terms of both public acclaim and financial reward. His share in the profits from the enormous sale of his songs and piano pieces, when added to his private income, allowed him to live a very comfortable existence during the years before the Great War. He had left his native Cheshire midway through the Edwardian decade and settled in London where, apart from his activity as a composer, he did a small amount of private teaching and some concert work, although this was apparently entirely restricted to the performance of his own music. He regularly spent four of every twelve months in foreign travel, he expended much energy in the production of a considerable quantity of verse (both original work and translations of modern European poetry) and found time to indulge a deep and ever more absorbing interest in spiritualism, the occult and Eastern philosophy. This comfortable and diversified existence helps to explain the lack of urgency and of total involvement often noted in Scott's music. Composition had become but one of a number of his creative activities and there is evidence from his writings that he experienced his deepest sense of fulfilment from his absorption in the study of the occult.

His position in the early Georgian musical world was a curious one. Despite holding himself aloof from all but the most fitful involvement with musical public life, he had a considerable reputation which was therefore earned for him almost entirely by

his compositions. As a composer, his sympathies unquestionably lay in the direction of experiment and he evolved a very original, highly distinctive musical language. Early in his career he had tempered his progressive inclinations in the interests of securing popular appeal. But in the pre-War years, he was in the enviable position of not having to stifle his modernistic inclinations in order to retain his considerable following; the media in which he chose to work and the forms in which he cast the bulk of his compositions made them comparatively easy of access. In short, he was that rare being, an English composer with a wide following both at home and abroad, and possessed of a highly original style which placed him briefly at the forefront of European musical development.

After 1909 a change came over Balfour Gardiner's composing career. He seems to have become surer of himself, allowing more of his music to be made public, and he scored several resounding successes with works which were immediately taken into the regular repertoire, notably the orchestral 'Shepherd Fennel's Dance' and the choral 'News from Whydah'. The former, an evocation of a spirited country-dance scene in one of Hardy's 'Wessex Tales', was composed at Christmas-time in 1910 and was first given at a Prom the following year. Audiences loved the work and it was immediately taken up by other conductors and orchestras; a piano adaptation appeared in 1911 and a score one year later. It is a robust and highly accomplished piece of light music, sparely built, clearly characterised and orchestrated with great skill.
'News from Whydah' is similarly vigorous, but is grim rather than warm-hearted. It is a setting for chorus and orchestra of one of John Masefield's darksome nautical ballads, and it is the swagger, cruelty and cynicism of the text which Gardiner underlines most strongly. Composed in October 1911, it was one of the few of his

own works that he allowed to appear at his concert series; he conducted the première himself at Queen's Hall on 13th March 1912. In view of his stringent self-criticism it is interesting to note that Gardiner said of this piece that it was "by far the best, most effective and most popular work I have written"[1].

The breezy energy of Masefield's verse was clearly congenial to Gardiner; he chose several more of his verses as the texts for songs and partsongs, one of the most effective of which was a four-part setting of 'Cargoes' which appeared in 1912. But this is by no means the only mood which Gardiner's best music reflects, as is borne out by another work for chorus and orchestra, 'April', which first appeared at a Royal Choral Society concert in December 1913. Edward Carpenter's verses speak of " ... April, month of Nymphs and Cupids / Month of the Sun-god's kisses ..." and the musical treatment is appropriately lyrical and sensuous. The influence of Delius (a close friend of Gardiner's) is apparent in a number of aspects of this work - in the rich chromatic harmony, the lilting triple metre in which most bars fall into the pattern of minim followed by crotchet, and the tiny woodwind arabesques which flash in and out of the texture. The name of Delius has also been invoked with reference to 'A Berkshire Idyll', a tone poem written at Gardiner's Ashampstead cottage and completed on July 28th 1913. This was a work of the merit of which the composer was unsure; reading the score three years later, he expressed himself "delighted with some of the material"[2], but nevertheless it remained unperformed until 1955, five years after his death.

The other pieces by which Balfour Gardiner was known in the years before the Great War were on a smaller scale - songs, part-songs and piano pieces. His fingerprints are as evident here as

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[1] quoted by Stephen Lloyd in the programme notes for a Balfour Gardiner Centenary Concert given in London in November 1977

[2] ibid

in the more substantial works: the texture of the music is clear, the rhythms sturdy, the harmonic palette rich and every piece has the feeling of having been pared down to its essentials with no padding to be found anywhere. But despite its unconventional bluntness, and Gardiner's love for and championship of modern English music, his work is essentially conservative in spirit. Stylistic links can be found between his music and that of Grainger and Scott, but whereas they were forward-looking, Gardiner affirmed the musical status quo. In Frank Howes' words " ... he pinpoints ... the golden noon of Edwardian England as known to a sane, cultivated and generous mind"[1]. That the composer himself recognised that his music belonged to one particular period is shown by his reaction to the post-War change of climate, a self-imposed termination of his active musical career. In early Georgian England, however, he was a figure of some consequence who was universally admired by his professional colleagues and had won the public ear with a number of his works.

After the considerable success of his music to 'The Blue Bird', Norman O'Neill continued to concentrate his efforts on producing music for the theatre during the early Georgian years. 'Don', 'Priscilla Runs Away' and 'All that Matters' did not offer great scope to the composer but 'The Gods of the Mountain' and 'The Golden Doom' by Lord Dunsaney, Ibsen's 'The Pretenders' and T W Broadhurst's 'The Holy City' all required specially-composed music, some of it quite lengthy and elaborate. Like Edward German before him, O'Neill extracted a number of items suitable for concert performance from his theatre music scores, several of which were published in piano arrangements: the waltz from 'Priscilla Runs Away',

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1 The English Musical Renaissance (1966) p 196

two dances from 'The Gods of the Mountain' and 'Håkon's Lullaby' from 'The Pretenders'. On occasion he transformed music from his stage works into entirely independent concert items, as in 1911 when material written previously for a production of 'The Bride of Lammermoor' was woven into 'A Scotch Rhapsody', and in 1913 when three movements from the ballet 'A Forest Idyll' were given by the Royal Philharmonic Society as 'Introduction, Mazurka and Finale' and repeated a few months later at a Balfour Gardiner concert.

The only wholly original orchestral work dating from this period was a 'Humoresque' first performed at the I S M Congress held in London at New Year 1914 (on the same day that the première took place, the composer read a paper on 'Music for Stage Plays' to the Congress); the 'Theme and Variations on an Irish Air' which Wood gave at a Prom in 1911 was an orchestration of a two-piano work written in 1905. O'Neill's only other early Georgian works were a handful of songs and small piano pieces.

What of the style of his music? In the half page which Joseph Holbrooke devoted to him in 'Contemporary British Composers' occurs the phrase "excellent light music"[1] and this sums up O'Neill's work perfectly. Excellent it surely was; O'Neill was in possession of an unfailing fount of attractive melody, an assured technique, impeccable taste and a total understanding of the media for which he wrote. But there is no question that it was also light music; everything is on a small scale, dance measures are used much of the time, darker moods are only occasionally touched on and never explored, textures are simple and the musical procedures straightforward. Even when there is no clue to its exact nature, one feels that there must always have been a

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[1] 'Contemporary British Composers' (1925) p 278

programme, or perhaps just a picture, in the composer's mind; his father had been a popular painter of genre pictures, accomplished, charming and intentionally facile works, and the son was his exact musical counterpart. O'Neill's work stands in the tradition of Cowen and German, but had just sufficient modern spice about its harmony and leanness about its texture to give it appeal after the music of these older men had begun to appear dated. In pre-War England O'Neill had a safe position, albeit a humble one, in the mainstream of musical development.

The fifth member of the 'Frankfurt group' was Roger Quilter. Born in 1877, he was Balfour Gardiner's exact contemporary, and the two men further shared a family background of ease and plenty which rendered wage-earning unnecessary. After four and a half years' study in Frankfurt, Quilter settled in London where he remained for the rest of his life leading an externally uneventful existence. He occasionally appeared as pianist at song recitals where his own works were being performed, and he is listed as a guitarist and xylonphonist at the Aeolian Hall Grainger concert of May 1912, but otherwise he played no active part in musical public life.

From the outset of his composing career, it was the solo song which was his preferred medium; more than two-thirds of his published works are for voice and piano. His choice of poets ranged from Shakespeare and the Jacobeans to writers of the 1890s, and he even wrote the verses of his Opus 1, 'Four Songs of the Sea', himself. To all he brought a sensitive ear, a refined technique and a gift for charming melody, just as he did to his works in other media - the 'Three Studies for Piano' Opus 4 and the 'Serenade for Small Orchestra' which was first performed at a Prom in 1907. He understood the limitations of his gift and never tried to write beyond its bounds*; indeed he never sought to develop his idiom or

* An exception is provided by his light opera 'Julia' produced at Covent Garden in 1936, a work which demonstrates his inability to write on an extended scale.

expand his range in any way. All the elements of his mature style are to be found in his first widely successful work, the 'Three Shakespeare Songs' written in 1903 and published two years later, and the third group of Shakespeare settings, which he brought out in 1933, is stylistically identical with the set produced thirty years previously.

It is no surprise to find that Quilter's music in no way reflects the spirit of upheaval and innovation current in Georgian England. Dating from this time are several sets of songs, all highly polished, discreetly sentimental and technically undemanding, and a certain amount of orchestral music, charming, melodious and urbane. The most satisfying of the songs are those to texts by modern poets - W E Henley, William Watson and Norah Hopper; Quilter's music has a strong flavour of the nineties about it which matches particularly well the poetry that sprang from the same artistic climate. The ingenuous innocence of Herrick and Keats does not accord so happily with Quilter's highly sophisticated, slightly arch simplicity.

The major orchestral work dating from this time is the incidental music to the fairy play 'Where the Rainbow Ends', first produced at the Savoy Theatre in December 1911. Although written quickly as a pièce d'occasion and not accorded the dignity of an opus number, this proved to be a work which lived on; the play (with Quilter's music) was revived every Christmas for many years, and the four-movement orchestral suite drawn from the incidental music had some success as a concert item at the Proms and elsewhere. The composer's most popular orchestral work, 'A Children's Overture', was written as part of the music to 'Where the Rainbow Ends', but for some reason was not used in the original production and lay unheard until 1920 when it was revised and published.

Although Quilter's music reflects nothing of the spirit of innovation present in the work of many English composers of the

time, his reputation as a composer grew considerably during the early Georgian years. Apart from his current output, a number of previously-written works, such as the 'Four Child Songs' Opus 4 and the 'Three English Dances' opus 11, were published and performed, and his name appears more and more frequently in press reports of song recitals. Gervase Elwes, who, in the wake of the popularity of 'The Dream of Gerontius', had become one of the best known male singers in England, was a particularly fine and faithful interpreter of Quilter's songs, and amateur singers too were attracted to them. Quilter's publishers, Boosey and Co., were the sponsors of the leading ballad concerts of the day, a species of concert which drew enormous audiences and had considerable influence upon public taste. Quilter's works with their charm and fluency fitted in well at such concerts for, although of far greater integrity, many of his songs make no more serious demands upon a singer's technique than do those of Wilfred Sanderson and the other ballad-mongers. The reason for the integrity of Quilter's songs is closely bound up with the purity and individuality of his style; for all its reactionary grammar, his idiom is strongly personal. A happy outcome of this artistic integrity, coupled with dual appeal in both professional and amateur circles, was the permanence of his reputation. For of all the 'Frankfurt group' it is Quilter whose flame of reputation has burnt the steadiest; never has there been a time when some of his best and most characteristic work has not been in the regular repertoire. However, in the years immediately before the Great War there was nothing to suggest that this would be the case; then Quilter's fame was still growing, and there was little to single him out from a great many other young composers working in England at the time.

As has already been implied, Frank Bridge's career as a composer, after the conventional beginnings outlined in chapter three,

took an unexpected turn as his style underwent a remarkable transformation. This was of course a gradual process which can be traced over something like twenty years. It has been suggested that the cause of this change of direction was the composer's reaction to the horrors of the Great War; but, while it is true that the War undoubtedly had a major effect upon his musical personality, it would be quite mistaken to imply that there was no hint of innovation to be found in the works written before August 1914. This is one of those cases where major changes which came about in the wake of the War have obscured smaller but no less significant developments which had been set in motion in the immediate pre-War period. For the early Georgian years clearly mark a watershed in Bridge's composing career, a period during which he was both perfecting the details of his early style and at the same time becoming aware of its limitations and beginning to branch out in new directions.

In 1910 Bridge produced the finest of his phantasy pieces, the Quartet in F sharp for piano and strings. There is nothing innovatory or even forward-looking about the material this work presents or the compositional procedures it reveals, but for the first time in the composer's output matter and manner are totally reconciled into a satisfying organic whole. Herbert Howells has declared that "there are few modern chamber works - English or other - more fluent, more judicious in gesture and technical 'behaviour' "[1]. The melodic material is warmly expressive and the work as a whole captures the phantasy spirit of unity in diversity with conspicuous success. It marks Bridge's entry into full maturity as a composer.

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[1] in an obituary article on Bridge in '<u>Music and Letters</u>' Vol XII (1941) p 208

In the following year he completed what proved to be the most popular of his orchestral works, the symphonic suite, 'The Sea'. The reasons for its success are not difficult to find, for it combines great melodic warmth with some highly accomplished and atmospheric musical pictorialism. This evocative quality drew the attention of many early critics away from the sophisticated and expertly-handled technical processes employed in the work; the panel of judges who selected it for publication under the auspices of the Carnegie Trust found it nothing more than "a notable example of what ... is called 'atmosphere' in music"[1]. Nevertheless, it was the strictly musical procedures which were of prime interest to Bridge in this work as in most others, as the subtitle 'symphonic suite' suggests; the four movements are braced by the application of stringent musical logic in the form of transformation and contrapuntal combination of the themes and careful control over the harmonic scheme. The work first appeared at a Prom in September 1912 and scored an instant success. Henry Wood always retained a strong affection for it, keeping it in his repertoire for many years; but the composer came to regret the success of a work which, if highly accomplished, was also quite uncharacteristic of his later style, and when told by Wood of its successful performance many years later, Bridge apparently remarked "Oh, that. It's such an old work, why do you play it?"[2]

1912 saw the completion of two chamber works which had been begun some half-dozen years earlier and thus have their origins in the composer's early, less distinctive style. A version of the Piano Quintet had been completed in 1905 and performed on a number of occasions, but in 1912 it was subjected to a thorough revision: the original slow movement and scherzo were telescoped into a single movement, the development sections of the outer movements were considerably modified and the piano part was integrated more successfully into the overall texture. Attractive and impressive as the

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1 quoted by Sir Jack Westrup in British Music of our time (1946) p 78

2 Henry Wood: 'My Life of Music' (1938) p 274

final version is, it is neither as distinctive nor as satisfying as the Phantasy Piano Quartet, seeming never to have fully recovered from its difficult gestation. The String Sextet in E flat, composed between 1906 and 1912, also looks back rather than forward; in the context of his earlier works it is a fine achievement, strong and attractive material skilfully and imaginatively treated, but in comparison with his more innovatory contemporary works it seems tame and reactionary.

Like many of his colleagues, Bridge wrote fine teaching music, little violin and piano pieces of the highest integrity but making only the most modest technical demands upon the performer. He also wrote a great deal of what might be termed 'music for gifted amateurs', compositions requiring a fair degree of technical ability and musicianship for their successful performance, but of modest dimensions and using a straightforward, conservative idiom. All Bridge's songs fall into this category, being in a superior drawing-room style, attractive, highly-charged, sentimental and utterly conventional. It must have been with effusions of this type such as 'Isobel' (dated 'October 1912') and 'O that it were so' (which appeared the following year) in mind that Joseph Holbrooke wrote " ... Bridge, like all of us, has had to go to the God Mammon with lesser offerings at times for his bread."[1] Much of Bridge's early piano music is in a similar vein. Eleven years separated the composition of 'Columbine' (1912) and 'Minuet' (1901), the first two of the 'Three Piano Pieces' published by Augener in 1913, yet both are identical in style, elegant, melifluous and facile. Something of the idiom of the 'Novelettes' and 'Idylls' for string quartet is continued in the third set of 'Miniatures' for piano trio which most probably belongs to the pre-War years.

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1 '<u>Contemporary British Composers</u>' (1925) p 62

The grammar is conventional but the syntax highly distinctive, the whole forming a characteristic blend of the straightforward and the subtle.

The 'Dance Poem' for orchestra was written between January and July 1913 and was first performed at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert the following March with the composer conducting. The work is cast in the form of a large-scale symphonic waltz which plays continuously but is subdivided into six sections labelled 'The Dancer', 'Allurement', 'Abandon', 'Tenderness', 'Problem' and 'Disillusion'. As with 'The Sea', the composer has drawn attention away from the purely intellectual appreciation of the music by choosing a picturesque subject and giving the work a highly-coloured and attractive surface. But beneath this surface the constructional processes have been thought out more carefully than ever before; there is a great deal of manipulation and combination of the themes and a further development of his favourite arch structure. Add to this an expansion of the harmonic language to embrace a much greater degree of chromaticism and it becomes evident that the 'Dance Poem' marks a major stylistic step forward. It certainly caused considerable concern to its early reviewers: the 'Musical Times' found it "bizarre, and ... designed apparently to amaze and startle" and hoped that the composer would "revert to the style in which he has distinguished himself"[1].

At the close of 1913, Bridge wrote a piano piece entitled 'Solitude' and early in the following year produced two companion pieces, 'Ecstasy' and 'Sunset', publishing the group in 1915 as 'Three Poems'. 'Ecstasy', with its soaring triplets and tumbling chromatic thirds, is impressive but not especially distinctive: the other pieces, however, are more remarkable. 'Sunset' too has its

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1 Musical Times Vol LV (1914), p 257

falling chromatic lines but in the context of richly-discordant, almost static harmonies and slowly lilting compound time of varying metre, they take on a new expressive quality. 'Solitude' is totally original; there is no melody to speak of, the harmonies wander apparently aimlessly, the texture is extremely spare, and a syncopated rhythmic ostinato fills sixty-four of the sixty-nine bars. Clearly the revolution in Bridge's style was well under way by the end of 1913.

The last work which he completed before war broke out was typically ambivalent; in the picture it paints, the easy warmth of its melody and its concern with beauty of sound, the tone poem 'Summer' looked back to the safe territory of 'The Sea' and the Piano Quartet, but its impressionist orchestration and pointillist texture were quite new to his music, and these proved to be stylistic devices which he explored exhaustively in the orchestral music he wrote during the 1920s. The new techniques are handled with perfect assurance in 'Summer'; however radical the innovations, there is never any straining or fumbling in Bridge's mature works. In a generation of fine craftsmen, he was an outstanding figure, although this very professionalism was held against him in some quarters; Vaughan Williams, writing to Gustav Holst in 1931, expressed the opinion that " ... the deepest abyss of the result of writing "effectively" is Frank Bridge" [1].

But strictures of this type belong mainly to the later period of Birdge's career; before the Great War he was well-known and respected in musical circles, famous rather more for his practical activities than for his original work. The quartet of which he was a regular member, the English String Quartet, had quickly established

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[1] quoted by Michael Kennedy in '<u>The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams</u> (1964) p 376

itself as one of the leading English ensembles, and in addition to his regular appearances with it, he found time to undertake a certain amount of free-lance playing. This was also one of the most active periods of his conducting career: he took charge of Marie Brema's opera seasons at the Savoy in 1910 and 1911 and conducted for Beecham and Raymond Rose at Covent Garden in 1913, as well as appearing with the Royal Philharmonic Society orchestra, the Queen's Hall Orchestra and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra. The compositions of his which were in wide circulation before the War were not his best or most characteristic; apart from songs and instrumental miniatures, his only published works in 1914 were the 'Idylls', the Phantasy Quartet and the Phantasy Trio. It was as a song composer that he first "rose to a prominent position" [1], and it was still by his songs and piano pieces, i e his most reactionary and least personal works, that he was most widely known. It took the increased popularity of chamber music and the interest in the work of native composers fostered by the musical conditions prevalent during the Great War to earn him a more worthy and balanced reputation as a composer.

John Ireland was born in the same year as Bridge and similarly studied with Stanford at the Royal College of Music; but whereas Bridge was a young man of twenty with a deal of practical experience behind him when he first encountered Stanford, Ireland was a raw, shy youth of sixteen. The influence for good of the older man's brusque manner and heavy-handed methods with his more sensitive pupils has been questioned: Peter Pirie has written "All his pupils took years to live down the chronic sense of inferiority he imparted ... Ireland may have been permanently crippled ..." [2]

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[1] Eaglefield-Hull: '<u>A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians</u>' (1924) p 62

[2] '<u>Bantock and his generation</u>': '<u>Musical Times</u> Vol CIX (1968), p 715

This is a serious overstatement; like all Stanford's pupils, Ireland later wrote with affection of the man and with respect of his methods. What cannot be denied is that the young student's musical personality was for a time submerged beneath that of his teacher. In the long term this was of the greatest benefit to Ireland's technique, but it did bring about a temporary anonymity of diction; most of his student works seem to have sounded very much like those of any other contemporary disciple of Brahms. He was not unaware of this, and suppressed or destroyed a great deal of the music written during his period of study with Stanford which came to an end in 1901. At the very end of his life, Ireland allowed a few of these very early works to be performed, by which time their obvious debt to the Brahms tradition had ceased to be a serious impediment to their enjoyment. At least one, a sextet for clarinet, horn and strings, was deemed worthy of publication, some sixty years after its composition.

Ireland continued this policy of rigorous self-censorship after he had left the Royal College. The Society of British Composers Yearbook for 1907/08 mentions two orchestral works, a string quartet and four substantial pieces for piano, none of which appear in the official list of his output: all that survives from before 1908 are a few songs and partsongs and some church music. A small number of more extended works dating from the very end of the Edwardian decade escaped suppression, but nothing of any size appeared during 1910, 1911 or 1912. Thereafter works appeared regularly but by no means frequently; even when at the height of his powers, Ireland never wrote copiously.

Two works dating from before 1910 should be mentioned, the Phantasy Trio in A minor and the Violin Sonata in D minor. The trio took second prize in the Cobbett competition of which Frank Bridge was the winner, but compared with the latter's work,

Ireland's trio seems dull and pedestrian. The melodies are short-winded and pale, the rhythms square and repetitive and the texture unadventurous. The sonata, however, is far stronger and more interesting. It was composed between the summer of 1908 and the autumn of 1909 and published in 1911, but revised on subsequent reprintings in 1917 and 1944. Of the weaknesses noted in the trio, the only one still clearly in evidence is a tendency to rhythmic monotony. The melodic material is at once freer and stronger, especially in the lovely second movement entitled 'Romance', and the textures are very rich and varied. The work made a strong impression at its first performance (at a Dunhill Chamber Concert in March 1913) but thereafter enjoyed a quiet career until new interest in it was awakened by the phenomenal success of the Second Violin Sonata in 1917.

Only two tiny works in the official list of Ireland's output are dated '1910', and neither of those was published. The following year was a little more productive in that some instrumental miniatures and three solo songs appeared, but none is in the least remarkable. In the summer of 1912 the composer visited the Channel Islands for the first time and, bearing in mind the powerful influence which the place came to exert over him in later life, it is clearly far from coincidental that during the course of this visit the two-and-a-half year comparative silence was broken by a piano piece, called significantly 'The Island Spell', which marked a new beginning in Ireland's composing career and introduced a new voice to English music. Two similarly original companion pieces, 'Moonglade' and 'The Scarlet Ceremonies', followed in May and June 1913, all three being published in 1915 as 'Decorations'.

The originality and assurance of 'Decorations' demonstrates that the period of time which elapsed after the completion of the D minor Violin Sonata in the autumn of 1909 was far from barren.

The new style must have been gradually growing in Ireland's mind, waiting for the necessary stimulus which was eventually provided by the visit to Jersey. It is known that at about this time the composer made a deep study of the music of Debussy and Ravel, and if in temperament and personality he had a strong affinity with the latter, it was the former who exerted the stronger musical influence at this stage. Ireland's was a deeply personal reaction to the Frenchman's music, however; some of the techniques, the washes of colour and the fragmented melodies picked out in isolated notes, clearly derive from Debussy's piano style, but the musical raw materials are Ireland's own, particularly so the harmonic language which is a highly distinctive blend of the diatonic, the chromatic and the pentatonic. The whole is marvellously pianistic in conception; Ireland was a fine player and in its expansion of keyboard techniques, as well as its novelty of idiom, 'Decorations' is a major landmark in English piano music.

Ireland's first mature orchestral work, 'The Forgotten Rite', was also begun in Jersey but exactly a year later than 'The Island Spell'. It was completed the following November and first performed during the Queen's Hall Prom season of 1917. It is a fine work in a far less advanced, if no less distinctive, style than 'Decorations'. The harmony is more strictly diatonic and the melodies more clear-cut and explicit: impressionist techniques are most clearly evident in the orchestration which is most carefully balanced and tinted. A striking feature of the work, a hallmark of the mature Ireland, is its economy: everything is pared down to its bare essentials, but with no loss of expressive power. A world of feeling is condensed into a mere twenty pages of miniature score.

Two of the four 'Preludes' for piano were composed during the winter of 1913/14, but 'The Undertone' and 'The Holy Boy' are the weakest and least distinctive numbers of the set. The former takes

a feeble and repetitive tune and loads it with lush chromatic harmony, somewhat after the manner of Cyril Scott, and the latter uses a similar method although here the melody has a stronger, if naive, quality and the harmonies, although rich, have a modal inflection. It is the two companion pieces, 'Obsession' and 'Fire of Spring', both belonging to 1915, which follow in the tradition of 'Decorations' and are most distinctive and interesting.

Two of Ireland's most popular small-scale works belong to the pre-War period. The fine motet for choir and organ 'Greater love hath no man than this' was composed in 1912 and his setting of Masefield's 'Sea Fever' is dated 'October 1913'. Of the ninety solo songs in his official list of works, only thirteen were composed before the War and just over half of these were in print by 1914. Most of the early songs are in ballad style, ranging from the hearty 'Hope the Hornblower' to the sentimental 'A Song from o'er the Hill'. 'Sea Fever' develops and refines the idiom of the former, 'Marigold' ('Three impressions for voice and piano' dated 'June 1913') that of the latter. As in his piano music, the composer was feeling his way towards a distinctive style in his song-writing at this stage of his career.

Ireland's reputation remained small during the early Georgian years. His main involvement in musical life at this time was as organist and choirmaster of various London churches and it was by his church music that he was best known as a composer. His songs had a certain currency but his more serious works were hardly known at all outside the sphere of influence of the Royal College of Music; his extreme reserve prevented him from actively promoting them in any way beyond publishing the phantasy trio and the violin sonata at his own expense. It was the songs written early in the War and, to a much greater extent, the Second Violin Sonata which brought his name into prominence as a composer.

But if his part in pre-War musical life was an insignificant one, the influence exerted by the Georgian artistic climate over the formation of his own mature style was very strong. His new start in about 1913 reflected the general innovatory spirit encountered in much contemporary artistic activity and several characteristics of his mature style had their source in the artistic enthusiasm of the day: the drawing of inspiration from the natural scene and from the distant past, and an awareness of the newest artistic practices in France. Particularly Georgian were his directness of utterance and his highly characteristic blending of sweetness and the most heart-searching melancholy. It was this which made his settings of words by poets bound up the Georgian movement (Masefield and Brooke especially) so powerful.

There was no difficulty in selecting the twenty-eight composers dealt with so far in this chapter. Some are among the great names in English musical history and even the least famous were figures of some importance in the years immediately before the Great War and were recognised as making a significant contribution to the musical life of the day, even if the most active period of their careers had occurred earlier or was yet to come. But study of contemporary books and periodicals throws up the names of a number of other musicians, men who, although now largely forgotten or else remembered for reasons other than their compositions, were regarded at the time as being of considerable standing, being referred to in terms similar to those used about their coevals whose reputations have proved to be more secure. Composers of this type have their place in a survey such as this.

Before the Great War, Herbert Hamilton Harty was more active and better known as a composer than as a conductor. Born in Dublin and trained at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Harty settled in

London in 1900 at the age of twenty-one and first made his mark as an accompanist, "one of the most brilliant ... there has ever been" according to Michael Kennedy [1]. His earliest success as a composer was at a provincial level when in 1901 a piano trio won a prize at the Feis Ceoil (the Irish musical festival), but of greater importance was his winning of the Lewis Hill Prize of fifty guineas with a piano quintet in 1904. In the same year he married the soprano Agnes Nicholls who was already well on her way to becoming one of the best-known English sopranos of her day and whose championship of Harty's songs greatly increased their circulation. In 1907 his 'Comedy Overture' was played at a Queen's Hall Prom and repeated shortly afterwards at the Crystal Palace, the Philharmonic Society and in Bournemouth, and in the same year his setting of Keat's 'Ode to a Nightingale' for soprano and orchestra was produced with great success at the Cardiff Festival. In March 1909 Harty's Violin Concerto was introduced to London by Szigeti, the following year the composer had a further triumph at Cardiff with a tone poem 'With the Wild Geese' which, like the 'Comedy Overture', was quickly taken up by orchestras in London and the provinces, and another resounding success at a provincial festival came in 1913 when Leeds gave his setting of Whitman's 'The Mystic Trumpeter', a work which was still regularly being performed twenty years later. These major works aside, Harty also produced a quantity of instrumental music and a great many songs.

Listening to Harty's music and reading of his characteristics as a conductor, one is struck by remarkable similarities. In both branches of activity his work displayed a thorough command of technique, an acute sense of orchestral colour, a warm romanticism,

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[1] in 'The Hallé Tradition' (1960) p 214

a ready wit, a nodding acquaintance with certain modern trends but an unshakeable faith in traditional methods and standards. The novel harmonies at the opening of 'The Mystic Trumpeter' soon give way to conventional procedures in which the music is well made and attractive but not very original; 'With the Wild Geese' is fine programme music, colourful, dramatic and vivid, the weakest sections being those where musical development is called for. In his works with Irish associations he often cast his themes in the mould of folk tunes (or else, as in the early 'Irish Symphony', used real folk melodies), but, in common with many far greater composers, he failed to achieve a happy synthesis between themes in folk style and classical development procedures. An obituary article summed up his achievement: "His best voyages were made on the imaginative rather than the constructive seas ..." [1] (the two composers he admired most and conducted best were Berlioz and Mozart whom he loved as "intuitive composers" [2]). Opportunities to conduct music other than his own came only rarely before the Great War: it was not until the middle period of the War, when he came to be associated with the London Symphony Orchestra's Sunday series, that the balance between the two branches of his activity became weighted more heavily in favour of conducting than composing.

Another musician who pursued a double career as composer and conductor (though never achieving Harty's distinction in the former capacity nor his popularity in the latter) was Julius Harrison. A student of Bantock at the Birmingham School of Music, Harrison began to compose seriously in about 1905 (when he was in his early twenties) and first attracted public attention with his setting of Gerald Cumberland's 'Cleopatra' which won the fifty

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[1] Musical Times Vol LXXXII (1941), p 95

[2] Harty's own words quoted by Michael Kennedy op cit p 214

guinea prize offered by the Norwich Festival committee in 1907 and was performed at the Festival the following year, Henry Wood conducting. An even earlier work, a poem for orchestra entitled 'Night on the Mountains' dating from 1906, was given by the London Symphony Orchestra in 1910 and again in Bournemouth the following year, but was subsequently withdrawn, as was a great deal else (mainly for orchestra, voice and orchestra or voice and piano) written at the same time. Partsongs and instrumental miniatures were published from 1908 onwards, and in 1910 and 1911 two more extended works appeared, a 'Harvest Cantata' and a 'Christmas Cantata', modest in scale and conventional in tone but giving occasional glimpses of the exuberant romanticism which was a distinctive feature of his mature work. A dramatic change in Harrison's musical career explains a lessening of creative work during the early Georgian years: in 1908 he had been earning his living largely by correcting piano rolls, but by 1912 he had been appointed '*maestro al piano*' at Covent Garden and within two years was conducting occasional performances there. Nevertheless,he wrote and had published a not inconsiderable quantity of vocal and instrumental music before the War, amongst which several works stand out: 'Prelude Music', an extended movement for harp and strings, a set of orchestral variations on 'Down among the Dead Men' produced by Wood at a Prom in October 1912, and 'Three Sonnets of Boccaccio' for high voice and piano written in 1914 but not performed in public or published until 1919. His style of writing in these works is imaginative and highly romantic, the richness tempered by a quality of level-headedness which adds to its distinctive flavour. In certain matters the influence of his teacher Bantock is clearly evident; the two men share the same habit of giving their works an original flavour not by any radical experiment but rather by using

familiar materials in an unusual way, and works like the choral setting of Hueffer's 'In the Forest' employ something of Bantock's system of 'choral orchestration'. Great things were expected of Harrison in both his chosen spheres of activity just before and soon after the Great War, but these expectations were never wholly fulfilled.

Two composers known chiefly for their orchestral music were William H Bell and Adam Carse. The former, a Royal Academy student who nevertheless studied under Stanford, was given his first professional performance (as were so many of his contemporaries) by Manns at the Crystal Palace when his 'Prelude to the Canterbury Tales' was played in 1899. From then on, new orchestral compositions appeared regularly there and elsewhere as first Henry Wood and Dan Godfrey, then Frederick Cowen at the Philharmonic Society, and finally Richter and Beecham became interested in his works. Very little of his orchestral music was published, but despite this handicap a number of works found quite a wide circulation, as for instance the nautical suite 'Mother Carey' first given by the Philharmonic Society in 1902, and the tone poem 'The Shepherd' composed in 1908 and first performed at Queen's Hall the same year, given by the Philharmonic Society under the composer's direction in December 1910, played by the London Symphony Orchestra at the 'Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft' congress the following July and included in Balfour Gardiner's second series of concerts in February 1913. It would seem from the tone of contemporary criticism that Bell's music lacked marked originality and relied for much of its success upon an attractive surface; for whatever reason, its popularity proved to be transitory and his work lost its place in the repertoire soon after his departure for a teaching post in Capetown in 1912.

Educational works and books on musical history are all that Adam Carse is remembered for by later generations, but before the Great War his not inconsiderable reputation rested largely upon his orchestral music. The first of his works of this type to be publicly performed was the incidental music to Maeterlinck's 'The Death of Tintageles', given at St George's Hall in 1902, and others were given by the Philharmonic Society and the London Symphony Orchestra (both in 1904) and at the Queen's Hall Proms (in August 1905). A symphony in C minor was played at a Patron's Fund concert in July 1906 (when the R C M Magazine found the influence of Tchaikowsky and Brahms too strong but singled out the scherzo for special praise), and another symphony (in G minor), produced at the Royal College two years later, scored a great success when given at the Newcastle Festival in October 1909. Carse's reputation seems to have suffered as an increasingly large amount of English music which was both more distinctive and more original than his own appeared in the pre-War years; a review of a performance of his 'Orchestral Variations' at a Patron's Fund concert in July 1913 speaks of a sure touch but admits that "the work left the impression of timidity, and more of it than was necessary was rooted in the Victorian past" [1]. From this time onwards,he concentrated more upon avowedly light music and teaching music, both branches of composition in which a reactionary style is no handicap to success, and it was on works of this type that his post-War reputation came to rest.

The review of the Patron's Fund concert quoted above goes on to single out as "the most commanding work in the evening's list" a symphonic poem entitled 'The Visions of Hannele' by Hubert Bath, a composer who won a considerable reputation mainly with operas and

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1 Musical Times Vol LIX (1913), p 537

and choral music. His work had first been brought to the notice of the London public in 1904 when, while he was still studying under Corder at the Royal Academy, his 'Orchestral Variations' had been produced by Henry Wood at Queen's Hall. From that time on he produced a steady stream of compositions but added little to his reputation until 'The Wedding of Shon Maclean', a cantata for chorus, soli and orchestra, was given by the Queen's Hall Choral Society in May 1909 and repeated the following year at the Leeds Festival. The straightforward, witty style of this piece had great popular appeal and was a vein which Bath worked again in a number of his succeeding compositions: 'Look at the Clock' and 'The Jackdaw of Rheims', two 'Ingoldsby Legends' set for singers and orchestra and produced by the Queen's Hall society in 1910 and 1911, 'Mr Midshipman Easy', an overture written for and produced by the amateur Strolling Players in 1911, and 'The Wake of O'Connor', an Irish counterpart to 'Shon Maclean' published in 1913 and first performed in Cardiff the following year. Work in the more serious and experimental vein (the style which had characterised much of his early output) greatly decreased as more and more he exploited the lighter style by which he became known almost exclusively during and after the War.

A very similar pattern of development was followed by George H Clutsam, an Australian musician who settled in England in 1890, finding employment first as an accompanist and later as a music critic on the staff of 'The Observer'. His 'Carnival Scenes' was one of the new works produced by Henry Wood during the very first season of Queen's Hall Proms in 1895, but for the next fifteen years it was as a composer of a large number of unremarkable songs and piano pieces that Clutsam was chiefly known. A cantata 'The Quest of Rapunzel' was produced with some success by the new

Queen's Hall Choral Society in 1909, but much more of a stir was made the following year when Beecham gave his one-act opera 'A Summer Night' as part of his summer season at His Majesty's. Beecham referred to this work as "bright and tuneful on its musical side, ingenious and effective in stage device, and pleasing to the more sophisticated portion of my audience" [1], and in the wake of its successful performance more of Clutsam's dramatic works were given: 'After a Thousand Years' (enigmatically termed "a New Egyptian Miniature Grand Opera") at the Tivoli Theatre and 'The Pool' at the Alhambra. 'King Harlequin', an opera produced in Berlin in November 1912 yielded two short orchestral movements played at a Prom on 2nd October 1913, but from this time on Clutsam turned more and more to the composition of light music, a trend which was to culminate in the much-criticised 'Lilac Time' and 'Damask Rose' in the 1920s. Light music was to provide a refuge for a number of composers left stranded by the fast-moving developments in serious music which came about after the Great War.

The works of Donald Tovey lie at the very opposite end of the musical spectrum and never made a strong impression upon the musical general public. The early Georgian years marked the most active period of his composing career (a period that was terminated by his appointment to the Chair of Music at Edinburgh University), but even at this time, when much of his chamber and instrumental music was in print, his works were very rarely played except by his close friends (for instance the d'Aranyi sisters), at his own series of 'Chelsea Chamber Concerts' or else in the highly sympathetic surrounding of the 'Classical Concert Society'. The piano concerto which he had brought forward in 1903 under Henry Wood had been given only once more, by the London Symphony Orchestra under Richter in December 1906 (when the 'Musical Times' critic detected "scholarly attainments" in the composer and, somewhat

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[1] in A Mingled Chime (1944) p 95

surprisingly, found that the work displayed "considerable charm"[1]), and the symphony which Tovey wrote in 1913 had to wait until 1915 for its only English performance, under Verbrugghen with the London Symphony Orchestra (this work fared much better in Germany where it received several performances under its dedicatee, Fritz Busch). Musicians aware of Tovey's remarkable musical powers (had not Joachim referred to him as the "greatest musician since Brahms"[2]?) took pleasure in his compositions as being the fruits of the labour of this giant intellect; but, in the words of the unsigned obituary article which appeared in the 'Musical Times' in August 1940, "It is ... clear that Tovey's original thoughts lack the inspired quality that gains the ear of the musical public". It was (and still is) a commonplace of criticism to deride his music for its obvious debt to classical precedent, but he was not as other men; where they copied the methods of the classical masters to cover the poverty of their own invention, Tovey was in such close sympathy (as a scholar and as a performer) with the mental processes of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms that it probably never occurred to him to do otherwise than follow the example set by these men, since they were responsible for what he considered to be the finest music ever written. Thus the quintet, the four quartets, the four trios and the instrumental sonatas were little known and little appreciated; indeed,it was as not a composer but as a scholar and a pianist of great distinction that Tovey was known in pre-War England.

In calling Thomas Dunhill "a limb of the Royal College of Music"[3], Joseph Holbrooke placed him perfectly. Not only was Dunhill a student at the College from 1893 until 1899 and from

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[1] 'Musical Times Vol XLVIII (1907), p 42

[2] quoted by Joseph Macleod in 'The Sisters d'Aranyi' (1969) p 49

[3] 'Joseph Holbrooke: Contemporary British Composers' (1926) p 283

1905 a member of the teaching staff, but his tastes and musical outlook were formed and influenced by the ideals of the institution. His music was sane, well-turned, serious of intent rather than profound, and largely unadventurous. Chamber music was the medium that interested him most; he published a treatise on the subject in 1913, ran a series of chamber concerts from 1907 onwards, and produced a considerable quantity of chamber music himself including three quintets, two quartets, two trios and two violin sonatas. These works were reckoned to be among his best by those that heard them; they held their own quite successfully in the steady atmosphere that prevailed at hisown concerts, the platform on which they appeared most frequently. The single important chamber work dating from the early Georgian period is the **Phantasy** Trio in E flat for violin, viola and piano dated "September 1911". In this piece, another of W W Cobbett's commissions, Dunhill solves the problem of shaping a movement observing the phantasy requirement of linked contrasting sections by using a relaxed sonata form for an 'andante moderato' in which a 'presto scherzando' takes the place of a development section. None of his early orchestral and choral compositions made any strong impression; the works of this type that he produced soon after the War added more to his reputation. His one major pre-War success in the orchestral field was the Yeats song-cycle 'The Wind among the Reeds', given a magnificent first performance by Gervase Elwes at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in November 1912. The third number of this group is the ever-popular miniature 'The Cloths of Heaven', and the other three songs are equally fine; the cycle as a whole shows Dunhill at his best, imaginative, unpretentious **and fluent.**

Although only nine years separated the birth dates of the two Cambridge musicians, Charles Wood and Cyril Rootham, this gap represents something of a watershed in the musical life of the city and the university which in turn reflects the opposing pull

of reactionary and progressive forces at work in pre-War musical England; for while Wood staunchly upheld the traditions established by Stanford (progressive in their day but conservative by the early Georgian period), Rootham did much to pave the way for the innovation initiated by E J Dent.

Rootham had a composing career of some forty years; there are songs and organ music dating from the last years of the old century, and at his death in 1938 he was working on his second symphony. His best and most interesting works belong to the war years and the early 1920s, but he was published and performed in late Edwardian and early Georgian England and so earns a place in this survey. As with many of his contemporaries, the first of his works to be issued were songs, partsongs and little violin pieces, and there was in addition a certain amount of organ music - Rootham began his career as an organist of some repute. His early style is not lacking in character or appeal but there is a structural stiffness and his extended movements too often fall into short-winded sub-paragraphs. Some of this formal weakness was overcome by the use of the <u>leit-motiv</u> principle, as in the cantata 'Andromeda' produced with success at the Bristol Festival of 1908, but here the poem provided the overall design. Without the help of a text Rootham's hand was less sure, as is shown by the orchestral rhapsody 'Pan' produced at a Patron's Fund concert in July 1913 and repeated by the London Symphony Orchestra under Arbós in February 1916, a work which the 'Musical Times' commended for its "well-directed individuality" but criticised for its slack construction. Other works written by Rootham before the Great War include another rhapsody, 'A Passer-by', played at Queen's Hall in 1911, an overture 'To the Spirit of Comedy' given in London and Bournemouth, an orchestral suite in D minor, 'Coronach' for baritone, male

male voices and orchestra, a quartet in C, an unpublished string quintet, numerous songs and partsongs (some with orchestral accompaniment) and more church and instrumental music. The quartet may be taken as representative of this period of Rootham's career. It is a distinctive work, up to date without being in any way experimental; the harmony is modal in flavour although there is no hint of folk-song influence or archaism, the texture largely contrapuntal (except for the last movement) and the form neat and concise. The work is dated "August 1914" and was first performed fifteen months later by its dedicatees, the Philharmonic Quartet.

The music Rootham wrote before 1915 reveals a slow but sure stylistic development, the most striking characteristic of which was an increasingly free use of diatonic discord* which looks forward to the poignant and highly expressive choral music he produced during and after the War. It was these last-mentioned works which made his name as a composer; before the War he was no more than one of many gifted young musicians with good but not outstanding work to their credit. His chief importance at this time lay in being the man who "was almost entirely responsible for the healthy and active life of Cambridge music"[1].

There are some even more shadowy figures to be found amongst the composers active in early Georgian England: Frederic Austin, best known as an operatic baritone, but whose orchestral works were given at the Proms, at the Musical League festivals and by Balfour Gardiner; Nicholas Gatty, a contemporary of Holst, who scored a notable success with two operas ('Grey Steel' and 'Duke or Devil') before the Great War; Edgar Bainton, whose orchestral works were given in London and the provinces from 1903

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* Although never an out-and-out modernist, Rootham had a keen interest in progressive trends as is proved by his broad-minded direction of C U M S.

[1] Spike Hughes: Opening Bars (1946) p 245

onwards, particularly frequently by Dan Godfrey in Bournemouth; Felix White, designated by Eaglefield-Hull "one of the most characteristic of the English composers of the ten years 1913 - 1923"[1], whose first public appearance (at a Prom in 1907) aroused exceptional interest; and three composers known chiefly for their chamber music - James Friskin, a Scottish pupil of Stanford whose works won prizes in the Cobbett competitions on several occasions, H Waldo Warner, who wrote with the expert hand of a professional viola player, and Richard Walthew, who worked a great deal with amateur musicians in London and whose works were especially popular in amateur circles.

A far from shadowy figure who had just embarked upon a public career as a composer when war broke out was Eugene Goossens. He had entered the Royal College of Music in 1907 at the early age of fourteen, leaving after five years study of the violin, the piano and composition to join the Queen's Hall Orchestra where he stayed until 1917. It was only during his last two student years that he took composition lessons from Stanford, relations between teacher and pupil being stormy but with feelings of respect on both sides; despite his deploring the young man's enthusiasm for the later works of Richard Strauss and the newest French and Russian music, Stanford recognised the young man's talent and arranged for the performance of his 'Variations on a Chinese Theme' for orchestra at a College concert in June 1912. This work was repeated at a Prom the following year and Wood commissioned the young composer/violinist to write a new piece for the 1914 Prom season. The 'Chinese Variations' had been "applauded quite startlingly"[1] but the symphonic poem 'Perseus' was received "in lukewarm fashion"[3] when performed at Queen's Hall on 13th October 1914 and was

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[1] in A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians (1924) p 528

[2] Eugene Goossens: 'Overture and Beginners' (1951) p 102

[3] ibid p 108

eventually destroyed. "Regrettable Teutonic tendencies"[1] were recognised in it, although it was French music, that of Debussy in particular, which exerted the strongest influence over the young composer. The two de Musset songs composed in 1914 are, suitably, very French in flavour, although the languorous harmonies and sinuous vocal line are tempered by an Anglo-Irish restraint. Richer and more forward-looking are the 'Four Sketches' for flute, violin and piano of the previous year and the Suite for flute, violin and harp which use something of the advanced chromatic idiom which was the striking feature of his mature style. At the age of twenty-two, while his language was yet unsettled, Goossens' diction was clear and fluent and his accent totally distinctive amongst English composers.

For the very last word in advanced composition in pre-War England, mention should be made of the early works of Bernard van Dieren and Gerald Tyrwhitt, later known as Lord Berners (he succeeded to the barony in 1918). Although at the time neither had very strong links with this country and furthermore the music of each was known only to his immediate circle, their activities prove that there was a musical equivalent to the radical _avant garde_ discernible in contemporary poetry and painting.

Van Dieren had settled in London in 1909 and over the next five years produced a not inconsiderable amount of original work. The large-scale pieces, the setting of Heine's 'Belsazar' for baritone and orchestra, the 'Elegy' for cello and orchestra and the 'Symphonic Epilogue to Shelley's 'The Cenci' ' for orchestra, Cecil Gray dismissed as being "in no sense representative" although "surprisingly different from other music"[2]; the 'Chinese Symphony' of 1914 for five solo voices, chorus and orchestra, however, he claimed to be "the first work in which van Dieren attains to complete individuality of utterance"[3]. The First String Quartet,

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1 Eugene Goossens: 'Overture and Beginners (1951) p 108

2 in _A Survey of Contemporary Music_ (1924) p 224

3 ibid

composed in 1912 in memory of Paganini, used material from the latter's 'Caprices' but was reckoned to be forbidding to both performers and listeners on account of its great complexity.

Three slighter works dating from this period did eventually reach a wider public through publication (the 'Six Sketches' for piano in 1921, a song, 'Mädchenlied', in 1927 and a Sonata for violin solo in 1935, shortly before the composer's death), but there is no evidence to suggest that any of van Dieren's work was performed in public before the War. Even at the height of his fame in the twenties and thirties, his place in musical life was extremely peripheral; in early Georgian London he was an utterly lone figure, pursuing a course which scarcely touched contemporary musical life in any way.

Equally personal though nearer to one of the streams of European musical development was the work of Lord Berners. Mainly self-taught, Berners came under the influence of Stravinsky and Casella and the surface of his music owes something to the instruction which he received from them. His earliest extant works date from 1913 and 1914 although none was published until after the War. The 'Lieder Album: three songs in the German Manner', dating from 1913, is the first of his many parodies of well-worn nationalistic styles, and the vein of irony is continued in 'Trois Petites Marches Funèbres' of 1914, the first ('Pour un homme d'état') being hollow and insincere and the third ('Pour une tante à héritage') positively riotous. 'Le Poisson d'or', a piano piece written in the same year, is prefaced by a prose-poem of the composer and gives a vivid picture of the joyless existence of a goldfish in a bowl.

Berners' harmony was very advanced for its time: the 'Marches Funèbres' are peppered with 'wrong notes' while 'Le Poisson d'or' employs a very relaxed tonality. Rhythmically his work is more

straightforward, but its very simplicity is forward-looking and had little to do with contemporary English practice. That a number of characteristics displayed by his pre-War works came to be common property after the War was not so much due to the influence of his own music but rather that of his mentor Stravinsky. Nevertheless, Berners was the first Englishman to respond positively to a number of Stravinsky's more radical innovations.

Amongst a highly gifted generation of students at the Royal College of Music, two were already singled out as being outstandingly promising. Ivor Gurney had won an Open Scholarship in composition in 1911 at the age of twenty-one and had, as a matter of course, been placed under Stanford. Gurney's view of his teacher has not been recorded, but Stanford, while despairing of his pupil's lack of discipline and disregard of practicalities, is known to have regarded him as "the biggest man of all" [1] that he taught. Most of the music which Gurney had composed by 1914 can fairly be labelled juvenilia, the product of a precocious but still adolescent mind; however, a handful of songs, the group of settings of late Tudor verse which includes the famous 'Sleep' and that of Robert Bridges' 'I praise the tender flower', merit inclusion in the final list of his mature works for, although they use a conventional idiom, they achieve the total integration of words and music which is the mark of great song-writing. Herbert Howells, Gurney's close friend and a fellow native of Gloucestershire, had come to London one year later and had straightaway formed a very happy and fruitful relationship with Stanford. Howells too revealed his gifts as a composer while still very young, but his early works were more ordered and consistent than those of Gurney - Arthur Bliss singled him out as "the outstanding talent" in "an age of brilliant students" [2]. His opus 1 was an unpublished organ

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[1] Herbert Howells' phrase quoted by Michael Hurd in The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney (1978) p 35

[2] As I remember (1970) p 28

sonata dated 1911 (at which time he was still an articled pupil of Herbert Brewer, organist at Gloucester Cathedral); opus 2, written the following year, was an unaccompanied mass given under R R Terry at Westminster Cathedral in April 1913, and opus 4 a piano concerto and the most impressive of all the pre-War works, first given at a Patron's Fund concert at Queen's Hall in July 1914 with Stanford conducting and Howell's fellow student Arthur Benjamin as soloist. Before the War,Howells' compositions had made no great public stir, but the musicians who came across them at the Royal College and elsewhere recognised their merits and confidently predicted great things to come. Within the College Arthur Benjamin had made something of a name for himself as a composer as well as a pianist,although it was a considerable time before he made any mark in the outside world or allowed any of his works to be published. Parry, in deploring Benjamin's joining the Army in February 1915, wrote of him as "too exceptionally gifted to be counted on the same footing as the millions who have no exceptional promise" [1]. Benjamin's name was often coupled with those of Howells and Gurney,and a fourth member of the group was Arthur Bliss who had come to the College from Cambridge in the autumn of 1913 to study with Stanford; as yet he had produced only a small amount of unremarkable piano music, some of which was privately printed but all subsequently withdrawn.

Peter Pirie detects "an odd lack of direction in English music as a whole after 'Falstaff' and before 1920. Up to 1912 it might be possible to depict English music as one mighty crescendo from the Enigma Variations to Elgar's Second Symphony and Delius's 'Song of the High Hills'; but after 1912 the impetus seemed lost, the major figures to have passed their climactic, the new men to be hardly established" [2]. Pirie has a point in that Elgar

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[1] C L Graves: Hubert Parry (1926) Vol II p 69

[2] Peter Pirie: The English Musical Renaissance (1979) p 83

unquestionably dominated English music through the Edwardian decade and that, after he had lost this prominent position in about 1911, no single figure appeared to take his place. But was this change of circumstances a cause for regret or a sign of "lost impetus"? One reason for Elgar's sudden loss of popularity must have been the increasing amount of first-class English music being produced: no longer was his pre-eminence as a composer unchallenged or unquestionable. Saddened and bewildered as he was by the change in his fortunes, there was no question of his having "passed his climactic"; he had great projects in mind in the summer of 1914 and, but for the disruption of the outbreak of the War, there seems no reason why these should not have come to fruition. This holds good for other of the older English composers: Stanford and Delius, for instance, were both still at the height of their powers in 1914. Turning to those whom Pirie calls "the younger men", to claim that either Bantock or Vaughan Williams (to name only the two most likely contenders) was "hardly established" by 1914, let alone 1920, is quite incorrect, and one wonders why, in his summing-up of post-Edwardian music, Pirie ignores the contribution of the even younger composers, such as Holst, Boughton, Bridge, Scott and Ireland, all of whom had produced first rate work by the outbreak of the Great War. As was pointed out in the previous chapter a dozen first-rate composers and a score of able men can only be thrown up by a healthy and balanced musical environment, whereas a single isolated genius can appear anywhere at any time. Thus the multitude of composers at work in early Georgian England indicates a state of amelioration, not deterioration; there was no "lack of direction" but rather impetus in many directions at once. Had the Great War broken upon a less healthy and vigorous musical environment, the blow would surely have crippled, rather than merely stunned, the development of music in this country.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Of the two dates which delimit the period studied in this thesis, 1914 is scarcely contentious. But that one sees with hindsight only. At the time, few people realised that they were at a watershed, and indeed there is considerable divergence of opinion as to how much the outbreak of war in August 1914 was expected. There was a widespread belief that the close fiscal, mercantile and social ties which had developed between the countries of Europe would prevent actual hostilities taking place, and a further body of opinion which hoped that England would adopt a neutral position were war to break out on the mainland of Europe. Certainly musical life showed no sign of anything unusual in the offing,with prospectuses being issued and arrangements made for a normal autumn and winter season and provisional plans laid for 1915 and even further ahead. It was the dislocation of social and financial life which began on 29th July that made many people aware for the first time of the gravity of the situation; but by then the point of no return had been passed.

At first it was imagined that the outbreak of war would be totally devastating to English musical life: "The immediate effects of the great war which is now raging in Europe is disastrous to all who depend for subsistence upon musical doings in all their manifold ramifications" wrote the editor of the 'Musical Times' [1]. But it was also recognised that every effort should be made to maintain as much musical activity as possible: as Robert Newman bluntly put it " ... the public will need its music and, incidentally, our orchestra its salaries" [2]. As it happened the outbreak of war occurred at the slackest point of the whole

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1 Vol LV (1914), p 575

2 quoted by Henry Wood in My Life of Music' (1938) p 288

musical season; the only musical event about to take place was the season of Queen's Hall Proms, due to start on 15th August. Thus close attention was fixed on Henry Wood and Robert Newman to see what their course of action would be and how the public would respond. With characteristic resolve they determined to adhere to their original scheme as closely as possible and thus the full ten-week season was given with the minimum of alteration to programmes and artists. This policy won universal praise from the musical profession and the public responded with strong support; audience numbers were only slightly smaller than usual. Encouraged by the success of this venture,other orchestras began to make plans for the winter season.

Some other concert-giving organisations were less brave. By mid-August the festivals at Worcester, Norwich and Sheffield had all been cancelled and shortly afterwards a similar decision was reached at Cardiff. Choral activity in general was severely disrupted: a number of choirs, chief among them the Edward Mason Choir, were immediately disbanded and others such as the Alexandra Palace Choral Society had temporarily to suspend all activities owing to the occupation of the Palace by the military authorities. Those that were able to continue operations soon began to suffer depletion in the ranks of the tenors and basses, and almost all abandoned plans to give new and unfamiliar works, replacing them with popular favourites from the standard repertoire.

This was not the only way in which programmes were affected by the changed circumstances. The second night of the 1914 Prom season had been planned as the customary Monday Wagner concert, but at the last moment the lessees of Queen's Hall insisted upon the substitution of a French and Russian programme, which drew a

disappointing and a disappointed audience. Wood and Newman had both been opposed to the substitution and a few days later they issued an announcement "emphatically contradicting the statements that German music will be boycotted during the present season" [1]. Wagner nights were reinstated, proving as popular as ever, and the propriety of continuing to perform the German classics was established. The attitude to more recent German music was not decided so easily, however; the works of living German composers were eschewed, as were those of composers who had recently died, but where the dividing line between the acceptable and the unacceptable should be drawn was a matter of some debate. No firm rule was ever decided upon, but the practice evolved of avoiding the work of composers who had lived after the turn of the century while performing the music of those who had died before 1900 much as usual. Thus Brahms' works were given, Mahler's were not, a decision that was not without its effect upon the relative reputations of these two composers in this country in later years.

A corollary to this ban on recent German music for political reasons was a sudden interest in the music of composers of the Allied Nations. Works by the established French, Russian and Belgian composers were given with renewed frequency and compositions by minor figures of these nationalities were dragged out of obscurity and greeted with an enthusiasm not always merited by their artistic stature. English music too received something of a fillip; the inclusion of English works in a programme came to be considered morally *de rigueur* in some quarters, or at least was deemed a point worthy of publicity. A number of concert series was established specifically for the purpose of bringing forward works by native composers; usually the motives behind the presentation of such concerts were admirable, but occasionally patriotism

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1 ibid p 289

was allowed to overrule artistic judgement and third-rate music was misguidedly championed.

The stream of English composition was interrupted too. A number of composers, Vaughan Williams, Brian, Butterworth and Dunhill among them, joined the army during the early months of the War, others (including Ethel Smyth and Balfour Gardiner) soon became involved in war work, and others still left the country - Grainger and James Friskin for instance both went to America. Some composers reacted positively to the stimulus of the War and produced _pièces d'occasion_ in response to the general mood, but most works of this type written during the early months of the War were of no stature and had no lasting worth, while not a few were of the execrable standard of Elgar's 'Follow the Colours' or Cyril Scott's 'Britain's War March'. It was some time before any worthwhile music inspired by the War appeared: Ireland's 'Songs of a Great War' and Elgar's 'For the Fallen' were not performed until 1916.

Thus the short term effects of the War upon English music were considerable. Musical life continued, but on a reduced scale and with a cautious tone to much of its activity; the richness and variety so evident in the pre-War years had disappeared at once. Many of the impediments to flourishing musical activity were to become much more serious in the later years of the War and the situation which emerged in 1919 was very different from that which had prevailed before the War; but the disruptive influence was sufficiently keenly felt during the early months of the hostilities to make the summer of 1914 a sensible pausing point in any survey of English music. The spirit of early Georgian musical life had been shattered and was never to be

restored.

There is, however, no such clear and obvious starting point to the period with which this survey deals and no attempt has been made to fix an arbitrary one. Major new trends have been chronicled from their inception whenever that occurred between 1909 and 1911, but where no obvious date has presented itself the year 1910 has been chosen, for this marks the time when the individual strands of innovation begin to coalesce into a general trend.

Thus in the absence of any external event to mark the beginning of the period, internal evidence has played an important part in defining the limits of what has been termed 'the early Georgian period', evidence thrown up by consideration of the music and musical life of the four pre-War years. The characteristics that emerge as belonging to this era only and which justify its separate consideration should now be described and will best be dealt with under the two headings of quantity and quality.

The number of composers of repute active in early Georgian England is the first point worthy of note; fifty-two are mentioned in the previous chapter but the list on page 246 could easily have been extended to include more minor figures. A steady increase in the number of English composers is discernible from just before the turn of the century onwards, but there is a sudden dramatic increase at the very end of the Edwardian decade as the musicians born in the remarkable period 1874 - 1885 (twelve years which produced thirty-five figures of note) reached maturity. Add to their number the fifteen or so active older composers (some of whom were still at the height of their powers) and also the handful of much younger men, precociously gifted but

as yet scarcely out of their musical adolescence, and the remarkable richness of the period becomes evident.

The quantity of music produced by these men between 1910 and the summer of 1914 was considerable. Taking the output of the forty most eminent and considering only their major works that were published and/or professionally performed, one finds that the four-and-a-half years produced some thirteen symphonies, forty-eight symphonic poems or orchestral works of similar dimensions, seventeen orchestral suites, seven concertos, seven operas, four ballets, four full oratorios, eighteen song cycles and (at a very conservative estimate) forty-eight major choral works and fifty large-scale chamber compositions. This list of course does not include smaller orchestral or instrumental works, single songs, partsongs, organ music or church music, genres in which many of these composers were outstandingly prolific. The total harvest of the early Georgian years was thus remarkably rich.

Fertility is noteworthy in itself but the quality of the crop is of vital concern. Many of the major figures could fairly be said to be at the height of their composing powers during the pre-War period: Stanford, Elgar, Ethel Smyth, Delius, Bantock, Vaughan Williams, Boughton, Bridge and Grainger all produced works at this time that are among their very best, and arguably Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Bantock (to name only the most obvious contenders) reached the apex of their careers. Stepping down from the very highest level, a fine body of good work belongs to this period, music which, whatever its subsequent career in performance, is interesting, original, well-written and characteristic of its composers. Had this not been so, then there would hardly have been the same concern shown by performers and concert-givers to bring this music to performance: the claim for the general high quality of early Georgian music rests upon more than subjective evaluation alone.

At the very beginning of this survey contemporary practice in the arts other than music was reviewed and the principal distinguishing features (some common to more than one branch of artistic activity) were noted. A similar process can be applied to the music of the time and, although nothing so tangible as a Georgian style emerges, several common characteristics appear which give much of the music of the period at least a distinctive flavour.

Much hinges on the matter of nationalism. For most of the composers caught up in the English musical renaissance, the search for an individual style was inextricably bound up with the rejection of an undue amount of Teutonic influence of the type that had been unquestioningly accepted by English composers of the early and mid-nineteenth century. A few early Georgian composers (Tovey and F S Kelly among them) still persisted in using the German-based *lingua franca* which had been current in late nineteenth century Europe; but the remainder sought new sources of influence elsewhere, many turning in upon the national cultural heritage and traditions for stimulus.

The most obvious sources of pure English influence were folk music and the music of the past. It is easy to forget that a just appreciation of these two branches of the national musical heritage was something very new and unusual in the pre-War period. The serious study and revival of Tudor music and folk-song dated from as recently as the turn of the century, and the treasures revealed thereby were so dazzling and unexpected that it took time for their true potential as a source of influence to be appreciated. By the early Georgian period, familiarity had led to deep understanding, and those composers sensitive to the influence of English music of the past (a group containing individuals as different as Vaughan Williams, Boughton, Grainger, Holst and

Butterworth) had penetrated to the core of this music and begun to tap the same spiritual and aesthetic sources. The economy and directness of folk-song and the freshness and clarity of Elizabethan music had transfused an up-to-date grammar and syntax to form a new and highly expressive musical language. An interesting parallel may be drawn here with the work of the Georgian poets: Rupert Brooke was not the only member of this group for whom a growing appreciation of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry had proved a rich stimulus to personal creativity.

The natural scene was another source of inspiration to which early Georgian composers frequently turned. Elgar had demonstrated how a strong sense of national identity might be achieved thereby without any obvious allusion to the music of the past; thus the music of a number of composers who had no interest in (and in some cases a distinct antipathy to) folk-song and Tudor music (Bax, for instance, and Frank Bridge) gained a distinctive quality which otherwise would have been lacking by the drawing of inspiration from nature.

A further alternative to Teutonic musical influence was the stimulus of other countries and cultures. The wide repertoire of works performed in Edwardian and early Georgian England presented audiences with a very broad spectrum of current international musical activity and was in itself a source of inspiration. French and Russian music was particularly well represented in English concert life, and something of its influence can be heard in the works of several of the young English composers - Brian, Bowen, Ireland and Goossens. Other composers travelled further afield in search of inspiration, drawing upon non-European cultures and practices; the music of Gustav Holst and, to a lesser extent, Cyril Scott was deeply and lastingly affected in this way.

The most striking characteristic of the music of pre-War England, however, was its novelty, and this in itself was something new and unusual. The first renaissance composers had written music which was new for England, but much of the newness it displayed could be directly related to current continental practice. Elgar's music was new in the sense that it was intensely personal and owed little to the work of his predecessors, but even at the time of its first production it was recognised as employing a totally familiar language in a new and unusual way. It was the early Georgian period that produced a real avant garde in England, a group of composers writing genuinely progressive music which owed little or nothing to contemporary developments in other countries. This is one of those areas in which the more obvious post-War innovations have overshadowed important new work done before the War. The experiments of Walton and Bliss in the early 1920s were if anything rather less revolutionary than those of Scott, Holst and Grainger before the War, and even the later developments of Vaughan Williams and Frank Bridge are remembered before their pre-War innovations. Thus a sense of experiment and progress, with which some degree of upheaval and unrest is inevitably bound up, was present in the music of the early Georgian period as it was in so much of the contemporary activity in the other arts.

To turn from the works of the early Georgian composers to pre-War musical life is to witness the same richness, variety and spirit of innovation but expressed in more prosaic terms. There were simply more performers and more concerts in pre-War England than there had ever been before, and among them were some which were strikingly progressive in outlook. The increase in activity was evident in all branches of music; nothing wavered or stood still in that exhilarating climate.

In many ways the situation as regards concert life was the same as that of the composers; the richness of the activity was due to the presence of three different generations. The senior musical institutions (the Royal Philharmonic Society, the Hallé Orchestra, the 'South Place Chamber Concerts,' the provincial festivals, Carl Rosa's company and the Covent Garden Syndicate) continued their steady work; some showed an awareness of modern trends and practices, but few allowed them to disturb their well-tried methods. To their work was added that of the phenomenally rich middle generation dating largely from the Edwardian decade: the Queen's Hall Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the new London choirs, the composers' chamber concerts and the new English ensembles, the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, the Moody-Manners Opera Company, the brilliant Yorkshire choral societies, all then at the height of their powers and the zenith of their influence. And lastly there were the brand new musical activities established during the immediate pre-War period itself: the New Symphony Orchestra, the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, the new type of choir, more new chamber music series, the Beecham opera seasons and, most striking of all, the Russian ballet.

Here too a generally high standard prevailed. Good quality raw material in the shape of gifted and well-trained performers was readily available and levels of proficiency were continuing to rise; new works described on their first appearance as stretching players to the limits of their ability quickly passed into the standard repertoire and became common property as more startling novelties appeared to take their place.

An era's view of itself it not always to be trusted. Contemporary evidence on a particular period can hardly be anything but highly subjective, and tells us as much about the deliverer of the point of view as about the subject in hand. Thus it is that one can be faced with apparently baffling contradictions: D H Lawrence wrote in 1913 "We have faith in the vastness of life's wealth. There is no winter that we fear"[1] while a few months later the Liberal politician John Morley wrote "Ah 1914!... I see not a patch of blue sky!"[2] There is no real contradiction here when we realise the different characters and circumstances of the two men and appreciate that they were writing about something in which they were intimately concerned.

Should we, then, give more weight to hindsight's view? This should be more objective, but again there can be violent differences of opinion: D C Watt's view that nowhere in Europe could be found a "state of disorder and division similar to that of affairs in Britain"[3] has already been quoted, which we may counter with Osbert Sitwell's question "How is it possible to capture the sweet and carefree atmosphere of 1913 and 1914?"[4] Again the two writers have allowed their own situations to colour their judgement of what is, after all, exactly the same thing.

How then are we to arrive at a balanced view of a period of time? Contemporary evidence may usefully be consulted, and the view of later generations certainly should be borne in mind; but it is by direct examination of the period itself, of its methods, of its actions and of its fruits, that the clearest picture will emerge, and many apparent contradictions will disappear in the

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[1] quoted by Robert Ross in The Georgian Revolt (1967) pp 260/1

[2] quoted by Donald Read in Edwardian England (1972) p 235

[3] in A History of the World in the Twentieth Century Vol 1: 1899 - 1918 (1967) p 200

[4] Great Morning (1948) p 229

rounded view obtained thereby. Thus, having studied the early Georgian period from within, we can see how Morley and Watt were correct: it was a period of enormous unrest plagued by some seemingly unsolvable problems. But Lawrence and Sitwell were quite right too: it was also a time of vigour and great optimism. It was this combination of unrest and instability, coupled with confidence and enormous vigour, that was responsible for the enormous quantity and the progressive quality of the artistic activity of the pre-War years. Music, entering this period on the crest of the huge wave that was the renaissance movement, throve in a manner never equalled before or since.

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I Histories

II 1 Autobiographies

2 Books of letters

III 1 Biographies and musical studies

2 Studies of groups of musicians

IV General musical writings

V Periodicals

VI Reference books

VII Books on subjects other than music

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