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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Melancholia in Twentieth-Century British Cello Concertos, Sonatas,
and Solo Works: 1900-1980

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Evyn Barb Mingo

June 2022

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Byron Adams, Chairperson

Dr. Walter Clark

Dr. Rogerio Budasz

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The Dissertation of Eryn Barb Mingo is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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To God Alone Be the Glory

This Dissertation is Dedicated Lovingly to
My Parents

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Melancholia in Twentieth-Century British Cello Concertos, Sonatas,
and Solo Works: 1900-1980

by

Evyn Barb Mingo

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, June 2022
Dr. Byron Adams, Chairperson

This dissertation explores how various early-twentieth century British composers used the cello as an instrument of melancholy and mourning in response to loss. Through an analysis of the biographies, correspondence, music, and cultural dimensions of Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, Frank Bridge, Herbert Howells, Gerald Finzi, E.J. Moeran, Gustav Holst, Edmund Rubbra, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and William Walton, all who composed significant cello works, this dissertation illuminates the legacy of melancholy that the cello came to symbolize.

The first chapter surveys melancholia, what the sixteenth-century author, philosopher, and Anglican clergyman Robert Burton called the “English malady.” Identifying its causes within British history, religion, and literature, the chapter argues that the immense tragedies of the twentieth century compelled these

composers to aestheticize grief through new cello works. Chapter two analyzes how Elgar's valedictory and influential cello concerto portrays the composer's histrionic lament over the passing of the world he knew. Chapter three meditates on Delius's Double Concerto, Cello Concerto, Cello Sonata, *Serenade*, and *Caprice and Elegie*, revealing the paradoxical melancholy of his fervid musical pantheism. In a study of Bridge's Cello Sonata *and Oration, Concerto Elegiaco*, the fourth chapter argues that Bridge negotiated the national and continental musical trends in order to meet the emotional exigencies of his artistic development during and after the Great War. The fifth chapter provides a hiatus from melancholic musings by presenting five British cellists, all women, who contributed to the success of several of the works discussed in the dissertation. Chapter six, a comparison of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi in tandem with their respective cello concertos, posits that the loss of childhood innocence—literally in the death of Howells's son Michael and figuratively in Finzi's experience of early losses—informed their cello compositions profoundly. Finally, by casting a wider vision on British musical melancholy and the cello, the seventh chapter considers the "British malady's" continued impact on lesser known cello works by E.J. Moeran, Edmund Rubbra, Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and William Walton, further demonstrating the cello's association with melancholy in twentieth-century Britain.

Table of Contents

I. An English Malady.....	1
II. Elgar's Melancholy.....	38
III. Frederick Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer.....	79
IV. Frank Bridge: Modernism and Melancholy.....	127
V. British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: An Overview.....	179
VI. Innocence Lost: The Cello Concertos of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi.....	216
VII. Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy.....	286
Conclusion.....	357
Bibliography.....	361
Permissions.....	375

List of Musical Examples

Chapter II

Example 2.1 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R0, mm.1-6.....	56
Example 2.2 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R1, m.5-R2, m.5.....	58
Example 2.3 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R2, mm.6-8.....	58
Example 2.4 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R10, mm.1-4.....	60
Example 2.5 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R10, mm.1-4.....	61
Example 2.6 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R17, mm.2-8.....	63
Example 2.7 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R17, mm.2-8.....	65
Example 2.8 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R37, m.7-R38, m.6.....	67
Example 2.9 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R37, m.7-R38, m.6.....	68
Example 2.10 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R65, m.12-R66, m.4.....	73
Example 2.11 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R71, mm.1-8.....	75
Example 2.12 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R71, m.9-R73, m.2.....	76

Chapter III

Example 3.1 Delius, Double Concerto, R17, m.6-R18, m.4.....	95
Example 3.2 Delius, Double Concerto, R18, m.5-R19, m.2.....	96
Example 3.3 Delius, Double Concerto, R1, m.5-10.....	103
Example 3.4 Delius, Double Concerto, R1, m.11-R2, m.5.....	103
Example 3.5 Delius, Double Concerto, R2, m.6-R3, m.6.....	103
Example 3.6 Delius, Double Concerto, R42, m.3-R43, m.5.....	104
Example 3.7 Delius, Double Concerto, R44, m.8-R45, m.3.....	106

Example 3.8 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.1-9.....	112
Example 3.9 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.10-17.....	112
Example 3.10 Elgar, Cello Concerto, mm.1-6.....	112
Example 3.11 Elgar, Cello Concerto, mm.7-12.....	112
Example 3.12 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.36-40.....	114
Example 3.13 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.94-101.....	114
Example 3.14 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.18-23.....	116
Example 3.15 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.294-300.....	117
Example 3.16 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.302-307.....	118
Example 3.17 Delius, Cello Sonata, mm.30-34.....	122
Example 3.18 Delius, Cello Sonata, mm.1-18.....	123

Chapter IV

Example 4.1 Claude Debussy Cello Sonata, <i>Finale</i> , R6, mm.25 – R7, m.2.....	133
Example 4.2 Frank Bridge Sonata for Cello and Piano, II R8, m.1 - R9, m.11...135	
Example 4.3 Frank Bridge <i>Oration</i> R0, mm.1-6.....	152
Example 4.4 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R35, m.10-R36, m.2.....	153
Example 4.5 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R36, mm.3-4.....	153
Example 4.6 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R1, mm.4-8.....	154
Example 4.7 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R3, m.3-R4, m.1.....	155
Example 4.8 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R4, m.11-R5, m.1.....	156
Example 4.9 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R5, mm.2-4.....	157
Example 4.10 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R9, mm.1-9.....	158

Example 4.11 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R10, mm.1-6.....	159
Example 4.12 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R15, mm.1-5.....	160
Example 4.13 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R18, mm.1-4.....	161
Example 4.14 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R19, mm.5-12.....	162
Example 4.15 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R22, mm.2-5.....	163
Example 4.16 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R22, mm.6-15.....	164
Example 4.17 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R32, mm.3-5.....	166
Example 4.18 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R32, mm.6-R33, m.3.....	167
Example 4.19 Bridge, <i>Oration</i> , R41, mm.1-5.....	168

Chapter VI

Example 6.1 Howells, <i>Fantasia</i> , mm.1-2.....	225
Example 6.2 Herbert Howells, <i>Fantasia</i> , R1 mm.1-3.....	227
Example 6.3 Herbert Howells, <i>Fantasia</i> , R1 mm.4-6.....	227
Example 6.4 Howells, <i>Fantasia</i> , R4, mm.11-13.....	228
Example 6.5 Howells, <i>Fantasia</i> , R10 m.8-R11 m.1.....	229
Example 6.6 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.8-12.....	234
Example 6.7 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.8-12.....	235
Example 6.8 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.35-37.....	236
Example 6.9 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.25-28.....	237
Example 6.10 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.29-30.....	238
Example 6.11 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.46-47.....	239
Example 6.12 Howells, <i>Threnody</i> , mm.48-50.....	240

Example 6.13 Howells and Clinch, <i>Final Movement</i> , RL, m.12-RM, m.8.....	244
Example 6.14 Howells and Clinch, <i>Final Movement</i> , RM, mm.8-14.....	244
Example 6.15 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R0, mm.1-7.....	259
Example 6.16 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R5, m.10-R6, m.2.....	262
Example 6.17 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R9, mm.6-8.....	263
Example 6.18 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R10, m.2-R11, m.1.....	264
Example 6.19 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R18, m.1-4.....	265
Example 6.20 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R19, m.34-45.....	266
Example 6.21 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R2, m.5-10.....	271
Example 6.22 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R2, m.6-R3, m.4.....	272
Example 6.23 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R14, mm.1-8.....	273
Example 6.24 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R10, m.8-R11, m.5.....	274
Example 6.25 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R5, m. 14; m. 67.....	275
Example 6.26 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R6, mm.1-5.....	276
Example 6.27 Finzi, Cello Concerto III. R11, mm.6-19.....	278
Example 6.28 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R7, mm.7-12.....	280
Example 6.29 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R2, mm.2-5.....	281
Example 6.30 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R13, m.14-R14, m.9.....	282

Chapter VII

Example 7.1 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R0, mm.1-10.....	290
Example 7.2 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R2, m.3-R3, m.6.....	291
Example 7.3 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R22, mm.7-11.....	292

Example 7.4 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R26, m.8-R27, m.4.....	293
Example 7.5 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R27, m.5-R28, m.2.....	293
Example 7.6 Elgar Cello Concerto, R34, m.1-R36, m.2.....	294
Example 7.7 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R50, m.12-R51, m.4.....	295
Example 7.8 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R51, m.5-R52, m.9.....	296
Example 7.9 Holst, <i>Invocation</i> , R0, m.1.....	304
Example 7.10 Holst, <i>Invocation</i> , R0, mm.2-5.....	304
Example 7.11 Holst, <i>Invocation</i> , R0, m.6-R1, m.2.....	305
Example 7.12 Holst, <i>Invocation</i> , R3, mm.1-3.....	307
Example 7.13 Holst, <i>Invocation</i> , R7, mm.86-87.....	309
Example 7.14 Vaughan Williams, <i>Six Studies in English Folk Song</i> , I. mm.19- 24.....	323
Example 7.15 Vaughan Williams, <i>Six Studies in English Folk Song</i> , VI. mm.38- 51.....	325
Example 7.16 Vaughan Williams, <i>Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes</i> , RF, mm.3- 6.....	328
Example 7.17 Vaughan Williams, <i>Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes</i> , RCC, mm.6- 66.....	330
Example 7.18 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R0, mm.1-4.....	340
Example 7.19 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R0, mm.5-6.....	341
Example 7.20 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R1, m.11-R2, m.5.....	343
Example 7.21 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R3, m.8-R4, m.2.....	344

Example 7.22 Delius, Double Concerto, R44, m.8-R45, m.3.....	344
Example 7.23 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R12, mm.1-4.....	347
Example 7.24 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R23, mm.11-14.....	347
Example 7.25 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R18, m.12.....	348
Example 7.26 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R6, m.6-R7, m.3.....	349
Example 7.27 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R7, mm.4-8.....	350
Example 7.28 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R13, mm.40-41.....	352
Example 7.29 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R14, mm.1-4.....	353
Example 7.30 Walton, Passacaglia, R0 -R1, m.8.....	355

List of Images

Chapter I

Figure 1.1 Gilbert Jackson, *Robert Burton*, 1635.....2

Chapter V

Figure 5.1 May Henrietta Mukle.....184

Figure 5.2 Augustus John, *Guilhermina Suggia*, 1923.....191

Figure 5.3 Beatrice Harrison - Portrait194

Figure 5.4 Wilfred de Glehn, *Portrait of Florence Hooton Playing the Cello*,
1936.....211

Chapter I

An English Malady

The British author and philosopher Robert Burton (1577-1640) stated that melancholia, that dispositional but often habitual devolution into depression and despair, is an English malady.¹ Burton's seminal book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, sets forth the author's ideas of this ailment's causes, consequences, and cure. The first edition of this volume was published in 1621; it was revised eight times, with the final version appearing in 1676. Insightful as it is, coming from an erudite member of the Anglican clergy, the book posits that melancholia has been a persistent trait throughout British history, one so persistent that it engrained itself in the national character. National characteristics—results of essentializing at the social and political levels—came to the fore in England during the sixteenth century and intensified during Burton's lifetime; indeed, it has continued to this day, seemingly resistant to globalization.² As is evident in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, the British traded in nationalistic stereotypes: the French were refined and rational; the Italians were artistic, treacherous, and emotional;

¹ Robert Burton, *Melancholy Anatomized: Showing its Causes, Consequences, and Cure with Anecdotic Illustrations Drawn From Ancient and Modern Sources and Principally Founded on the Larger Work Entitled, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*, 2nd ed. (London: William Tegg, 1867), 20. "It is these three species of melancholy that I now propose to anatomize, and treat of through all their causes, consequences, and cures, together and apart, that every man, who is in any measure affected with this English malady, may know how to examine it in himself, and apply the remedies."

² An example of nationalistic tropes in British dramas of this period can be viewed in such plays as Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Henry V*, and in Webster's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, set in Italy.



Figure 1.1 Gilbert Jackson, *Robert Burton*, 1635
Oil on Canvas
Brasenose College, University of Oxford

the Teutonic peoples were viewed as alternately dutiful and ruthless; the Spanish were characterized as proud, fanatical, and antiquated. To label the English as a people prone to depressive tendencies, then, was not an unusual move for Burton or his contemporaries.

Yet, it was also human for Burton to do so. He was responding to a condition that he had understood through his own experience, and what he perceived in himself, as an Englishman, he recognized in his culture. However, Burton was more sagacious than to restrict melancholia to England, for then the absurd conclusion would be that British people were the only ones susceptible to it, as if it was an infectious disease to which some nationalities were inherently immune. Burton's book, with its extended descriptions of cranial, corporeal, hypochondriacal, amorous, and religious melancholia supported by rich references to classical mythologies, philosophies, and allegories, contradicts that notion. Burton knew melancholia was universal, brought about by a broken world beset by loss in all its vagaries. This "English malady," then, if not the general melancholy experienced by all humanity, is idiosyncratic in nature.

Much of what befalls man is the same. As the preacher observes in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "There is nothing new under the sun." The causes of melancholia are inevitable. Burton deftly outlines various situations, each with its characters, contexts, and complications from which that affect arises. And, logically, each situation has either its solution or conclusion. Characters experience some form of

loss, developing melancholy that is assuaged only by the restoration of that which was lost, a miraculous intervention, a change of mind, consolation—or death.

The theme of consolation through music will form the crux of the metaphysical explorations in this dissertation. Since melancholia is a condition, a remedy is needed, but as remedies do not always bring about immediate results, consolation is required in order for a person to avoid more permanent negative outcomes. One effective means of consolation is music. Burton writes:

Music is one, and not the least powerful, of those many means which philosophers and physicians have prescribed to exhilarate a sorrowful heart, and to divert those intense cares which accompany this complaint. *Musica est mentis medicina mæstæ* [Music is the masterful medicine for the mind], a “roaring-meg” against melancholy.³

The key phrase, “to divert those intense cares,” refers to music’s ability to stir other emotions in order to disrupt the pernicious hold of melancholy; it even has the power to ally the sufferings of a person in its grip.

Discussions of music’s ability to alter moods are found during the Greco-Roman age, of which Burton was a subtle scholar. The ancient Greeks, e.g., Plato, Aristotle and their successors among poets and philosophers, often remarked upon music’s power to heal and renew.⁴ Burton draws on a longstanding tradition of

³ Burton, *Melancholy Anatomized: Showing its Causes, Consequences, and Cure*, 136. A “roaring-meg” was a British seventeenth-century mortar (cannon) used successfully by Roundheads (Parliamentarians) to overtake key Royalist strongholds during the English Civil War. Burton’s comparison of music to a powerful siege machine against melancholy, an enemy stronghold, is profound, especially as it emphasizes that overcoming melancholy is a process, not something always accomplished in a swift stroke.

⁴ See Aristotle, *On the Purposes of Music*

addressing intense emotions through the medium of music and, although the science of music therapy would be established five centuries later, its basic principles were exploited much earlier. Music, its creation and performance, was in part a response to melancholy. According to Burton, the English were distinct in this respect. Therefore, their response to the “English malady” is to be understood primarily as a unique musical style exemplified by British composers and musicians from the Tudor era to at least the end of the twentieth century.

Although melancholia was a European phenomenon, it must be acknowledged that, just as Burton’s examples of melancholic situations implied different individuals and contexts, the British experience involved complex reasons for its own melancholic aesthetic. Religion, history, climate, weather, and geography all have a bearing on the quality of the melancholy found in British cultural artifacts. This is seen clearly through the symbolically rich pastoral tradition that pervades its literature. In part, English pastoralism is derived from Classical models, shared widely by other European peoples, which idealizes the countryside and an innocent, albeit uncultured, existence. Topical in nature, the pastoral fantasy relies on visual and audible symbols such as green rolling hills, blossoming meadows, bird song, babbling brooks, spring weather, jocund games often played by the peasantry, and the perennial quest for love. The one unwelcome entity is death, but, as the expression goes, *Et in arcadia ego* (And I am in Arcadia). Its presence cannot be shaken from the pastoral (the word connotes life in this case) for the logical construct would not exist without death’s shadow. Quoting German philosopher

Georg Simmel, Thomas Pfau reflects on the tragedy inherent in the dichotomy of life and death.

Inasmuch as 'death does not merely condition our life in the hour of death but constitutes a formal criterion of life and, as such, colors all of its contents,' the result is a pervasive ambiguity within life itself; for 'just as any automatic or spontaneous move can be interpreted as a drive for life, for 'more' life, it can also be seen as an escape from death'⁵

Death is thus synonymous with loss, and loss produces the melancholy that pleads for a better, or former, existence as a means to consolation. These tropes populate the narratives of a great deal of British literature and poetry, leading to the supposition that England imagined itself as a transposition of the pastoral ideal. Authors viewed its verdant countryside as the epitome of the pastoral landscape, including shepherds herding their sheep and huntsmen chasing their prey over hill and dale. It must be remembered that from the time of St. Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604), British education had been based on Classical models, including Virgil's pastoral *Eclogues*. William Shakespeare, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Thomas Gray, Jane Austen, John Keats, John Clare, the Brontë sisters, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, to name just a few, participated in this tradition. They interwove pastoral moods, settings, and symbols within their poems and stories. Death and loss, too, find a place in their works, especially in those (i.e., Thomas Hardy's novels) written during the decades nearing the twentieth century. This resulted in melancholic

⁵ Thomas Pfau, "Mourning Modernity: Classical Antiquity, Romantic Theory, and Elegiac Form" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15.

characters. Often, these characters are exiled from a lost Arcadia. Shakespeare's Prospero in *The Tempest*, an exile and outsider from his native land; Milton's Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, expelled from the Garden of Eden, as well as the grieving speaker of *Lycidas*; Keats's melancholic protagonists in *Ode on Melancholy* and *Ode to a Nightingale*; Austen's Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*; Hardy's farmer William Boldwood in *Far From the Madding Crowd*; the native Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native*; and the mayor Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*—all may be described as melancholic figures, some even as melancholiacs (that is, people who are chronically depressed). The tragedies that befall them cast a pallor over the countryside, much like the gray clouds that often cover the British landscape.

If literature reflects the themes and preoccupations with which people prefer to engage, then the recurring themes of a nation's literature reflect what the readers of that literature prioritize highly. It encapsulates their desires, hopes, attitudes, and their losses. Considering that idealization implies a dissatisfaction with cold reality, the pastoral flights of fancy undertaken by these British authors reveal an engrained cultural malaise to which they were responding, and one by which Burton himself, as a melancholic Englishman, was affected as well. He addressed this in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, as if the act of writing about melancholy might dispel his own melancholy.⁶ For this reason, too, were other authors writing their novels. A

⁶ Burton, *Melancholy Anatomized*. "I write of melancholy by being busy to avoid melancholy."

survey of British Romantic literature from the eighteenth century to the cusp of the fin de siècle evinces a stark contrast to literature that appeared after the First World War, much of which expressed a sense of desolation. Even in satirical novels such as Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928) or *A Handful of Dust* (1934), comedic or romantic endings were replaced by cynicism, expected resolutions yielded to uncertainty, and ideals were smothered by raw realities. When, as in T.S. Eliot's bleak poem *The Waste Land* (1922), pain was present, it was folly to hope in a pastoral fantasy that consoled previous generations. It just would not do.

Was there anything inherently lacking in the pastoral tradition to express and treat the deeper forms of melancholy, the second of Burton's types—that is, the habitual kind (or modern clinical depression)? Often overlooked is the prelapsarian aspect of English pastoralism. While classical in origin, Arcadia resembled the Biblical Eden as portrayed by Milton in his *Paradise Lost* (1667), in which he evokes the lost paradise described in the book of Genesis. The moral failure of mankind—the theological doctrine of original sin—led to death, spiritual and physical, thereby introducing melancholy. Burton expostulates the root cause of melancholy in these terms:

[S]o we, as long as we are ruled by reason, correct our inordinate appetite, and conform ourselves to God's word, are as so many saints: but if we give reins to lust, anger, ambition, pride, and follow our own ways, we degenerate into beasts, transform ourselves, overthrow our constitutions, provoke God to anger, and heap upon us this of melancholy, and all kinds of incurable diseases, as a just and deserved punishment of our sins.⁷

⁷ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 191-192

England had proclaimed itself a Christian nation since the Middle Ages, first Catholic but after the Anglican Reformation in the sixteenth century as Protestant. The story of the fall of man carried more than allegorical significance: original sin—what poet A. E. Housman evokes as the “primal fault”—was the origin of human suffering.⁸ The evocation of the pastoral serves to veil a moral framework articulated by Milton in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*: “Of Man’s first disobedience, and the Fruit / Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste / Brought Death into the World ...”⁹

According to this moral and specifically Christian context, which Burton, as an Anglican clergyman, shared, melancholy gains a different perspective from that of classical poetry, such as that of Virgil. For Burton, religion is integral to mitigating its vicissitudes. While there is no moral imperative concerning melancholy’s course in the pastoral, Burton believed that Anglican Christianity supplied an ultimate resolution to melancholy. Burton believed in the eternal life promised in the Gospels, and that scripture offered profound consolation. As a clergyman, Burton believed that what was lost in Eden would be restored for Christian believers. Burton recognized, however, that the time between loss and restoration was one in which deep suffering is experienced. Burton’s family had Roman Catholic sympathies, so it is not surprising that he turned to certain aspects of Catholic doctrine as well as the Anglican tradition to cope with the death, the deepest

⁸ Housman, who was a determined atheist, nevertheless used theological terms from time to time, see “Stars, I have seen them fall,” in his posthumously published volume *More Poems*, ed. Laurence Housman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), 24.

⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained* (New York, New York: Signet Classic, 1968), 5.

manifestation of loss. As will be discussed below, the coping mechanisms that he employed generated a melancholia that was unique to High Church Anglicanism, the flavor of which is particularly British.

Make no mistake: the Church of England of Burton's era espoused a Protestant perspective on death. Of the various theological and doctrinal differences between Catholic dogma and the Anglican doctrines expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion published in the Book of Common Prayer, one that sharply divides Catholicism from Anglicanism is that concerning the immediate future of the deceased's soul. In Catholicism, unless the deceased was a saint immediately granted the Beatific Vision in heaven, the soul has two destinations: hell or purgatory. If the soul of the deceased met certain preconditions on earth, it voluntarily accepts the purification of purgatory in order to make it acceptable for heaven. Only the rebellious and irredeemable souls are consigned directly to hell. The time in purgatory a soul spends undergoing purification may be commuted through intercessions or indulgences, allowing the living to participate in the ultimate salvation of the "dead."¹⁰

This supernal "work release" program was rejected by Protestantism in general and Anglicanism in particular. Once a person dies, their soul's fate is the sole domain of God. Article twenty-two of the Thirty-Nine Articles specifically reject purgatory as "a Romish doctrine" that is "a fond thing, vainly invented, and

¹⁰ Catholic doctrine concerning purgatory is accurately explained in St. John Henry Newman's epic poem *The Dream of Gerontius*, a redaction of which was set to music by Sir Edward Elgar in 1900.

grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”¹¹ This makes clear that survivors cannot intercede for the salvation of the souls of their deceased loved ones. Therefore, the elaborate liturgy and music of the Tridentine Requiem Mass, were rejected by the Church of England, which at first allowed only a bare graveside service.

Whereas a Requiem Mass is sung or said for the soul of the dead and gives comfort to the living indirectly, hymns and anthems sung by the living in Anglican funeral services are intended to edify the congregation rather than intercede on behalf of the deceased. Certainly, the sharp historical antagonism between Protestantism and Catholicism in Britain was called upon to exalt each one’s response to death over the other. Protestant funerals rejected anything too “popish” while Catholic rituals denounced Protestant views as heretical. Theological disputes are not the primary focus here, however. Instead, the focus remains on those who were mourning, as they were the ones most affected by these disputes. England was a touching example.

During the Anglican Reformation, Tudor England underwent a violent transition when the Protestant Church of England replaced over a millennium of Catholicism. This affected citizens profoundly, especially in their concept of life, death, and grieving. The Church of England, under Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, imposed the original edition of the Book of Common Prayer. They forbade the

¹¹ The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were finalized and promulgated by the Church of England in 1571 in response to the excommunication of Queen Elizabeth I the previous year.

Requiem Mass, leaving only a perfunctory graveside service. This harshness resulted in a strong backlash, and, after Cromwell and the Restoration, the Book of Common Prayer was revised in 1662 to include a modest funeral service. Brief when compared to the Catholic service, the Anglican service was based on the Psalms and other scriptures, such as the Book of Job and Paul's epistles. The service was about nine pages long and lasted approximately twenty minutes. Its simplicity suggested a reduced concern for the dead and even less for the mourners.

For those British subjects born before the Anglican Reformation accustomed to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, the inability to pray for the dead and, through Masses and prayers, help eventually liberate the souls of their loved ones from purgatory, was traumatic. The abrupt shift from that doctrine, one that had given them hope and some comfort in assuring the celestial future for their departed children, parents, spouses and friends, to a doctrine of merciless predestination made them question what the fate of their own souls might be. The purely linguistic Anglican funeral service presupposed that a soul goes straight to heaven or to hell upon death. Moreover, the doctrine of purgatory was culturally ingrained: their lives and morality were bound to it. The consequent pain when that doctrine was suddenly yanked from under them is understandable: it tormented many survivors. When compounded by the Church of England's failures as an institution to care

sufficiently for the grieving individuals or families, their losses must have seemed unbearable.¹²

The brief funeral service contained in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer was not entirely devoid of comfort for the grieving, however. Like those of most Protestant denominations, the Anglican doctrine was based on salvation by grace through faith, with God alone knowing “the secrets of our hearts.” The advocacy and actions of human beings were irrelevant. Death was inevitable; it was part of the Edenic curse. There was no room in Anglicanism for an expansive theology of death, and therefore, no prolonged rituals were required. What grieving occurred among the living after the internment of their loved ones, was exclusively their own affair. Mourning had a course to run, and the Anglican response was that of private grieving. The grand religious outlet for grief in the Catholic faith, which took place in church and at the altar, was subsumed by the home. In her book, *With Mornefull Musique: Funeral Elegies in Early Modern England*, K. Dawn Grapes explains, “When Catholic services no longer provided an outlet for continued focus on the departed, a vacuum was created in which poetic rhetoric served as a means not only for formal expression of grief, but also as a way to ensure the departed maintained a lasting legacy.”¹³ This would have a lasting influence on the British literary expression of melancholy.

¹² For a description of the profound social disruptions caused by the Anglican Reformation, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹³ K. Dawn Grapes, *With Mornefull Musique: Funeral Elegies in Early Modern England*, Music in Britain, 1600-2000 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 6.

Like Shakespeare, Burton was born in the Tudor age and survived into the Jacobean, and thus he understood the rites of mourning idiosyncratic to their world. Apart from the expected raw emotional response, other socially and culturally sanctioned methods of grieving appeared in their works, a majority of which were derived from classical literature. Burton used examples of mourning characters from Greek and Roman history in his book, while Shakespeare called upon forms of melancholic dialogue, such as soliloquies. Burton's Jacobean contemporary Milton used the elegy in his poem "Lycidas" and others. However, these classical forms were not modes of mourning, nor were they pervasive among the unlearned. Other more accessible forms of expression existed, either sanctioned by Anglicanism or hallowed by popular tradition. Just as current Western society prescribes acceptable ways of mourning whose readily understood symbolism provides an outlet for melancholy (such as wearing somber clothing and performing slow, minor mode music), so too did Tudor and Jacobean society offer recognizable ways of expressing grief. Much of what remains of those forms is now considered art, or merely cultural artifacts, but they did fulfill a profound function at the time: to address individual and collective melancholy.

Daily existence was often difficult for both commoners and the nobility in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mortality rates were high, civil liberties were sharply curtailed, and persecutions—of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Puritans, and foreigners—warfare, factionalism, famines, insurrections, and diseases such as the bubonic plague affected all levels of society. Organized

religion, being more openly intertwined with their daily lives than today, provided a coping mechanism for many. Highly important were authors, poets, and musicians who conveyed mourning and melancholy through their art. Most literate people were familiar with different types of rituals, including the lament, dirge, and elegy.¹⁴ Laments are immediately “raw” in emotional expression; they do not always adhere strictly to a formula, instead following the train of thought of one who is grieving intensely. Laments with which British readers of the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries were familiar were select Biblical Psalms, passages from the Bible, such as David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel: 17-27) as well as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Another biblical expression of mourning is the dirge. (“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.”)¹⁵ This “song or hymn of grief or lamentation *especially*: one intended to accompany funeral or memorial rites”¹⁶ is usually shorter and less formal than an elegy. The poet and playwright James Shirley’s (1596-1666) eponymous “Dirge” from his play *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* is only twenty-four lines long,

¹⁴ The funeral march was generally a later musical form (note absence of literary content) related to the dirge that accompanies, or artistically suggests, the procession of mourners to or from the funeral service. It is a piece in a slow, simple-duple meter that favors minor modes and other allusions to mourning. From Beethoven’s funeral march movement of his *Eroica* Symphony (Third Symphony, Op.55, 1803) to Igor Stravinsky’s *Chant Funèbre* (1908) in memory of his teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov to New Orleans Jazz funeral processions, the genre reveals the significance of embodied mourning.

¹⁵ Matthew 11:17 (New International Version). In the King James Version, “lament” is used instead of “dirge.”

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “dirge,” accessed July 5, 2021.

compared to Milton's "Lycidas," which is one-hundred ninety-three lines long. Elegies, in the classical sense, consist of formal prose written to commemorate various forms of loss, such as to honor the recently deceased. These writings are often structured and poetic, intended to become a testimony of the loss for future generations.¹⁷ However, according to Pfau, the definition of elegy has become exclusive in the modern era: "By contrast, with few notable exceptions, such as Goethe's *Roman Elegies* (1788-90), the modern elegy is overwhelmingly focused on death, loss, or indeed on a seemingly all-pervading melancholia of being." The latter category deserves particular attention in regards to the twentieth century, for it is during the last century that an aesthetic of melancholy overshadows the arts as they search retrospectively for an unrecoverable ideal. Pfau writes,

The true object of modernity's mourning and the source of an elegiac dimension pervading so many of its aesthetic models and cultural pursuits, is the utter impossibility of even wishing to return to a past whose fleeting appeal, in fact, only stems from the estranged and disoriented situation of the modern, strictly temporal subject devoid of transcendent points of reference or normative frameworks.¹⁸

Therefore, because not just the subject matter but the form itself can evoke mourning, works of art, especially music, may be perceived as elegiac, even if they do not directly refer to a specific loss.

¹⁷ Thomas Pfau, "Mourning Modernity: Classical Antiquity, Romantic Theory, and Elegiac Form" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2. The origin of the literary genre of elegy is unknown. "We know, after all, that the classical elegy—its tenuous etymological connection to mourning (GK. *elegos*) notwithstanding—was written in a variety of modes and on a broad range of topics."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

Alongside these three types of poetic or musical works for mourning, the liturgies of both Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism provided ample space for funeral music in their liturgies. Roman Catholic Requiem Masses were often adorned by music, but from the late eighteenth century onwards, settings of parts of the Requiem Mass became a distinct musical genre. As in the case of Verdi's monumental Requiem (1874), the setting of the liturgical text was divorced from liturgical function altogether.

By the nineteenth century, the dominant "Broad Church" faction of the Church of England had long dispensed with Requiem Masses, replacing them with Burial Services, such as the one that William Croft (1678-1727) published in 1724, hymns, and anthems. These compositions sought to console the living while providing for the living hope for eternity within a distinctly Protestant framework.¹⁹ Although these expressions of mourning provided some immediate solace, they were not concerned with the long-term duration—the everyday reality—of grieving. One way people coped with death domestically was through the tradition of wakes.

The purpose of a wake was to memorialize the loss of a loved one in a semi-private occasion before the more formal church service and burial. The specifically English version of the European wake tended to be a quiet event among family and

¹⁹ A study by Glenn Pemberton in his book *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms* of Baptist and Presbyterian hymnody shows that about fifteen percent of the hymns deal with suffering and loss, compared to the forty percent in the Psalms. This demonstrates a certain reticence to entertain the subject of grief in worship, a cultural difference from that of the ancient Hebrews like King David who believed it was acceptable to lament openly in times of distress.

close acquaintances. The people would gather in the evening for a few hours in the family's house to eat light refreshments, converse, and pay their respects to the deceased, whose body was usually in its coffin in the parlor. The English wake continued into the Victorian era. The morose atmosphere of such a gathering would appear incongruous with jubilation, but not all wakes were somber: nor were they exclusively Anglican. Often there was a class dimension to the amount of vivacity—and alcohol—encouraged at a wake. In Irish working-class Roman Catholic families as well as working-class Scottish Protestant ones, music, heavy drinking, and florid displays of emotion were expected.²⁰ The wake became a celebration of life that functioned as a catharsis rather than merely sedate eulogizing of the deceased. This sort of wake resembles the attitude of New Orleans funeral processions after burying the body: the music is joyous because the deceased's suffering has ended and they have moved on to a joyous life in heaven. Nevertheless, the consensus in England about what constituted a proper wake was subdued and dignified mourning. To do otherwise would be disrespectful, even treasonous. An eighteenth-century comic novel, Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, implies this disapproval when the character Blifil purposefully misrepresents Tom's joyous outbursts. Tom had been worried for his uncle while the elderly man lay in his presumed death bed, and no sooner did Tom hear that he

²⁰ At Irish Roman Catholic wakes, however, the celebratory part of the evening was preceded by a priest leading a solemn recitation of the Rosary in memory of the deceased, which was often followed by tearful eulogies.

was out of danger than Tom began to celebrate. In order to turn his uncle against Tom, Blifil told the uncle that Tom had been celebrating while he lay sick in bed, implying that Tom wanted him dead. The uncle believed Blifil and turned Tom out of the house. Fielding's comedy illuminates the kind of response to death expected of family, friends, and even strangers in England up to that time. Victorian society held fast to those sober expectations, immortalizing them in the protracted mourning of Queen Victoria over the death of Prince Albert.

Whether or not the deceased were memorialized at home, lamentation may devolve into melancholy based on a person's temperament as well as the severity of the loss. British society made provision for the process of mourning in dress and customs. From the seventeenth century onwards, English mourning was characterized by a series of stages that unfolded over a prolonged period, symbolized by the color of clothing. Victorians followed such dress protocols, which represented the intensity of their grieving, from black to dark colors. After the death of her husband, Queen Victoria's public appearances were curtailed, as she engaged initially in only the most necessary state functions. Normally, the bereaved would limit social contact for several months, gradually returning to daily life in about a year. Others understood that that person was grieving. However, Queen Victoria prolonged her grieving for years, integrating aspects of the customs and clothing of continual mourning into her daily life. This cast a pall not only over her image but also, since she was a symbol of the British Empire, over the entire nation, transforming the Victorian Age after 1861, the year of Prince Albert's death, into a

melancholic era of progress: optimism for an ideal future wrought by human ingenuity alongside a longing to preserve the more “innocent” Arcadian and elegiac past. Monarchs set the tone of a nation’s mood. Queen Victoria’s melancholy, when combined with her devotion to the somber and Evangelical “Low Church” faction of the Church of England, concretized a form of religious melancholy. Victorian melancholy was only partly dissipated by the pleasure-seeking and opulent Edwardian Age that followed. In hindsight, it now seems as if this persistent undercurrent of sadness foreshadowed the devastation of the First World War.

In the first chapter of his book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell described the summer of 1914 before the war as idyllic.²¹ This extended from the years between the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the end of the Edwardian age in 1910, and the beginning of the war in 1914. In truth, not all was idyllic during this period. Rumors of social unrest emanated from around the world; premonitions of revolutions due to anarchist movements arose; and dark calls from politicians, the intellectual elite, and, shockingly, from certain Anglican clergy for a global war to “cleanse” European society of the moral decay were rampant during the fin de siècle.

During that same period, the Church of England received pointed criticism for its complicity with social decay. Even more disconcerting for that national

²¹ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23-24. “Although some memoirs of the benign last summer before the war can be discounted as standard romantic retrospection turned even rosier by egregious contrast with what followed, all agree that the prewar summer was the most idyllic for many years. It was warm and sunny, eminently pastoral.”

church was the gradual falling away of its congregants due to the simultaneous rise of scientific discovery, such as Darwin's theory of evolution, and a persistent fascination in the occult.²²

It is evident that the religious, social, and political condition of England was unstable by the beginning of the First World War. The tragedy and destruction of the war years, not to mention the 1918-1919 Spanish-flu pandemic, redefined loss and mourning in England, deepening the national propensity for melancholia. Continuous mass slaughter of troops at the front—this in addition to people in cities struck down by a pandemic—deeply affected all classes of British society. Inevitably, mourning had to be modernized.²³ What painfully emerged from the hearts of writers, artists, and composers, a number of whom were veterans, were attempts to transcribe their losses as effectively as possible through their respective media. Recognizing that former methods of expression did not, nor could not, suffice to deal with a tragedy of this magnitude, these creators often forged new techniques that aestheticized the awful realities they had faced during the conflict. British composers had often turned to the musical approaches explored by continental composers in the preceding decades, but they also searched their own scholarship for elements that had been used in the development of an idiosyncratic

²² For a detailed and scholarly investigation of the rise of spiritualism and the occult in England, see Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850—1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²³ For the ways in which the First World War changed British mourning customs, see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

English style since the 1880s. The synchronization of European modernism and British nationalism in the cauldron of the Great War produced what is generally recognized as British musical modernism. One defining trait of this idiosyncratic modernism was a melancholy that had always existed in the past, as Burton amply demonstrated, but intensified and was driven to the surface as the result of the war. The curious sense of timelessness that can be identified in these cultural artifacts is due to this interaction of the distant past with the riven present and uncertain future.

In this dissertation the tropes and musical signifiers of melancholy will be explored in relation to a selection of cello concertos, sonatas, and solo works by twentieth-century British composers. These works are significant in that they represent the British manner of aestheticizing grief and mourning through music as a needed response to the upheavals of that century and the country's complicated modernity. In order to understand these works, the manifestation of melancholy in British culture will be traced, from the Tudor era in the writings of Robert Burton and the *momento mori* to the protracted grieving of Queen Victoria. The funeral tradition along with the distinct pastoralism, potent sources for musical elements symbolic of melancholy, will be explored. A topic-theory approach will be used to make the connections between the literary influences transcribed into the scores. The biographies of the composers and musicians who collaborated on these works as well as the important figures (e.g., critics) and conventions (i.e., performances) will be handled in a manner similar to Christopher Small's concept of "musicking" to

demonstrate that these works were not simply one person's engagement with melancholy but a confluence of experiences belonging to the world he or she inhabited. As the matter of melancholy often pertains to religion, and since Christianity is intimately connected to the British national identity along with melancholy, the composers' and musicians' religious backgrounds will be considered when analyzing their artistic decisions as most of them adhered to some form of Christianity, and wrote for the Church of England as well as the Roman Catholic Church. To treat their aesthetics apart from religious considerations is an incomplete endeavor because the criteria to judge melancholy corresponds to existential, and ultimately spiritual, beliefs that inevitably inform creative decisions for artistic expression.

It is key to observe that a significant portion of the musical works paralleled the literary works of mourning. The latter informs the former, particularly in terms of the tone, addressee, and general worldview. Those musical works, which were produced primarily for secular audiences, contemplated the depths of individual grief in order to arrive at the general human experience of grief. And music, though intended for private grieving (e.g., Herbert Howells's Cello Concerto), eventually served a public function, as with all art. Many of the pieces were recorded, broadcasted, or disseminated widely.

Given that art is to be contemplated, its consequential public life can only be restricted by degrees, such as in the case of chamber music, through practical performance limitations, lack of publication, or mere lack of interest. Music unheard

makes little impact. But music overplayed is the same, if not more ineffective. A testament to this was the gradual turning-away of the British public from war pieces. By the time of the premiere of Bridge's *Oration* in 1936, the genre had expended itself for that generation. Bridge's work was mildly appreciated. Thus, several elements influence the effectiveness of music for mourning: timeliness, the extent of the tragedy, and the clarity of expression of the symbol used. The cello works to be studied in the following chapters will all undergo an evaluation based on these categories. Because one is dealing with the sensitive topic of expression that pertains to deep loss, one sees the necessity to treat musical works that convey such feeling with fairness, separating the aesthetic from the psychological. (Defining the line between the two is problematic so, rather than expounding upon it in only this chapter, this author will do so in every chapter.) Yet, while on this subject, one must also consider Burton's theories on melancholy. Intense melancholy, as he demonstrates repeatedly, hinders useful activity, even artistic creativity. Therefore, the composers to be discussed were not necessarily under its worst effects when writing their pieces. The feelings they transcribed were those that belonged to memory, motivated by their creative impulse and malaise, but placed at an emotional distance through rational thinking. The most insightful composers and musicians had the fortitude to make something beautiful out of the painful material at hand.

By the end of World War One, every element of society had been irrevocably altered, including the methods for mourning. The Victorian Era rituals hitherto

discussed were not designed to handle mass death or the influx of terribly maimed and mentally disfigured soldiers returning from the front. Thousands of men perished every day in a matter of hours; whole villages found themselves without sons or husbands. The concern for maintaining national morale abrogated prolonged formal-grieving customs, as they were deemed impractical. Repeated rites for millions of dead were too demoralizing. As a result, memorials, such as the famed Cenotaph, and musical commemorations, such as Bliss's "Morning Heroes," were created to be observed by large gatherings of mourners at a time. Grief, which had led a highly formalized existence before the war, was more open. Unfortunately, some attitudes persisted, especially that of the Victorian's stiff upper lip.²⁴ The people did not talk about their grief in order to protect their image of composure.

In one respect, the ideas of European modernism, along with its derivatives, precluded the British artistic response to the war. The French introduced Symbolism in an effort to represent in a more indirect manner than realism. Rather than attempt to restrict the world to precise lines, colors, and textures, those artists appealed to memory. The eye would formulate the basic form of an object. Peter Childs writes that, "In theory, an impressionist painting would take no longer to paint than it took to look at an object, making the finished canvas akin to an early

²⁴ Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: The Cresset Press, 1965), 18. "It would obviously be harrowing for a doctor to have to do so [(tell a patient the truth of a fatal disease)], and it is understandable that they share the British fear of the display of emotion; but it would seem worth considering whether this practice is not causing unavoidable misery."

Kodak photograph but shot through with colour.”²⁵ Abstraction by degrees influenced the subsequent movements. Cubism was a representation of a scene from different angles all at once, usually of a human subject. Time and space soon were also manipulated, most notably in Futurism. The Italian movement had a fascination with speed brought about by an inordinate hope in mechanization. Speed was viewed aesthetically. To capture it in art, its adherents sought novel ways to portray dynamism.²⁶ This meant that past art was denounced as antiquated. The most vocal proponent of Futurism was its inventor Filippo Tomaso Marinetti (1876-1944). He metaphorically cast libraries, the records reality, into the fire, convinced that only a violent break with the past was the way forward. Strangely, his Manifesto proved ominous for the course of the twentieth century, specifically his pronouncement, “We will glorify war—the world’s only hygiene.”²⁷ War mongers believed that the Great War, the first global mechanized conflict which utilized speed and machine for unprecedented devastation, would end all wars and cure Europe of its decadence. England’s foray into Futurism, Wyndham Lewis’s Vorticism, aimed to depict modern reality in a linear, harsh manner, which befitted the severity of those years. Vorticism affected British musical modernism, pointing to the stylistic shifts in composition during and after the war. The societal trauma caused by the deaths of millions led British composers to reevaluate their musical

²⁵ Peter Childs, *Modernism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 115.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

aesthetics. Vaughan Williams, Bridge, and even Elgar experimented with the techniques of Continental composers such as Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel; the Second Viennese School, especially Berg; and Russian composers. Retaining elements from pre-war musical tradition alongside the newer elements underlined an inability to break away completely from the past. And through the resulting nostalgia, one discerns melancholy.

Now, music is continuously an act of remembering what has sounded formerly, whether it is remembering the music of a bygone era or one's own former tastes. The Royal College of Music under Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) and Hubert Parry (1848-1918) instructed its earliest generations in Brahmsian and Wagnerian idioms. Stanford and Parry's students generally held this approach to be restrictive of their creativity. They were predisposed to rebel, so they looked beyond those horizons for inspiration. Simultaneously, some composers like Cecil Sharp, George Butterworth, Percy Grainger, and Vaughan Williams realized that they did not need to look outward but inward. As a result, the Pastoral School began as a folksong movement. Gathering folksongs through field work and incorporating them in arrangements or complete art-music pieces preserved the dying traditions. After all, the radio was slowly usurping the prevalence of folk music; the rural people reasoned that it was more entertaining to hear broadcasts of music than to perpetuate a centuries-old oral tradition. Hence, rescuing the repertoire of folksong

from extinction was also an English-nationalist concern. It was one of nostalgia for an older Britain that was disappearing.²⁸

Were mourning and melancholy gendered? Was there an appropriate way for British men and women to express their sense of loss during the early twentieth century? British culture before the Great War raised its sons to be “brave,” even unflinching under duress. It also discouraged them from pursuing certain professions, such as music performance, which it deemed effeminate since instrumental playing had been largely a woman’s activity in the domestic sphere.²⁹ In his essay on music in British education during the Romantic era, Bernarr Rainbow explains that “...music long failed to gain respect in university circles because it was considered unworthy of the serious attention of a gentleman.”³⁰ The graduates of these elite schools went on to hold prominent positions in the nation, promulgating this opinion of music:

Lord Chesterfield’s damning observation that music wasted a man’s time and took him into odd company—itsself an unacknowledged quotation from John Locke—seems to have made an indelible impression upon the upper classes in Britain.³¹

²⁸ The phenomenon of collecting folk songs also occurred in Europe, notably by Béla Bartók.

²⁹ Bernarr Rainbow, “Music in Education” in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley. *The Athlone History of Music in Britain* (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 43. Music was almost compulsory for girls, but not for boys.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

Thus, rough sports—rugby—and respectable male-dominated professions, including clergyman, lawyer, merchant, military officer, scientist, etc., attracted most young male minds. The rigorous work ethic that those careers required and further engrained in British society as signs of status contrasted with the unpredictable creative experiments that characterized the fine arts. Composition, as will be demonstrated throughout this dissertation, acquired a certain privileged status given that emulating (and surpassing) the great German masters was a nationalistic concern. Notwithstanding, not all British composers were at ease with the perception of music making as being feminine. Edward Elgar struggled with the “masculine” image he wished to convey versus the “feminine” qualities of his art. He attempted to distance himself from what he believed were signs of effeminacy. Although a violinist at first, he sold his violin later to buy a billiard table—a manly game.³² He did not wish to be associated with the violin, either as a performer or a teacher, because it did not fit his concept of an English gentleman. Yet, Elgar’s music reveals a highly sensitive and emotional individual, especially in the Cello Concerto, which suggests why he was careful to check his outward expressivity: he feared what being misconstrued as too effeminate could do to his image as a composer. If combined with Byron Adams’s observations of Elgar’s veiled homoeroticism, this suggestion grants a slightly nuanced perspective of his melancholic musical

³² Byron Adams, “The “Dark Saying” of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox” in *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 23, No. 3. (Spring 2000): 226, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/746879>.

aesthetic.³³ He had to negotiate the cultural masculine and feminine aspects of his personality with his artistic persona. If intense melancholic effusions were patently feminine, then he, and all other composers of his time, would feel to some degree a need to defend their masculinity. Of course, that was not the case with all the male composers to be discussed later, but this metaphorical probe into the complexities of musical expression in relation to gender uncovers how the standards of manliness could influence the work of a composer like Elgar. All that notwithstanding, music allowed men and women composers and musicians to grieve, mourn, and sob publicly through performance.

An association precisely in line with mourning and melancholy is that the cello was an instrument of melancholy. A parody of a famous phrase from the playwright Maurice Maeterlinck summarizes this notion: “Ah sad, how sad, sadder than a cello solo.”³⁴ Was it then humorous when sad music was written for the cello? Underneath the veneer of humor, the association of sadness with the instrument signals a commonly known cultural aspect of the cello. For a parody to be effective, familiarity with what is being parodied is necessary. Maeterlinck’s plays, poems, and essays were well known, repeated frequently in Britain. The cello,

³³ Sophie Fuller, “Elgar and the Salons: The Significance of a Private Musical World” in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 225. Fuller observes Elgar’s “expressive sensitiveness associated with femininity” in his vocal opinion of his violin concerto: “It’s *good!* Awfully emotional! Too emotional but I love it.”

³⁴ Frank Howes, *The Music of William Walton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 101. The original phrase was derived possibly from Maeterlinck’s *Wisdom and Destiny*: “It is sad to love and be unloved, but sadder still to be unable to love.”

too, was widespread, having existed since the sixteenth century. Its qualities had been sufficiently exposed to permit people to stereotype its repertoire. A low range that correlates to the human vocal range and timbre, especially one that is prominently heard when a disconsolate individual laments, sighs, or groans, makes the instrument suitable for music that expresses melancholia. Both Baroque and Classical composers took advantage of the cello's singing-like tone in the slow movements of their concerti. Indeed, many of those piece's markings indicated affects related to melancholy: triste (sad), amoroso (loving), affettuoso (with passion, emotion, feeling), pensoso (pensive, thoughtful), etc. In regards to technical brilliance, the cello could not compete with smaller, nimbler instruments like the violin or flute, or the flexible harmonizing instruments such as the keyboard family or plucked strings, including harp and guitar. This restricted composers to the above-mentioned qualities when they wrote for the cello. Thus, their expressive aims were determined by affects associated with the effects and timbres that the instrument offered. Certainly not all cello repertoire is melancholic, as other instruments have a comparable distribution of melancholic and mournful music. Some features of the cello simply connoted simply tragedy.³⁵ Other low-ranged instruments (e.g., theorbo, trombones) accompanied serious, even portentous scenes in Baroque opera (e.g., Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*). A

³⁵ Word painting may have contributed to this.

single pluck of a theorbo's lowest string at the end of a lament movement punctuates misfortune.

The cello's connotation of melancholy continues to interest researchers in the psycho-acoustic aspects of timbre. In their article, "Are Stopped Strings Preferred in Sad Music?" co-authors David Huron and Caitlyn Trevor explain that sadness can be detected from instruments that emulate certain features of vocalized signs of sadness. Using "sad" speech as a reference, the authors note that the physiological relaxation of facial muscles that occurs when people are sad "produces a lengthening of the vocal tract resulting in a lower resonant frequency, consequently causing a darker or less bright sound."³⁶ Case comparisons of the marimba and xylophone as well as the guitar and banjo reveal a tendency to associate sadness with instruments offering darker, lower-pitched sounds and slower decay. While a combination of acoustic factors, including the structure of scales, contribute to these associations, one must also consider the less scientific—and perhaps more artistic—causes through which an instrument conjures up particular affects. Inducing an audience to experience precise emotional states during a performance is the equivalent of aural prestidigitation. What stirs one person's emotions may cause indifference in another person. Cultural differences, personality, modes of listening, and the mysteries of personal taste all coalesce at

³⁶ David Huron and Trevor, Caitlyn, "Are Stopped Strings Preferred in Sad Music" in *Empirical Musicology Review* vol.11, no.2 (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/emr.v11i2>. Ohala, 1980, 1994; Tarter, 1980; Tarter and Braum, 1994

once in a performance in every participant, creating an unpredictable scenario of enthusiastic response or utter boredom. Therefore, one will, with great trepidation, use a biological reason to demonstrate why the cello is deemed to be more “sad” than other instruments. The stance to be taken is one that observes common traits in the body of British cello works in order to support a hypothesis that the cello became a favorite vehicle for representing melancholy primarily through tradition and secondarily through mimesis. Hearing a “sad” cello piece for the first time may trigger “sympathetic emotional vibrations”—the goal of the Doctrine of Affections—but unless the composer, player or listener has experienced these emotions fully, the effect will not necessarily be strong. People respond sympathetically to the universal phenomena of laughter, tears, lassitude, and anger via imitation. With musical instruments and nuanced emotions like melancholy, the responses are mediated by context. For many listeners, and composers such as Berlioz and Franck, the timbre of the English horn conjures the world of pastoral melancholia and nostalgia in some music while in others such as Debussy or Ravel, it evokes the sound-world of the Spanish-Arabic fairytale. The cello conjures feelings based on the nature of the performer and the repertoire performed. The melancholia found by many listeners and music historians in Elgar’s score is far from the passion of, say, Lalo’s tempestuous concerto. Perhaps there was an unconscious, “primordial” recognition on the part of British composers that the cello suited mourning and melancholy because it imitated the sounds that human beings often produce—and to which they respond when confronted by loss of an object of affection, whether

another person or a beloved landscape. However, it is difficult to tell what the actual reasons are in such cases. Much of the appreciation of music is based on custom, and the cello, from its physical attributes to its symbolism, has a rich history. Twentieth-century composers selected it for their expressive purposes within the context of that history and, in turn, they contributed to its evolving symbolism. Thus, in Britain, the cello became primarily an instrument for mourning.

In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how the cello became a locus for mourning and melancholy in works for cello by British composers written between 1900 and 1970. Special attention will be lavished upon concertos, sonatas, and solo pieces by Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, Frank Bridge, Herbert Howells, Gerald Finzi, E.J. Moeran, Edmund Rubbra, Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and William Walton. All of them composed for the cello, sometimes in direct response to tragedies, but also in response to the acoustical characteristics of the instrument.

Recognizing that the cello is an inanimate object regardless of its expressive potential, attention must rest on the performer. British composers wrote for particular cellists, not merely for the instrument. Writing for versatile cellists who could exploit fully the solo voice of their instrument as if they were Ciceronian orators involved both contractual commissions as well as collaborations. The subtle interchange between composer and performer that takes place in the rehearsal studio, the parlor, or by letter, as they design the work reveals that finding just the right mode of expression is a shared process. The composer may intend, but the

musician realizes—interprets. The cellist whom the composer chooses is as important as the score he or she creates and signs. Often, the British works for cello discussed over the course of this investigation should be viewed as the result of the advice offered by their performers. The unique artistic rapport between composer and cellist often led to significant modifications in the actual musical material of the concertos, sonatas, and solo pieces, not to mention how those composers took the individual styles and abilities of those performers into consideration. As in ages past, the ultimate success of these new works was as much dependent on excellent and loyal performers as on the composer's name.

Up to this point, this author has dwelt on the practical concerns of selecting a cello soloist for a given score. Skills constitute competency for interpretation but, as critique, pedagogy, and art theory argue consistently, interpretation is a creative process that transcends the mere instrument in order to probe lived experience. Elgar summarized it well when, in referring to a performance of his cello concerto, he told cellist Beatrice Harrison to “Give’em the spirit.”³⁷ Skill aside, Harrison’s playing captured Elgar’s imagination, emotions and artistic vision. She comprehended what he wanted, making her an ideal vehicle for his “composer’s voice.” Solo pieces place weight on the soloist’s artistic agency, as they become one with the composer’s style and intentions. These performers are simultaneously a narrator and a participant, a “chosen vessel” for the cogitations of another. Just as a

³⁷ Beatrice Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ed., *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison* (London: John Murray, 1985), 125.

concerto brings a collective of musicians around an individual, the expressive musical act unites audience and musicians around a single voice which subsumes the many during a performance. Any aesthetic decision affects the emotional impact on the whole. Being sensitive to the expressive content of a concerto, expressed through notes, tempo, dynamic markings, register, and articulations, informs those decisions. For this reason, investigating the biographies of the cellists alongside those of the composers within the context of their times and shared experiences is germane to a thorough appreciation of the music. Moreover, any attempt to understand the melancholy transmitted by the British cello works benefits from knowing to what the composers may have been reacting. That can be quite personal. A soloist “speaks” for the composer and audience, but he or she also “speaks” for him- or herself, even at a certain aesthetic distance.

Speaking of the aesthetic distance, music may arise out of an aestheticized grief, that is, one that is not caused by a personal experience but one that is grasped well enough through observation to produce a reaction. When one person mourns, others may mourn in sympathy. Rarely, though, do they mourn empathetically. To do so would require them to have undergone the exact same circumstances, and that is neither possible or desirable: the loss of a beloved child to a swiftly moving and fatal illness, for example. Yet, mourners often search for empathy. How is it to be addressed, then? Music has the ability to stimulate memories with potent emotional content, to crystallize experience, and to mimic the dynamics of thought and feeling as they flow over time. These characteristics, and others beyond the

scope of this chapter, enable composers and musicians to reach the hearts of the audience in an act of faith. Following the tradition of their forbearers as well as authors, poets, and artists, these composers and musicians used art to at once express and exorcise (as much as possible) the pain and, by so doing, created something new out of what had been lost. For the hope of expressing melancholy, whether private or publicly, is for healing a soul broken by sorrow.

Chapter II

Elgar's Melancholy

By the time that his Concerto in E minor for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 85, was premiered in 1919, Edward Elgar's (1857-1934) reputation was in decline in Britain.³⁸ His was the Edwardian era—the foundation of his success was laid in the last years of the Victorian period—the confidence, opulence, and ideals of which were annihilated by the Great War. Indeed, Elgar felt his waning popularity keenly and seemed to acknowledge this decline, turning out fewer large-scale works, turning to composing chamber music, and composing less and less after the war, and especially after the death of his wife Alice in 1920. A new generation of British composers shunned Elgar's style, if not for aesthetic reasons, at least for the bygone Edwardian era that his music had seemed to celebrate.³⁹ All that notwithstanding, calling Elgar antiquated would be as nearsighted as eighteenth-century musicians rejecting J. S. Bach as old-fashioned, or the Futurists who sought to dismantle all the libraries as a pretense for advancing knowledge. Elgar continued to write music during and after the war, and some of that music was established in the British

³⁸ Michael Kennedy, Michael De-la-Noy, Diana McVeagh, Jerrold Northrop Moore, Simon Rattle, and Percy Young, "A Portrait of Elgar - 'Hope and Glory,'" Documentary. BBC, 1984, Accessed 5 August 20 21. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ap8FyBZFD0>. According to Byron Adams, "Elgar's popularity remained high among the British public for such pieces as the Pomp and Circumstance Marches and The Dream of Gerontius, but his reputation was sinking fast among music critics and scholars."

³⁹ Simon Heffer, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Phoenix, 2000), 51-52. Heffer expands upon Elgar's post-World War Two reality: "When Elgar's first works after the war—notably the Cello Concerto—were met with a critical hostility that seemed to stem from a reaction against Edwardian conceptions of nobility, beauty and style, the field was clearly open for the next generation."

repertory during his lifetime. The Cello Concerto was one of his masterpieces, one that seemed bizarre in form and sound to early listeners, but turned out to be not just relevant but influential. Despite having a lackluster premiere due, as will be discussed below, to circumstances beyond the composer's control, the work has nevertheless become a staple of cellists' repertoire alongside concertos by Dvořák, Lalo, and Saint-Saëns. Within the context of British musical modernism, moreover, the concerto served as a catalyst and archetype for other twentieth-century British cello concertos: later composers of cello concertos would imitate its form and even allude to its chordal opening (such as in Delius's Cello Concerto). The plethora of modern British cello concertos was evidence that Elgar's music was still relevant to younger composers of the twenties and thirties. One salient reason for this continuing relevance can be located in the overwhelming emotional impact of this score on audiences across the globe—the work is a virtual ambassador for British melancholia. In the decade immediately after the First World War, melancholia pervaded British life under the glittering and brittle surface of the “Roaring Twenties,” and can be seen in, say, the novels of Evelyn Waugh, such as *A Handful of Dust*. Music was a useful medium for the expression, not just Elgar's Cello Concerto but also such scores as John Fould's *World Requiem* (1921) and Rutland Boughton's opera *The Immortal Hour* (1912; first produced in London, 1922) were taken up by

audiences who sought comfort from their grief.⁴⁰ Both composers and listeners found an ideal outlet for the expression of mourning and reflection in the genre of the cello concerto, especially as the instrument has long been associated with melancholy: the slow movement of Chopin's Cello Sonata (1846) is only one such example of melancholy in an earlier score designed for the cello. Elgar demonstrated how this melancholy could be expressed in a concerto, the form of which was sophisticated and innovative. His contested class status in British society, his situation in time, and his unconventional artistry provided the structure, and his unique sensibility informed the message. By analyzing the man, the premiere, and the semiotic material, admirers of the concerto can discern the ways in which this concerto defined the zeitgeist of a reticent war-weary Britain that was transitioning into modernity.

Despite his appearance as the epitome of an Edwardian "gentleman," Elgar was an acutely sensitive man, moody, temperamental and, at times, unstable. He could be as friendly to some as he was curt to others, especially when his carefully constructed social image was threatened. He was proud of his aspirations but not always of his circumstances, however celebrated or affluent he became. His working-class origins were a thorn in his flesh, for, as a musician and composer in the highly stratified society of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, his status still

⁴⁰ For a detailed investigation of the impact of *The Immortal Hour* on British audiences in the 1920s, see Matthew Buchan, "Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour*, the Celtic Twilight, and the Great War," *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 103, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2020): 311-345.

reflected the class status of his family origins. The lingering prejudice against Elgar's Roman Catholic religion—one of his sisters took the veil as a nun—caused further tensions for the hyper-sensitive composer, who never forgot a slight.⁴¹

Elgar's career brought him into contact with royalty, aristocrats, wealthy industrialists, members of the intelligentsia, influential cultural figures, and other artists and musicians. He appreciated some of these figures but disdained others, such as his *bête noire*, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924). The complexity of Elgar's character has been discussed extensively in the order of famous composers whose lives draw as much attention as their music; the authors of such studies invariably describe him as alternating between high spirits and deep melancholia. This investigation will consider how the most salient manifestation of melancholy in Elgar's biography might have influenced his music with his Cello Concerto providing a focal point for this case study. The people he knew and with whom he collaborated reveal his predispositions, confirming the observations of Elgar scholars that his life was truly "bound up" in his music. This is not just an exercise in the "biographical fallacy" of using the work to illuminate the personality of the artist, as the composer himself provided ample testimony about the ways in which his life and work were intertwined in a particularly intimate manner, unusual even in the annals of composer biography.

⁴¹ For a detailed investigation of Elgar's social insecurities, see Byron Adams, "The Dark Saying of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox," *19th-Century Music*, vol. 23, no. 3 (Spring, 2000), 218-235.

Calls for a cello concerto from Elgar can be traced back to 1900 when the German-born cellist of the Brodsky Quartet, Carl Fuchs (1865-1951), requested (and reiterated in a letter) that Elgar to compose one for him.⁴² However, the composer was preoccupied with composing his oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* at that time and did not respond to Fuchs's suggestion. In 1906, another cellist, Paul Grümmer (1879-1965), asked Elgar for a concerto.⁴³ Elgar was again preoccupied with *Gerontius*, rehearsing the crucial solo tenor part with Grümmer's friend, German singer, reciter, and actor Ludwig Wüllner (1858-1938) at Leo Frank Schuster's home.⁴⁴ Grümmer, like Fuchs, followed up the request with a letter, but Elgar was simply too busy. Several years would elapse before Elgar began considering seriously a concerto for cello. According to Cecil Bloom, Elgar considered writing a cello concerto for the 1913 Leeds Triennial Music Festival. The festival's

⁴² Royal Northern College of Music, "Collection CF - Carl Fuchs Papers," Royal Northern College of Music, 16 July 2018, accessed July 18, 2021. <http://www.archives.rncm.ac.uk/index.php/carl-fuchs-papers>. Fuchs, not to be confused with German critic, pianist, conductor, and composer Carl Dorius Johannes Fuchs (1838-1932), was the Professor of Violoncello at the Royal Manchester College of music from 1893 to 1942. He had first gone to Manchester to perform as a soloist under Charles Hallé with the Gentleman's Concert Society Orchestra, returning to Germany afterwards. He moved eventually to Manchester in 1888 and concertized extensively. In 1895, he formed the Brodsky Quartet, not to be confused with the 1972 Brodsky Quartet, with German violinist Adolf Brodsky, second violinist Christopher Rawdon Briggs, and violist Simon Speelman. Fuchs had met Brodsky in Leipzig around 1887.

⁴³ Kurt Stephenson and Tully Potter, ed., "Grümmer, Paul," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed July 18, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11867>. Grümmer was a cellist and a viola da gamba player, a former pupil of Julius Klengel at the Leipzig Conservatory and later of Hugo Becker. He was primarily active in Germany and Vienna, although he toured throughout Europe as well as in Britain. He also performed with "a string quartet founded by Jan Kubelík."

⁴⁴ Richard Smith, "Frank Schuster—Elgar's Patron," in *The Elgar Society Journal* 19, no.5 (August 2016), 4-18. The wealthy British arts and music patron, Leo Frank Schuster, was a staunch supporter and friend of Elgar. Their first recorded meeting was in 1899.

committee was negotiating preemptively with the Spanish (Catalonian) cellist Pablo Casals, who was living in London, if Elgar would provide a cello concerto. They did not know until the late stages of the planning what kind of work Elgar would submit which, when he did, was a “symphonic poem,” *Falstaff*. Bloom gathers that Elgar had thought about collaborating with Casals, as he “had conducted the Spanish virtuoso in London with the London Symphony Orchestra in November 1911 shortly before his discussions with Leeds.” However, the propitious time for the concerto came in 1918. Elgar completed three great chamber-music scores: the Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82, the String Quartet in E minor, Op. 83, and the Piano Quintet in A minor, Op. 84. During this process the composer worked closely with the noted British cellist Felix Salmond (1888-1952) and his ensemble. A period of convalescence that year after a painful operation for tonsillitis suddenly intensified Elgar’s focus on the centrality of melody in his music and informed the concerto and the chamber music that he would compose in the coming months.⁴⁵ After returning to Severn House from the nursing home where he had been recovering from the tonsillectomy, Elgar wrote what would become the cello concerto’s opening 9/8-meter melody.⁴⁶ Moore speculates that Elgar did not know immediately which instrument should play this theme, but that he already had a somber instrument in mind. Perhaps this sketch brought renewed attention to Fuchs’s and Grümmer’s requests. However, the exact

⁴⁵ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford, New York, and Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1984), 741.

⁴⁶Ibid., 715.

circumstances that initially prompted Elgar to conceive of the idea of a cello concerto are unknown. One can view Moore's suppositions with a certain skepticism by noting the extended period that had elapsed since Fuchs brought up the subject of a concerto. The second one, from Grümmer, may have left a deeper impression, but Elgar seems to have needed some further stimulus to begin work on a concerto. (During and immediately after the war, writing a piece for a German was out of the question.)

Working with Salmond might have provided a fresh impetus, since Salmond traveled willingly to Elgar's rural retreat, a thatched cottage called "Brinkwells" that was located near Fittleworth in Sussex—which was not and is not an easy destination to reach. Salmond collaborated with Elgar just as William Henry ("Billy") Reed had gone to Elgar's residences to work on the Violin Concerto. The circumstances which attended the birth of the concerto, though, encouraged Elgar to compose a melancholic solo piece for the cello. Elgar began to become dimly aware that his wife Alice was fading away, which darkened his mood.

As mentioned above, Brinkwells was a cottage in a secluded wooded area. Furthermore, the house was surrounded by curiously twisted trees. During this period, the author Algernon Blackwood (1861-1951) visited Elgar at this lonely and slightly eerie spot. Blackwood had met Elgar during the 1915 production of a children's play by Violet Pearn, *The Starlight Express*, which was based on Blackwood's novel *A Prisoner in Fairyland*; Elgar had composed extensive incidental music for this unsuccessful production. However, Elgar and Blackwood, who was

best known for his stories of the uncanny, the ghostly, and the occult, remained friends. On one visit to Brinkwells, Blackwood wove a tale purporting to relay an obscure legend of the nearby twisted trees which were said to be the remains of Spanish monks who had been struck dead for ungodly rites. Although this is nonsense historically—how could there have been a Spanish monastery in Sussex at any time? —it caught Elgar’s imagination and became unnervingly real to him. Blackwood’s story put Elgar in a different, receptive, and melancholic mood for the rest of his time at Brinkwells.⁴⁷ In addition, Elgar possessed a decidedly superstitious streak that may have grown as his Roman Catholic faith declined. Matthew Riley observes, “In his final years Elgar himself declared his intention to haunt a particular place in Worcestershire, and told a friend that if, after Elgar’s death, he should hear someone whistling a theme from the Cello Concerto on the Malvern Hills, ‘don’t be alarmed, it’s only me.’”⁴⁸ In the final months of the summer at Brinkwells, Elgar’s mood may have been further darkened by the end of the war; Brinkwells is so close to the English Channel that Elgar could hear the massive guns echoing from France.

Moore indicates that a more tangible aspect also brought sadness to Elgar at that time: the end of the particularly hot summer of 1919 approached while he was

⁴⁷ Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 180.

⁴⁸ Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

finishing the concerto.⁴⁹ Was Elgar affected by the change of season, the falling of summer into autumn, which can happen rapidly in that part of Britain? British society has been accustomed to calibrating their collective emotions in sympathy with the weather. Given that dreary cloudy weather that is often the norm in Britain from autumn to mid-April, the months of sunshine, especially those of early spring, often impart great excitement to the British populace. Fall and winter months spelled overcast skies, relentless rain, and miserable cold. For those enraptured with roaming the countryside by foot or on bicycle, as Elgar was, the end of summer meant the inevitable curtailment of such enjoyable activities. He was fond of nature and the privacy it afforded; many people of the middle to upper classes whose houses were filled with gossiping servants sought privacy outdoors. Walking about the verdant country lanes, they could avoid eavesdroppers. A new season also reminded Elgar that he would soon have to return to London, the cosmopolitan antithesis of his favorite domain, the countryside. In the city, he would have to cope with the escalating expenses of Severn House which, by 1919, had lost a great deal of its charm. In September, Elgar and his wife reluctantly decided to sell the home that had cost them so much expense in order to give Elgar a grand residence in the capital; the sale of the house, on which Elgar lost money, occurred after Lady Elgar's death in 1920.

⁴⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 745.

When the Cello Concerto was premiered on October 27, 1919, various accounts testify to the unsatisfactory performance. Due to the high-handedness of Albert Coates, a rising Anglo-Russian conductor who shared the podium with Elgar on that occasion, and who had taken more than his fair share of the rehearsal time for, the concerto was under-rehearsed.⁵⁰ In addition, the cellist, Felix Salmond, whose small tone and emotional reticence were ill-suited to the music, was devastatingly nervous. Finally, the score revealed a new facet of Elgar's style to which the audience was unaccustomed: no confident Edwardian opulence here, but rather introspection bordering on anguish. These factors detracted from the work's success, but not all of the critics considered it a complete debacle. Ernest Newman, the august music critic, was more intrigued about its potential than disappointed. As Newman wrote in *The Observer*, "The work itself is lovely stuff, very simple—but with a profound wisdom and beauty underlying its simplicity...the realization in tone of a fine spirit's lifelong wistful brooding upon the loveliness of earth."⁵¹ Elgar soon had another chance to present the concerto to the public, and this time the conditions were propitious.

Between December 1919 and November 1920, the twenty-eight year-old cellist Beatrice Harrison accepted an invitation to record a shortened version of the

⁵⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*, 327. Moore writes, "It was a far from brilliant occasion owing to the London Symphony Orchestra's new conductor, Albert Coates, who monopolized almost all of Elgar's rehearsal time in order to ensure a great impression with his own part of the concert. Alice Elgar was furious: Edward consented to conduct the indifferent première, he said, for the sake of the soloist Felix Salmond."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 747.

concerto that would fit on a series of 78 records with Elgar conducting the HMV Orchestra at Hayes. Following those successful sessions, Elgar arranged for Harrison to perform the concerto in its entirety at Queen's Hall. Harrison became Elgar's preferred interpreter of the concerto, securing multiple performances of the work throughout her life, including a later full electronic recording in 1928.⁵² It is not too much to claim that Harrison saved the concerto from protracted neglect.

A pervasive theme of transience runs throughout the narratives posited by commentators concerning the Cello Concerto; these narratives are often conflated with those concerning the work's elegiac nobility. Pointing to the massive losses suffered during the war and highlighting the social upheavals that changed Britain society, critics such as Michael Kennedy have implied that the melancholy aesthetic evinced in the concerto was the direct result of world events. Falling into the "biographical fallacy" that reads the composer's life as a direct reflection of his or her life, such commentators conclude that melancholy without creates the melancholy within. In addition, some scholars assert that an artist "prophesizes" what the society later feels. However, in the case of the concerto, Elgar's own melancholic circumstances happened to coincide with those of the war and societal change. Later, the concerto would serve as a symbol of the fraught time in which it was composed. In any case, as we shall see, the 1920s were a time in which war

⁵² For more information about the collaboration between Elgar and Harrison on the cello concerto, see Chapter V-"British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: An Overview."

pieces were created by British composers, all of whom understandably mourned the tragedy. Elgar was not a special case in this regard.

During the war, Elgar had composed various works in order to support the war effort and the nationalist agenda, as Beethoven had done during the Napoleonic Wars. Due to his age, Elgar never fought at the Front like Vaughan Williams, but he did lose friends and interpreters of his music. If the *Enigma Variations* is a revelation of Elgar's attachment to certain special people (and their pets), if the *Dream of Gerontius* is a redoubtable attestation of Elgar's Roman Catholicism, and if his Second Symphony, which evokes the pounding sounds often experienced by sufferers of Ménière's disease, a reflection of his chronic physical suffering, it is possible that the Cello Concerto is the testament of an aging composer growing progressively melancholic as he broods over his accumulated losses and an uncertain future. As Burton observes about old age:

...As it diminishes the energies of the mind and increases the adust humours of the body, is an unavoidable cause of melancholy....All persons, after a certain period, become melancholy, doting, and scarcely able to manage their affairs, through the common infirmities incident to age: filled with aches, sorrows, cares, and griefs, they frequently carle as they sit, mutter to themselves, and become covetuous, suspicious, wayward, angry, waspish, and displeas'd with every thing around them; or else self-willed, superstitious, self-conceited, braggers, and admirers of themselves.⁵³

⁵³ Robert Burton, *Melancholy Anatomized: Showing its Causes, Consequences, and Cure* (London: William Tegg, 1867), 26-27.

At sixty-seven, Elgar was hardly senescent, but he was well enough along in years to descry the sunset of his life. Alice Elgar was his senior by a decade and her aging would have been felt more acutely by him, especially since she was becoming increasingly frail over the course of 1919.

As Elgar aged, he became more sensitive to the transitory nature of old age. He dedicated the Cello Concerto to his close friends, Sidney and Frances Colvin, who were seventy-four and eighty years old, respectively, at the time.⁵⁴ In a warm letter to Sidney Colvin in which he asked for permission to include their names on the manuscript's title page, Elgar disclosed his affection for them: "Your friendship is such a real & precious thing that I should like to leave some record of it; I cannot say the music is worthy of you both (or either!) but our three names wd. be in print together & would look very nice together even if the music is dull & of the kind which perisheth."⁵⁵ That he did not dedicate the work to anyone more directly involved with the composition, such as Felix Salmond, Algernon Blackwood, or Beatrice Harrison, suggests that he found the concerto's melancholy appropriate for these elderly friends. The slightly deprecatory comment about the music at the end of the letter, at once cheerful and glum, is telling. Elgar, as the venerable composer, could self-deface in words meaning the very opposite about his new concerto which he described as "a real large work & I think *good* and alive." But he also reveals a

⁵⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 744.

⁵⁵ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 325.

practiced depressive attitude.⁵⁶ In his mature years, Elgar was disclosing himself once more.

Matthew Riley states that, “The true Elgar is gentle, melancholy, brooding, tender—perhaps even ‘feminine.’”⁵⁷ These characteristics are applicable to the materials found in the concerto. There is one aspect that is lacking in Riley’s list, though, to which Lady Elgar refers: the nobility of the music. Unsurprisingly, Lady Elgar’s choice of vocabulary implies that a social stratum is musically codified with this description, complicating the identity of the “true Elgar.” It raises the question: To what degree does Elgar’s concerto reflect the man himself? Elgar had been knighted by King Edward VII in 1904, he moved among the aristocracy, but he sometimes sought to efface his origins in the lower middle class. Byron Adams explains further: “And though Elgar’s talent did in fact help him into a higher class status, its magnitude could never entirely allay the composer’s insecurity about his new social standing—especially among those so entirely devoid of talent themselves.”⁵⁸ Moreover, his being a Roman Catholic isolated him from the overwhelmingly Anglican British musical establishment. In a highly class-conscious society these factors were cause for both insecurity and concern.⁵⁹ According to

⁵⁶ Ibid..

⁵⁷ Ibid., 152.

⁵⁸ Byron Adams, “Elgar and the Persistence of Memory” *Elgar and His World*

⁵⁹ Sophie Fuller, “Elgar and the Salons: The Significance of a Private Musical World,” in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 225. “He was always acutely aware that his Catholic, provincial, lower-class, self-educated background set him apart from the apparently effortless ease and confidence of those from the Protestant, upper-middle-

Riley, Elgar's greatest admirers "[admitted that] in places the concerto [came] close to self-pity."⁶⁰ As in his "symphonic study" *Falstaff*, the Cello Concerto evinces "Irony, anger, and even nihilism." Although it would be approximately fourteen years until his fatal illness, a darker sentiment that is alluded to in the concerto appears in one of his last conversations with his trusted doctor, Arthur Thomson. Elgar told Thomson in confidence that "He had no faith whatever in an afterlife: "I believe there is nothing but complete oblivion."⁶¹ One of Elgar's friends, the famous music critic Ernest Newman, also reported that Lady Elgar told him once that Elgar always spoke of "making an end of himself."⁶² Melancholiacs, as Burton pointed out, can speak as such, and illness can exacerbate habitual cynicism. Thus, it is wise to take Elgar's confessions with a grain of salt. However, Elgar was prone to debilitating bouts of depression, sufficient at times, such as when he nearly failed to complete *The Apostles* oratorio, to render him physically ill. In view of Elgar's emotional instability, one wonders how he could compose joyful music. Nonetheless, the emotional state of melancholy is also predicated on some joy and hope, albeit remote. Melancholy is always accompanied by desire. Elgar's Cello

class, Oxbridge, conservatory musical establishment—men such as Hubert Parry or Charles Villiers Stanford."

⁶⁰ Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, 32.

⁶¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 818.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 358. In the October 30, 1955 issue of *The Sunday Times*, Newman wrote about Elgar: "He gave me even then the impression of an exceptionally nervous, self-divided and secretly unhappy man;...while no doubt gratified by his rapidly growing fame he was in his heart of hearts afraid of the future. / I remember distinctly a dinner at Rodewald's at which Mrs. Elgar tactfully steered the conversation away from the topic of suicide that had suddenly arisen; she whispered to me that Edward was always talking of making an end of himself."

Concerto conveys this mixture of joy and sorrow, vitality and decline, longing and impossibility. The following analysis of the work sets forth the juxtapositions of these qualities as musical analogs of Elgar's complex melancholy.

Elgar's penchant for key symbolism influenced his choice of specific keys associated with the moods he sought to express. He was following a long-standing tradition, one of which, according to James O. Young, medieval writers, sixteenth through nineteenth century theoreticians, and many composers and musicians were aware and propounded.⁶³ This tradition, though full of controversy, resulted in the general belief that keys had inherent abilities to stir, or connote, particular emotions. For instance, Beethoven's C minor mood, made famous by later scholars such as Joseph Kerman, was reserved for "serious" music, of deep philosophical import.⁶⁴ There was no scientific basis for the definitions given to keys, but the idea was sufficiently popular that Ernst Pauer (1826-1905), an eminent German pianist and theorist in London, published a short book on music aesthetics expounding his version of key theory. Stanford, Elgar's rival in the establishment's Royal College of Music, took lessons with Pauer.⁶⁵ Elgar studied Pauer's book, using some of its precepts in his own music. *The Dream of Gerontius* stays in F minor, "A harrowing

⁶³ For a detailed discussion of the history of key symbolism, see James O. Young, "Key, Temperament, and Musical Expression," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 235-242, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/431477>.

⁶⁴ Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 140.

⁶⁵ Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 24.

key, [one that] is especially full of melancholy, at times rising into passion,” after the first half of the oratorio.⁶⁶ The key reflects the drama of Gerontius’s soul encountering the awesome heavenly realm and recognizing his own inadequacy before God. The Cello Concerto centers on E minor. Pauer describes E minor as a key that, “represents grief, mournfulness, and restlessness of spirit.”⁶⁷ Let it not be assumed that Pauer is alone in designating this symbolism. E minor finds an important place in certain melancholic works of Johannes Brahms. His Sonata No. 1 for cello and piano and his tragic Symphony No. 4 are both in the same key. The sentiment Elgar associates with E minor, then, carries traditional weight.

Central to the first movement and to the entire concerto is the 9/8 main theme. It forms a passage pregnant with meaning, both on semiotic and cultural levels. Diana McVeagh observes that Elgar creates a simple structure for the first movement, one that emphasizes the main theme through repetitions; the first passage restates the theme five times.⁶⁸ The introductory chords and lamenting melody, while iconic, behave as a precursor to this passage—a cry of a lone, troubled soul in the world. Therefore, one might easily make the connection of this opening to the cry of the preacher in the first words of the Old Testament book of

⁶⁶ Ernst Pauer, *The Elements of the Beautiful in Music* (London: Novello and Company, Limited, 1923), 25.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁸ Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1955), 170.

Ecclesiastes, “[V]anity of vanities; all *is* vanity.”⁶⁹ A tragic pessimism bleeds through the musical and the literary over the nature of man’s heavy existential burden. King Solomon, the alleged writer of Ecclesiastes, was endowed with great wisdom, power, and wealth. Ecclesiastes outlines the development of his philosophy of life as he reigned for more than forty years over the ancient Kingdom of Israel. He observes carefully his life and those of others as he undertakes great feats, from major construction, war, jurisprudence, and entertainment to probing the spectrum of humanly acquirable knowledge in wisdom, pleasure, and madness. This is a treatise written retrospectively by an elderly man. The repeated cry “All is vanity” appears throughout the various episodes which use phases of his life as experiments in trying to find fulfillment apart from God. A reader can trace his life less in a chronological manner than in a character exposition. Similarly, Elgar’s biography can be deconstructed. His life, composed from the perspective of an aging melancholic Elgar, can also be read as a retrospective personal elegy.

The elegiac main theme establishes the historical, philosophical setting. Set in a triple compound meter with an element of the Siciliana, the pastoral topos immediately comes to mind (Example 2.1). During the period Elgar was composing the concerto, the Arcadian trend in European literature and art had received a fatal blow by the Great War. Its rich associations with Classicism, Christianity,

⁶⁹ Ecclesiastes 1:2 (King James Version).

Edward Elgar
(1857-1934)
Op. 85

I. Adagio. $\text{♩} = 56.$ a tempo, rit.

Flauto (anche Picc. ad lib) 1 2

Oboe 1 2

Clarinetto (A) 1 2

Fagotto 1 2

Corno (F) 1 2 3 4

Tromba (C) 1 2

Trombone 1 2

Tuba (ad lib) 3

Timpani (3)

Violoncello Solo Adagio. $\text{♩} = 56.$ largamente a tempo, rit. ad lib.
ff nobilmente sf sf sf dim. p ff p

Violino I II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

Example 2.1 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R0, mm.1-6

geography, climate, and nature allowed Pastoralism to adapt throughout several centuries and, by the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment, it was exploited by the intelligentsia to function as an antithesis to the consequences wrought by modernization. World War One destroyed its innocence—it became overworked, thereby symbolically irrelevant to many. In England, a nation defined in pastoral terms by literature, art, and music since the Middle Ages due to its landscape, the topos survived through adaptation—a kind of synchronism with present realities. It became an ideal reflected in the cultural division of countryside and city. Escape from modern life to one more ancient, familiar, and private was offered by the countryside. Nature reigned there. The pantheistic tendencies of the Transcendentalists influenced the art and music in the decades preceding the Great War, serving as the apex of the Romantic vision of the pastoral with pseudo-Christian spirituality. The war and social upheavals shattered that vision; it changed how society interacted (strict class division disappeared), marred the countryside—the sublimity of the landscape as well as sunrise and sunset in the trenches lost their import—and hearts turned cold towards religion. In the post-war years, to recall the pastoral was to invoke a lament, not a summoning. The compound triple meter in the concerto is not one from the Classical era, like that of Beethoven in his sixth symphony: in a major key that is pleasant. Elgar's theme descends in the minor mode, and the mode itself is peculiarly alien. The melody explores the

Hypophrygian mode as it gravitates to E minor.⁷⁰ When reduced to its pitch content, the order of notes sounds eerily like plainchant (Example 2.2 and 2.3).⁷¹ In both



Example 2.2 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R1, m.5-R2, m.5



Example 2.3 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R2, mm.6-8

segments, the leading tone motion, the first having F# move to G and the second having C# move to D, establish a recurrent yearning motif searching for resolution, especially in the fourth movement. While Elgar's general oeuvre often falls within the late-Romantic chromatic idiom, the chromaticism in the cello concerto remains mild. The first theme derives solemnity from the Hypophrygian mode, supporting the notion of the noble grandeur Elgar marked in the score. Additionally, it connects the work to Elgar's Catholicism (albeit fading at that time). He composed large oratorios for the celebrated Three-Choirs Festivals, experience which honed his sacred music sensibilities. These works most likely influenced his idiom profoundly so that by 1919, he could integrate it easily into a secular piece. He was familiar with cathedral venues, knowing how to navigate their decorum and acoustics just as Herbert Howells would do as an organist and composer of music for the Anglican

⁷⁰ This mode was suggested by Rogerio Budasz.

⁷¹ Edward Elgar, *Concerto in E minor for Cello and Piano, Op.85* (London: Novello, 1921), 3-4.

Church. Thus, the compound triple meter conveys an aesthetic of traditional pastoralism and spiritual fervor, concepts that apply well to nobility. As the metaphorical cry of Ecclesiastes, it shows aptly the deep concern of an aged man reconsidering what is meaningful in life and whether or not he attained it.

While the first movement does not adhere to sonata form, it does evince an expanded traditional elegy form. After the five repetitions of the main theme by the cello and orchestra, a brief transition moves the music from E minor to the key's brighter parallel major at rehearsal seven. The new section is marked *dolcissimo* and is set in 12/8, allowing for more lyricism. McVeagh draws a comparison between the new theme and Elgar's earlier cantata *Caractacus* (1897-1898), noting how it "shares the twelve-eight signature and some of the rhythmic idioms of the love-duets in *Caractacus*, but how much more deeply tender is the idyll than that!"⁷² Indeed, the music flows passionately, arriving at an arresting climax (Example 2.4) that is redolent of amorous melancholy. As if that was insufficient, Elgar restates the same material and climax. Thereafter, the brightness of the melody gradually fades, reverting quietly to the 9/8 meter that is repeated four times by the cello and orchestra, signaling a metaphoric return to the tragic present (Example 2.5).⁷³ A last anguished statement in the cello is cut short by the

⁷² McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music*, 170.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

10 poco stringendo I

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system is for the cello and string quartet. The cello part begins with a *mf* dynamic, followed by *p* and *rit.* The string quartet (violin I, violin II, viola, and cello) also begins with *mf*, followed by *p* and *dim.*. The second system is for the cello and string quartet. The cello part begins with a *f* dynamic, followed by *sf*, *simile*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The string quartet also begins with *f*, followed by *fp*, *simile*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The third system is for the cello and string quartet. The cello part begins with a *fp* dynamic, followed by *simile*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The string quartet also begins with *fp*, followed by *simile*, *dim.*, and *pp*.

Example 2.4 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R10, mm.1-4

The musical score is written for a cello and piano. It consists of several systems of staves. The first system includes a cello line and a piano line. The piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices. Dynamics range from fortissimo (ffz) to pianissimo (pp). Performance instructions include 'loco' for the cello and 'con sord.' (con sordina) for the piano. A specific passage in the piano part is highlighted with a black box, containing the instruction 'ff molto sostenuto' and 'div.' (divisi).

Example 2.5 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R10, mm.1-4

reassertion of the main theme at the point of resolution, and the theme descends into utter dejection (Example 2.6).

The second movement responds to the cry of vanity with the energy and frivolity of Paul Bunyan's Vanity Fair in his *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Its virtuosic brightness translates seemingly the bustling of Edwardian opulence, progress, and the machine into the instrumental equivalent. The contrast with the first movement is striking when comparing the slow, flowing compound triple meter main theme to the giddy sequences and scalar passages in the second movement. If the first movement evokes the rural, the second defines the urban. In this instance, one could imagine London. The city was the location of activity and, for a British composer, it was the place where careers took off. Prominent musicians, renowned venues, and cultured audiences were its greatest offerings. Early in his career, Elgar sought the riches of the city to advance his music, initially as a violinist and later, upon marriage, as a composer and conductor. He and Alice eventually took up residence in Severn House when Elgar had established himself, yet they retained a country abode to which to retire seasonally. At the time of the Cello Concerto, Brinkwells satisfied the rural retreat. Thus, Elgar had both urban and rural facets, not unusual for a composer of his stature during that era. Gustav Mahler, Brahms, and Beethoven traveled to the countryside for refreshment in order to concentrate on composing.

In light of this, Elgar's passion for nature gains more significance in the concerto. The Malvern Hill country where Elgar grew up left an indelible

The musical score is for the first movement of Elgar's Cello Concerto, measures 2 through 8. It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The score consists of a cello part and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a rhythmic bass line starting in measure 2, marked with *pp*. The cello part has a melodic line that begins in measure 2, marked with *pizz.* and *dim.* in measure 4. A specific passage in the cello part, from measure 4 to measure 8, is highlighted with a black box. This passage includes a *dim.* marking in measure 4 and a *pizz.* marking in measure 5. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line, marked with *ppp* in measures 2, 3, and 4, and *ppp* in measures 5, 6, and 7. The cello part concludes with a *pizz.* marking in measure 7 and an *arco* marking in measure 8.

Example 2.6 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R17, mm.2-8

impression on his mind; he would come to prefer the countryside to the urban, enjoying a rugged lifestyle. His favored pastoral roots were entangled deeply in his musical nature, as evinced by his idea to haunt those hills (see above). Was the theme he would whistle the main theme of the concerto? It would seem to be.

The rapid pace of the second movement places the main theme in relief, functioning as a scherzo movement would in a symphony. Its sixteenth-note *moto perpetuo* only pauses on two occasions to allow a heavily rubato musical exultation. The overall mood is thus mercurial, if not comical (Example 2.7). The true weightier matters belonged to the pastoral while urban life's productivity, however exciting, was ephemeral. Curiously, this movement is a crowd pleaser, as in the case of many short virtuosic solo pieces by other composers. Elgar composed a jovial solo with great élan, appearing to have taken thematic cues from Tchaikovsky symphonic cello writing (e.g., *Romeo and Juliette Fantasy Overture*) in the eighth note runs and sequences of which the Russian composer was so fond.⁷⁴ One interprets this movement as the summary of all activity a person remembers—all his or her ambition, success, failure, and relentless pursuits of fame and glory—just as the preacher of Ecclesiastes recalls in his report of his great feats in search of what is good in life. This activity can only be realized in city life, but while it promises

⁷⁴ Mary G. Dann, "Elgar's Use of the Sequence," in *Music and Letters* 19, No.3 (July 1938): 255-264, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/727531>. In her article, Dann explains that Elgar used peculiar sequences for modulating in many of his pieces: "Just as he is essentially a contrapuntal composer, so is he also a tonal composer, although his use of rapid sequencing often gives the impression of atonality; many times his nervous intensity is accentuated by the shifting tonality accompanying a familiar figure or motif."

II

colla parte, a tempo

Example 2.7 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R17, mm.2-8

affirmation, it is distant from the peace symbolized by the countryside. If heard as a large-scale version of Fauré's elegy, this second movement resembles the wistfully nostalgic recollection of the deceased's life, forming vignettes of what was good in that person's life. It serves to console the bereaved. However, the bereaved in this concerto is the protagonist, and the tragedy is his own.

After the only bright movement in the concerto, Elgar engages his tenderest sensibilities in the brief and deeply melancholic third movement, an Adagio in B-flat major, a tritone away from E minor, as Adams observes. Pauer states that B-flat major, "the favourite key of our classical composers, has an open, frank, clear, and bright character, which also admits the expression of quiet contemplation."⁷⁵ The third movement is brighter than the first movement and contemplative, yet it is also on the verge of falling into the antithetical parallel B-flat minor, which Pauer describes as "a key full of gloomy and somber feeling, like *E flat minor*."⁷⁶ These keys' moods may be symbolic, but the sense remains that the third movement tonality is meant to convey emotional fragility through its ambiguity and, ultimately, instability. The cello melody unfolds in a Wagnerian endless melody, adding chromatic inflections as the main theme modulates toward a fleeting climax in E major (Example 2.8). This arrival is significant, for it is the attainment of that key, which was first heard in the B section of the elegiac first movement—the

⁷⁵ Pauer, *Elements of the Beautiful in Music*, 25.

⁷⁶ Ibid.. Pauer says that "B-flat minor is seldom used." In regards to E-flat minor, he asserts that it "is the darkest, most somber key of all. It is but rarely used."

38 rit.

appassionato

mf *f* *sf* *fpp* *sf* *fpp* *sf pizz.*

rit. *largamente rit. e dim.* *ten.* *sf*

f sf *f*

Example 2.8 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R37, m.7-R38, m.6

transformation of E minor into the major mode—through much subtle effort.

Symbolically, sorrow has been turned to joy again. Nevertheless, this attainment, as a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day, or a memory of sheer bliss brought about by contemplation, fades back into the mental processes of reminiscence. The melody cadences on a B-flat major chord, but with a certain reticence, harmonically hinted at by the lack of strong dominant-tonic progression (Example 2.9). The coda, which lingers on the melody once more, ends inconclusively on B-flat. In a perceptive summarization of the movement, McVeagh posits that “The third movement is pure song, straight from the heart” and conveys deep longing. She expounds this facet in the following manner:

III

40

ppp

dim.

con sordini

con sordini

con sordini

con sordini

2 only arco

ppp

pizz.

arco

41

rit.

rit.

p

div.

unis.

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp (2 only)

ppp

Example 2.9 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R39, m.7-R41, m.8

In it time is stilled and there is no sense of forward movement, for the melodic patterns shun full closes—the movement ends on the dominant—and overlap each other with no check, and are drawn even more tightly together by the sequences: it is a moment out of time into which is compressed a lifetime of feeling.⁷⁷

The “[shunning] of full closes” captures the state of contemplation that is not beholden to chronological time. Adams also notices this peculiar effect of Elgar’s technique: “This [suspension of forward movement in the harmonic flow] creates a sense of stasis that in turn creates an effect analogous to pensive reflection.”⁷⁸ Truly, the third movement suspends the elegiac narrative long enough to grant a vision of the yearning that causes melancholy.

Elgar follows the convention of placing a contrasting movement after a rapid one in a four-movement symphony. However, this is a concerto, which usually contains three, not four, movements. The nearest cello concerto to Elgar, Dvořák’s Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op.104, B.191 (1896), was lengthy, yet it was divided into three movements (I. Allegro; II. Adagio, *ma non troppo*; III. Finale: Allegro moderato-Andante-Allegro vivo).⁷⁹ Eduard Lalo’s Cello Concerto in D Minor, too, follows the triptych pattern. Elgar’s Adagio, then, is peculiar. Although the melody is in a slow 3/8 meter, the regular slurring of the eighth notes across the bar lines deemphasizes the pulse, making it feel as if it is in a duple meter. This distances it

⁷⁷ McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music*, 170-171.

⁷⁸ Byron Adams made this observation during an email conversation with the author in 2021.

⁷⁹ Dvořák premiered his concerto in London on March 19, 1896 at Queen’s Hall with the English cellist Leo Stern. Had Elgar heard it?

from the 9/8 meter sufficiently to both prevent it from being heard as its continuation and to suggest that it could be its derivative. The sentiments expressed by the main theme and the Adagio are closely related. Love and acute longing pervade the latter in a manner comparable to that of the second movement of Elgar's early *Serenade for Strings*. In that work, the theme leaps and resolves, evincing a texture in which sighing and crying might be imagined. One is tempted to attribute its pathos to Elgar's hypersensitivity, especially when considering how expressive (or temperamental) Elgar could be. The Cello Concerto's Adagio reveals an intimate side whose technical simplicity and light orchestration suggests chamber music—a private gathering. Here, the register encourages the cellist to “sing” with the instrument. In a segment that can only be derived from the late-Baroque period, a Handelian aria cadence (see Example 2.9). Elgar suggests that the cello solo is the protagonist who serves as his own representative. Unlike the *Serenade for Strings*, though, the heightened emotional content in the Adagio is cut prematurely, as if some thought inhibits further indulgence in the loving sentiments. As the key and the rhythm of the third movement are distant from the first movement's theme, its sentiments are now too far removed from reality to reclaim.

Curtly, the third movement reintroduces the main theme in the home key of E minor. Cynical and biting, this iteration of the theme undoes all the effect of the preceding movement as in a mood swing. Elgar was known to alter suddenly his music as well as his manners; new themes and new company occasioned abrupt shifts. Dora Penny (a.k.a. Dorabella), one of Elgar's close friends, once commented

that “You never knew which Elgar you would meet. He was a different man to every person.”⁸⁰ Harrison opined that she found the piece interesting for the sudden changes of mood.⁸¹ Elgar would explode in anger at perceived slights, regardless of the people present,⁸² but he could also be quite genial.⁸³ Thus, the opening of this movement reflects Elgar’s mercurial personality. The main theme transforms into a rigid march in the style of his four *Pomp and Circumstance* marches composed between 1901 and 1907 for England as military-parade music during the Second Boer War. Later, during World War One, Elgar himself had been a loyal supporter of the nation’s war effort initially, but he, like many citizens, became gradually disenchanted with the realization that the war itself, and not the “Hun,” was the true enemy.⁸⁴ The war was also the enemy of the countryside, the pastoral. A march belonged to the industrialized, mechanized world, the opposite of serenity. Its

⁸⁰ Michael Kennedy et al., “A Portrait of Elgar - 'Hope and Glory,'" Documentary. BBC, 1984, Accessed 5 August 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ap8FyBZFD0>.

⁸¹ Beatrice Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ed. *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison* (London: John Murray, 1985), 120.

⁸² Byron Adams, “Elgar and the Persistence of Memory,” in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 74. When requested to contribute a score to Queen Mary’s Doll House, an exquisite cultural artifact built between 1921 and 1924 on commission by Princess Marie Louise (1872-1956) and designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) (he also designed the famed Cenotaph) that summarized the artistic world of the early twentieth century, Elgar famously exploded. He refused to contribute to what he perceived as a frivolous project which would equally demean his hard-earned status. Only one other contemporary, the writer George Bernard Shaw, refused on the similar grounds. Other British composers, including Gustav Holst, Frederick Delius, Arthur Bliss, John Ireland, and Arnold Bax, included a score in the Doll House’s library.

⁸³ See Chapter V-“British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: An Overview.”

⁸⁴ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

plodding duple meter contested the lilting triple meter of the Siciliana and the Adagio. Prolonged at times, the fourth movement recalls the second movement's energy, but one that is frenzied. Conspicuous bursts of what sounds like Edwardian popular music contribute to the forceful forward drive of modern progress, toward utopia or tragedy. Ravel's *La Valse* comes to mind, for just as the lavish Belle Époque dance devolves into a *totentanz*, Elgar's march means countless men marching off to near certain death. This deathly march recurs in Bridge's *Oration: Concerto Elegiaco*, indicating a common ironic manipulation of the genre during this period.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, it would be myopic to evaluate Elgar's concerto as a war piece although the sentiments expressed therein match those of commemorative war pieces. His concerto has layers of meaning that allow for various interpretations, and an analyst is bound to discover synchronicities between Elgar's life and concurrent events in his world. For example, as Elgar's prominence waned significantly because of the war, and had fallen off by the Cello Concerto's premier, so too was the world he knew ending. This observation has been made by other critics, who have applied posthumously a reading of general ties that influenced the concerto, most notably the war. While logical and informative, these readings probe the surface of the profound melancholy inherent in the concerto. Returning to the score, the fourth movement march proceeds consistently until it fragments and halts (Example 2.10). Elgar introduces a slow theme that he subjects to ever

⁸⁵ See Chapter IV—"Frank Bridge: Modernism and Melancholy."

IV 85

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 12-65) features a piano introduction with *rall.* and *p* markings. The second system (measures 66-85) begins with **66 Poco più lento.** and includes a cello solo with *f molto espress.* and *ten.* markings. The score includes staves for piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass, with various performance instructions like *pizz.*, *arco*, and *dim.*

Example 2.10 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R65, m.12-R66, m.4

decaying chromatic sequences, adumbrating a depressive collapse but, suddenly, the theme of the Adagio recurs in a gesture reminiscent of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony's third-movement theme resurfacing in the heroic fourth movement (Example 2.11). Elgar's gesture intimates an incomplete message from the Adagio which could now be resolved. After all, the cello did not end conclusively (i.e., perfect authentic cadence) in the third movement, similar to how Beethoven interrupted the expected cadence in the Fifth Symphony. However, in a few bars, there is a poignant pause and suddenly the opening chords and melody are recapitulated, creating an instance of cyclicism that completes the overarching elegiac structure (Example 2.12). Again, the tender emotions are dismissed abruptly. The pastoral theme is bypassed by a menacing compressed version of the march which terminates quickly in an abrupt "explosion." It would be an understatement to say that this was theatrical. The inexorable march of life from which one cannot escape stifles the energy and beauty of the inner movements which, in retrospect, are the fleeting matters of life. In bitter exasperation, the cry is that of "All is vanity" but for Elgar's protagonist there is no indication of hope. The conclusion of the matter for him is nihilism.

A telling aspect of this concerto's dramatic narrative is the roles the cello, orchestra, conductor, and composer play. Elgar was experienced in operatic and oratorio composition which calls for the musical reification of characters. A concerto, what Diana McVeagh describes as the collaborative contest, offers a distinct opportunity

71 più tranquillo rit. IV Lento

con sord.

più tranquillo rit. Lento

p *dolciss.*

unis. pizz. *ppp* div. arco unifs. *pp*

div. pizz. *ppp* unifs. arco

unis. (pizz.) *ppp* arco

ppp

Example 2.11 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R71, mm.1-8

102 **72** **IV** **73**

rit. Adagio. rit. Allegro molto.

naturale naturale

dim. e rit. Adagio, come prima. QUASI RECT. largamente rit. Allegro molto.

f *sf* *p* *ff* *pp* *sonor?* *sonore*

p *mf* *ff* *pp* *pp* *pizz.* *pp (arco)* *pp*

Example 2.12 Elgar, Cello Concerto, R71, m.9-R73, m.2

for concretizing a character.⁸⁶ The soloist is the locus of composer, artist, and aesthetic vision. His or her individual worlds all coalesce on stage and the music is their common text. Elgar's soloist encounters a lonely role, however, which heightens the melancholy of the entire work. If one focuses on the opening, the cadenza, and sparse plucked chords, one discerns the primary overarching voice that speaks little but says much when it does. The very first chords of the concerto are emblematic of tragedy. Their scoring is minimal, lending a serious tone to the solo line. The word to best describe it is exposed: exposed in timbre, exposed in technique, exposed in raw sonorities, exposed as in solitary.

Solo works often begin with a declamation like that of Elgar's concerto in order to set the mood of the piece, signaling where the emotional journey is headed. The artistic challenge is to unravel convincingly its knotted thread of meaning while making the process beautiful. Elgar's concerto is tragic from the beginning, melancholic to the point of self-pity as some of his near acquaintances opined, and despite the jocund second movement or the tender, passionate third movement, it must end tragically. It is an elegy for what an individual has learned and lost, a summary of his or her life spoken despairingly. By reinterpreting classical concerto form, pastoral topics, and arcane elements, Elgar practices modernism's tenet of experimentation with the past to make sense of the present. Basil Maine explained that audiences did not comprehend the concerto because Elgar had outpaced the

⁸⁶ Diana McVeagh, "The Concerto: Contest or Co-operation?" in *Music and Letters* 28, No.2 (April 1947): 115-120, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/855524>.

trends. While the world was distracted by war, Elgar was exploring his art, creating a style that was condensed and effective.⁸⁷ His work cannot be accused of musical excess since it is a relatively short concerto at approximately thirty minutes long. As modern literature shed itself of the heavy prose and traditional syntax, the concerto relinquishes a strict adherence to the virtuosic concerto. Rather than conveying ideals or generalities alone, it is personal, approaching the autobiographical. As a result, it opens the door to profound melancholy, as the grief over spiritual, emotional, and physical loss can be explored aesthetically. Crucial to twentieth-century modernism's difference from the past is the notion of pervasive melancholy. Elgar's work aptly heeds this criterion and it is the first British concerto for the cello of its kind. The concerto sets the tone for later cello concertos by other British composers, sometimes literally, but in all instances spiritually. They will produce a steady stream of melancholic cello works, demonstrating the wide recognition of the cello's ability as an instrument of mourning suited to the individual's need to express in the increasingly uncertain and ominous modern era.

⁸⁷ Basil Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works* (Bath, United Kingdom: Cedric Chivers LTD, 1973), 214-215.

Chapter III

Frederick Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer

What effect does the idea of “home” have upon composers and their music? The old dichotomy of the outdoor, visual, and visceral world and the indoor, felt, and intellectual sphere creates artificial categories that defy the fluid experience of consciousness so often captured by composers in their music. Ultimately, they react not to the ontological present but rather to memory. Memory is an experience of its own that can be mutated through various phenomena, both internal and external: the individual discovers, formulates, and remembers his place in an ongoing cyclical process stimulated by memorialized events.⁸⁸ Various consistent environments, such as that of nature, influence that process of self-situating. The visible, tactile, and olfactory occur in a continuum that informs and pervades our memories and impressions—condensed emotion—based on the peace and joy felt within an instance of that continuum. Therefore, the inward place that composers inhabit remains an extension of their inner lives. Rather than imposing an impenetrable divide between the physical world and the inner life, it is important to realize that the two realms, inner and outer, are in fact fungible. In any discussion of Delius’s music within the context of its melancholy, the interplay between action and contemplation is a crucial feature of his aesthetic. Delius’s aesthetic is therefore

⁸⁸ This constant inner change, as variable as the weather is the topic of Proust’s extended novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

informed by his fluid nationality as well as his often-noted pantheism. To delve into these issues in regard to Delius's life and career provides a way of understanding his musical identity. An answer to the question, "Where was home for Frederick Delius?" must be paradoxical: "nowhere and everywhere."

Hungry for international recognition, the British musical establishment expropriated Delius, although his parentage and his travels, and more importantly, his fluid relation to place, virtually disqualify him from being an English composer.⁸⁹ A sojourner of various lands including the United States (most notably northern Florida), Scandinavia (primarily Norway), Germany, and France, Delius found it impossible to declare an exclusive allegiance to any single culture. Delius, whose artistic and restless nature compelled him to move constantly towards new lands and adventures, certainly was not going to allow himself to be constrained by any set of musical signifiers of nationalism.⁹⁰ In his traveling from country to country he is superficially reminiscent of Stravinsky, but unlike Stravinsky, he was only once

⁸⁹ Lionel Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters II 1909-1934* (Aldershot, United Kingdom: Scolar Press, 1988). Sir Thomas Beecham, one of Delius's friends and eminent conductor of his music, urged him to return to England during World War One and offered him a place to live and compose. Beecham alludes to Delius's contested status as an English composer in his invitation letter from October 25, 1914: "But if you come over here, as I suggest, and continue your work quietly and without outside worries, I shall have no trouble in arranging for fees with different societies, but of course you would have to be present at each concert, *not* necessarily to conduct, but simply to be in evidence as an 'English' composer!"

⁹⁰ Delius was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England to Julius and Elise Pauline Delius, who were of German origin but had taken up British nationality in 1850.

and briefly a refugee and that, paradoxically, was to the land of his birth during the First World War.⁹¹

For most of his life, Delius was free from the pain of being uprooted from a cherished homeland. His pursuit of beauty, the natural world, sensuousness—the pantheistic transcendent—revealed values incompatible with nationalistic musical aesthetics of his time. Perhaps for this reason, the totality of Delius’s oeuvre sounds distinct, even apart, from that of his contemporaries such as Vaughan Williams, with his cultural nationalism, or John Ireland, who was a curious mix of Anglo-Catholicism and pantheism. Delius’s music is pervaded by the vivid sensate memories of the ecstasy he experienced from his reimagining of sublime visions of natural beauty. The intensity of such ecstatic memories, the experiences that he transmuted into music, is permeated with a painful delight which invariably leaves one sensing a profound melancholy.⁹² One recalls the beauty of Arcadia, but also its warning: “Et in Arcadia ego.”⁹³ Natural beauty is forever dying, and the ecstasy that it inspires is evanescent.

⁹¹ Stravinsky lived in Paris and Switzerland, and eventually moved to the United States, where he settled in Los Angeles, since he was unable to live in Russia after 1917. His first major post-exilic work, *Histoire du Soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*) (1918), a musically accompanied spoken narrative about a displaced soldier returning to his home country from war only to be banned from staying as a term in a deal he struck with the devil, poignantly captures the cruelty of exile. In the story, the devil claimed the soldier’s soul when he attempted to return.

⁹² Daniel M. Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁹³ The Latin phrase is translated usually as “Even in Arcadia, there am I,” the ‘I’ referring to Death. For more information about Arcadia, see Chapter I—“An English Malady.”

Delius was the heir to poets such as Keats, Shelley, Swinburne, Dowson, and Whitman who often took as their subject the transience of beauty. In his “Ode on Melancholy,” Keats urges his readers to “drink deeply into her piercing eyes” and luxuriate in the sensuousness of retrospection.⁹⁴ Every moment experienced is fleeting, subject to decay, and yet precious. In Delius’s music, then, a teleological musical narrative, as in Beethoven’s “Eroica” Symphony, say, is less important than the act of reviving an acute feeling of those remembered experiences. In his biography of the composer E. J. Moeran, Geoffrey Self sums up an important aspect of Delius’s aesthetic: “Transience is, of course, a principle motivating force in the art of Delius.”⁹⁵ As Eric Fenby remarked, “With what serenity [Delius] sang of the loveliness that is fast passing away before our eyes, of creaturely happiness short-lived, never more to return.”⁹⁶ Place mattered as far as it made an indelible imprint on the sonic world he was creating for himself to inhabit. Delius sense of place was populated by the innumerable blades of grass—Walt Whitman was a favorite poet—as well as the mist of the English countryside, the potent light of a Norwegian sunrise on a mountaintop, the verdant citrus groves of Florida, and the

⁹⁴ Of course, on a lower level of aesthetic contemplation, sentimentality has a retrospective element, reviving pleasing memory so as not to lose it—to forget—but rather to wallow in it.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey Self and Vernon Handley, *The Music of E.J. Moeran* (Toccata Press, 1986), 83.

⁹⁶ Eric Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1936/Faber and Faber, 1981), 176. Eric Fenby (1906-1997) volunteered to act as Delius’s amanuensis over a period of five years, staying for long periods of time in Grez-sur-Loing to help Delius compose works such as *Cynara*, *Song of Summer*, and *A Song of Farewell*. Fenby met a number of Delius’s friends who were major figures in the musical establishment of the time, including Sir Thomas Beecham, Percy Grainger, May and Beatrice Harrison, Balfour Gardiner, Philip Heseltine, Howard Jones, and Norman O’Neill.

impressionistic garden of Grez-sur-Loing. Hence, Delius's music did not belong to a nationalistic musical idiom because that would have compromised his artistic claims on others.

Critics have often regarded Delius as a sophisticated composer without a clear explanation of how his sojourning related to his creative life. However, in his book *Delius and the Sound of Place*, Daniel M. Grimley undertakes a wide-ranging analysis of this aspect of the composer's aesthetic through a process of the critical reception and the study of sound itself. Grimley arrives at a deep understanding of the fluidity of place in Delius's music. He comments on the elusiveness in existential terms, using Delius's famous *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* as a reference:

His work's characteristic quietude and stillness in fact conceals a complex folding together of different modes and temporal perception and assembly. The way in which 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' revolves around its nested variations without revealing any fixed point or centre, for example, is particularly expressive of the way in which the evocation of place opens up further affective states and ways of being. Delius's work can be heard as an act of presencing that both mourns its contingency and simultaneously celebrates its immediacy....⁹⁷

One might go even further by dwelling on the spiritual aspect of Delius music, for it helps illumine the inimitable melancholic strain that pervades Delius's music.

Inherent in Delius's avowed spirituality are problems that affected his artistic decisions and imply a complex dissatisfaction with life. Delius was a pantheist, a

⁹⁷ Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place*, 27.

hedonist, and an impassioned admirer of Nietzsche. He forged close friendships with those people who respected and understood his music.

Delius was extraordinarily self-centered, even narcissistic. Eric Fenby was therefore amazed by how such a difficult and complex character produced such artistry:

What was extraordinary in the man as I knew him was not so much that which was inherent in his nature[...], but that which was largely the fruit of his Unbelief and the secluded life he found it necessary to lead in order to perfect his art, namely his intellectual isolation, his inhuman aloofness, his penetrating truthfulness, wholly indifferent thereby whether he hurt people or not, his utter contempt for 'the crowd,' and his all-embracing self-sufficiency. To these were added his colossal egotism, his dreadful selfishness, his splendid generosity (particularly to those of his old friends who had fallen on hard times), his equal indifference to money and honours, his exceptional refinement, and his noble triumph over an almost total physical incapacitation.⁹⁸

In Robert Burton's estimation, Delius's "Unbelief" in particular, would lead to dissatisfaction and restlessness, which often develop into melancholy, an emotion that permeates Delius's lush musical language.

Burton identifies atheism as a cause for melancholy. In his opinion, an atheist "squares his life to the narrow limits of his mind, and exhibits in his conduct a corresponding course of selfish profligacy and daring vice."⁹⁹ Tied closely to this diagnosis of self-love, pride, and vain-glory, the selfishness Burton mentions here describes the motivation behind hedonism as well as the cause of the veneration of

⁹⁸ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 162-163.

⁹⁹ Burton, Robert. *Melancholy Anatomized: Showing its Causes, Consequences, and Cure* (London: William Tegg, 1867), 267.

nature and beauty, which Burton implies is a form of idolatry. Echoes of Burton's opinion persisted in the Church of England for centuries. Even during Delius life, positions such as those articulated by Burton, who was, after all, an Anglican clergyman, held a significant position in philosophical and aesthetic thought. Transcendentalists, such as Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, paid pantheistic homage to nature when they located their concepts of God within nature; this led in turn to their individual experiences of the sublime. (Of course, Emerson was influenced by Hölderlin, Novalis, and other nineteenth-century German philosophers and poets.)¹⁰⁰ Due in part to Novalis's writings philosophical speculations arose that conflated Christianity and the fascination with the beauty of the natural world. Descriptions of Delius's music made by cellist Beatrice Harrison exemplify a perspective derived from Novalis.¹⁰¹ She writes about Delius's Cello Concerto

Delius makes so manifest in his music the richness, fullness and loveliness of Nature, that the player is consumed with the desire to respond to the emotion. This love and almost passion for nature, this miraculous power and understanding of her and perfect sympathy with her, is greatly intensified in this Concerto....So mysteriously and so delicately are the harmonies interwoven that the ear must be attuned to the most sensitive degree to catch their mystic beauties.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a key figure in the development of German idealism; Novalis, the nom de plume of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772-1801), was a mystic, naturalist, and philosopher who laid the foundations of German Romanticism.

¹⁰¹ For more information about Harrison family's religious background, see Chapter V- "British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: An Overview."

¹⁰² Beatrice Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ed. *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison* (London: John Murray, 1985), 118-120.

Delius's own perspective abandoned the Christian element altogether, as he explained to Philip Heseltine (1894-1930), who published music and prose under the pseudonym Peter Warlock, in a letter from 1911:

I consider Nietzsche the only free thinker of modern times & for me the most sympathetic one—He is at the same time such a poet. He feels nature. I believe, myself, in no doctrine whatsoever & in nothing but Nature & the great forces of Nature—I believe in complete annihilation as far as our personal consciousness goes.¹⁰³

In view of his belief that personal consciousness is annihilated after death, and that all pleasure is finite, his music can profitably be heard as trying to capture the evanescent beauty of the world—to capture this beauty in music so that some of its intensity can be reexperienced. Despite this ardent ambition to preserve a mystical experience through art, the effect of this music is, paradoxically, one of passive resignation. Burton might well have associated Delius's aesthetic—to say nothing of his life—with the exclamation of the ungodly reported by the prophet Isaiah: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die."¹⁰⁴ In his later years, Delius told Fenby that "So long as I can enjoy the taste of my food and drink, and hear the sound of my music, I want to live."¹⁰⁵ Food, drink, and music formed his strongest consolation against his tremendous physical ailments, which often curtailed his pleasure. In Delius's music, then, sensuous beauty summons up a certain melancholy as an after-effect, due to the fleeting nature of the pleasure it provides. In the world of Delius's

¹⁰³ Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place*, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah 22:13 (King James Version).

¹⁰⁵ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 73.

art, one can hear even an overtly joyous score and be left downcast afterwards because it ends, not in the ideal, but in prosaic reality.

Delius's pantheism carried melancholy within itself: if nothing is eternal, then beauty is transient. The cyclical pattern of life, death, and rebirth inherent in the cycle of nature negates any hope for permanence. For the pantheist, the loveliness of nature is always in danger of disappearing forever; their pleasure is limited to what is experienced immediately in the present moment. This is contingent on temporality and the senses, which already makes such experiences subject to finality in spite of the promise of recurrence through the cycle of death and rebirth. Delius's redaction of *Sea Drift* from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* that the composer made for his eponymous 1904 score for baritone, chorus, and orchestra, retains the searing pain caused by the inevitability of loss and death in nature:

Chorus

Once, Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
....

Chorus

Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Delius, *Sea Drift* for Orchestra and Choir, 1904. Text by Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, "Sea Drift," 1855.

All seems blissful until the narrator, a boy who has observed the nesting seabirds, notices the disappearance of the male bird's mate.

Baritone

Till of a sudden,
Maybe kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.
And thence forward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.¹⁰⁷

The narrator, presumably now the mature poet, empathizes with the anguish of the male bird:

Baritone

O I am very sick and sorrowful.
O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.
O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.¹⁰⁸

Thus the pantheist, both poet and composer, is forced to cope with the specter of mortality: all aesthetic satisfaction ends, whether it be caused by circumstance or death. Immortality is replaced with a hope for perpetual rebirth in nature, but even

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

that is contingent on circumstance. As Shelley writes in his elegy “Adonais”: “Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,/Stains the white radiance of Eternity,/Until death tramples it to fragments.”¹⁰⁹ The strict adherent to such views tends to rationalize death as a part of existence.

In *Sea Drift* and other scores, Delius employs memory in order to perpetuate experience. If mortality and death are part the aesthetic, why attempt to imagine an existence without them? The primary aim of much of Delius’s music, especially his Cello Sonata, is to hold fast to sensuous beauty, which determination is expressed musically by the prolonged build-ups toward climaxes through expansive melodies and lush chromatic harmony, preserving aesthetic experience so that it can be recollected (in tranquility or ecstasy). Through music, Delius sought to preserve his pantheistic raptures from decay. However, the paradox of Delius is that he attempts simultaneously to memorialize natural beauty while lamenting its passing. For Delius, this Sisyphean task produced a great deal of poignant, melancholy—and ravishing—music.

To a certain extent, however, Delius managed to hold melancholy at bay personally through sensuous indulgence as well as through composing music. Generation upon generation of a small band of devoted listeners have relived his pantheistic rapture through scores such as *In a Summer Garden* (1908) or *Song of the High Hills* (1911). The chronic pain, blindness, paralysis, and physical decline

¹⁰⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was a Romantic poet who espoused atheism; his pastoral elegy “Adonais” (1821) was written in memory of John Keats.

that resulted from syphilis revealed how much he relied on music. In his final years, he could not see the physical world whatsoever so that his life became a matter of sounds, relationships, feelings, and memories of what he had experienced during his wanderings. Through a Nietzschean determination, he continued to derive pleasure in food, drink, music, imagination. Delius downplayed his loss of vision when he remarked to Fenby, "Not being able to see does not trouble me. I have my imagination. Besides, I have seen the best of the earth and done everything that is worth doing; I am content. I have had a wonderful life."¹¹⁰ Although Delius had arrived to a certain resignation that often comes in the last years of a person's life, he did so by enduring great trials that would have broken a less hardened character. This explains why he relied on his memory of beautiful sights to retreat into a lush inner world. To this end, when his health began to fail, Delius stored up memories for the future. Fenby recounts how the ailing Delius longed to see a last Norwegian sunset.¹¹¹ His wife Jelka arranged for friends, including the Australian composer Percy Grainger (1882-1961), to carry him up a mountain in a chair supported by poles in order to see a final, glorious sunset.

Moreover, every abode in which he sojourned, especially his beautiful house and garden in Grez-sur-Loing, was picturesque and secluded: he preferred to live

¹¹⁰ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 73.

¹¹¹ Delius befriended Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), whose music was nationalistic and romantic. It is also interesting to note the strong influence the Norwegian landscape had on Grieg's music. He was a Unitarian, a branch of Christianity closely informed by Transcendentalism. For the story of Delius and the sunset, see Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 74-75.

apart from the general run of humanity. There was an ideal scene for which he searched, and his music provided a recurrent avenue towards that ideal.

After a 1992 visit to Delius's home at Grez-sur-Loing, Byron Adams (b. 1955) recalled that the riverbank, trees, and situation of the house resembled typical landscapes found in Jacksonville, Florida, where Delius had lived briefly as the manager of a small citrus farm. The parallels between the two locales suggest a deep-seated nostalgia that led Delius to recreate a visual world in his backyard, even though the original experience of Solana Grove was separated by geography, time, and culture from Grez-sur-Loing. As Fenby tried to persuade the infirm Delius to travel to the Delius Festival Sir Thomas Beecham was arranging in London, Delius replied, " 'Yes, yes, lad, I know,' he replied, 'but I haven't the strength, and when I die I want to die in Grez.'¹¹² (Fenby succeeded and Delius attended Beecham's festival.) Though he no longer saw his home physically, in his mind he belonged to its visual environs, and by extension, to Jacksonville and a different epoch.

Furthermore, comparing Delius's music to a *memento mori* in art reveals how his music expressed melancholy. Delius aestheticizes decay by depicting its symbols in an idealistic fashion as in a painted still-life. A still-life painting of a vase with flowers or a dish of fruit is designed to produce the illusion of repose: an observer does not immediately think of their demise. On further reflection, however, the sensitive viewer may well realize that the beauty of the objects painted

¹¹² Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 85.

on the canvas have decayed many years, decades, or centuries ago. Beauty and its inevitable decay are juxtaposed in order to memorialize the former and to lament the latter. The more intensely vital the subject of the painting, the stronger the desire on the part of the artist that the subject be preserved. However, this desire for permanence is accompanied by the sure knowledge that all things pass away. Even so, our human nature rebels instinctively: Death ought not to exist. If one replaces the painting's vase of flowers or bowl of ripe fruit with a pastoral scene, the response is strangely familiar. The warning from Virgil's fifth *Eclogue*—"Et in Arcadia Ego"—resounds in the viewer: this scene is not paradise, but only a representation of a longed-for, and lost, paradise. Nevertheless, humanity continues the task of portraying such beauty in order to perpetuate the memory of it.

Brooding over this subject elucidates Delius's compulsion to express melancholy. Placing Delius's pantheistic convictions alongside the dissipation of his youth provides lenses with which to view the ecstasy of his mature works. The musical gestures of longing, increasing energy, intense chromaticism, and fantasia development create a *memento mori* of the rapture that Delius had loved and lost. Ironically, his later illness deprived him of the forward motion and ecstatic vision that introduced him to those sources of inspiration. Only sound and sense brought him nearer to his cherished world of memory.

Numerous pieces in Delius's catalogue exemplify this melancholic strain. However, the cello works in particular provide a rich, concentrated appreciation of this aspect of his music. The cello pieces also show his reliance on collaboration with

sympathetic performers. A case in point is Delius's collaborations with Beatrice and May Harrison. Additionally, his choice of the cello, for reasons discussed throughout this study, communicates melancholia with a singular, almost painful, poignance. His major works for cello, including the Double Concerto, Cello Sonata, Cello Concerto, alongside minor works, including the incidental music to James Elroy Flecker's play *Hassan*, the *Caprice and Elegy*, the Romance for cello and piano, and the *Serenade* were mostly composed at Grez-Sur-Loing and most with Beatrice Harrison in mind.¹¹³ Harrison was a cellist—an artist—who understood intimately Delius's musical idiom, for which she had an uncanny "elective affinity." She certainly recognized the melancholic strain in his music. Hence, attention will be given to what she had to say about Delius's different cello pieces throughout this chapter.

Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra (1915)

To begin an investigation into Delius's cellos works with the Double Concerto, rather than such better-known Cello Concerto or the Cello Sonata, might at first seem counterintuitive, given that the focus here is on scores written exclusively for the cello. However, chronology supports this approach. There are later circumstances, including the friendship between Delius and the Harrisons,

¹¹³ James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915) was a British author of the fin de siècle period; he was influenced by French literature, especially by Symbolist poets such as Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). He is best remembered today for his verse drama *Hassan: The Story of Hassan of Baghdad and How He came to Make the Golden Journey to Samarkind*. Somewhat improbably, this strange play with Delius's incidental music was a popular hit when it was produced in 1923.

which show that the Double Concerto was the beginning of Delius's fascination with the cello. Through the Double Concerto, Delius learned how to write large-scale music for solo cello; he also found a kindred spirit in Beatrice Harrison. He would compose subsequent scores specifically for her, all of which demonstrate different expressive facets of Delius's musical personality. The benefit of studying a composer's output for one instrument is the ability to scrutinize the affectual habits found in such scores, much as one identifies an individual's varied facial gestures. The instrument remains the same, with its timbre and aesthetic legacy, as a set of controls, while the way it is utilized and adapted to new music constitute the variables. The interaction between the "controls" and the "variables" creates specific meaning. It also offers a useful distinction for separating melodic symbolism from symbolism inherent in the timbre the instrument itself. For instance, the same melody for cello, if transcribed for another instrument, such as the piccolo, will convey a sentiment quite distinct from that of the original tone color. Certainly, this is a principle that composers and arrangers exploit regularly to great effect, and it provides an insight into Delius's cello works. It also helps isolate similar patterns in other British cello works, thus enabling the discovery of rich inter-musical symbolism and allusions. When viewed through this lens, Delius's Double Concerto is revealed to be a study of melody: the repartee between the violin and cello is a dialogue of similar themes in two different timbres. Thus, the "controls" define the meaning. The cello's timbre gives it material mystery and yearning (Example 3.1)

The image shows a page of a musical score for a double concerto. The score is for a full orchestra and solo cello. The instruments listed are Cor ang., Cello, Bassoon, Horns, Harp, and Solo Cello. The tempo is marked 'Slow' and the mood is 'dolce'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p', 'pp', 'ppp', and 'espress.'. The page number '25' is in the top right corner. The measure number '18' is in a box above the first staff and below the solo cello staff.

Example 3.1 Delius, Double Concerto, R17, m.6-R18, m.4

while the violin lends the same thematic material a wistful and, at times, ethereal quality (Example 3.2). The combined effect is that of melancholy.

Delius began to compose the Double Concerto especially for May and Beatrice Harrison, violinist and cellist respectively, in April 1915; he finished it in June.¹¹⁴ Due to their keen interest in the contemporary music of their day, the Harrison duo was sought after by composers to perform and record their music. May premiered the revised version (currently lost) of Delius's Sonata No.1 for Violin and Piano (1905, rev. 1914) with Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) in London, and she

¹¹⁴ For more information about the Harrison Family, see the Chapter V-“British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: An Overview.”

Example 3.2 Delius, Double Concerto, R18, m.5-R19, m.2

worked with Delius on his late Sonata No.3 for Violin and Piano (1930).¹¹⁵ Beatrice would be central to the composer’s later output of cello works, including the Cello Concerto (1921), Cello Sonata (1918), and the *Caprice and Elegy* (1930).

It was through a nineteenth-century double concerto that Delius became acquainted with the two sisters. World War I had begun in August of 1914; German military advances at the Marne, close to Grez-sur-Loing, compounded by advice

¹¹⁵ Harrison, May, “The Music of Delius,” in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association, 71st Sess.* (1944 – 1945): 43-48, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/766028>. The Double Concerto was not the first piece by Delius that May performed. The first violin sonata holds that honor. Hamilton Harty was a distinguished pianist and conductor who was chief conductor of the Hallé Orchestra from 1920 to 1933.

from friends such as Beecham and Percy Grainger, compelled Delius and his wife, Jelka, to live in Britain until November 1915, when they were able to return to France.¹¹⁶ Delius feared the effect the war would have on the arts and music, which he expressed in a letter to Heseltine: "I hate & loathe this german [sic] militarism & autocracy & hope it may be crushed for ever – but I can get no enthusiasm whatever for the war. My sympathies are with the maimed & slaughtered on both sides."¹¹⁷ The stress of the situation affected him, and although he was able to continue his composition and concertizing without much interruption while residing in England, his health weakened, leading him and his wife to retreat eventually to Norway. Nevertheless, the time he spent in Britain was productive. Soon after settling in London, Delius met May and Beatrice in Manchester on December 3, 1914, at a concert of the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Beecham, Delius's favorite exponent of his music, during which the sisters had performed Johannes Brahms's Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, Op.102 (1887).¹¹⁸ May and Beatrice were renowned for their performances of Brahms's Double Concerto on the continent and later in England. The piece was a staple of their repertoire since they had

¹¹⁶ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*. Delius made it clear that only Beecham knew how to interpret his orchestral music correctly. In Grez-sur-Loign, Delius would listen to broadcasts of Beecham conducting his music in England with satisfaction. Beecham proved pivotal in preparing the pivotal 1929 Delius Festival in England. Jelka Delius (1868-1935, née Rosen), German painter, came from a distinguished intellectual and musical family; she was the granddaughter of the noted pianist and composer Ignaz Mocheles (1794-1870).

¹¹⁷ Lionel Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters 1909-1934* (Aldershot, United Kingdom: Scolar Press, 1988), 141.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 142. The music critic, Samuel Langford, introduced the Harrison sisters to Delius.

performed it in Berlin in 1910. Though generally obscure at that time due to its technical demands and unique interpretive challenges, not to mention its subdued feeling and length, Brahms's Double Concerto gave May and Beatrice the ideal platform to demonstrate their professional status on the international scene. As Beatrice later wrote: "No one had heard this concerto played for many years and the idea of two young girls performing it seemed to strike at the imagination, so after a lovely season of concerts and parties at home May and I set off with Mother to Europe."¹¹⁹

Ironically, it was not Brahms's concerto, nor his style, which influenced Delius: he detested Brahms.¹²⁰ It was, rather, the sister's striking and deeply musical performance that inspired him to compose his own Double Concerto.¹²¹ He was inspired by the sisters, their essential musicality, and the genre's potential. During the composition of this score, Delius enjoyed a friendly and artistic collaboration with May and Beatrice. Furthermore, Delius and the Harrison family became fast, life-long friends.¹²² Indeed, their friendship was so important to the

¹¹⁹ Their tour encompassed Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

¹²⁰ Harrison, "The Music of Delius," 43. "He told us that he usually had not much liking for Brahms, but that the Double Concerto had greatly impressed him." In a letter from Delius to Heseltine dated 24 September 1912, Delius explained, "Brahms I never liked much & never shall – it is philistin [sic] music – altho' some of the chamber music is good – But to have to get accustomed to music is a fearfully bad sign."

¹²¹ Ibid., 43-44.

¹²² Daniel M. Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 257. Grimley notes that, "Other materials in the Harrison archive indicate that the sisters were closely involved with the realisation of the Concerto at various stages of the compositional process."

composer that it resulted in Delius's corpse being exhumed from Grez-sur-Loing and reinterred at Jelka's request in the churchyard of St. Peter's Church in Limpsfield, a village near the Harrison family's home.¹²³

A double concerto demands great interpretive and timbral finesse on the part of all concerned, the conductor, soloists, and orchestra. Given that the soloists function like a duo playing chamber music instead of as individual soloists, they must strive to listen constantly and carefully to each other as well as to the orchestra. Composing for this combination is extraordinarily daunting. When undertaking a double concerto, the composer must make sure that the soloists do not merely double the thematic material presented by the orchestra, lest the solo parts recede into the background rather than project their themes and figuration. Furthermore, the parts for the two soloists need to be sufficiently distinctive. By adding a second instrument, as in Brahms's Double Concerto, or a third, as in Beethoven's Concerto in C Major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, and Orchestra, Op. 56 (1804-1807), the need for independent solo lines that are interesting to hear increases.

By drawing upon the contrapuntal training that he had received in Leipzig, Delius successfully overcame these technical challenges: his Double Concerto

¹²³ Harrison, "The Music of Delius," 46-47. May recounts, "Jelka told me that ever since the Festival, and at any rate repeatedly during the last year of his life, Delius had expressed a very strong wish to be buried in England, not in his native Yorkshire, where it was too cold and bleak, but somewhere in the South, and she was quite nonplussed to know where it could be. I suggested Limpsfield, which was our own little church and very closely bound up with all we loved...." Jelka Delius is also buried in the same grave as her husband.

supplies both the cello and violin with gratifying music supported by autumnal colors in the orchestra. The work was performed on February 21, 1920 in Queen's Hall under the baton of Sir Henry Wood.¹²⁴ During his nearly year-long "exile" in England, the Harrison sisters often visited Delius to work on the concerto. The sisters advised Delius to avoid writing in unison, although octave doublings were permitted. This allowed them to differentiate their timbres as well as to mitigate potential intonation challenges posed by Delius's highly chromatic post-Wagnerian harmonic idiom.¹²⁵ Correct intonation was especially important to Delius for any interpretation of his music, as May confirms:

No composer, I think, depends to such an extent on his interpreters, who can make or mar to such a degree as to change the whole colour and meaning of his work; and no composer suffered more from indifferent playing than he did. Exact intonation is one of the greatest difficulties. I have seen him shudder with agony at bad intonation or insensitive phrasing....¹²⁶

For Delius, only a sensitive and immaculately trained performer was capable of presenting, and therefore completing, his works. He was elated when a performer intuited his musical style and instinctively divined how it should go. Fenby

¹²⁴ Harrison and Cleveland-Peck, eds., *The Cello and the Nightingales*, 114.

¹²⁵ Paul Watkins, *Delius: Double Concerto, Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto*, Tasmin Little, Paul Watkins, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sir Andrew Davis, Chandos CHSA 5094, 2011, compact disc, Liner notes by Watkins, 7. Margaret Harrison, the youngest of the three Harrison sisters, wrote that, "When Delius began the Double Concerto at our house in Cornwall Gardens he wrote a lot of it in unison. Both May and Beatrice said, 'You can't do that – it doesn't sound right'. And when they played bits he said, 'No, you're quite right. I see what you mean'... Delius used to come over with two pages, sit at the piano and then say, 'Play this'. Then he'd say, 'This is what I want'. He'd then bring two more pages and so in this way it was built up."

¹²⁶ Harrison, "The Music of Delius," 43.

confirmed that Beecham's editorial markings on the orchestral and large choral scores were critical to achieving fully satisfying interpretation of Delius's scores. Delius also approved of Fenby's aid once he knew that Fenby would complete his musical ideas in a manner consistent with his aesthetic.¹²⁷ Technically and musically, May and Beatrice worked together, and their first-hand knowledge of Delius's compositional process enabled them to realize his music successfully.

The ominous theme with which the Double Concerto opens may well reflect the somber mood of the early war years. As is evident in the letter to Heseltine about the war quoted above as well as in his seldom-performed Requiem that was composed in memory of wartime casualties, Delius was deeply affected by the waste and bloodshed of the conflict. His feelings of deep sadness cast a long shadow over the Double Concerto. Just as in Elgar's Cello Concerto—as well as in classic operatic tragedies such as Mozart's *Don Giovanni* or Bizet's *Carmen*—the introduction in C minor, which Grimley describes as “ruminative and invocatory,” of Delius's Double Concerto comes to represent an underlying tragedy which will be reasserted later in the score.¹²⁸ In the meantime, Delius moves on to a truly powerful and tightly intricate duet between the violin and the cello. Beatrice's and May's goal was to make it sound like one instrument as they alternated duplets and triplets, involved counterpoint, polyrhythmic passages, highly chromatic melodies,

¹²⁷ Fenby, Eric, *Delius as I Knew Him*.

¹²⁸ Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place*, 272.

and varying textures. They were in unison emotionally if not literally. The two-voice nature of the Double Concerto implies an intimate dialogue between two individuals sounding forth against the background of a group of sympathetic listeners. One perceives an integral relationship between the musical material shared by both instruments, one that is metaphorically striving for mutual understanding. This is best exemplified by the simultaneous independent melodies whose chromaticism creates a fluctuating compound stream of consciousness (Example 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). The constant interplay of anguished dissonance and fleeting consonance, symbolic of comprehension and incomprehension, give the impression of two minds desynchronizing and synchronizing as phenomena out of phase.

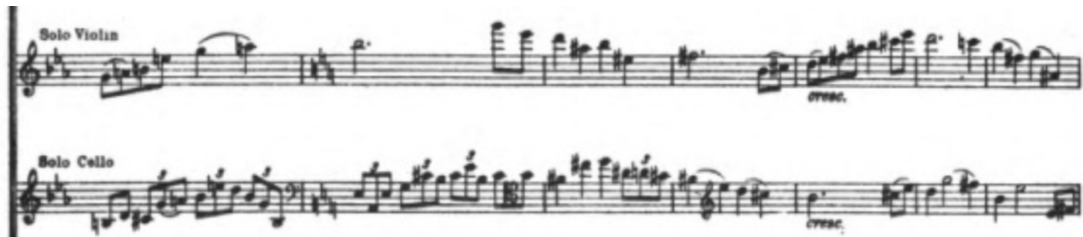
Delius increases the intensity of the work gradually by manipulating these variables within an intricate structure that is a synthesis of a classical three-movement concerto and a theme and variations, for his purpose is to prepare a veritable anti-climax.¹²⁹ In Grimley's analysis, the concerto consists of an Introduction (mm.1-15), Movement I (mm. 15-118), Movement II (mm.140-211) and a reprise of Movement I (mm.242-313) and Movement II (mm. 336-352).¹³⁰ The first movement, a passionate and energetic theme and variations section,

¹²⁹ Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place*, 270-271. "The Concerto is played in a single sweep, without a break, but, like Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, which Delius had heard (and grudgingly admired, despite finding it 'very dry & unpoetical & entirely intellectual') in Cologne in March 1914, the work can be broken down into constituent movements, broadly in dialogue with conventional classical expectations of the form (fast-slow-fast, with a closing return of the slow music).

¹³⁰ Grimley, *Delius and the Sound of Place*, 272.



Example 3.3 Delius, Double Concerto, R1, m.5-10



Example 3.4 Delius, Double Concerto, R1, m.11-R2, m.5



Example 3.5 Delius, Double Concerto, R2, m.6-R3, m.6

transitions to a contrasting slow second movement—as expected in a classical concerto—that features two distinct, sublime themes (Example 3.6). Such sublimity, like the retrospective B section of an elegy, contrasts with the energetic and passionate Movement I material that precedes and follows it, bordering on untrammelled exuberance. Hence, two of the crucial sections of the usual structure of a poetic elegy are present. The recapitulation of the introduction is the third.

After a cadenza, Delius returns to Movement I and II material, though is not an exact repetition of their first occurrence. Grimley explains that “the music is cast

50 . . . molto very slow **43** Very quietly

Fl. *pp*

Ob. *pp*

Cor ang. *pp*

Cl. *p din.*

Bass. *p din.*

Hrn. *p* (coming out) *pp*

Timp. *p*

Solo Violin *molto* very slow Very quietly *p esp.*

Solo Cello *p*

Vn. *din.* *pp* *pppp*

Viola *din.* *pp* *pppp*

Cellos *din.* *pp* *pppp* *pizz.* *arco*

Bassoon *din.* *pp* *pppp* *pizz.* *arco*

43 1:741

Example 3.6 Delius, Double Concerto, R42, m.3-R43, m.5

in a more somber light, the turning of the seasonal cycle toward an autumnal end.”¹³¹ He changes the keys and textures, seeking to propel the music toward a much anticipated perfect authentic cadence.¹³² The rise of passion immediately preceding the recapitulation at Tempo I (R30) is signaled by shorter note values and a triumphant traditional harmony and cadential movement. Just when it is expected to resolve triumphantly, the opening theme interjects cruelly, like a bucket of cold water thrown on a burgeoning flame (Example 3.7).¹³³ The shock is both disconcerting and upsetting, lasting for a few seconds but Delius soon molds the melody and harmony into a blissful reverie at the end. This is not like the brusque ending of Elgar's Cello Concerto. By contrast, the effect of Delius's coda contains an undercurrent of unease despite the surface serenity due to its unnatural timing. An anti-climax such as this seems to warrant a longer diffusion (unless the resolution is magical) than the composer provides here. But perhaps that is the composer's intent: to leave the listener with a sense of longing for longer fulfillment. However, this gesture is very much in line with composer's conception of passion, satisfaction, and permanence discussed above. Delius withholds an easy resolution from the listener. Around the time he was composing the Double Concerto, Delius wrote to Heseltine, languishing in an unfulfilling relationship, about passion:

¹³¹ Ibid., 280.

¹³² Ibid., 280-81.

¹³³ Ibid., 281. Grimley notes, “The unexpected return of the Introduction at precisely this point of climax (b.352, *piano* following *fortissimo*) is a devastating gesture of structural and expressive defeat.”

Not everyone falls really in love – only few men & few women are capable of a great & real passion – But in my opinion it is of enormous importance for an artist to have had a great passion – It is that which gives that extraordinary depth of emotion to his work....Love is a thing one must snatch at & hold & keep & enjoy as long as it lasts—for *it does not last.*"¹³⁴

Yet Delius writes this knowing full well that great disappointment is also possible—if not probable. Thus, the anti-climax in the Double Concerto expresses his melancholy worldview. Why does Delius not end his double concerto abruptly, like Elgar? As noted above, Delius sought to mitigate life's harshness through the contemplation of beauty, suggesting that life and love are akin to Shelley's evanescent "dome of many-colored glass." If interpreted through the lens of Delius's pantheistic convictions, the ending of the Double Concerto points to his embrace of a voluptuous nihilism. But the signifiers of melancholy that punctuate this passage in the Double Concerto permeate the entire work. By ending with the beginning theme, one understands that the energy, passion, and beauty Delius transcribes into melody and harmony is part of an eternal cycle. He attempts to subdue melancholy by distancing the musical material from its morose key, but the weight of the shock is too fresh to be mended. By contrast, Elgar brutally severed it.

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1921)

Shortly after performing the Double Concerto, Beatrice gave the English premiere of Delius's Cello Concerto in Queen's Hall, on a concert conducted by

¹³⁴ Lionel Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters 1909-1934* (Aldershot, United Kingdom: Scolar Press, 1988), 117-119. Letter from Delius to Heseltine dated January 2, 1914.

Eugene Goossens on July 3, 1923.¹³⁵ She had personally requested that Delius compose a concerto for her after he finished his Cello Sonata.¹³⁶ Although he had promised the piece to Beatrice and had attempted to secure a performance when she would be in Vienna through Universal-Edition (his publisher at the time), Delius reluctantly agreed to allow the Russian cellist Alexandre Barjansky (1885-1946) to give the world premiere of the Cello Concerto in Vienna.¹³⁷ Barjansky was an accomplished cellist; he was a pupil of Julius Klengel (1859-1933), the first chair of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and a professor at the Leipzig Conservatory.¹³⁸ Delius and Jelka were close friends with Barjansky, whose visits to Grez-sur-Loing

¹³⁵ Paul Watkins, *Delius: Double Concerto, Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto*, Liner notes by Watkins, 9. Delius had intended for Beatrice to give the first performance of the work, but the Russian cellist Alexandre Barjansky gave it instead. Eugene Goossens (1893-1962) was a British conductor and composer whose family, rich with first-rate musicians, was of French and Belgian extraction.

¹³⁶ Harrison and Cleveland-Peck, eds., *The Cello and the Nightingales*, 115. Jelka told Beatrice in a letter, "It is strange, I could never hear the Cello Concerto without thinking of you—it is so bound up with those lovely spring days with you all at The Waffrons and this intense wish of yours and mine, that he should compose a Cello Concerto." Delius composed the cello sonata for Beatrice and dedicated it to her.

¹³⁷ Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters II 1909-1934*, 256, 258, 270. Circumstantial evidence mentioned in letters suggest that it was the only practical solution at the time. Jelka wrote to Adine O'Neill, a close friend who was a concert pianist and music critic, on July 2, 1922 that, "Our finances are of course the great source of anxiety for us both....It is [Delius's] 60th birthday on the 29th of Jan...The Cello Concerto is out now (score and all). Delius then asked Norman O'Neill in on August 20, "Would the Philharmonic like to give the 1st performance of my Cello Concerto with Beatrice Harrison? Perhaps in March?" Norman O'Neill (1875-1934), Adine's husband, was a British composer and conductor, as well as a close friend and supporter of Delius. Apparently, the request was not granted soon enough, for on March 30, 1923 Jelka mentioned to Adine, "[Barjansky] stays at Vienna and Universal-Edition who has published the Concerto runs him. He would not be expensive either." Cleveland-Peck mentions that Delius set things right with Beatrice in a letter and arranged for her to give the British premiere.

¹³⁸ Interestingly enough, Klengel also had taught Guilhermina Suggia, who was Beatrice's friendly rival in England, in addition to other well-regarded cellists, including Gregor Piatigorsky and Emmanuel Feuermann.

were much anticipated because Delius enjoyed hearing him play. Few recordings of Barjansky's playing exist, and the quality of those that are preserved are marred by the poor sonic quality provided by early recording equipment. However, even from these recordings, it is clear that he played in an expressive nineteenth-century style that featured wide, constant vibrato and abundant portamenti.¹³⁹ (Beatrice Harrison's playing is more poised, with controlled vibrato and therefore, more modern than that of the Russian.) When Barjansky first performed the Cello Concerto at Grez with Fenby playing the piano reduction,¹⁴⁰ Delius's response might explain why he was willing to have Barjansky premiere the work in Vienna before Harrison could do so: "Bravo, Barjansky! It was glorious. Nobody plays the work like you. Oh, it was superb! Bravo, Fenby! You amaze me, my boy. I am so glad to have you here with me."¹⁴¹ Delius later conceded to Harrison, through a letter his wife wrote for him, that she had a better understanding of his preferred tempi. Jelka reported him saying, "I *know* she will play it beautifully!" And then she explained that "[Delius] had never intended to put metronome marks but Barjansky, who played so awfully well, has a tendency to play too fast, so he thought to give an idea

¹³⁹ Alexandre Barjansky and Staatsoper Berlin, "Cello Concerto in G minor, Handel," Parlophone E10407, 1925. <https://youtu.be/tz4V0ZZLqPM>. Unfortunately, the recording does not represent his intonation with anything approaching clarity.

¹⁴⁰ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 22. Before Barjansky's arrival, Delius requested Fenby, who was just beginning to work with Delius, to prepare to play the Cello works. "However, Delius had been very definite that morning. He had said that he particularly wanted Barjansky to play him his 'Cello Concerto and Sonata, and that I was to look at the piano parts of these works."

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26. Of course, composers often praise highly the performer in front of them in order to secure more performances from them. Delius's praise of Fenby was another matter, however.

of the tempi. He says you have always known how to take his tempi."¹⁴²

Overlooking any slight, real or imagined, Harrison proceeded to perform the concerto regularly with great acclaim both in Britain and abroad, including in the United States.

Delius's Cello Concerto, cast in a single movement divided into three broad sections, recalls aspects of Elgar's E minor Concerto, opening with dramatic triple and quadruple stops and using a pastoral compound 9/8 meter.¹⁴³ While no definite evidence exists of Delius taking Elgar's concerto as a model, one can deduce from his own score that he was well acquainted with that of Elgar. Elgar's concerto had been premiered in October of 1919 and Harrison began recording it for HMV in December of that year, continuing through November of 1920. Between April and July of 1921, Delius visited the Harrisons regularly, composing his cello concerto and relying on Beatrice's feedback.¹⁴⁴ It is likely that she would have at least shown, if not played, Elgar's score with Delius. The similarities between Delius's and Elgar's concertos testify to the fluidity of musical influence among British composers at this time, and

¹⁴² Harrison and Cleveland-Peck, eds., *The Cello and the Nightingales*, 118.

¹⁴³ 6/8 is also attributed to the pastoral compound meters.

¹⁴⁴ Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters II 1909-1934*, 243, 245. In a letter to Heseltine dated June 4, 1921, Delius wrote, "I am at present working at a Violincello-Concerto." From their London flat in Hampstead, Jelka wrote at length to Marie Clews on July 31, 1921, "Broadwoods sent Fred a lovely piano and he began composing at once and never stopped for over 2 months. He wrote a beautiful Concerto for Violincello and Orchestra there; it was quite heavenly how the beautiful music streamed out and seemed to make everything so lovely..."

in this instance, a connection between two composers made possible by their common friendship with the Harrisons.¹⁴⁵

Delius's Cello Concerto exhibits the same handling of the cello as found in his earlier Double Concerto. Like the Double Concerto, the Cello Concerto presents both technical and interpretive challenges. The Cello Concerto's chromatic sixteenth-note passages do not immediately fall under a cellist's fingers. A large portion of the work is written in the instrument's upper register, creating a registral and intonational challenge. Like Elgar, Delius solves the problem of the orchestra covering the cello's middle and lower register by writing rather higher than what is usual for the instrument, if compared to concertos by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) and Edouard Lalo (1823-1892). However, this means that what the instrument gains in projection is at the cost of a certain resonance.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the frequent delegation of textural figuration, rather than melodies, to the cello inhibits the way in which its sound projects in Delius's concerto. Though playing the textures is a virtuoso undertaking, their expressive effect is oddly muted. In respect to the ratio of melody to textural figuration, Delius's melodic Cello Sonata is more satisfying for cellists.

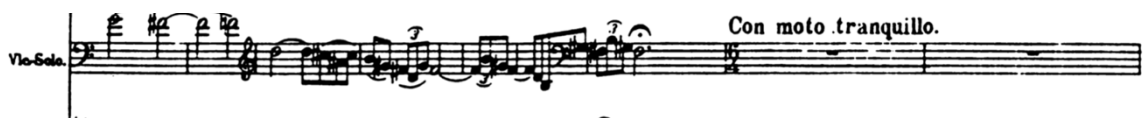
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 413, 420. Elgar and Delius became good acquaintances around 1933, when Elgar corresponded with Delius and then visited him in Grez-Sur-Loing, later publishing the article, "My Visit to Delius," about their meeting. Did the Harrisons encourage them?

¹⁴⁶ The solo cello part in Ludwig van Beethoven's Triple Concerto exhibits this tendency for placing the instrument in its highest register.

The Cello Concerto differs from the Double Concerto in expressive import. The opening is serious and arresting, made so by the orchestra's twice-repeated "do-sol" motive and low drone, which precedes the cello's declamatory chords that, as mentioned above, are reminiscent of the beginning of Elgar's concerto, albeit not as overtly tragic (Example 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11). The *nobilemente* character of Elgar's series of opening chords is highly reminiscent of the gestural effect of Delius's chords. Soon thereafter, however, in the fourth bar of Delius's score, after the cello enters, the mood becomes gently melancholic, rather than which compressing the sentiment into a five-bar statement. Delius is in no hurry, nor is he anxious (as in the Double Concerto) to arrive at a climax. This lack of urgency confounds any



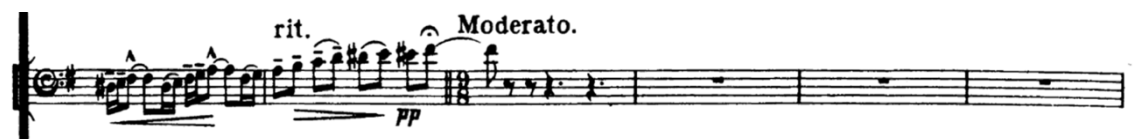
Example 3.8 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.1-9



Example 3.9 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.10-17



Example 3.10 Elgar, Cello Concerto, mm.1-6



Example 3.11 Elgar, Cello Concerto, mm.7-12

listener who expects the traditional rhetoric expected of a concerto, for this initial material is much like the central part of Delius's Double Concerto, with references to some of his finest and most contemplative music such as *On Hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring* and *In a Summer Garden*. It is at once mellifluous and reflective (Example 3.12 and 3.13). According to musicologist Jeremy Dibble, the Cello Concerto alters the classical concerto form in a similar manner to the Double Concerto; the single-movement scheme contains the three necessary sections with no breaks in between. Furthermore, Dibble identifies a modified sonata form in his outline: the introduction (mm.1-23); the exposition (mm.24-40) and development (mm.49-55) in the "First Movement" (mm.1-93); a repeated exposition (mm.94-123) before the recapitulation (mm.185-204) in the "Slow Movement" (mm.94-204); and the finale (mm.231-358).¹⁴⁷ Delius's experimentation with traditional form signifies a conscientious critique of old structural methods. Just as the world out of which they arose had largely disappeared by the time of this concerto, the rigid adherence to the classical concerto and sonata form had lost much of its import. Yet, to utilize their essential aspects meant that they still held some aesthetic relevance, and for a modernist, that was desirable. Thus, Delius's manipulation of classical form was an inherently nostalgic, if not melancholic, enterprise.

¹⁴⁷ Jeremy Dibble, "Music of the War Years and After (II): Violin Sonata No.1, Double Concerto, Cello Sonata, String Quartet, Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto, Violin Sonata No.2 (1914-1923)," in *The Music of Frederick Delius: Style, Form and Ethos* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv136c0q0.22>, 441.

Example 3.12 shows a musical score for Delius's Cello Concerto, measures 36-40. The score is arranged in a system with six staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: Violin Solo (Vlc. Solo), Violin I (VI. I.), Violin II (VI. II.), Viola (Via.), Violoncello (Vlc. arco), and Cello (Cb.). The Violin Solo part is marked with a box containing the number 40. The Cello part includes markings for 'arco' and 'ma metà'.

Example 3.12 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.36-40

Example 3.13 shows a musical score for Delius's Cello Concerto, measures 94-101. The score is arranged in a system with eight staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: Flute II (Fl. II.), Timpani (Timp.), Arpa (Arpa.), Violin Solo (Vlc. Solo), Violin I (VI. I.), Violin II (VI. II.), Viola (Via.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). The Violin Solo part is marked with a box containing the number 100. The Violin Solo part includes markings for 'arco' and 'pp'.

Example 3.13 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.94-101

The consistent use of a compound triple meter lends a pastoral quality to the piece, further veiling its melancholic aspects—there is no apparent dramatic moment of loss. Musical signifiers associated with mourning and grief are scarce here, by quiet omission or by subtle obfuscation. Nonetheless, the beginning and the final sections express melancholy of a different kind. A lonely bird call in the flute and oboe introduces the cello's main theme (Example 3.14). In the last bars of the concerto, the cello's sequence of elongated rising gestures with short, gentle falls each time suggests the serene but inevitable ebbing away of daylight (Example 3.15 and 3.16). As Beatrice Harrison observed, "Towards the close of the work an echo of regret seems to foreshadow his approaching blindness. Did he perhaps faintly realise that all that riot of colour he was so enraptured with in the garden would only become a memory?"¹⁴⁸ In *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton ruminates at length on the simultaneous pleasure and pain in which the sufferer is enmeshed. The dominant theme in the imagination of such people is the object of affection and the desire for reciprocation, which is further nurtured by ever-increasing reaffirmations of the subject of the melancholia produced by love. Some individuals nearly despair when their devotion is neither reciprocated nor assuaged, while others are energized by the hope of satisfaction. Neither type, of course, is promised fulfillment. Their lot—sometimes their preference—is to model for interpreting Delius's concerto, one identifies patterns of musical symbolism of seriousness,

¹⁴⁸ Harrison and Cleveland-Peck, eds., *The Cello and the Nightingales*, 115.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Delius's Cello Concerto, measures 18-23. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Flute I (Fl. I.), Oboe I (Ob. I.), Clarinet in B-flat (Clac. I. in B.), and Bassoon (Cae. III. in F.). The second system includes staves for Violin I (Vl. I.), Violin II (Vl. II.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). A box highlights measures 18-23 in the Flute I part, with a '20' marking above it. A page number '5' is in the top right corner.

Example 3.14 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.18-23

nobility, reverie, passion, transience from one pleasant scene to another, certainty, and serenity. It is an elliptical journey of erotic melancholy. In Delius's sound-world, such musical symbols have the potential to represent not just an individual's desire for a love object but also their rapture in nature. In his book, Grimley studies Delius's fascination with gardens, showing how his scores captured the emotions evoked through the contemplation of a garden in full bloom. The multitude of sensations from color, fragrances, and warmth call for revision—looking and feeling repeatedly—in order to prolong the euphoria. Delight results from the small changes that occur to the scene, such as subtle gradations of light. Likewise, the minute shifts in harmony and rhythms (i.e., duple to triplet) that occur in a score such as *In a Summer Garden* produce similar effects. Delius attempts to include all

The image displays a page of a musical score for the Cello Concerto by Edvard Delius, measures 294-300. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. The upper section includes woodwinds (Flute I & II, Oboe I, Clarinet I & II in B, Bassoon I & II) and an Arpa (Harp). The lower section includes strings (Violin I & II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso). A Violino Solo part is highlighted in a separate box above the Violin I staff. The score is marked with the number '300' in a box above the Flute I & II staff and another '300' in a box above the Violino Solo staff. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *arco* (arco). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 3.15 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.294-300

The image displays a page of a musical score for the Cello Concerto by Edvard Grieg. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. I & II, Ob. I, C. Ing., Clar. I & II in B, Fag. I & II, Arpa, Vlc. Solo, VI. I & II, Vla., Vcl., and Cb. The Vlc. Solo part is highlighted with a black box. The score shows measures 302 through 307. The Vlc. Solo part features a melodic line with a trill in measure 302, followed by a series of eighth notes and a final cadence in measure 307. The other instruments provide accompaniment, with the Flutes and Clarinets playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano).

Example 3.16 Delius, Cello Concerto, mm.302-307

these symbolic changes as if he was a gardener who conserves the flowers he has cut by putting them in a vase for later contemplation. But the impossibility of memorializing every moment of beauty, even musically, means that much will be missed, more will be forgotten, and all will be lost at last. Thus, Delius's concerto vacillates between erotic melancholy and voluptuous nostalgia.

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1918)

Early in their acquaintance, Delius composed his Cello Sonata, which Beatrice Harrison premiered at Wigmore Hall on October 31, 1918; the pianist was Hamilton Harty.¹⁴⁹ She would perform the Sonata extensively at home and abroad, where it was invariably well-received, notably making a recording with the British pianist Harold Craxton (1885-1971).¹⁵⁰ As with the Double Concerto and Cello Concerto, the Sonata is cast in one movement divided into several sections played without pause. Jeremy Dibble analyzes the sonata as a sonata-rondo, with a “first movement”—the exposition (mm.1-127), a “slow movement”—development (mm.128-170), and the “first movement”—recapitulation (mm.171-265).¹⁵¹ Various tempo markings signal new thematic sections, each with a contrasting character. This formal process creates the effect of a fantasia, not unusual for a

¹⁴⁹ Dibble, “Music of the War Years and After (II): Violin Sonata No.1, Double Concerto, Cello Sonata, String Quartet, Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto, Violin Sonata No.2 (1914-1923),” 435.

¹⁵⁰ Dawes, Frank, “Craxton (Thomas) Harold (Hunt),” in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2001—, Accessed 2 December 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06797>.

¹⁵¹ Dibble, “Music of the War Years and After (II): Violin Sonata No.1, Double Concerto, Cello Sonata, String Quartet, Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto, Violin Sonata No.2 (1914-1923),” 435.

British work of that era, but unusual for a sonata.¹⁵² Delius composed a substantial number of songs, among them an ardent setting of Shelley's "Love's Philosophy" (1891). His Sonata unfolds in a series of melodic arches that suggest a sustained fourteen-minute art song. According to Fenby, the soaring passages of the sonata derive from Delius's earlier Romance for cello and piano (1896).¹⁵³ The *Romance*, originally written for the violin, exemplifies the relationship between soloist and ensemble expected in the sonata and the orchestral pieces. The Cello Sonata, like the *Romance*, is filled with Delius's characteristic chromatically inflected melodies. Unlike the *Romance*, however, the thematic arc of the Sonata is unbroken except for a few brief interludes for the piano; for most of the score, the pianist plays a series of seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords, usually in inversion. (This is more difficult than it may sound, as the pianist's hand position must change rapidly as the music unfolds.) Performing such melodic shapes convincingly requires that the musicians, especially the cellist, study the full score carefully. In this instance, the cello is at least as rhythmically and melodically assertive as the piano part. Compared to Delius's orchestral works for cello, his Cello Sonata is intimate; its technical demands are less burdensome. The tempi, the longer note values, and the fewer chromatic sections and clef changes make it within the grasp of advanced amateur cellists. Nevertheless, Delius's music challenges the cellist in regards to phrasing

¹⁵² Frank Bridge's divides his Cello Sonata into two movements rather than three.

¹⁵³ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 68.

and interpretation, since he provides few key signatures, relatively rare dynamic markings, and unusual counterpoint. If not phrased properly—if it doesn't "breathe" like a singer—the Sonata can degenerate into a musical version of a protracted run-on sentence. A knowledge of French music of the fin de siècle, such as that of Claude Debussy, Albéric Magnard, or Gabriel Fauré, is essential for any cellist who seeks to interpret Delius's work with sensitivity and finesse.

The Cello Sonata is quite distinct in mood from both the Double Concerto and the Cello Concerto. It has a refulgent quality, giving the listener the impression of a midsummer's day in a verdant garden. As in the Romance for cello and piano, Delius expands his melodies in the Wagnerian fashion of the unending melody but in a more leisurely manner that recalls the English "fantasia mode." Indeed, in Delius's score there are passages that are reminiscent of Bridge's Cello Sonata, particularly in the calm arpeggiation and sequencing of the extended harmonies (Example 3.17 and 3.18). Delius uses chromatic modulation to heighten the emotional quality of the melody in all these cello works, yet none are organized as powerfully towards a single, culminating climax as is this sonata. The overall formal design of the Sonata is arranged to lead to its climatic ending, leaving a fine "aftertaste." Its wistfulness and the subtle modal endings of short phrases hint at that sweet melancholy to come. The blissfulness of this concise piece of chamber music contrasts with the two large-scale works' portentousness concerning lost beauty. Conceived as a gift for Beatrice Harrison, Delius created a score that matched her vivacious personality. Thus, the work causes a reaction akin to viewing an actual bouquet of



Example 3.17 Delius, Cello Sonata, mm.30-34

live flowers in contradistinction to admiring a still life of flowers: heartfelt gratitude at the gesture mixed with sadness at their ultimate fading.

Serenade (1923)

Delius presented the Serenade to Harrison in 1923; it became one of her favorite smaller works for cello and piano, one that she would often perform for salon recitals and social events.¹⁵⁴ To create his *Serenade*, Delius drew upon incidental music (1923) he had composed for James Elroy Flecker's play *Hassan*¹⁵⁵ before he went totally blind.¹⁵⁶ This graceful score shares some of the lyricism of the Cello Sonata, but in a smaller package that fit neatly within the dimensions of a piece of salon music. The principle theme is repeated four times, two in a lower register and two an octave higher, accompanied by mostly light chords in the piano.

¹⁵⁴ Harrison and Cleveland-Peck, eds., *The Cello and the Nightingales*, 151.

¹⁵⁵ Lionel Carley, Robert Anderson and Anthony Payne, "Delius, Frederick [Fritz](Theodore Albert)," in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2001—, Accessed 2 December 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49095>. Delius's incidental music proved to be his greatest commercial success, "with 281 performances at His Majesty's Theatre, London."

¹⁵⁶ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 44.

FREDERICK DELIUS
1916

Allegro, ma non troppo

Example 3.18 Delius, Cello Sonata, mm.1-18

While this piece is the least technically demanding of all of Delius scores for cello, it still captures the essential qualities of Delius's pensive aesthetic.

Caprice and Elegy (1930)

The *Caprice and Elegy* comprises a pair of succinct pieces written in 1930 and thus quite late in Delius's life.¹⁵⁷ According to Carley, Harrison requested the piece personally. It was dictated to Fenby, who recalls the circumstances of the composition.

So the months passed uneventfully, except for a short visit from Beatrice Harrison and her mother which resulted in two pieces being specially written for her coming American tour—the *Caprice* and *Elegy* for 'cello solo and chamber orchestra.¹⁵⁸

Both the *Caprice* and the *Elegy* sit comfortably in the cello's range. Unsurprisingly, Delius dedicate this work to Harrison.¹⁵⁹ The *Caprice's* curious rhythmical patterns sound winsome when played with a light bow technique.¹⁶⁰ In the *Elegy*, however, the composer intersperses the traditional elements of an elegy throughout, giving it a plaintive sound through minor thirds and dissonant harmonies. A slow march section during which the piano chords match the solemn tread of mourners in a funeral procession (i.e. Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major "Eroica,"* Op. 55)

¹⁵⁷ Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters II 1909-1934*, 362.

¹⁵⁸ Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 102.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Barlow, *Folk Tales: British Cello and Piano Miniatures Bax, Bridge, Delius, Elgar, Moeran, Vaughan Williams*, Gerald Peregrine and Antony Ingham, Naxos 8.574035, 2019, compact disc, Liner notes by Barlow, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Gerald Peregrine (cello), Antony Ingham (piano), *Folk Tales: British Cello and Piano Miniatures Bax, Bridge, Delius, Elgar, Moeran, Vaughan Williams*, Naxos 8.574035, 2019, compact disc.

must be carefully timed, as otherwise this piece can seem lugubrious. As always, Delius's horizontal harmonies make the most sense when played at the right tempo. If it is too slow, important contrapuntal lines are missed, but if it is too fast, the chromaticism becomes merely a wash of color. The curious order of the *Elegy* following the *Caprice* results in a programmatic challenge. Convention would have the order reversed, with a melancholic section leading to a light-hearted closing section, akin to the formulaic lighthearted ending. Listeners often prefer to be given a positive emotional resolution. By placing the *Caprice* first, Delius denies them this resolution but, given the time of its composition, the order and the piece as a unit foreshadows the inevitable: Delius's own death. It is as though he considered his life along with his music, a metaphorical caprice—"a sudden usually unpredictable condition, change, or series of changes"—soon after to be punctuated by his own funeral.¹⁶¹ Fenby noted that "Though [Delius] had often seemed so near to death, and had so often startled me by looking its very image, as he sat propped up in his chair listening to our reading, he had never referred to it before save once, and this rather mockingly." Yet, as Fenby reflected, "Death, when it did come to him, was indeed terrible."¹⁶² Did Delius share Fenby's and others' observations of his dying state? Was the *Caprice and Elegy* a farewell note to Beatrice Harrison? In any case, Delius would not compose any more music for the Harrisons after 1930.

¹⁶¹ "Caprice," Merriam-Webster.

¹⁶² Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 72-73.

Delius compliments the cello by writing these substantial works for the instrument. While each is shorter than many of the prominent concerti or sonatas from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these pieces are still formidable in their scope due to the condensed musical ideas found in them. They are the opposite of “show pieces.” A player demonstrates virtuosity in these works only when they have internalized Delius’s compositional language and imagined Beatrice and May Harrison’s attitudes toward the pieces; they are gifts from a friend who loves beauty and nature. As noted above, warmth and ecstasy permeate Delius’s music, and the performer must honor those sentiments. Listeners attuned to Delius’s inner world respond to and relish their melancholic charms. Beauty and passion, the two guiding tenets of Delius’s worldview, include loss in their entourage as well. The cello became the chosen vehicle for late Delius, as it had for Elgar, about a decade before his death, which virtually coincided with that of Elgar’s own in 1934. For the Harrisons, that year would be poignant, for they would lose their mother and two of their greatest musical friends. It has been commented superstitiously that some composers turn to composing for the clarinet in their twilight years. Perhaps British composers who become acutely attuned to their own mortality turn to the cello.

Chapter IV

Frank Bridge: Modernism and Melancholy

Frank Bridge (1879-1941) was a highly accomplished composer, violist, pianist, and conductor, but his posthumous reputation remains in the shadow of Elgar, Delius, Vaughan Williams, and of his own pupil Benjamin Britten. Part of the reason is that his achievement as a composer is poised uneasily between the romantic musical idiom, based largely on his assimilation of Brahms and Fauré, and his increasing fascination with and assimilation of the modernism of Berg during and after the First World War. Bridge fearlessly explored Continental trends at a time when many in the British musical establishment sought to re-establish prewar musical values. Empowered as he was by his technical process and by the faithful support of his American patron, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), Bridge chose to seek and dare in a manner that found him out-of-step with British musical life by the early 1930s. But his work was never played much on the Continent either, where modernism was more accepted. (Unfortunately, the sort of modernism that Bridge espoused was not at all in favor in France during the heyday of *Les Six* although Nadia Boulanger admired his ability as an orchestrator.) Vaughan Williams and others accused Bridge of deliberately "uglifying" his music after the First World War. In Bridge's defense, one notes that the old aesthetic dispensation and musical assumptions had died in the trenches, and many composers, including Vaughan Williams, Ireland, and Holst, underwent radical

changes of style as a result. Bridge was hardly alone, but the ways in which he integrated modernism into his works, using primarily Austro-German models, did not find favor with either his colleagues or the British public as a whole. In addition, Bridge's brash, tactless, and self-confident demeanor won him few friends.

The tragedy of Bridge was that his music was perceived as being more radical than it actually was. The rapid change of postwar aesthetics, which also took place in France, Italy, and Germany, repurposed fragments of musical tradition in ways that audiences and music critics often denounced as “ugly” or “misguided.”¹⁶³ Eventually, some twenty years after Bridge's death, sympathetic critics began to position his postwar music aside the modernist works of younger British composers, such as Arthur Bliss, William Walton, and Benjamin Britten. Bridge's decision exacted a toll on his reputation, and the massive success of Britten further pushed his work into the shade. Just as conservative critics and envious composers accused Britten of being “clever”—a deadly insult in Britain to this day—so Bridge had suffered from the same sort of opprobrium over the course of his career. The difficulty was that his close association with Britten, a closeness that Britten at times exaggerated, meant that a whiff of Bridge's supposed “cleverness” lingered until

¹⁶³ Mark Amos, “‘A Modernist in the Making’? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941” (PhD diss., The Queen's College, University of Oxford, 2009), 242. In his discussion of *Phantasm*, Amos includes the following review from *The Times*: “His ‘Phantasm’ resembled several other works of his recent years in suggesting a quest in the wrong direction. His creative gift is beyond doubt: but he seems to have chosen a culture that does not bring out its fertility.” Amos clarifies this statement in these words: “The critic's mention of a ‘chosen culture’, his assertion that Bridge was questing in the ‘wrong direction’, demonstrates his perception of Bridge's embrace of modernist ideology, together, of course with the inherent idealism of such a stance.”

after Britten's own death in 1976. Indeed, it has only been in the twenty-first century that recordings and first-rate performances of virtually all of Bridge's music has begun to redress the balance in his favor. Finally, the living memory of his difficult and abrupt personality dimmed, as did the acute resentment of his having had a supportive, generous, and discerning patron in Mrs. Coolidge.

Bridge composed two major works for cello, the Sonata in D Minor for cello and piano, H.125 (1917) and his *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco* for cello and orchestra, H. 180 (1930).¹⁶⁴ These two scores, completed more than a decade apart, lament the destruction of war, especially the human cost of war. Each provides a glimpse into how Bridge reacted to the destruction, but each work is markedly different in the mode of expression employed and the expressive result. Bridge was both an involuntary non-combatant (a heart murmur disqualified him from fighting in the First World War) and was generally indifferent to nationalism. The Cello Sonata was composed during World War One and reflects his distress over the carnage. He could have ended his aesthetic involvement with the subject of war with that work; instead, he composed a series of scores that took as their subject the horror of war, including *Lament: For Catherine, Aged 9 "Lusitania" 1915*, for string orchestra or piano H.117 (1915), his Piano Sonata, H.160 (1924), *Phantasm*, for piano and orchestra H.182 (1931), and *Rebus*, for orchestra, H.191 (1940). These "war works" will dominate this chapter, as they reveal Bridge's feelings of loss, anxiety, fear, and

¹⁶⁴ The 'H' stands for Paul Hindmarsh, who catalogued Bridge's complete oeuvre.

apprehension over the tragedy of war, which is crucial to understanding the Cello Sonata and *Oration*.

One of the most celebrated of this series of anti-war scores is *Oration*, a second major work for cello—a concerto in all but name—that vividly portrayed the horrors of fighting at the front and unflinchingly rejects easy consolation, an aspect musicologist Ciara Burnell designates as “anti-elegiac.”¹⁶⁵ *Oration* was warmly received because of its sincerity, a remarkable occurrence for one of Bridge’s later works, which usually were dismissed by the critics. To what extent, then, did Bridge’s selection of the cello arise from his need to express his feelings concerning the tragedy of war? In this chapter, I will explore how he negotiates mourning through an instrument that is particularly well suited to express both tragedy and melancholy.

Sonata in D Minor for Cello and Piano

On July 13, Mr. Albert Sammons, Mr. Felix Salmond (‘cello), and Mr. William Murdoch combined to give an attractive program which included Debussy’s Sonata for violin and pianoforte, in C, a Sonata for ‘cello and pianoforte in D minor, by Frank Bridge, John Ireland’s new Trio, and Gabriel Fauré’s C minor Pianoforte Quartet, in which Bridge took the viola part.¹⁶⁶

The above-mentioned 1917 program at Wigmore Hall (whose previous name, Bechstein Hall, had been changed due to anti-German sentiment) exemplified

¹⁶⁵ Ciara Burnell, “The Anxiety of Memory: Frank Bridge’s Late Works and Inter-War British Modernism” (PhD diss., Queen’s University, Belfast, 2009), 162-163.

¹⁶⁶ “London Concerts,” *The Musical Times*, vol. 58, no. 894 (1 August 1917). At that time, Debussy was dying of cancer and Fauré, although his hearing was declining rapidly, was the director of the Paris Conservatory, trying desperately to keep that institution going in dire wartime conditions.

contemporary music in Britain and France. To situate Bridge's Cello Sonata (1914-1917) among the works of Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, and John Ireland implied that there was a musical affinity between Bridge, Ireland, and the music of living French composers. Music from France had influenced British composition for two decades, vying for an audience in Britain. Most of the British composers who were fascinated by the tonal and formal innovations of Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, Erik Satie, and Maurice Ravel were members of the younger generation trained at the Royal College of Music. The institution's pro-Teutonic, primarily Brahmsian, bias, which was promulgated by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Sir Hubert Parry, and others, had fallen out of favor. While his early music bears traces of Brahms's influence, Bridge explored French music exhaustively, especially through playing the chamber music of Fauré and others as a violist. Furthermore, he conducted the music of his French contemporaries. French influence is evident in his Cello Sonata, which was composed during what Fabian Huss describes as Bridge's transitional period.¹⁶⁷ During this stage, he became further acquainted with the new developments in music from France, yes, but also from Austria, Germany, and Russia. Bridge drew especially on "the piano music by composers such as Debussy, Ravel and Scriabin."¹⁶⁸ Bridge began to distance himself from the agreeably facile music style he had mastered before the Great War; the tragedy of war had made that

¹⁶⁷ Huss, *The Music of Frank Bridge*, 78. Huss states that for Bridge, "The period after the retrospective works of 1912 is one of experimentation and stylistic expansion." This period lasted until 1925.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

mode of expression irrelevant. Bridge needed a more expansive way to communicate his inner turmoil about current events. He was hardly alone in this respect, as Vaughan Williams, Ireland, Bax, Smyth, and Elgar also changed their respective aesthetics during and after the war. The shift in Bridge's style at this point incorporated elements of Continental modernism in the Cello Sonata (1913-1917), which, it should be noted, is cast in D minor, the same key as Debussy's Cello Sonata of 1915. (Fauré completed his First Cello Sonata, Op. 109, also in D minor, in 1917.) While late-Romantic in its phrase structure, tonality with modal inflections, and chromatic sequences, the sonata features octatonic pitch collections alongside pentatonic scales reminiscent of the Javanese Gamelan-inspired figuration that Debussy used in his own Cello Sonata (Example 4.1). It is possible that Bridge became acquainted with Debussy's score at its 1915 premiere in London's Aeolian Hall. Though the two pieces differ in formal design, Bridge's sonata features melodic fragmentation and episodic juxtapositions which resemble those found in Debussy's work. For example, the opening of the finale of Bridge's score unmistakably recalls the opening of the last movement of Debussy's sonata. Moreover, Bridge's sonata is cyclical—he returns to the opening themes at the end of the last movement, a formal procedure that Debussy used in his sonata. Debussy himself was experimenting with cyclical form in multimovement works, the most notable precedent for which was César Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major (1886). Debussy's use of cyclical procedures was subtler than that of Franck, however, much more concise and, therefore, modern.

Example 4.1 Claude Debussy Cello Sonata, *Finale*, R6, mm.25 – R7, m.2

The opening of Bridge's sonata reflects immediately the French influence through the pentatonicism of the first theme. Bridge's melody unfolds surrounded by rich, Delius-like harmony; Bridge ensures a certain fluidity by using complex rhythmic patterns characterized by alternating duplet and triplet groupings. The overall effect is that of a threefold musical eclecticism. The first is that the eclecticism adumbrates Bridge's exploratory approach, which Huss notes as a sign of Bridge's transitional phase. Huss observes that in the sonata, Bridge was in the process of synthesizing his new aesthetic influenced in part by the music of the contemporary composers that he was exploring in his other works, *Dance Poem*, H.111 (1913), the Second String Quartet, H.115 (1914-1915), *Summer*, H.116 (1914-1915), and *A Prayer*, H.140 (1916, 1918), which he composed alongside the Cello

Sonata.¹⁶⁹ Huss hypothesizes that “The movements evince rather disparate styles, probably due in no small part to this chronology, with a lyrical, Romantic first movement followed by a more harmonically ambiguous and complex second.”¹⁷⁰ The second aspect, reflected in the sonata's structure, is that the melody can be understood as a logical beginning to a work that traverses a collection of multiple and varied themes. From the beginning, Bridge planned that the sonata was to be eclectic, and the opening's potent symbol of “exoticism” that was still in vogue in French avant-garde music—Debussy's *Ibéria* had been premiered in 1910, for example—would have prepared listeners for a score that eschewed the formulaic. The third aspect of this unusual opening is one that regards Bridge as historically conscious. Bridge demonstrates that he was aware of the contemporary trends in music and the arts, using fragments, textures, and disjunct themes as a musical analogy to the turbulent world, politically and artistically, of the First World War. This last interpretation positions Bridge as an innovator rather than a mere follower of Continental trends. In this sonata, however, Bridge did not jettison his British heritage altogether, as is clear from his inclusion of an English folk-like melody in the second movement (see Example 4.2).¹⁷¹ Bridge had earlier succumbed to the seductions of pastoralism and was not yet ready to leave that aesthetic behind. His

¹⁶⁹ Huss, *The Music of Frank Bridge*, 116. Huss bases this view on Hindmarsh's observation.

¹⁷⁰ Huss, 117.

¹⁷¹ Evyn Barb Mingo, “Reimagining “Englishness” in Frank Bridge's Sonata in D Minor for Piano and Cello,” Unpublished Manuscript, December 2014.

Andante con moto

con sordino

pp teneramente

8 9

pp

ppp

pp

len. len.

ppp

perdendosi

Example 4.2 Frank Bridge Sonata for Cello and Piano, II R8, m.1 - R9, m.11

earlier finely crafted piano miniatures exemplify his thorough knowledge of the pastoralist idiom. Furthermore, his use of folksongs, such as *Two Old English Songs*, H.119 (1916) and *Sir Roger de Coverley "A Christmas Dance"*, H.155 (1922), attests to his exploitation of folk music. In regards to their semiotics, the two went hand-in-hand. Therefore, Bridge's inclusion the folk-like melody in the sonata testifies to the national origin of his musical identity during wartime.

For Bridge in 1917, pastoralism represented a prelapsarian world of innocence and simplicity. When analyzing Bridge's Cello Sonata through the lens of the composer's eclecticism, pastoralism must be set in a broader context, however. Bridge's derivation of themes from other trends, twice removed in some cases (such as the pentatonic scale), suggests that a certain amount of artifice was needed for the composer to maintain this ideal. For example, the folk-like melody is not a direct quote of any actual folk song. Bridge seems to have formulated it himself. It sounds otherworldly in the context of the surrounding material, resembling the way in which the pastoral tradition's escapism contrasted with the blunt and tragic reality of the twentieth century. Portraying an idealized past in contrast with the unvarnished present through historical musical symbols was a tendency that continued to haunt his musical imagination. As late as 1931, his use of the waltz and its distortion within a fantasia structure in *Phantasm* suggests the irretrievable old-world zeitgeist in a manner that resembles how Ravel disassociates the waltz from the ballroom in *La Valse*.¹⁷² The waltz was the superficially innocuous pastime of European social entertainment—a risqué but widely accepted activity—which came

¹⁷² Frank Bridge, *Frank Bridge Orchestral Works: The Collector's Edition*. Sarah Connolly, Philip Langridge, Roderick Williams, Alban Gerhardt, Howard Shelley, BBC National Chorus of Wales, and BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Richard Hickox. Classic Chandos 10729(6) Six compact discs. Liner notes by Hindmarsh, 25-26. "The strange visions gradually come into focus. Then the orchestra begins a macabre, spectral waltz, but as Bridge's whole-tone chords and tritone-based polychords disperse, melodic shapes become more clearly defined, tonality grows more stable, and a graceful 'waltz' emerges as the second subject. The piano soon snuffs it out, however, and leads the orchestra into a development of the lyrical material of the introduction."

to represent, ironically, its moral decay.¹⁷³ Thus, along with other dances, the majority of which were derived from traditional folk dances, the waltz symbolized the pre-war world. Though an anachronistic comparison, Bridge's "folk" melody in his Cello Sonata functions in much the same way.

Although Bridge incorporates fragments of the "folk" melody's main motive throughout the sonata's second movement, these repetitions function as distant, partial memories of an earlier time, much like Elgar's quote of his own Cello Concerto's third-movement main theme in the finale. Elgar represents disintegrating memory through thematic fragmentation; Bridge represents memory episodically, creating a nostalgic distraction. Yet Bridge's motivic reminiscence occurs early in the work compared to Elgar's procedure. By contrast, Bridge's sonata expands into a fervent conclusion, of which only the last portion is a cyclical recapitulation of the first movement's primary and secondary themes. Thus, the structure displays elements of a fantasia, a formal procedure that Bridge had developed in the recent past for the compositions that he submitted to the Cobbett Chamber Music Competitions.¹⁷⁴ This procedure, reminiscent of developing

¹⁷³ Burnell, 217. Burnell, referencing musicologist Francesca Draughon's article "Dance of Decadence: Class, Gender, and Modernity in the Scherzo of Mahler's Ninth Symphony" says, "The understanding of the Viennese waltz as a 'dance of death' may be traced to the perceived link between the dance and sexual danger when it first appeared in the nineteenth century. This association was due in part to the dancer's physical proximity for the waltz was danced in such close contact, which caused genteel society to be 'shocked by the intimacy implied by the waltz's embracing position'. The idea that the waltz was the 'ultimate experience of socially licensed sexual pleasure' was linked with fears that it could corrupt and violate the innocent female."

¹⁷⁴ Anthony Payne, Lewis Foreman, and John Bishop, *The Music of Frank Bridge* (London: Thames Publishing, 1976), 10. Payne explains that, "Cobbett had the stimulating idea of forging a link with the great Elizabethan and Jacobean age of English chamber music by setting up competitions for

variations lessens the emotional impact of that pastoral memory at the *Andante con moto* (Example 4.2). Certainly, it is nostalgic at first, but when answered by the *Molto allegro e agitato* section that follows, it evokes a deeper sadness, passion, and certainly melancholy. Burnell comments, "This has the effect of making it seem like an ethereal and transient glimpse into the pastoral genre, suggesting that Bridge is acknowledging the role of pastoralism in consolatory writing, but finding it no longer sufficient in the face of such loss."¹⁷⁵ As Burnell notes, Bridge composed the sonata's first movement near the beginning of the war, between 1913 and 1914, when the scope of the eventual devastation could not have been anticipated.¹⁷⁶ The second movement was finished later during a period of high casualties, between 1916 and 1917, a time of growing angst for Bridge as he deplored the futility of the war.¹⁷⁷ A commentary by the cellist Antonia Butler¹⁷⁸ of the French premiere of the sonata in 1928 opens a window onto Bridge's inner turmoil:

single-movement, so-called 'phantasies'. He thus did something to combat the automatically accepted four-movement archetype, encouraging a fresh approach to the principle of unity in diversity with a movement that would embrace the different moods and textures of classical precedent by thematic inter-connexion." Some of the works that Bridge submitted to the competitions are the Phantasie String Quartet in F minor, H.55 (1905), Phantasie Piano Trio in C minor, H.79 (1907), Phantasie Piano Quartet in F# minor, H. 94 (1910), and *Summer*, H.116 (1914-1915). The first two won prizes. The "phantasie" influenced Bridge's musical structure.

¹⁷⁵ Burnell, "The Anxiety of Memory: Frank Bridge's Late Works and Inter-War British Modernism," 140-142.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 140. Burnell references Hindmarsh's estimate.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Antonia Butler (1909-1997) was a British cellist and a teacher at the Royal College of Music; she broadcasted regularly over the BBC between 1929 and 1970.

I first played the sonata with a contemporary pianist of his called Ada May Thomas.... She told me that during the First World War, when he was writing the slow movement, he was in utter despair over the futility of war and the state of the world generally and would walk around Kensington in the early hours of the morning unable to get any rest or sleep—and that the idea of the slow movement came into being during that time.¹⁷⁹

Other works of his from the war years echoed his experience, including his tone poem *Lament: To Catherine, Aged 9, 'Lusitania' 1915* (1915), in which he mourns the drowning of Catherine Crompton and her entire family, who perished in the sinking of the RMS Lusitania by a German U-boat.¹⁸⁰ Bridge was clearly tormented by both civilian and military casualties, and he expressed that torment through his music. Moreover, as he was ineligible for combat due to his heart murmur, his torment may have been accentuated by survivor's guilt.

In a searching essay, Thomas Pfau regards melancholy as a defining aspect of modernism. Pfau asserts that the concept of something being modern implies the loss of what was the closest representation of what was considered ideal. This lost ideal is what the twentieth-century aesthetic mourns by juxtaposing fragments—memories—of past traditions. Pfau writes:

The true object of modernity's mourning and the source of an elegiac dimension pervading so many of its aesthetic models and cultural pursuits, is the utter impossibility of even wishing to return to a past whose fleeting appeal, in fact, only stems from the estranged and

¹⁷⁹ Burnell, "The Anxiety of Memory: Frank Bridge's Late Works and Inter-War British Modernism," 140.

¹⁸⁰ Byron Adams, "Sea Change: A Meditation upon Frank Bridge's *Lament: To Catherine, Aged 9, 'Lusitania' 1915*", in *The Sea in the British Musical Imagination*, ed. by Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer. (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 201), 51-53.

disoriented situation of the modern, strictly temporal subject devoid of transcendent points of reference or normative frameworks.¹⁸¹

As noted above, Bridge began as a traditionalist who often accessed the modal idiom later called “pastoral.” In earlier chapters of this dissertation, the inherent melancholia of pastoralism has been alluded to several times and the reasons for that association discussed. Even as Bridge began to broaden his style during the First World War, he did not abandon pastoralism or its implications—that repudiation came later. During the war he clung to what might be called a “bruised pastoralism” precisely to express the losses of the war.

Bridge cherished the innocence and lively camaraderie of his early years as a student at the RCM, belonging to a group known as the Beloved Vagabonds. Sadly, Bridge and his wife Ethel remained childless; whether or not they would have made good parents is a matter for conjecture. They clearly loved having children around them at their home.¹⁸² The entry of the very young Benjamin Britten into their lives may have assuaged any sadness at their childless state to a degree. By bringing Britten under his artistic wing, Bridge may have fulfilled in part his yearning for fatherhood. Bridge’s tutelage of Britten may also have enabled him to deal with the difficult reality of his own childhood, as his father laid a heavy burden of responsibility on his son’s shoulders. Bridge endured a difficult and abnormal

¹⁸¹ Thomas Pfau, “Mourning Modernity-Classical Antiquity, Romantic Theory, and Elegiac Form” in *Oxford Handbook of the Elegy* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 16.

¹⁸² Amos, “‘A Modernist in the Making’? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941,” 278. During WWII, the Bridges billeted children at their home.

childhood due in part to his father's alcoholism. Perhaps for these reasons, Bridge's early output of short forms and salon pieces always was often tinged with a touching wistfulness.

However, the emotional rupture that Bridge experienced during the war caused a loss of musical and political idealism that accelerated his disillusion with political and moral bromides. By the 1920s, he was an embittered man and a very different composer. The melancholic strain that is apparent in his song "Mantle of Blue," H.131 (1918) became more pronounced in the twenties and in the thirties as another world war loomed.¹⁸³ His proleptic concerto for the cello, *Oration*, therefore derives much of its power from the somber idiom, influenced by modern, British, pastoral, and personal loss, that had first announced itself during the First World War.

Oration, Concerto Elegiaco for Cello and Orchestra (1930)

No performance of a major score comes without difficulties. An elegy is worthy of the tears shed: a time of mourning is essential in the face of traumatic loss. Bridge's *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco*, for cello and orchestra, H. 180 (1930) creates a space in which the listener can confront and mourn tragedy. As mentioned previously, this innovative cello concerto garnered praise at its premiere, something increasingly rare as the composer's modernist aesthetics estranged him further and further from the mainstream of British music in the 1930s. *Oration* expresses

¹⁸³ For "Mantle of Blue," Bridge set a poem by Irish poet and playwright Padraic Colum (1881-1972).

directly Bridge's anguish over the suffering caused during World War I.¹⁸⁴ The completion of *Oration* was delayed by over a decade, but it took that long for Bridge to process musically the trauma and helplessness he felt during wartime. Much as if he had experienced a form of post-traumatic stress disorder, it took time to cope with the nightmare of London under bombardment. If made during zeppelin raids over London, his nighttime walks may well have been dangerous. Quite simply, mourning takes time.

The run-up to the premiere of *Oration* was exceedingly trying for Bridge, who was beset by dashed hopes, repudiated agreements, and logistical barriers. Bridge tried mightily and persistently to obtain a performance for *Oration* against formidable odds, his sheer determination attesting to the significance he placed on the work. It seems only fitting, then, to know about the speakers behind this musical elegy, understand what they shared, and inquire who listened.

Bridge completed *Oration* on June 29, 1930 at his home in Friston, Sussex. The original particella was signed—as was Bridge's custom—on March 25 of the same year.¹⁸⁵ At that time *Oration* lacked the "Epilogue," a brief poignant ending that seems to foreshadow the tenebrous final movement, also called "Epilogue," of

¹⁸⁴ Huss, 119. "As noted, Bridge's music during World War I tended rather towards spiritual consolation, and the only work that seems to address the trauma of war directly, *Oration*, was written during the "war boom" period of the late 1920s and early 1930s, which saw a dramatic increase in the production of literature and music seeking to come to terms with the "Great War."

¹⁸⁵ Paul Andrew Hopwood, "Frank Bridge and the English pastoral tradition" (PhD diss., 2007 University of Western Australia, 2007), 289.

Vaughan William's Sixth Symphony of 1947. Bridge added the "Epilogue" three months later in order to heighten the impact of the piece's emotional message. It seems to have been effective. In the liner notes for his recording of the concerto, cellist Steven Isserlis opines that "[The last bar of the original sketch] was the original ending, and a bleak one it would have been."¹⁸⁶ Isserlis fancifully posits that the "Epilogue" represents the soul of the orator—perhaps an unknown soldier—ascending into heaven. Alternatively, Paul Hindmarsh states that this ending can be interpreted as "Bridge's image of, or hope for, a world without the horrors of war."¹⁸⁷ The common trait in both interpretations is one of final, peaceful repose.

A number of logistical obstacles always arose to thwart his hopes for a premiere of *Oration* in a manner that would have crushed a less stubborn composer. *Oration* was premiered at last on January 17, 1936 during a *BBC Concerts for Contemporary Music* program. 1936 was the series' tenth season; the concerts were held in Broadcast House for a small invited audience.¹⁸⁸ Bridge had persuaded a leading British cellist, Florence Hooton (1912-1988), to play the concerto with the

¹⁸⁶ Frank Bridge, *In the Shadow of War: Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Cello and Orchestra*, Steven Isserlis and Deutches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Hugh Wolff. BIS 1992, 2012, One compact disc, Liner notes by Steven Isserlis.

¹⁸⁷ Frank Bridge, *Frank Bridge: Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Cello and Orchestra*, Julian Lloyd Webber and London Philharmonic Orchestra, Nicholas Braithwaite, Lyrita SRCD.244, 1979, One compact disc, Liner notes by Paul Hindmarsh.

¹⁸⁸ Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 388. The information on the tenth season is thus prefaced: "All eight concerts were given before an invited audience and were transmitted over the National wavelength."

BBC Symphony Orchestra; he himself was the conductor on that occasion. This was the first and only time Bridge conducted the work, for in October of the same year, he contracted the bronchitis¹⁸⁹ that rendered him too frail to conduct the second scheduled performance in December.¹⁹⁰ Sir Adrian Boult, the orchestra's principal conductor, stepped in to direct this last performance before *Oration* fell into obscurity for over half a century. The astonishing reason for this neglect was due in large part to the disappearance of the score and performing materials between 1936 and 1979.¹⁹¹ It is virtually impossible to discover whether or not the original manuscript had simply been misplaced or was retained by Bridge's wife after her husband's death. Thanks to the establishment of the Frank Bridge Trust in the early 1950s, the publisher Faber Music Limited, through the efforts of its managers Martin Kingsbury and Sally Cavender, made the score available as a beautifully engraved edition with accurate parts.¹⁹² Bridge's *Oration*, his elegy to the world lost in the First World War, was at last performed and recorded several times.

¹⁸⁹ Trevor Bray, "Frank Bridge, A Life in Brief, The End...and a Beginning, 94," Trevor Bray Music Research, 2016, accessed June 14, 2018, http://www.trevor-bray-music-research.co.uk/Bridge%20LinB/ch8_94.html.

¹⁹⁰ Amos, "'A Modernist in the Making'? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941," 153.

¹⁹¹ John Warrack, "A Note on Frank Bridge," *Tempo* nos. 66/67 (Autumn-Winter 1963): 27-32, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/943323>. "This is not, I fear, the much-needed full critical assessment of Frank The very size of his output makes such a task difficult, and it is not helped by the disappearance of several important scores, among them the Cello Concerto and Enter Spring (1927)- which Britten remembers "as a riot of melody, harmonic richness, although it is thirty years since I heard it or saw the score."

¹⁹² John Bishop, "Bridge-Building: The Frank Bridge Trust," *The Musical Times* 132, no. 1775 (January 1991), 698-700. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/965550>.

Oration belongs to a late phase of Bridge's increasingly modernist musical development. As noted above, the First World War represented a paradigm shift, a profound change in the aesthetics of many British composers, including Bridge. Mark Amos asserts that while Bridge's shift in style coincided with the war, the tragic events of the conflict did not necessarily cause the shift. Amos notes that these events inspired specific works in which Bridge was able to take full advantage of his technical experiments. (He continued to produce lightweight salon pieces during the war, in addition to elegant songs that sold well, and that had nothing to do with the war.) By the late 1920s, Bridge's compositional style for serious, weighty compositions assimilated somber, expressionistic tendencies akin to those of Continental composers, in particular the music of Alban Berg and Paul Hindemith, both of whom were performed often in Britain, especially over the BBC.¹⁹³ He thereby distanced himself from his tonal and modal idiom of the pre-war years, though he never abandoned it completely. As discussed above, Bridge's transition to extended resources such as atonality is announced in the Cello Sonata (1913-1917) and further evident in the Piano Sonata (1921-1924). Bridge composed contrary to the major music trends in England throughout his life.¹⁹⁴ Though he was

¹⁹³ Amos, "A Modernist in the Making"? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941," 172, 210. Amos shows that Bridge was sympathetic to Schoenberg's and Berg's compositions. Likewise, they were sympathetic of his music that they heard at ISCM Festivals.

¹⁹⁴ See Adams, "Sea Change: A Meditation upon Frank Bridge's Lament," 60-61. "As Britten observed, Bridge was never tempted to jettison his consummate technical control as he experimented with denser chromatic saturation in the manner of Scriabin and, later, of Berg: 'But always his instinct for form and workmanship and [his] unerring ear brought him back.'" (35n Britten quoted in Hindmarsh, "Seeds of Discontent," 698.).

educated at the Royal College of Music, where he was exposed to the music of Brahms and Wagner, Bridge sought to experiment with the advanced French developments of the 1890s that were far from accepted by the English musical establishment. Aside from his interest in the music of Debussy and Fauré that was touched upon earlier, during the interwar years his musical idiom drew close to that of Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) and the immensely popular Cyril Scott (1879-1970).¹⁹⁵ Clarity in his musical intent was a principle he zealously retained, even in those pieces with a highly individualized rhythmic and harmonic language.¹⁹⁶ Certainly, not all listeners could follow his modern music and, for this reason, not all his modern music found a receptive audience. Finally, Bridge never employed or, as far as we know, even experimented with Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique, which was perhaps was a bridge too far even for his questing spirit.

It was crucial, then, for Bridge and other modernist composers to secure an advocate to present their music to the masses. The *BBC Concerts for Contemporary Music* series were created to address this lack of accessibility, physical and otherwise, to modern music in England. The regular broadcast of live concerts enabled millions of listeners to become aware of the newest music from home and abroad. In her magisterial book *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936*, Jenny Doctor describes the inception of this concert series.

¹⁹⁵ Fabian Huss, *The Music of Frank Bridge* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2015), 129.

¹⁹⁶ Bray, "Frank Bridge, A life in Brief, Isolation, 71," Trevor Bray Music Research, 2016, accessed June 15, 2018, http://www.trevor-bray-music-research.co.uk/Bridge%20LinB/ch6_71.html.

At the Control Board meeting, [the organizer of programs, Cecil A. Lewis,] proposed that arrangements be made “for an international series of concerts to take place in October at which some of the more important international artists would be invited to perform....Apart from the programme value, the Company would undoubtedly get considerable publicity from these concerts.”¹⁹⁷

The series commenced during the 1926-1927 winter season at Grotian Hall in London. Each concert, arranged by Hubert J. Foss of Oxford University Press, was held on the first Tuesday of every month between October 5 and March 1. That Bridge's *Oration* was simultaneously heard in a live concert setting, however modest, as well as over the airwaves by listeners sitting next to their radios was a marvel for the time. Hearing new music was no longer an exclusive, elitist affair as it had been in past decades. The invited audience extended beyond the hall to those within range of the radio signal. This is not to say the series were universally appreciated. Listeners were often uninterested in or affronted by the strange new music. Doctor explains:

The BBC promoted contemporary music in an emphatic and pervasive way during the 1927-1928 season, not only by including a relatively high percentage of recently-composed works in its music broadcasts, but also by incorporating educational information about new music in broadcast talks and publishing articles in the *Radio Times* explaining and justifying its new music policy. As the season progressed, however, the general public began to have serious doubts about its interest in learning about this type of music. The attitude gradually shifted from one of curiosity to one ranging from boredom and disapproval to ardent dislike and anger.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*, 92-95.

¹⁹⁸ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*, 118-119.

Works by British composers were occasionally featured in this series alongside new music by composers from around the world. For example, *Oration* was the second work on a program that consisted of the Swiss composer Conrad Beck's (1901-1989) "Inominata" (1932) and Aaron Copland's (1900-1990) acerbic *Music for the Theatre*. Introducing listeners to an international variety of new music was the BBC's aim in creating this program, but fewer and fewer listeners tuned in to these rebarbative broadcasts.

By 1930, the concert series had broadcast new works by the Second Viennese School, Béla Bartók (1881-1945), and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). The professional quality of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as well as Sir Adrian Boult's conducting, attracted Bridge.¹⁹⁹ A perfectionist in his own right and ever adamant about refined performance, Bridge hoped eventually desired that the orchestra, which had been established that year, would premiere *Oration*.²⁰⁰ For a time he had entertained the idea that *Oration* might be performed in the United States with the help of his patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.²⁰¹ The contract he needed from the cellist Felix Salmond and the support from Coolidge, however, did not materialize.

¹⁹⁹ Amos, "A Modernist in the Making"? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941," 130.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 234.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 233. Amos reveals, through Paul Hindmarsh, that "As soon as [*Oration*] was completed, Bridge wrote to Mrs. Coolidge hoping that she might include it in one of her rare orchestral concerts planned for Autumn, in Chicago." The Great Depression reduced Coolidge's financial resources, preventing her from being able to help. Moreover, Salmond would not have been available in any case, since he would not have been in the United States at the time (234).

(Coolidge commissioned mostly chamber music and pieces for chamber orchestra; she had neither the connections with orchestras nor the wealth to influence major conductors.) This was just one of several setbacks, but through persistence Bridge persuaded the BBC to take up the work. He still needed a cellist.

Before continuing the history of the premiere, it is necessary to answer the question, “For whom was this elegy written?” As noted previously, Bridge had been deeply affected by the loss of friends during the First World War. Logically, he would have written *Oration* in their memory. He had expressed his grief over the death of the Catherine Crompton and her family in *Lament: To Catherine, Aged 9, ‘Lusitania’ 1915*, which was published simultaneously for piano solo and for string orchestra. His Piano Sonata was dedicated to the composer Ernest Farrar (1885-1918), who had died at the Front.²⁰² Both of these pieces stemmed from the grief Bridge felt at their violent deaths. Composition provided a form of catharsis as it did for those British composers who fought in but survived the war. Their musical reactions exposed the trauma British society felt at the immense loss of life. In his influential volume *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, historian Jay Winter describes the ways in which methods of mourning before the war became rapidly obsolete in the face of thousands of daily

²⁰² Gerald Finzi also felt Ernest Farrar’s death keenly, as Farrar had been his devoted composition teacher and friend. For more information on Finzi and Farrar, refer to “Chapter VI-Innocence Lost: The Cello Concertos of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi” of this dissertation.

casualties in combat. Victorian traditions of protracted and private mourning were rendered impractical; mourning became a national affair.²⁰³

Music, the art which can be collectively heard and felt at the same time, became one of the primary vehicles to express mourning. In response to this demand, British composers responded with works honoring the dead. Elgar's *The Spirit of England*, Op. 80 (1915-1917), *Morning Heroes* (1930) by Arthur Bliss (1891-1975), the massive and ecumenical *A World Requiem*, Op. 60 (1921) by John Foulds (1880-1939), and Vaughan Williams's *Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* (1921-1922) are just a few examples of disparate scores created as war memorials. The grieving continued unabated through the mid-1930s, marked every so often by a new composition that reminded the British public of wounds that were slow to heal.

All of these works were, to a greater or lesser extent, elegiac. Elegies can be poetic, but also musical. In poetry, an elegy, such as John Milton's pastoral elegy *Lycidas* (1637), is a specific form of mourning derived from the ancient tradition of delivering eulogies for the dead. Musical elegies, such as Josquin des Prez's *La Déploration de Johannes Ockeghem* (c. 1497) is just one of the musical elegies found through Western music history. Given its association with melancholy as discussed in earlier chapters, the cello is particularly well suited for the expression of elegiac emotion. Fauré's *Élégie* for cello and orchestra (1880) and Bridge's *Oration* are both elegiac scores that incorporate the steady tread of funeral marches, such as most

²⁰³ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

famously found in the second movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. An opening section in a somber minor key introduces the principle lament. This opening eventually transitions into a brighter key for a contrasting nostalgic, subdued section. This lighter contrast is gradually reabsorbed by the returning A-section material. Fauré's elegy is constructed in three parts in a manner that recalls the much longer and more involved *Oration*.

The British musicologist Sir Jack Westrup (1904-1975) makes a revealing comparison between Elgar's concerto and Bridge's *Oration*, an equitable comparison according to Bray: "Elgar's looking back with regret to the lost world destroyed by the First World War [and] Bridge's trying to come to terms with the tragedy of that war." Unlike Elgar's concerto, *Oration* is overt in its drama rather than sad and nostalgic; it is a warning, not just a memorial. Bridge employs atonality through octatonicism to make his urgent point. Bridge exploits the cello's range in order to lend the music the ability to express either "speech" or "prayer."

How, then, can *Oration* be called an "elegy" and not a "lament"? Like an elegy—and unlike a lament—an "oration" is "an elaborate discourse delivered in a formal and dignified manner."²⁰⁴ As the definition implies, an oration's function depends on the context in which it is spoken. Bridge appended the subtitle "Concerto Elegiaco," the original title of his score in order to specify that this is a

²⁰⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "oration" OED Online, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132195?rskey=eb6jMc&result=1&isAdvanced=false>. The word can also be defined as "A prayer or supplication to God. Now rare (in later use chiefly Roman Catholic Church)."

funeral oration.²⁰⁵ In the spirit of the definition, the piece is elaborate, especially for the soloist, and the overall tone, while intense and even anguished in certain passages, always retains a certain dignity.

The work begins quietly with a slow orchestral introduction. As though summoning the audience to hear an oration, the flutes and clarinets sound a distinct open-ended motif (Example 4.3), which will not appear again until the closing section (Example 4.4 and 4.5). Shortly after the motif, the cello—the orator—slips

The image shows a musical score for three woodwind parts: Flutes 1 & 2 (Piccolo 1 & 2), Oboes 1 & 2, and Clarinets in A 1 & 2. The tempo is marked 'Poco lento'. The score is in 4/4 time. A box highlights a passage in measures 1-6, where the flutes and clarinets play a motif. The notation includes a dynamic marking of 'pp dolce' and a first ending bracket.

Example 4.3 Frank Bridge *Oration* R0, mm.1-6
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out of the string section and assumes its role as principal mourner with neither fanfare nor virtuosity, an unusual gesture for any concerto's first movement (Example 4.6). The opening cello melody is a plangent descent permeated by chromaticism, which creates both a functional and emotional ambiguity. It is a soliloquy, accompanied by a sparse orchestration that heightens its serious nature and expression of acute loneliness. Gradually, the melody's intensity increases, arriving at a climax that tips over into a cascading sequence, landing on a violent orchestral tutti chord (Example 4.7). Bridge marks the cello's sixteenth-note

²⁰⁵ Amos, "A Modernist in the Making"? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941," 175.

Example 4.4 Bridge, *Oration*, R35, m.10-R36, m.2
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Example 4.5 Bridge, *Oration*, R36, mm.3-4
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Example 4.6 Bridge, *Oration*, R1, mm.4-8

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response *feroce*, a sentiment that represents one of war and anger. Fear also accompanies anger. Bridge's dramatic dynamics and persistent rhythms in this and ensuing passages create the visceral experience of living through the tragedy of war itself.

Funeral marches are a recurrent element of elegiac music. Bridge introduces a march-like tread immediately after the *feroce* statement through the new theme in the cello solo. The orchestra subsequently takes up the march at rehearsal four (Example 4.7). This march is as persistently doleful as it is sinister, a quality it does not share with the funereal march in Herbert Howells's Cello Concerto's *Threnody* or Stravinsky's *Chant Funèbre* (1908). The strident, militaristic trumpet calls that combine with the march suggest that the deceased may not be the only one going to their grave (Example 4.8 and 4.9). As the march continues, the music played by the cello becomes increasingly agitated. Energetic thirty-second-note chromatic runs, syncopations, and rapid switching duplet and triplet groupings convey frenzy. At rehearsal nine, the forward momentum increases tremendously due to the cello's ostinati, sufficient to infect the entire orchestra, which then joins in the musical equivalent of mass hysteria (Example 4.10 and 4.11). As the energy dissipates slightly, the harp enters for the first time, and its entry signals a profound change in

The image shows a page of a musical score for the bridge of 'Oration' by R3, measures 3-4. The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, Trumpets, Timpani, Solo Cello, Violins, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The tempo markings are 'animato', 'rit.', 'Tempo I', and 'Lento e ritmico'. The key signature is one sharp (F#). A vertical black box highlights measures 3 and 4 across all staves. The Solo Cello part has specific markings: 'pizz.', 'f con forza 5', 'arco feroce', 'V m', and 'sonoro dim, molto'.

Example 4.7 Bridge, *Oration*, R3, m.3-R4, m.1
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mood. The section that follows adheres to the slower contemplative model of elegy B sections. The mood turns mysterious and melancholic, especially beginning at rehearsal fourteen, where a lugubrious melody expresses acute sorrow (Example 4.12). The harp's occasional interjections add a magical aura that conjures up a dreamscape. This mood lasts only a moment, however, for a sudden leap from a G

Example 4.8 Bridge, *Oration*, R4, m.11-R5, m.1

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two octaves above middle C to an E below middle C breaks the spell (Example 4.13), ushering in a return of the funeral march.

Bridge structures *Oration* in the form of a fantasia as was the case in the second movement of his Cello Sonata. Hence, there are no breaks in the narrative through rhythm and by introducing new motifs. The next episode features a condensed sixteenth-note theme in the cello and a persistent quarter pulse in the low strings. It is another march, but it is not funereal this time. It is the warlike march of doomed troops to battle. The low range and regular pulse may suggest the pounding heartbeat of a terrified soldier marching to his death. The cello is

Fls. 1 & 2

Obs. 1 & 2

Clts. in A 1 & 2

Bsns. 1 & 2

1 & 2

Hns. in F 3 & 4

Tpts. in C 1 & 2

1 & 2

Tbns. 3 & Tuba

Timp.

Solo Cello

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Db.

senza sord.

mf

dim.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

f

dim.

dim.

p

f

mf

p

p

f

mf

dim.

dim.

dim.

dim.

dim.

dim.

tr

Example 4.9 Bridge, *Oration*, R5, mm.2-4
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9 a tempo

Solo Cello *p* deciso e ritmico *cresc.*

Vla. *ppp*

Vlc. *ppp*

Fl. I *pp*

Cl. I in A *pp*

Solo Cello *f*

Fls. I & 2 *p* *cresc.* *a2* *mf* *cresc.*

Obs. I & 2 *p* *cresc.* *a2* *mf* *cresc.*

Its. I & 2 in A *p* *cresc.* *a2* *mf* *cresc.*

Bsns. I & 2 *f* *a2*

Solo Cello *f*

Vln. I *mp* *molto cresc.*

Vln. 2 *mp* *molto cresc.*

Via. *div.* *f*

Vlc. *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Db. *arco* *mf* *cresc.* *f*

Example 4.10 Bridge, *Oration*, R9, mm.1-9
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10

15

Fls. 1 & 2

Obs. 1 & 2

Clts. in A 1 & 2

Bsns. 1 & 2

1 & 2

Hns. in F 3 & 4

Solo Cello

Vin. 1

Vin. 2

Via. uni.s.

Vic. pesante

Db. pesante

Fls. 1 & 2

Obs. 1 & 2

Clts. in A 1 & 2

Bsns. 1 & 2

1 & 2

Hns. in F 3 & 4

Pip. in C 1 & 2

Vin. 1

Vin. 2

Via.

Vic.

Db.

Example 4.11 Bridge, *Oration*, R10, mm.1-6
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22

15

Fl. I

Ob. I

Cl. in A
1 & 2

Bsns.
1 & 2

1 & 2

Hns. in F

3 & 4

15

Harp

Solo
Cello

15

Vln. I

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Db.

mf cantando

Example 4.12 Bridge, *Oration*, R15, mm.1-5
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18 Poco lento

I & 2 Hns. in F con sordini p

3 con sordini p

Solo Cello

18 Poco lento

f ff portamento p

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl. pizz. arco ppp

Db. pizz. arco ppp

Example 4.13 Bridge, *Oration*, R18, mm.1-4

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militaristic, expanding on the earlier bugle-call triplet figure into a relentless tirade that also suggests the mechanical coldness of modern warfare (Example 4.14).

Modal inflections add a cynical twist to what has been transformed from a dreamscape to a nightmare. The orator is reliving the experience of the Front. The nightmare does not last indefinitely, as a trumpet call resembling “Taps” ends the march (Example 4.15 and 4.16). One is left with the uncomfortable question, “Did the soldier die?”

The music holds out no hope or optimism. Soft flutes provide a background for a doleful cello theme, producing an aural analog to the distant sounds of bird song that could only be heard only in pauses in the fierce battles at the Front. At this crucial point, the cello begins a cadenza—the orator has returned. The orchestra

Cl. I in A

Bsns. I & 2

Timp.

Solo Cello

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Fl. I

Ins. in F

I & 2

3 & 4

Timp.

Solo Cello

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Db.

ritmico e deciso

Fls. I & 2 change to Piccolos

(con sord.)

(con sord.)

à la corde

div.

div.

Example 4.14 Bridge, *Oration*, R19, mm.5-12

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Musical score for the bridge of *Oration*, R22, mm. 2-5. The score includes parts for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in A, Bassoon, Horn in F, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Tuba, Snare Drum, Solo Cello, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The music is in 3/4 time and features dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, and *dim.* A specific triplet in the Trumpet part is highlighted with a black box.

Example 4.15 Bridge, *Oration*, R22, mm.2-5
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The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the following parts: Tpt. I in C, S.D., Solo Cello, Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vcl. The second system includes: Fls. I & II, Ob. I, Cl. I in A, Tpt. I in C, Solo Cello, Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vcl. The tempo is marked "Tranquillo (♩ = 60)". The score contains various musical notations including dynamics (mp, pp, ppp, mf, p dolce), articulation (pizz., arco, trem. pont.), and performance instructions (saltando, à la corde, perpendendo).

Example 4.16 Bridge, *Oration*, R22, mm.6-15
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then enters, the ensemble developing once again into a frenzy as it recapitulates the various motifs heard throughout. At rehearsal thirty-two there is a pause and the cello goes silent. The orchestra continues, and the section closes on an upward sweep (Example 4.17 and 4.18). A timpani and snare roll can perhaps be heard as a harbinger of death.²⁰⁶ The funereal march resumes to conclude the elegy portion of the concerto. The clarinets and bassoons repeat the distinct motif that opened the concerto.

However, an emotional catharsis was needed. Bridge added the epilogue in 1930, and it is here where Bridge's earlier manner reemerges. The epilogue is a wounded and desolate pastoral. The horn and harp play a lilting string melody in 6/8 (R38). In its final appearance, the cello plays the same lilting string melody (Example 4.19), one that is vaguely like the pastoral folksong rhythm from the Cello Sonata, before quietly ending on a drone on a low D and A and a final A and F# chord (R43, mm.1-13). And then, like Hamlet's last words, "The rest is silence."

Oration demands great technical virtuosity from the performer and orchestra. Bridge's writing for cello presents difficulties that challenge even a supreme virtuoso. As a result, Bridge had to find a highly capable cellist to play the premiere. He appealed to three other cellists before discovering Florence Hooton (1912-1988), who courageously took up the challenge.

²⁰⁶ Berlioz used a similar effect in his *Symphonie Fantastique*, IV. "Marche au supplice" (March to the Scaffold) to depict the main character being executed by guillotine. Snare drum and timpani followed immediately after the blow.

55

The musical score is for a bridge section of an oration, spanning measures 3 to 5. It is a multi-staff orchestral score. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Flute 1:** Starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic, playing a melodic line with slurs.
- Flute 2:** Includes the instruction "change to Piccolo" and plays a similar melodic line.
- Oboe 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs.
- Clarinet in A 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Bassoon 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Horn F 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Trombones 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *dim.* and *pp*.
- Trumpets 1 & 2:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *pp*.
- Violin 1 & 2:** Play a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and dynamics *f*.
- Viola:** Plays a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Violoncello & Double Bass:** Play a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *f* and articulation *pizz.* (pizzicato).

The score is marked with various dynamics including *f* (forte), *pp* (pianissimo), and *dim.* (diminuendo). There are also articulation markings such as *pizz.* and *arco*.

Example 4.17 Bridge, *Oration*, R32, mm.3-5
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The image shows a page of a musical score for Felix Salmond's *Oration*, R41, measures 1-5. The score is for a full orchestra and solo cello. The instruments listed on the left are Fl. I, Picc., Obs. in A, Clar. in Bb, Horns in F, Harp, Solo Cello, Vin. I, Vin. II, Vla., and Vic. The Solo Cello part is highlighted with a black box, showing measures 41-45. The dynamics markings in the Solo Cello part are *p sempre*, *dolcissimo*, and *p marc.*. The Harp part has a *naturale* marking. The Piccolo and Oboe parts have *p sempre ma poco marcato* and *simile* markings. The Flute I part has a *pp* marking. The Horns in F part has a *pp* marking. The Viola part has a *sempre ppp dolcissimo arco Harp.* marking. The Violoncello part has a *pp* marking. The Solo Cello part has a *p sempre* marking. The Solo Cello part has a *dolcissimo* marking. The Solo Cello part has a *p marc.* marking.

Example 4.19 Bridge, *Oration*, R41, mm.1-5
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Felix Salmond (1888-1952) had been Bridge's first choice, and reasonably so: the cellist had premiered the composer's Cello Sonata. He had also performed with Bridge in his 1908 concert debut, presumably in Brahms's Piano Quartet in G Minor, Op. 25 (1861), with Maurice Sons playing violin, Bridge playing viola, and Salmond's mother playing piano. Bridge's *Phantasy Trio in C Minor* was also featured on the same program. Amos states that Salmond turned down Bridge's request to play

Oration.²⁰⁷ Logistically, and possibly technically, it was out of his reach; given his unsatisfactory performance at the premiere of Elgar's concerto, this was perhaps for the best.

The second person Bridge approached was the renowned Portuguese cellist Guilhermina Suggia (1885-1950). Suggia had moved to England in 1914 to advance her career and became a celebrated cellist. Anita Mercier writes sympathetically about Suggia's career trajectory:

It is not known why Suggia moved to England rather than elsewhere in 1914, who she knew there, or exactly how she went about rebuilding her life after leaving Paris and Casals. She initially visited England in 1905, when as part of the post-Leipzig touring she played a concert at London's Bechstein Hall [later Wigmore Hall]. She also accompanied Casals on one of his tours in England in 1912 or 1913; while he had high-profile engagements, she played only at informal musical events. She probably made some acquaintances and professional contacts on this visit which were useful when she relocated, and Tovey may have provided some assistance. But she was far from famous in England. She was known chiefly as Casals' "wife," and a war was raging, which would have curtailed performance opportunities.²⁰⁸

Bridge knew Suggia well as he had collaborated with her on several orchestral performances. They may have met at a Beethoven quartet cycle sponsored by Sir Edward Speyer (1862-1932), one of Bridge's supporters. Also, Huss mentions that Suggia included Bridge's Cello Sonata in her repertoire after 1918.²⁰⁹ Despite the

²⁰⁷ Amos, "A Modernist in the Making? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941," 234

²⁰⁸ Anita Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia," Internet Cello Society, 1995, accessed June 14, 2018, <http://www.cello.org/newsletter/articles/suggia.htm>.

²⁰⁹ Huss, *The Music of Frank Bridge* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2015), 81.

connection, Suggia turned down the chance to perform *Oration*, perhaps because she had begun to wind down her career in the late 1920s.

The third cellist Bridge asked was Robert “Lauri” Kennedy (1896-1985). An Australian by birth, Kennedy made several sojourns in England and the United States. He and his wife moved to England in 1921, touring and performing frequently. When the BBC Symphony Orchestra was formed in 1930, Kennedy was appointed as its principle cellist, a position that seemingly would have made him a logical choice to perform *Oration*.²¹⁰ Interestingly, he agreed to play it only to cancel as the performance drew near.²¹¹ Bridge’s musical connections were extensive, and he obviously knew several first-rate cellists. But the unusual idiom and the fearsome difficulty of the work seems to have unnerved and discouraged a series of fine players.

Florence Hooton rescued the piece from perpetual silence and, perhaps, oblivion. She eventually came to be widely recognized for her performance of *Oration*, about which Bridge, like Elgar for Harrison’s interpretation of his cello concerto, was ecstatic.²¹² Hooton knew Bridge’s music well, and her repertoire included several of his scores. A composer’s true estimation of his own music in his

²¹⁰ Peter Campbell, “Kennedy, Irvine Robert Laurie (Lauri) (1896–1980),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2007, accessed June 14, 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kennedy-irvine-robert-laurie-lauri-12730>.

²¹¹ Amos, “‘A Modernist in the Making’? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941,” 234-235.

²¹² For more information about Florence Hooton, see Chapter V-“British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century: An Overview.”

own words is seldom published; accolades or criticisms usually come from others. Nonetheless, Hindmarsh divulges Bridge's response to the premiere in the liner notes accompanying Webber's recording.

For his part Bridge was delighted with the young soloist 'who having imbibed every ounce of what I wanted her to do, played like a fine artist. Fancy a cellist always playing in tune (!) as well as with great understanding. For the first time the 'great' Ernest Newman has not been destructive, which is all that he is usually.'²¹³

As this letter attests, Bridge was pleased with Hooton's interpretation and pleasing him at all was a feat unto itself. Bridge never tolerated the slightest imperfection. He had played as a violist with the Joachim String Quartet as well as with Pablo Casals (1876-1973). Bridge the conductor has been remembered for his severe, often sarcastic criticism, extracting great precision from players at the expense of their self-esteem. Therefore, he incurred the resentment of many orchestral musicians and a bad reputation among composers; both Vaughan Williams and Ireland disliked Bridge personally. One speculates that Hooton was spared his withering remarks partly because she was a friend and partly because she proved that she was an exceptionally accomplished musician.

The truly surprising comment in Bridge's letter quoted above is the one directed at Ernest Newman (1868-1959). Due to the sheer number of different newspapers published in Britain until the early 1960s, the British music scene had a

²¹³ Frank Bridge, *Frank Bridge: Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Cello and Orchestra*, Julian Lloyd Webber and London Philharmonic Orchestra, Nicholas Braithwaite, Lyrita SRCD.244, 1979, One compact disc, Liner notes by Paul Hindmarsh.

large amount of native-born music critics. As the critic of *The Sunday Times* from 1920 until his death, Newman held a preeminent place among British music critics. Newman, who edited the letters of Berlioz and wrote a biography of Wagner, was conservative in his tastes and exacting in his critiques of new works but would change his mind if, upon further study of a work, he discovered something of merit.²¹⁴ Bridge was clearly alluding to Newman's "destructive" impulses in the letter quoted above when he mentions Newman's review:

Frank Bridge's new Concerto Elegiaco ('Oration') for cello and orchestra is not the kind of work that we can expect to grasp in anything like its totality at a first hearing; it may even be that, lacking an inside knowledge of the 'mental images' that have obviously determined the course of it throughout, we shall never be able to see it exactly as the composer saw it, for its abrupt, sometimes spasmodic changes of mood cannot possibly be accounted for on the lines of so-called 'pure' music.

But even at a first hearing it is evident that the work comes from a fine mind, that its departures from the current obvious are not mere pose or eccentricity but the natural expression of a personal way of thinking, and that Bridge is in no doubt whatever either as to what he wants to say or the most direct and convincing way of saying it.

It is hardly likely that the work will ever be a popular 'hit'; but it is certainly a work that musicians would like to hear again.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Evyn Barb Mingo, "Profoundly Orthodox or Properly Irreligious? British reactions to the premiere of Igor Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms." Unpublished manuscript, March 2018. The reference is taken from Vera Newman's book about her husband: *Ernest Newman: A Memoir by His Wife* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 77.

²¹⁵ Bray, "Frank Bridge, A life in Brief, The Late Works, 87," Trevor Bray Music Research, 2016, accessed June 14, 2018, http://www.trevor-bray-music-research.co.uk/Bridge%20LinB/ch7_87.html.

The grasping correlates to the intentionally elaborate nature of an oration and Bridge's rhythmically and harmonically complex style. Thus, Bridge's title was aptly chosen. Indeed, the acknowledgement that the work came from a "fine mind" and not "pose or eccentricity" is a compliment of Bridge's mastery of his own musical language, while permitting its universal comprehension to be doubted. It was a work for musicians—the initiated—to revisit. W. R. Anderson's response to a broadcast of *Oration* a year later in January of 1937 seems to confirm Newman's prediction.

Frank Bridge produces new music rarely. He has changed in style, but one feels the sincerity always. His elegiac 'Oration' for 'cello and orchestra I had not heard before. Florence Hooton played it one Sunday night. Some Russian influences seems clear, and I was reminded of Bloch once or twice, though, as in most such instances, it is improbable that the composer was. Processions and banners, eulogies, and perhaps ceremonial dances, with a slow bell-tolling end: it is all impressive, if rather secretive in final effect.²¹⁶

This rather cool response testifies to the lack of enthusiasm with which *Oration* was received at its premiere.

Certainly there was no mention of Bridge's supposed pacifism in the early reactions to *Oration*. The music critic Edward Evans of *The Listener* avoids mentioning anything about pacifism directly, though he readily points out *Oration's* relation to the First World War.

As a vague idea it originated during the War period, to the tragic events of which the elegiac element is ascribed. But a vague intention

²¹⁶ Anderson, W. R., *Wireless Notes* in *The Musical Times* 78, no.1127 (January 1937), pp. 34-38. Anderson quickly moves on to discussing other music (36).

is one thing, a concerto another, and it was not until 1930 that the original conception took definite shape. Three principle constituents go to the making of it. The most prominent is a march, not quite a funeral march, but an elegiac cortege. Another is an animated Phantasy with a subacid tang, perhaps a bitter reflection of the events to which the work relates. The third constituent is the lyrical thread which binds the whole [...].²¹⁷

Evans, who was usually receptive to new music, was careful not to mention any specific connection with the war. He is content to provide a basic, non-specific series of descriptions of the work: “a march, not quite a funeral march, but an elegiac cortege”; “a Phantasy with a subacid tang”; and “a lyrical thread.” (Evans might also have considered the rhythmic thread that moves the music forward.) These aspects were doubtless better appreciated by a listener holding a score, but Evans had to be satisfied with listening to a radio broadcast. Amos suggests that the pacifism that some have attributed to Bridge because of *Oration* is due to Hooton’s recollection of what Bridge had told her about the genesis of the work.²¹⁸ Bray does relate that teacher and pupil talked about pacifism at length during the period when Britten was studying with Bridge. That these talks took place does not in itself present hard evidence concerning either the intensity or the very existence of Bridge’s pacifism, nor do they explain why Bridge composed pieces like *Blow Out, You Bugles*, in support of the British war effort. Byron Adams, for example, sharply

²¹⁷ Amos, “‘A Modernist in the Making’? Frank Bridge and the Cultural Practice of Music in Britain, 1900-1941,” 176. From E.E. [Edwin Evans?], ‘Notes on the Week’s Programmes: Bridge, Beck and Copland’, *The Listener*, 8 January 1936, p.95.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

dissents from the view that Bridge possessed any pacifist convictions at all.²¹⁹

However, Bray and others call the composer a pacifist, reviewing any output related to war in that light. Yet their presumptions rest on a slender and unstable foundation, as Amos signals, because virtually the only source of information in this regard was Britten's remembrances, and Britten was a resolute pacifist and conscientious objector. This is not to say Bridge supported the bloodshed and destruction unleashed by the First World War. The loss of life troubled him deeply.

The 1979 rediscovery of *Oration* occasioned what was tantamount to a second premiere. The publication of the piano reduction allowed cellists to play it in chamber-music settings, while the orchestral score made concerts and recordings possible. In addition to the partial recording created during the original BBC broadcast of *Oration*, there are currently no less than five excellent compact discs that include recordings of the work by contemporary cellists and ensembles. The artists are as follows: Steven Isserlis and the Deutches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin;²²⁰ Steven Isserlis and the City of London Sinfonia;²²¹ Albert Gerhardt and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales; Julian Lloyd Webber and the London Symphony Orchestra; Ralph Wallfisch and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. An unusual aspect is that all these performances were recorded within the first two

²¹⁹ Byron Adams, "Sea Change," 59-62.

²²⁰ Steven Isserlis, Deutches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and Hugh Wolff, "Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Cello and Orchestra," on *The Shadow of War*, BIS 1992, 2012. One compact disc.

²²¹ Steven Isserlis, City of London Sinfonia, and Richard Hickox, "Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Cello and Orchestra," on *Britten and Bridge*, Warner Classics, 2007. One compact disc.

decades of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, with the exception of the one by Isserlis with the Deutches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, all these recordings of *Oration* are performed by British orchestras. Of the four cellists, three are British and one is German. This has created a perception that the dissemination of *Oration* has been minimal and parochial, restricted to Britain.

This not entirely the case. When *Oration* was premiered, G. -L. Garnier paid it a simple greeting in the January 31, 1936, issue of the Parisian journal *Le Menestrel*. *Oration* was given what may well have been its first American performance was given by cellist Matt Haimovitz at Avery Fisher Hall of Lincoln Center on April 7, 2006, as part of an American Symphony Orchestra program entitled *The Gathering Storm* that was curated and conducted by Leon Botstein.²²² It remains to be seen if *Oration* will prove Newman wrong and will enter the repertory.

Regardless of its long-term future in the concert hall, that *Oration* has now been recorded by virtuoso cellists evinces the evident appeal of the score and its message. Part of this revival is due to the expert way in which Bridge exploits a cellist's technical skill and interpretive insight. Beyond this, however, *Oration* eloquently expresses the anxiety and inconclusiveness of war through a well-paced musical narrative. Relentless rhythmic motifs impel the orator-cellist and the listener forward relentlessly, as though words cannot keep pace with emotion. One

²²² Byron Adams, "Oration (Concerto Elegiaco) for Solo Cello and Orchestra (1930) Program Notes: Written for the concert *The Gathering Storm*, performed on April 7, 2006 at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center," American Symphony Orchestra, 2018, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://americansymphony.org/oration-concerto-elegiaco-for-solo-cello-and-orchestra-1930/>.

senses that the orator is reliving a first-hand account of the horror of the trenches, a horrible experience that Paul Fussell vividly sketches in the chapter “The Troglodyte World” from his book *The Great War and Modern Memory*.²²³

To be in the trenches was to experience an unreal, unforgettable enclosure and constraint, as well as a sense of being unoriented and lost. One saw two things only: the walls of an unlocalized, undifferentiated earth and the sky above.²²⁴

Like the final minutes of Ravel’s terrifying “choreographic poem” *La valse* (1920), *Oration* traps the listener amid evocations of the rattle of machine-gun fire and exploding missiles, trapped in the trenches as cold, mechanized weapons of destruction rain down. Composed ten years after the end of the Great War, *Oration* is both a personal and collective testimony. The soloist might represent any survivor of war, while the orchestra and audience remain within the inhuman vortex of the tragedy. Perhaps Bridge composed *Oration* not just as a reminiscence of the barbarity and waste of the First World War but as a warning.²²⁵ Indeed, Bridge continued warning his generation after finishing *Oration* in 1931 with his fantasy for orchestra, *Rebus*, which was premiered in 1934. He had a premonition that the deteriorating situation in Europe would result in another war, and *Rebus*, originally titled *Rumor*, appealed to the popular ear—its more approachable style

²²³ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 36-74.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

²²⁵ Burnell, “The Anxiety of Memory: Frank Bridge’s Late Works and Inter-War British Modernism,” 175-176. Burnell argues that *Oration* may have an element of prolepsis and anti-war rhetoric in light of the unstable political situation in Europe that led to World War Two.

gained a wider favorable response similar to *Oration*. All of that notwithstanding, its message was sadly unheeded, as such messages are invariably are ignored. The only consolation that Bridge can offer in *Oration* is that of a musical cenotaph to those dead who have nothing left to remember.

Chapter V

British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries:

An Overview

During the first half of the twentieth century, women instrumentalists made important advances as performers into the male-dominated world of public concerts. In England, the suffrage movement had a great impact in this regard as well as a reduction in the number of male musicians due to heavy casualties during the First World War. These historical changes gave rise to a series of distinguished women cellists, among whose number can be counted May Mukle (1880-1963), Guilhermina Suggia (1885-1950), Beatrice Harrison (1892-1965), Peers Coetmore (1905-1976), and Florence Hooton (1912-1988). Their artistic collaborations with noted British composers of the time expanded the British concerto, sonata, and solo repertoire for the cello. The success of these collaborations in turn helped to establish the cello as a viable instrument for women to play in public using innovations such as endpins.

Except for Vivaldi's celebrated cellists at the Ospedale della Pietà, all of whom were girls, and the French cellist, Lisa Barbier Cristiani (1827-1855), women did not pursue professional careers as cellists before the twentieth century. This was due in

part to the societal qualms about the physical appropriateness of respectable women playing the cello publicly.²²⁶

It took the gradual increase in popularity of an innovation to make the cello more accessible for women to perform. In her article on Guilhermina Suggia, music historian Anita Mercier argues that the endpin “was a particularly important turning point in the history of female cellists.”²²⁷ Having been used sporadically as early as the seventeenth century, the endpin was a device that allowed female cellist to negotiate her dress and preserve a respectable mien as she played the cello. The baroque cello had been played held between one’s calves, sometimes poised on a box, and this tradition continued until the 1800s.²²⁸ Some cellists, like the Belgian Adrien-François Servais (1807-1866), preferred to use an endpin for practical reasons—as he aged, his growing weight made it more difficult to hold the instrument with his legs.²²⁹ Women cellists used the endpin more frequently than did male cellists: eventually, it became standard practice for both men and women.

²²⁶ Anita Mercier, “Guilhermina Suggia,” Internet Cello Society, 1995, accessed June 14, 2018, <http://www.cello.org/newsletter/articles/suggia.htm>; MacGregor, Lynda, “Cristiani, Lisa (Barbier),” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed January 19, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06832>. Anita Mercier, a researcher from the Juilliard School, notes that, “Only one professional female cellist is known from the first half of the 19th century. Lisa Cristiani (or Christiani) had a short but brilliant career. Born in Paris in 1827, Cristiani made a sensational debut at the age of eighteen and toured several cities in Germany. Mendelssohn dedicated his *Song without Words*, Op.109, to her.”

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ The viola da gamba was also played held between the legs.

²²⁹ Campbell, Margaret, *The Great Cellists*, 80; Peire, Patrick, “Servais family,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed January 16, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.25492>. It is also possible that the size of his unusually large Stradivarius compounded the need for an endpin.

Nevertheless, this did not remove the long-standing stigma of the actual posture women assumed when playing the cello.²³⁰ Mercier describes:

A side-saddle position was popular, with both legs were [sic] turned to the left and the right either dropped on a concealed cushion or stool or crossed over the left leg. A frontal position with the right knee bent and behind the cello, rather than gripping its side, was also used. Feminine alternatives like these were still in use well into the twentieth century. Paul Tortelier's first teacher, Béatrice Bluhm, played side-saddle, and a photograph exists of Beatrice Harrison playing in the modified frontal position.²³¹

The unfortunate ergonomic effect alternative positions must have had on players can only be imagined, especially when considering that the cello already required awkward, unergonomic positions. Moreover, the side-saddle positions had long-term impacts upon finger and bow technique. Harrison probably knew how to play side-saddle, but she usually played with right knee bent behind the cello, as several photographs of her playing show.

Aside from questions of propriety concerning the way in which the cello might be held, music performance as a legitimate and respected profession for women instrumentalists was a development of the latter half of the nineteenth

²³⁰ Interestingly, there was not the same kind of stigma for those women who played the viola da gamba. Sarah Becker explains that in sixteenth century England and the Continent, it was popular for young ladies to play the viola da gamba, especially in the upper classes. However, social mores of the time generally restricted their performances to the privacy of the home. For more information, see Sarah Becker, "Sexual Sonorities: Gender Implications in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Viola da Gamba and Violoncello Performance Practices" (music honors thesis, Trinity University, 2013). Furthermore, Tara Mancini presents sixteenth through eighteenth century images of women playing the viola da gamba and the cello, many holding the instrument with the calves. See Tara Mancini, "Women, Cellos and Viola da Gambas," *Calicos, Camelots and Swords* (blog), December 17, 2017, <http://17thcenturynewyork.blogspot.com/2017/12/women-cellos-and-viola-de-gambas.html>.

²³¹ Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia," Internet Cello Society, 1995.

century, although there were several celebrated female pianists active in Britain throughout that period. Victorian society still discouraged women from pursuing careers as professionals. The one exception was that women music teachers were accepted, as teaching was a genteel profession for a single woman akin to that of governess.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century the situation had changed: no longer was knowledge of an instrument merely an accoutrement of feminine accomplishment for the purpose of marital eligibility. That knowledge became apt for their advancement in society as independent musicians; this was due in part to the admiration for touring women musicians such as pianist Clara Schumann (née Wieck, 1819-1896) and violinist Wilma Norman-Neruda (1838-1911; later Lady Hallé). Many of England's women cellists in the twentieth century entered the ranks of amateur orchestras—all-female and alongside men—as well as professional orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, the five cellists to be discussed in this chapter impacted the instrument's modern repertoire and not just in Britain. Their careers and influence fully merit, if not demand, consideration here.

May Mukle

May Mukle (pronounced “moo’ clay”) was one of the first female British cellists to lead a long professional career after her decorated studies at the Royal Academy of Music with the cellist Alessandro Pezze (1835-1914). Mukle toured both England and internationally, including South Africa and the Americas. She was

born to Leopold Mukle, an immigrant from Hungary and an organ-builder for the Inhof and Mukle firm in London. He claimed to have relatives among the Roma people, colloquially called “Gypsies.” Vaughan Williams, who was fascinated with the peripatetic lives of the Roma people, may well have found May Mukle’s heritage so compelling that it may have led him to compose his *Six Studies in English Folk Song for Cello and Piano* (1927) for Mukle, to whom he dedicated this score.

Interestingly, the folk songs that Vaughan Williams selected from a wide variety of geographic locations provide a musical tour of England.²³² Mukle took advantage of this heritage, integrating it into her stage deportment, clothing, and publicity. As one American journalist wrote in *Musical America*:

May Mukle, the English ’cellist, is not altogether English in appearance, and, in fact, is of Hungarian Gypsy extraction. She declares that she cannot always resist the gypsy trick of instinctively singling out and playing to the most sympathetic listener in her audience. Her inherited roving spirit and love of adventure make her especially well fitted for the life of an artist.²³³

Anne Mukle, her sister, was an accomplished pianist who toured with May as part of the Maud Powell Trio.²³⁴ May and Powell had a long association, playing for official and unofficial engagements throughout their careers. May Mukle also knew and performed with the British composer and violist Rebecca Clarke (1886-1879) in

²³² James Day, *Vaughan Williams* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55. However, the possibility of Vaughan Williams’s interest in Mukle’s Gypsy heritage has yet to be investigated fully.

²³³ “Personalities” in *Musical America* 31 March 1917, 26

²³⁴ Maud Powell (1867-1920) was a celebrated American violinist who concertized extensively.



Figure 5.1 May Henrietta Mukle
by Unknown Photographer
© National Portrait Gallery, London

various settings, most notably in the English Ensemble, an all-women piano quartet consisting of the violinist Marjorie Hayward and the pianist Kathleen Long. According to the musicologist Rebecca Thumpston, who quotes from the British poet Anna Wickham (1884-1947)²³⁵ Mukle was an “early rabid feminist” involved in the suffragette movement²³⁶ which makes for a compelling aspect of the cellist’s personality. Margaret Campbell observed, “Although [Mukle’s] platform personality was somewhat reserved, her playing was notable for its warmth of tone and emotional intensity.” From existing records of Adolphe Fischer’s (1847-1891) *By the Brook* (1915)²³⁷ and Alice Bredt-Verne’s (1864-1958) *Lullaby*, one discerns that Mukle’s playing possessed a truly delicate singer-like tone in the Romantic vein.²³⁸ Portamenti abound but not to the point of mannerism. Her intonation was remarkably accurate even in the higher ranges of the instrument. Her stage presence and sound, therefore, belied her indomitable and outgoing personality. The American conductor and composer Jonathan Elkus, son of the American composer Albert Elkus, told the story of the time when his mother asked Mukle at an afternoon tea if Mukle felt unsafe when she walked alone in the London streets.

²³⁵ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England: 1870-1914 “Encroaching on All Man’s Privileges”* (New York, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 249.

²³⁶ Thumpston, Rebecca. “An ‘important mission to perform’: Beatrice Harrison and the ‘Gendered’ Cello.” Paper presented at North American British Music Studies Association, Online, July 2020.

²³⁷ May Mukle (cello) and George Falkenstein (piano), “Au bord du ruisseau (By the Brook),” Victor 17844 A, 1915, Streaming audio. <https://youtu.be/MThTtqL9dmA>.

²³⁸ May Mukle (cello) and George Falkenstein (piano), “Lullaby.” Victor 17844 B, 1915, Streaming audio. <https://youtu.be/a8z0B1IXTgc>.

Mukle responded, “No, ma’am, no one would attack a woman with a cello attached to her back.”²³⁹

Given her personality and skill as a cellist, it is not difficult to understand why Mukle was active in advancing the cause of women in professional life. She was an original member of the Society of Women Musicians, an organization formed in 1911 to promote women composers and musicians.²⁴⁰ According to Gillett, the organization would

Emphasize one especially needed area of reform, the encouragement of women composers, who were finding it increasingly difficult to have their works published and performed; conferences would be held on subjects useful to composers, who would be given performance opportunities and the stimulus of interaction with colleagues. Marion Scott secured the assistance of Liza Lehmann and Ethel Smyth so as to associate the Society from the start with two of the most productive and successful women composers.²⁴¹

Her association with this organization testifies to Mukle’s strong convictions concerning both the music world and the suffrage movement. Marion Scott (1877-1953), a musicologist and composer, had recruited Liza Lehmann (1862-1918), a soprano and a famous composer of English art song, to be the first president of the Society of Women Musicians from 1911 to 1912.²⁴² Dame Ethel Smyth, known at

²³⁹ Jonathan Elkus, interview by author, Orange, October 2021.

²⁴⁰ Sophie Fuller, “Society of Women Musicians,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed January 16, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26084>. The organization disbanded in 1972.

²⁴¹ Gillett, *Musical Women in England: 1870-1914 “Encroaching on All Man’s Privileges,”* 247.

²⁴² Stephen Banfield, “Lehmann, Liza,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed 20 February 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16324>.

that time for her active involvement in the suffrage movement as well as her accomplishments as a composer, lent a militant reputation to the organization.

Notwithstanding her involvement with the suffrage movement, Mukle showed concern for the advancement of musicians regardless of gender. Her generosity was reflected in her founding of a restaurant and meeting place for musicians known as the M.M., or Mainly Musicians Club, in the thirties, running it for fifteen years—even at her own risk during the Second World War.²⁴³ Her flat was open to composers such as Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, and Maurice Ravel.

As discussed previously, the acceptance of women cellists into the music profession was a gradual process in Britain, accelerated to a great degree by the Great War. Mukle was one of the exceptional women 'cellists to gain fame in chamber and orchestral settings before the war, if only for the reason of her gender: in those days she was a novelty just because she was a woman. An editor of the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* issue of 8 November 1913 makes this apparent in a concert announcement: “[Mukle] was one of the best-known of our lady 'cellists. The inclusion of a lady in a string quartette was an interesting feature of these concerts, and the well-known large tone of this 'cellist caused the balance of the interpretation to be in no way deteriorated.”²⁴⁴ Mukle had stood in for the cellist C.

²⁴³ Margaret Campbell, *The Great Cellists*, 203.

²⁴⁴ “Bath Quartette Society,” in *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* vol.156, 8041 (Saturday, November 8, 1913), accessed January 26, 2021.

Warwick-Evans of the London String Quartet.²⁴⁵ Warwick Evans was the principle cellist of the Queen's Hall Orchestra and probably knew Mukle professionally. She had performed Gustav Holst's *Invocation*, for Cello and Orchestra, Op.19, No.2, at Queen's Hall in 1911.²⁴⁶ Hence, it is safe to assume that Warwick Evans was in the orchestra. With this in mind, it was a special honor for her to substitute for him. Mukle was among the music elite of her day, associated with composers such as Holst, Ireland, Vaughan Williams and Bridge, as well as other cellists, such as Pablo Casals and Felix Salmond. Similar to Suggia and Hooton for whom prizes were instituted in their names, Rebecca Clarke and other friends created the annual May Mukle Prize at the Royal Academy of Music in 1964.

As a result of her connections and accomplishments, Mukle was in demand as a cellist for new music. As noted above, she premiered Holst's only major work for the cello, *Invocation*. Unfortunately, no known recording by Mukle of this piece exists. (Holst withdrew the piece and it lay unperformed until it was "rediscovered" decades after Holst's death.) She performed Vaughan William's *Six Studies in English Folk Song*. (*Six Studies* remains a foretaste of Vaughan Williams' unfinished cello concerto, which the elderly composer intended for Casals, but he died before the

²⁴⁵ This ensemble at the time was established in 1908 by Albert Sammons, Thomas Petre, H. Waldo Warner, and Warwick Evans. The quartet debuted in 1910, soon becoming known for promoting the music of living British composers, including Delius and Howells. See Robert Philip, "London String Quartet," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001-), accessed 1 February 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16942>.

²⁴⁶ Janet Horvath, "Forgotten Cellist: May Mukle," *Interlude*, accessed 1 February 2022, <https://interlude.hk/forgotten-cellists-may-mukle/>. For more information, see Chapter VII-"Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy."

work was finished.²⁴⁷) In her tours of the United States, she included Elgar's Cello Concerto in her repertoire, although she only played the piano and cello reduction, which suggests that she never attained the rank or fame of Beatrice Harrison as a virtuosa.²⁴⁸ It is possible that she did not perform Elgar's concerto in England with an orchestra due to Harrison's identification with it and her widely known status as Elgar's preferred exponent of the work.

Mukle's career overlapped with those of the following cellists to be discussed, indicating that her activity contributed to the acceptance of women cellists during this period. She devoted herself to her art, playing and adjudicating well into her eighties.

Guilhermina Suggia

Approximately five years after Mukle's was born, a cellist from another land entered into the world. Guilhermina Suggia was Portuguese by nationality but spent a considerable time in England, becoming an eminent but friendly rival to Beatrice Harrison. Suggia was a child prodigy who initially learned the cello with her father, Augusto Jorge de Menim Suggia, who was a professional cellist. While the family lived in Lisbon, and later in Porto, she and her sister Virginia, a prodigy at piano, played for high society at special gatherings and clubs. The Portuguese Royal

²⁴⁷ Day, *Vaughan Williams*, 234-235. (check pages). Sketches of Vaughan William's unfinished cello concerto date from 1942-1943. For more information about the work, see Chapter VII-"Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy."

²⁴⁸ "May Mukle, cellist and Mrs. Sutherland Ideler, pianist," Recital Program (13 October 1960). During a visit to the United States in 1960, Mukle and her pianist, Sutherland Ideler, performed a reduction of Elgar's Cello Concerto at the Greensboro Senior High School.

Family took notice of Suggia and funded a scholarship for her to study with Julius Klengel at the Leipzig Conservatory. Germany was still a prized destination for instrumental training, and Suggia's father had been keen to request that she have lessons with Klengel. Klengel was one of the foremost professors in Germany, the other being his rival at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, Hugo Becker (1863-1941); Becker was Harrison's principal teacher.²⁴⁹ Suggia excelled under Klengel's tutelage, graduating in "less than half of the three years originally projected."²⁵⁰ In 1905, she made her solo debut with the Gewandhaus Orchestra under the direction of the star conductor Artur Nikisch, a performance that initiated a European concert tour of Paris, Budapest, London, Warsaw, and Karlsbad.

From 1906 to 1912 she settled in Paris, where she became intimately acquainted with Pablo Casals, arguably the most famous international cellist of the early twentieth century. She had first met Casals in 1898, when he was twenty-one and she was ten, at a casino resort in Espinho, Portugal. Her father had been sending her on a weekly basis to the resort to hear Casals perform with a septet, presumably so that she could learn from him through observation.²⁵¹ She had the opportunity to play for him, and he was impressed sufficiently to give her some lessons. In 1906, she and Casals met once again, this time in Paris. Casals took her on as his formal pupil. However, their relationship soon deepened into a romance.

²⁴⁹ This adds another complication to the rivalry between Suggia and Harrison.

²⁵⁰ Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia," Internet Cello Society, 1995.

²⁵¹ Robert Baldock, *Pablo Casals* (Boston, Massachusetts: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 70.



Figure 5.2 *Guilhermina Suggia*, Augustus John, 1923
Oil on Canvas
© Tate / Bridgeman Images

Suggia's volatile relationship with Casals during those years helped her establish her career. However an irreparable rift between the two caused her to move to London in 1914. Since Suggia had visited England with Casals to give concerts, she was well known. Her contacts included the influential composer and theorist Sir Donald Tovey (1875-1940); Tovey and other friends helped Suggia establish herself in Britain²⁵² Her vibrant personality, evident musicality, and exuberant beauty were immensely helpful as well.

As Campbell comments, "She was known for the nobility of her phrasing and 'tone of a masculine power' seldom heard from a lady violoncellist," one that could (and did) overpower accompanying pianists.²⁵³ The British painter Augustus John's splendid and dramatic 1923 portrait of Suggia captures the essence of her dramatic personality. Baldock describes Augustus's painting as "superbly evocative—and accurate." He continues, "[It] depicted her as dramatic and haughty in a sumptuous geranium gown. Suggia was unquestionably striking: slim, dark, olive-skinned and graceful. Her habit, when playing, of sitting firmly erect and thrusting out her jaw, turned her large nose into a dramatic accessory."²⁵⁴ As a celebrity, her playing was constantly sought after by impresarios and orchestras, and it is unsurprising that

²⁵² Michael Tilmouth, Michael, "Tovey, Sir Donald," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed January 19, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28234>. Tovey was an eminent music scholar, composer, and pianist with many professional-musician friends and connections.

²⁵³ Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia."

²⁵⁴ Baldock, *Pablo Casals*, 71.

Bridge approached her—unsuccessfully as it turned out—to premiere his *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco for Cello and Orchestra*. Nevertheless, her presence in Britain was to be reckoned with, which further enhanced the image of the woman cellist in Britain and elsewhere.

Beatrice Harrison

Unquestionably, Beatrice Harrison represented the epitome of English women cellists. The second of four highly musical sisters, Harrison began to play the cello when she was about eight years old, but her musical training preceded it by seven years with regular piano and violin lessons to prepare her ears and dexterity. Her mother, Anne Harrison (née Martin) was a devout Christian who had been an aspiring singer and pianist in her younger years before she married Colonel John Harrison. Unable to further her musical career, she desired to raise her daughters to be first-rate musicians.²⁵⁵ She arranged their training methodically, combining a staunch Victorian work ethic with her unbridled passion for their excellence. To a great extent, the Harrison sisters experienced what Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his sister, Maria Anna, did from their father, Leopold Mozart, during their burgeoning musical careers: their childhoods were consumed by musical activity, from lessons to concerts, tours, and introductions to the crème of society. Beatrice

²⁵⁵ Beatrice Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ed., *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison* (London: John Murray, 1985), 17. “Mrs. Harrison, her own singing career frustrated, had vowed that if she were to have musical children she would do everything in her power to help them.”



Figure 5.3 Beatrice Harrison - Portrait
Lebrecht Authors / Bridgeman Images

and her sisters, however, thrived in their familial circle and would support each other throughout their professions. May Harrison, Beatrice's older sister, was a prominent violinist who famously concertized with Beatrice, notably promoting Brahms's Double Concerto as well as Delius's Double Concerto.²⁵⁶ Beatrice's youngest sister, Margaret, served her older sisters as an extraordinarily capable piano accompanist. When their mother passed, Margaret took over her mother's role as their manager. The third sister was Monica, who became an accomplished mezzo-soprano, yet her career was eclipsed by her other sisters' successes. However, Beatrice's status in the music world easily eclipsed all her sisters combined. Nevertheless, her achievements were predicated as much on her prodigious ability as on her home's nurturing environment, financial stability, and prominent social connections. Beatrice's father retired from the army for the sake of his daughters' musical preparation, accompanying them abroad in Europe while they received tutelage and gave concerts. Beatrice met various important figures of the British and foreign music scenes, including Sir Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, Sir Arnold Bax, Guilhermina Suggia, the noted pianist Harriet Cohen (1895-1967), members of the Royal Family, and President Woodrow Wilson. Elgar and Delius provided many musical opportunities for her, May, and Margaret. Beatrice Harrison enjoyed a very close friendship with Princess Victoria (1868-1935) that enabled her

²⁵⁶ For an extensive discussion of Harrison's role in the creation of Delius's cello works, see Chapter III- "Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer."

to cultivate a warm relationship with the Royal Family, a rare privilege.²⁵⁷ Along with her mother's death and that of Delius in 1934, Princess Victoria's death in 1935 proved to be a blow that was difficult for Harrison to bear.

Beatrice's successful career stemmed exclusively from her rapid advancement on the cello. She passed the Association Board Examination in piano and violin when she was seven and in cello when she was nine.²⁵⁸ She then entered the Royal College of Music at eleven, studying with cellist William Edward Whitehouse (1859-1935) and, upon graduating, with Becker in Berlin.²⁵⁹ Mercier recounts:

[Becker] delved deep into physiology and anatomy in an effort to make a science of cello playing. He was considered by many, including Piatigorsky and Raya Garbousova, to be rigid and dictatorial. Klengel on the other hand, was a relaxed and genial man who respected the individuality of his students.²⁶⁰

Traveling to Paris for study with Casals had been an option for more lessons, but May's violin instructor and close family friend at the RCM, Enrique Fernández Arbós (1863-1939), "strongly advised" Harrison to study with Becker since Casals was

²⁵⁷ Queen Alexandra 1844-1925, née Alexandra of Denmark) was particularly interested in music, even though she gradually became deaf as she aged. From one perspective, Princess Victoria, the one daughter of Queen Alexandra who did not marry, remained to care for her mother. Princess Victoria was a proficient pianist and played with Beatrice at private gatherings.

²⁵⁸ Beatrice Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, ed., *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison*, 45-47. While her family lived in Chatham, she took violin lessons in Rochester with an Italian music teacher, a certain Signor Fasoli.

²⁵⁹ Beatrice first met Becker at a gathering/concert held at one of Sir Edward Speyer's homes. Speyer was a wealthy music and art patron. He supported numerous British and Continental composers, including Gabriel Fauré.

²⁶⁰ Anita Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia," *Internet Cello Society*, 1995.

often absent on concert tours.²⁶¹ Given Becker's teaching style and the prominence of Germany as a music center during the early twentieth century, her parents were inclined to send her to Berlin rather than Paris. Near the end of her formal studies, she won the Mendelssohn Prize in 1910, becoming the youngest competitor at that time and the first cellist to win the prestigious award. After returning to England, Beatrice toured several times with her mother, May, and Margaret in Britain and the United States. She helped popularize the cello as a solo instrument in the United States and, in England, her famous and beloved nightingale broadcast over the BBC produced a popular sensation that lifted the national spirit after the tragedies wrought by the First World War.

Beatrice's contributions to the British music scene were significant indeed, for her work with Elgar on performing and recording his concerto as well as her association with Delius on his Double Concerto, Cello Sonata, Cello Concerto, and other small chamber works would ensure that those pieces entered the cello repertory.²⁶² Her skills and style of playing belonged to the modern era. The plethora of examples of her playing reveal a consistently controlled, elegant, and flexible technique. She avoided excessive portamenti and vibrato, two telling aspects of traditional nineteenth-century cello playing. In this way, she was a truly modern cellist. Harrison's experienced musicianship enhanced her robust tone and

²⁶¹ Beatrice Harrison, *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison*, 56. Arbos may also have been thinking of Casals' deserved reputation as a womanizer as well.

²⁶² For a detailed history of these collaborations, see Chapter II-"Elgar's Melancholy" and Chapter III-"Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer."

her accurate intonation, something that composers and critics found compelling. As related through his wife, Delius said that, “I *know* she will play it [Delius’s Cello Concerto] beautifully!” and that Harrison always knew how to realize his tempi.²⁶³ Before a performance of his Cello Concerto, Elgar told Harrison, “Give it’em Beatrice, give it’em. Don’t mind about the notes or anything. Give’em the spirit.”²⁶⁴ Elgar certainly minded her technique being superb, but the statement suggests that this picky composer valued Harrison’s interpretation to a remarkable degree. Elgar’s exclamation, much in the same spirit as Delius’s lauding Sir Thomas Beecham’s interpretation of his music, evinces Elgar’s profound respect for Beatrice not just as a musician but also as a musical confidante. Harrison regularly performed Delius’s and Elgar’s works during her career.

How did Harrison become closely acquainted with Delius and Elgar? In her autobiography, which was assembled by Patricia Cleveland-Peck, Harrison describes all her work with both composers in thoroughly enthusiastic terms. She seems to have been pleasant and positive to work with, both musically and personally: she was serious about quality and appreciative. Beyond these reasons, she evinced subtler affinities that she shared Delius and Elgar. It is well documented that Harrison had a fondness for nature that nearly equaled Delius’s passion for its beauty. She understood that his musical language was a kind of spiritual reflection

²⁶³ Ibid., 118.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 125.

of gardens, forests, rivers and mountains. Her fascination with nightingales that manifested itself in her playing for them on the cello captures her own intimate artistic connection with nature. Additionally, her fondness for animals of all types reflected in various playful anecdotes interspersed in the autobiography, attests to her devotion. Due to her sister Margaret, pets were in abundance in the Harrison home. And here an affinity with Elgar is discovered. Elgar and the Harrison family cherished dogs. After the first successful public performance of the concerto at Queens Hall, Elgar visited the Harrisons to find a Scottish terrier for himself. Lady Elgar, who disliked pets, had recently died, and Beatrice opined that “Dogs were the consolation of Sir Edward’s later years, his constant companions. As well as music this was another bond between us [....].”²⁶⁵ Therefore, Elgar appreciated the family not only for their musical expertise but for their friendship. Beatrice enjoyed the respect of these two composers in such a manner that music, nature, and friendship took precedence—and neither Elgar or Delius were easy to deal with for most people, but the Harrison family had no problems with either man. With this in mind, one will briefly consider the lives of the works that bound Harrison, Delius, and Elgar. Beatrice mentions Delius more often in her book than Elgar, but this is easily explained: the warm acquaintance between her family and Delius preceded that with Elgar. Delius composed more music for the sisters while after his concerto and late chamber music, Elgar composed relatively little.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 123-124.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Delius first came to know Harrison when she and her sister May played their signature Brahms Double Concerto. Enthusiastic about their ability and the genre's potential, he promised to write his Double Concerto for them. He included them in the composition process and, though a violinist himself, he deferred to the sisters' advice. Their friendship grew apace, leading to more works, the majority of which were for cello. Delius recognized Harrison's ability to intuit the flow of his cello music. The renowned collaborative pianist Gerald Moore testified, "She sang on her instrument and had an infallible instinct for feeling where the muscle of the music slackened, where it tightened again, where it accumulated tension till the climax was reached."²⁶⁶ Harrison elucidates what Delius's music demands of the performer.

The artist's conception of this Concerto must be an emotional one. Joy and sadness are so intermingled and the moods vary so exquisitely that it is only by undertaking these transcending beauties that Delius's music can be interpreted.

She further realized the warmth and ecstasy that the music conveyed and justly considered herself among the few who understood Delius's style. When she premiered the Concerto in the United States, she was disappointed that Fritz Reiner, and not Stokowski, conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra on that occasion. "Fritz Reiner conducted for me and he could not bear nor understand Delius's music," she recounts. Then, she makes a more personal observation: "I must confess that the

²⁶⁶ Quoted in Grimley, Daniel M.. *Delius and the Sound of Place* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 259.

people did not understand the idiom of Delius and although I hope it did not sound difficult, so many passages written for the cello would have sounded perfect on the woodwind [sic].”²⁶⁷ The last “suggestion” is credible, given that she edited the music at Delius’s request. She was a versatile cellist and could handle demanding music, such as Kodály’s Sonata for Solo Cello. Armed with intimate knowledge of Delius’s music, Beatrice, along with Beecham and her sister May, was one of the composer’s preferred ambassadors.

As regards Elgar’s Cello Concerto, Beatrice can be regarded as its earliest champion. The 1919 premiere of this score did not go well. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, cellist Felix Salmond was not equal to the demands of the solo part and the orchestra was under-rehearsed, resulting in a lackluster performance. Audiences did not comprehend readily this deeply introspective work. A reevaluation of the concerto stemmed directly from Beatrice Harrison’s determined advocacy, which took the form of a recording of the concerto and a performance at Queens Hall with Sir Henry Wood’s orchestra conducted by Elgar.²⁶⁸ In her autobiography, Beatrice mentioned that “My association with Elgar at this time was, musically speaking, one of the high-points of my life.”²⁶⁹ At age twenty-seven, she was in her prime as an artist. Through unspecified connections, Beatrice discovered that Elgar wished for her to make recordings with HMV at Hayes. Beatrice was keen

²⁶⁷ Beatrice Harrison, *The Cello and the Nightingales: The Autobiography of Beatrice Harrison*, 141.

²⁶⁸ Elgar provided a truncated version of the concerto for that first recording.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

to indicate that she had to study the concerto, something she does not mention in relation to Delius's works (although it may be assumed she did). Harrison solicited the help of her friend Augustín Rubio, a friend of Casals. She also wisely consulted with William H. Reed (1876-1942), leader of the London Symphony Orchestra and one of Elgar's closest friends: Reed had advised Elgar during at the time he composed his Violin Concerto (1910). Harrison recalled that Reed "knew the [cello concerto] so well."²⁷⁰ Harrison went to Elgar's London home, Severn House, to go over the concerto with her pianist-sister Margaret serving as the piano accompanist until Elgar sat down at the piano himself to demonstrate how the music should go. Both Elgar and Harrison were nervous at the first recording session, but an encouraging and well-timed comment from Lady Elgar to Harrison's mother helped to dispel some of tension: "I think your child will make people love this work when she has an opportunity of playing in public."²⁷¹ While the recording was hampered by the technology of the day, Elgar approved of Harrison's interpretation; the recording was acclaimed. Rather to Harrison's surprise, a public performance did follow the recording. This event went spectacularly well. Elgar was elated and went on to secure performances of the concerto with Harrison at the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford, at Worcester Cathedral (she was the first woman

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 124.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 121.

instrumentalist to play there, an engagement made possible by Elgar's insistence), and in Manchester.²⁷²

Writing years later, Harrison alluded to the defining characteristics of the concerto that suited her musical approach: "I loved the work with its sudden changes of mood and its grandeur."²⁷³ Compared to his Violin Concerto, Elgar's Cello Concerto is concise, featuring passages that vary radically in tempo and style. Some are abruptly cut short while others are expansive. Pertinent to the "spirit" of this work, Beatrice seemed to have a special sensitivity for its spiritual quality. At the public performance she remembered, "I kept thinking of Lady Elgar who had just passed away. I thought so much of her kind words when we recorded at Hayes and I felt strongly that she was near the cello helping to make the work appreciated."²⁷⁴ When she performed it at Worcester, the town in which Elgar had grown up, she described an almost mystical experience:

The atmosphere of the cathedral was like no other and something greatly spiritual descended on the cello and I know the orchestra experienced it too. The following year I played a Gloucester Cathedral and the next at Hereford and always the same feeling of serenity was with me.²⁷⁵

Beatrice had been brought up as a devout Christian, and judging from various statements about God throughout her autobiography, one senses that she held some

²⁷² Ibid., 133.

²⁷³ Ibid., 120.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 123.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 134.

kind of belief in the numinous. However, music was her immediate recourse for expressing the transcendent. It gave her much joy. The grandeur she located in Elgar's concerto could refer to that awe she had for the eternal and natural. While she does not disclose exact theology, she honors Providence in the outcomes of certain events in her life. Elgar may or may not have known this about her, and by this time he had lost much of the Catholic faith that had inspired his oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*, but he certainly recognized a musician who understood the private musings and emotions he expressed in the concerto.

Harrison's collaborations with Delius and Elgar represent only a fraction of her enormous amount of activity as a performer. She promoted works by other important British composers, premiering such works as the cello sonatas of John Ireland and Arnold Bax, working with noted pianists Harriet Cohen and Evelyn Howard-Jones (1877-1951), respectively.²⁷⁶ Ireland was a close friend, and Harrison's repeated performance of his music confirms the notion that new music's dissemination often relies on a consummate musician who is willing to risk promoting repeatedly a composer's untried score. Furthermore, a musician of Harrison's stature encouraged new generations of musicians and composers. Beatrice gave future cellists, especially women cellists, an example of what can be achieved with talent, much dedication, and a supportive familial and musical environment.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 135.

Peers Coetmore

Kathleen Peers Coetmore Jones was a cellist from Skegness, Lincolnshire who rose to national prominence during the decade after the end of the First World War. Not much has been documented about her formative years, but it is known that Coetmore had advanced as a cellist to the degree that she won the 1924 Piatti Prize for cellists from the Royal Academy of Music, where she was a student. Suggia adjudicated this competition that year.²⁷⁷ Coetmore studied for a brief, but fruitful, period with the great Jewish cellist and pedagogue Emanuel Feuermann (1902-1942), who had been one of Klengel's most accomplished pupils.²⁷⁸ In her biography of Feuermann, Annette Moreau explains that "many of [his] students were very fond of him."²⁷⁹ Coetmore was no exception in this regard. Moreau transcribes a letter Coetmore wrote to Feuermann while she was volunteering for the ambulance service in London during the Blitz, a letter which reveals how much she appreciated his teaching: "I thought you might be interested to have a letter from the 'front line' and also from (however humbly) a cellist. You would be surprised how often in the brief hours I can get for work you are at my elbow asking 'is that a note?' Believe me I learnt a very big lesson in the short time I was with

²⁷⁷ "The Royal Academy of Music," in *The Musical Times* 65, no.977 (1 July 1924), 642. "the Piatti Prize (violoncello) to Peers Coetmore Jones (a native of Skegness), Albert E. Killick being highly commended, and Marion Bowlby commended. The adjudicator was Madame Guilhermina Suggia." In 1924, Suggia had also conducted the British Women Symphony Orchestra along with Dame Ethyl Smyth (see Mercier, *Guilhermina Suggia*).

²⁷⁸ Margaret Campbell, "Hooton, Florence," in *Grove Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed January 16, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42600>.

²⁷⁹ Annette Moreau, *Emanuel Feuermann* (Yale University Press, 2002), 315-316.

you...We all live from hour to hour...."²⁸⁰ Her candor towards Feuerman in the rest of her letter as she recounts the daily terrors, culminates in a frank postscript, showing a certain level of trust in him. She wrote, "I forgot one of the most important things I wished to ask you. I know you admired my Testore cello. If I am killed and it has managed to survive, would you be able to find a purchaser in America for me? I have very little to leave my sister and I doubt if it could be sold easily in this country now."²⁸¹ Her apprehension was well founded, as she was in the midst of unbelievable carnage. Yet, she seems to have had courage in abundance, as she also joined the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) as part of the war effort, which meant that she toured all over England performing in schools, factories, and military bases.

Coetmore is often associated with the composer E. J. Moeran. She was married to him for a relatively short time and he composed some of his finest music with her in mind. Indeed, as Moeran's letters to Coetmore attest, he composed for her with an enthusiasm that recalls the joy with which Schumann composed piano scores for his wife Clara or the joy that Gabriel Fauré felt as he wrote his song cycle *La bonne Chanson*, Op. 61 (1892-94) for his mistress Emma Bardac. Moeran

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 315.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 316.

composed a Cello Concerto and a Cello Sonata for her as well as several other smaller pieces.²⁸²

However, Coetmore was an independent artist before and after her relationship with Moeran.²⁸³ Her primary interest was playing chamber music, which is evinced by the numerous chamber-music programs in which she took part between 1922 and 1945. She performed extensively with the Margot MacGibbon String Quartet and, in the capacity of a soloist or part of an ensemble, with both the Birmingham Studio Orchestra and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra.²⁸⁴ Coetmore also gave performances through the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). She later moved to Australia and, after Moeran's death, she built a career there. The only student attributed to Coetmore is Doreen Carwithen (1922-2003), who briefly studied with her but later became a composer

²⁸² For a longer discussion of Moeran's cello works, see Chapter VII—"Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy."

²⁸³ Coetmore married four times in her life. She divorced her first husband, Major Arthur Hubert Treby Davis, whom she had married in 1929 (see "Births, Marriages, and Deaths," *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3585 (September 1929): 152, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25333785>). Moeran was her second husband. Due to his chronic alcoholism, they soon separated, with Moeran living in Ireland and Coetmore residing in Australia until the composer's death. Thereafter, Coetmore married Cecil Herbert Haswell; after their divorce, she married her final husband, Walter Knott. Moeran had been seriously wounded during the First World War, and his alcoholism was in part an attempt at managing recurrent pain, both mental and physical.

²⁸⁴ Various local newspapers between 1925 and 1938 reported Coetmore's performances, including the ones with the Margot MacGibbon Quartet and the aforementioned orchestras, in their concert and radio broadcast listings. The *Aberdeen Journal*, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, *Dundee Courier*, *Hull Daily Mail*, *North Devon Journal*, *Nottingham Evening Post*, and the *Western Daily Press* number among those newspapers.

of film music.²⁸⁵ Over the course of her career, Coetmore presented lectures and made recordings, among which are the first ones of Moeran's Cello Sonata and Cello Concerto. In its October 11, 1943 issue, *The Derby Evening Telegraph*, announcing a joint concert between Coetmore and a Swiss-born soprano by the name of Sophie Wyss, said that Coetmore was, "a fine interpretive 'cellist with a charming platform personality."²⁸⁶ Her abilities as a cellist were solid but never approached the virtuosic level of either Harrison or Suggia. Her major contribution to the British cello repertoire, i.e., inspiring Moeran to compose his sonata and concerto, is invaluable for those works comprise signal and important additions to the repertoire of British cello music.²⁸⁷

Florence Hooton

Belonging to the generation of women cellists who came to prominence after Beatrice Harrison, Florence Hooton was a versatile soloist and chamber musician. Her formal training and later career centered around the Royal Academy of Music. Her father, a cellist himself, was her first teacher. In addition to studying at the RAM

²⁸⁵ Foreman, Lewis, "Carwithen, Doreen," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed December 8, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49089>.

²⁸⁶ "First Recital in Derby," *Derby Daily Telegraph* 112, Issue 19394 (October 1943): 4, British Library Newspapers (accessed May 11, 2022), <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/JF3236417179/BNCN?u=ucriverside&sid=bookmark-BNCN&xid=c72f67f1>.

²⁸⁷ Stephen Wild, *E J Moeran* (London: Triad Press, 1973), 7-8. In her introduction to the Wild's biography, Coetmore recounts that she was affected by hearing Moeran's Violin Concerto and wished years before their marriage that Moeran would compose a cello concerto. For a further analysis of Moeran's Cello Concerto and Sonata, see Chapter VII—"Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy."

with cellist Douglas Cameron, she would later study in Zurich with Feuermann.²⁸⁸ Hooton was a founding member of the Grinke Trio alongside Canadian-born violinist Frederick Grinke (1911-1987) and pianist Dorothy Manley. They constituted a regular ensemble who performed nineteenth and twentieth-century repertoire in venues such as Wigmore Hall, as well as on the radio, when the occasion permitted. One notable performance was of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Sir Henry Wood and the BBC Symphony Orchestra during the first BBC Promenade Concerts in 1934.²⁸⁹ Considering the technical demands on the cellist in that monumental work—the closest Beethoven came to writing a cello concerto after Bernhard Heinrich Romberg (1767-1841) rejected his offer²⁹⁰—it can be safely assumed that Hooton was a proficient cellist. In the same year, she also performed the Haydn Concerto in D Major for Cello and Orchestra, for which the Royal Academy of Music Club Magazine reported that “she played with breadth and purity of tone.”²⁹¹ She possessed a nimble technique that allowed her to shine in quick, energetic, and rhythmically complex music. Yet, in contrast, her acrobatic style was

²⁸⁸ “Obituary: Florence Hooton,” *The Times* 63089 (May 1988): 16.

²⁸⁹ Campbell, “Hooton, Florence,” In *Grove Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—).

²⁹⁰ Campbell, *The Great Cellists*, 62. “Beethoven thought highly of Romberg and his playing, but the latter had little understanding of his friend’s music.... Perhaps the most unforgivable legacy of his arrogance is that when Beethoven wanted to write a cello concerto for him, Romberg rejected the offer because he only performed his own compositions.”

²⁹¹ “Orchestral Concert, November 8,” R.A.M. Club Magazine No.98, 1934. <https://archive.org/details/r.a.m.clubmagazineno.98mar1934/page/n1/mode/2up?q=Hooton%2C+Florence>.

less apt for slow lyrical passages; she did not “sing” on the cello in the same fashion as Mukle or Harrison. Her recording with pianist Wilfrid Parry of Arnold Bax’s Cello Sonata demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of Hooton’s playing.²⁹² Once the music calls for speed or playfulness, Hooton is crisp and clear. Her intonation is stable throughout. The double stops in the second movement, “Improvisation,” are in tune, and portamenti are almost non-existent. In the third movement, marked “Molto Vivace ma non troppo,” she even manages to convey tenderness. Bax’s writing for the cello is not especially lyrical overall, but when the music does become more overtly melodic, Hooton’s playing loses its vitality; however, Hooton is not well-supported by Parry, as his tone is dry and his phrasing is virtually non-existent. Nonetheless, her qualities seem to have fit a certain repertoire, and when she played the right works, she approached brilliance. Such was the case with Frank Bridge’s *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco for Cello and Orchestra*, H.180. As in her recording of Bax’s *Legend Sonata*, a work dedicated to her by the composer, Hooton could play the technically demanding music with panache.²⁹³ As mentioned in a previous chapter, Bridge did not suffer mediocrity gladly; he certainly promoted Hooton for the premiere of his concerto.²⁹⁴ He was right:

²⁹² Florence Hooton (cello) and Wilfred Parry (piano), *Bax and Jacob: Music for Cello and Piano*, Lyrita, 2008, streaming audio, <https://youtu.be/ZkSrQAzWR2I>.

²⁹³ Hooton, Florence (cello) and Wilfred Parry (piano), *Bax and Jacob: Music for Cello and Piano*. Lyrita, 2008, Streaming audio, <https://youtu.be/ZkSrQAzWR2I>.

²⁹⁴ Campbell, *The Great Cellists*, 256. Bridge heard Hooton play at one concert and decided during the performance that if she successfully played one more difficult high note, he would ask her to premiere *Oration*. She did, and rest can be assumed.



Figure 5.4 Wilfred de Glehn, *Portrait of Florence Hooton Playing the Cello*, 1936
Oil on canvas
Image reproduced with permission from the Royal Academy of Music, London

Hooton came to be a strong exponent of Bridge's music. An article was published in *The Times* on 22 October 1988 announcing a tribute concert Hooton's pupils gave in honor of their recently deceased teacher; the program included music by Bridge and directly associated Hooton with *Oration*, stating that she had played the work. Indeed, Hooton and Bridge's names regularly appear in the same periodicals, a curiosity that may not be a coincidence. The earliest mention of her name in print is found in a short review of the London Violoncello School's annual student concert in "The Weekend Concerts" section of the March 26, 1928 issue of *The Times*: "There were two soloists, both promising young players—Miss Florence Hooton, who was heard in Sammartini's Sonata in G, and Mr. Boris Rickelman, in Bruch's "Kol Nidrei."²⁹⁵ She studied with the Scottish cellist Douglas Cameron²⁹⁶ (1902-1974) at the London Violoncello School and then at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was admitted as a scholarship recipient.²⁹⁷

Aubyn Raymar places her in connection with the Grinke Trio, named after the ensemble's violinist, Frederick Grinke, in the "Recitals of the Week" article of *The Times* issue of May 4, 1934. The critique was diplomatic.

Mr. Frederick Grinke (violin), Miss Florence Hooton (violoncello), and Miss Dorothy Manley (Pianoforte), played Trios by Beethoven, Schumann, and Frank Bridge at the Wigmore Hall on Tuesday evening. Individually these players are very able musicians, but a firmer lead from the violinist is needed to blend their qualities in a good

²⁹⁵ "Weekend Concerts: London Violoncello School," *The Times* 44851 (March 1928): 14.

²⁹⁶ Margaret Campbell, "Douglas Cameron," in *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001-), accessed June 15, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42217>.

²⁹⁷ "Obituary: Florence Hooton," *The Times* 63089 (May 1988): 16.

ensemble...The lack of sure leadership was more evident in Frank Bridge's Trio, in which the playing was too tentative to make sense of the music until the more obvious rhythms and melodic outlines of the finale provided material which could be boldly attacked.²⁹⁸

Such is the case with Bridge's musical language, which invariably requires experienced musicianship: a first-rate violist himself, Bridge wrote demanding parts for strings. In a review of a concert given on June 24, 1936, *The Musical Times* commended the group by saying that "It is so good that one hopes it will persevere until it has carried itself into the inner circle of artists. The concert at Wigmore Hall on 24 June showed that the Trio has lately made an advance toward this goal."²⁹⁹ As a soloist, Hooton often took the stage with Manley as her collaborative pianist. She performed a sonata recital that was broadcasted on April 29, 1935.³⁰⁰ From the extant critiques one gleans that Hooton was a thoroughly experienced and sought-after cellist. If her expertise in Bridge's music solely encompassed playing what he wrote, the discussion would end there. Interestingly, her membership in the New English String Quartet implies a strong admiration for Bridge, as indicated in February 25, 1937 issue of *The Times*.³⁰¹ This new ensemble, comprised of violinists Winifred Small and Eveline Thompson, violist Winifred Stiles, and Hooton on cello,

²⁹⁸ Aubyn Raymar, "Recitals of the Week," *The Times* 46745 (May 1934): 12.

²⁹⁹ M.M.S. "London Concerts," *The Musical Times* 77, no. 1121 (July 1936): 650, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/918438>.

³⁰⁰ "Broadcasting Programmes: Home Station," *The Times* 47050 (April 1935): 24.

³⁰¹ "Broadcasting: Home Stations," *The Times* 47618 (February 1937): 12, <http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=CS202453081&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>.

is reminiscent in name of the original English String Quartet of which Bridge had been the violist.

Hooton ventured enthusiastically into pedagogy more than the other women cellists discussed here. While Mukle taught Lyndon de Lecq Margerie, who later graduated as a teacher from the Royal Academy of Music in 1932, Suggia and Harrison appear not to have sought regular pupils or a permanent teaching position.³⁰² In 1964, Hooton returned to the RAM as a professor until her death in 1988. She was well-regarded by her students, attested by a memorial concert they arranged at her passing. The annual David Martin/Florence Hooton Concerto Prize was created in honor of her and her husband, the noted violinist and professor David Martin. For the rest of public, a portrait of Hooton, painted by a friend and student of John Singer Sargent, Wilfred Gabriel de Glehn (1870-1951), remains, capturing her fresh exuberance and musical poise.

Conclusion

It might at first seem curious that it was women who promoted cello music composed by male composers, an instrument that until the 1960s audiences and critics associated with masculinity. Musical instruments are often heedlessly assigned a gender, creating qualms over the selection of “appropriate” instruments: until recently few male students took up the harp, which was pigeonholed as a “woman’s instrument.” As with other cultures until the 1960s, Britain adhered to a

³⁰² “Front Matter,” in *The Musical Times* vol.74, 1081 (March 1933), 196, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/917651>.

culture of propriety for women, and a woman cellist was a rarity until the massive international success of Jacqueline du Pré (1945-1987) forever shattered such prejudicial assumptions in Britain.

However, there is much to be said for Britain's repeated exceptions to the rule. During the sixteenth century, the establishment of Anglicanism had to allow for accession to the throne of a Protestant, powerful, ruthless, and coldly authoritarian woman, Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603; regnant from 1558), who, among other accomplishments, was a first-rate musician. The reign of another musically proficient female monarch, Queen Victoria (1819-1901, regnant from 1837), gradually created a space in which professional women musicians could thrive. Certainly, circumstances in the twentieth century necessitated the acceptance of women into English musical life just to ensure its survival, but that would not have happened without a ready and expert pool of women musicians. Even if the male gentry deemed instrumental music to be too feminine for an "English gentleman," and professional-music making was nevertheless considered a man's purview until the late nineteenth century, women made steady inroads into the ranks of professionals. British women who played the cello came to thrive, and through their advocacy of British composers and the melancholic works discussed in this dissertation, they made vital, important, and lasting contribution to the British repertory for their instrument and the expression of the "English Malady" in the twentieth century.

Chapter VI

Innocence Lost: The Cello Concertos of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi

As exemplified by two disparate cello concertos, one by Herbert Howells (1892-1983) and the other by Gerald Finzi (1901-1956), the cello continued to be used to express melancholy and mourning well into the 1950s. Mourning is both a private and public process, one that is potentially self-absorbing even when its cause is universal or shared by others. In view of the Elgar concerto's timely response to different manifestations of tragedy, the cello concertos by the close contemporaries Howells and Finzi evince the same tendency towards introspective musical melancholia. Howells composed his cello concerto as part of a life-long project of lament over the death of his son, Michael. Finzi composed his cello concerto initially in response to a persistent interest in the genre. However, Finzi must have known that he was a dying man when he composed it. As it turned out, the last piece that Finzi ever heard was a broadcast of his own concerto. Although the styles of these contemporaries were distinctive, they share an affinity for the British pastoral with its concomitant obsession with lost innocence.

Howells and Finzi knew each other and kept a friendly, although mutually conflicted and competitive, respect for each other. Howells was nine year older than Finzi, and according to Diana McVeagh, Howells "later referred to [Finzi] as his

‘unofficial pupil’ (probably not how Finzi saw it).³⁰³ This condescension may have been glib, but it reveals a deep personal unease between the two men. While they kept a steady exchange of music and correspondence and their families visited each other fairly often, their social status and opposing attitudes toward composing did not enable full reciprocity. Finzi had the financial resources to advance his compositional career, but he stubbornly wanted to realize his gifts his own way and at his own pace. Howells desired to have a successful professional career in composition, but he lacked fiscal security and so relied on his professionalism and facility to help him secure patronage and teaching positions. The scion of a poor family in an undistinguished town, Howells, like Elgar, created a persona based heavily on the English gentry, including a remarkably stylized way of dressing, gesturing, and speaking. Born into a family of Sephardic Jews who had settled in Italy in the fifteenth century, Finzi assimilated into English society and mores with a singular focus and determination. British art, literature, and especially music became crucial aspects of his “rigorous self-formation.”³⁰⁴ Both Howells and Finzi were introverted, sensitive, and highly self-critical. Family tragedy—the loss of a son—had a hand in compromising Howells’s success. Likewise, terminal illness kept Finzi from realizing his potential.

³⁰³ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi's Letters: 1915-1956* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2021), 36.

³⁰⁴ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 93.

It has been said that “the adult’s sense of loss at his exclusion from this Eden inspires some of Finzi’s strongest sustained passages, from the melancholy grandeur that informs *Intimations [of Immortality]* to the brooding power of *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*.”³⁰⁵ Finzi was fixated upon childhood innocence. His music often evokes a degree of longing and melancholy. After his son’s death (and even before), Howells’s music often evinces an elegiac quality; the youthful optimism of early scores such as the Piano Quartet in A Minor, Op. 21 (1916, substantially revised 1936), gradually dissolved during and after the First World War. Howells’s lifelong mourning of his son after the child’s death in 1935 may have been exacerbated by certain social and political events, but it is important to make a distinction between personal and public tragedy over the course of the twentieth century. After all, private mourning is made public through the performance of music whose origin is in personal tragedy. Howells exemplifies this statement through his *Hymnus Paradisi*, at once one of the most heartfelt and most flamboyant musical acts of mourning ever composed. Finzi reacted to the tragedy of his truncated lifespan more quietly, but with deep feeling in his Christmas choral piece, *In Terra Pax*, Op. 39, which was begun in 1954, just after the Cello Concerto, Op. 40. (The opus numbers of the Cello Concerto and *In Terra Pax* reflect their publication dates rather than their order of composition.) Both composers sought consolation from their

³⁰⁵ Diana McVeagh, “Gerald Finzi,” in Grove Music Online (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed May 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09689>.

respective afflictions through public performance. Yet paradoxically, the most personal, intimate mourning is found in their respective cello concertos.

Herbert Howells: Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra

Herbert Howells's Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra reveals unquestionably the darkest and melancholic aspects of the man himself.³⁰⁶ Created around the time of his only and much-beloved son Michael's death from bulbar poliomyelitis, Howells returned to sketches for a cello concerto that he had begun to compose in 1933.³⁰⁷ It is evident that the cello concerto is one of a long series of pieces that find their origin in Michael's demise.³⁰⁸ Howells habitually returned to work on the piece on the anniversaries of his son's passing.³⁰⁹ However, it is *Hymnus paradisi*, that daunting, public, sacred choral piece, and not the cello concerto, that is given prominence among Howells's many memorials for Michael. After all, Howells did not hide his motive for composing *Hymnus paradisi*. Seeing

³⁰⁶ Christopher Palmer, *Herbert Howells: A Celebration*, 117-118. Palmer says that Howells did not want it discovered for this very reason.

³⁰⁷ For a detailed and accurate discussion of the circumstances of Michael Howells' illness and death, see Byron Adams, "Musical Cenotaph: Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* and Sites of Mourning," in *The Music of Herbert Howells*, ed. Philip A. Cooke and David Maw (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2013), 285-89.

³⁰⁸ Paul Spicer, *Herbert Howells* (Wales, United Kingdom: Seren, 1998), 109.

³⁰⁹ Palmer, 117 and also Herbert Howells, *Howells Cello Concerto/An English Mass*, Guy Johnston, Britten Sinfonia, Stephen Cleobury, and Christopher Seaman, King's College, Cambridge KG0032, 2019, 2 compact discs, Liner notes by Clinch.

her father's terrible grief, his daughter Ursula suggested that he should compose something for Michael.³¹⁰ Writing this complex score served a cathartic purpose.

For centuries, activity as a method to dissipate the pain of loss was believed to be an effective remedy. Burton mentioned that a man by the name of Cardan and another named Tully wrote in order to assuage their pain of losing a child: "Cardan professeth he wrote his book, *De Consolatione* after his son's death, to comfort himself; so did Tully write of the same subject with like intent after his daughter's departure..."³¹¹ How effective composing *Hymnus Paradisi*, which was premiered in 1951, fifteen years after Michael's death, was in helping Howells to dispel his grief, though, is brought into question in light of the existence of the cello concerto. Why did Howells continue to work desultorily on the concerto over many years without giving any indication of finishing it, let alone allowing it to be performed or published in its entirety? Although he had completed the monumental first movement, which he entitled *Fantasia for Violoncello and Full Orchestra* (1937) and deposited on December 13, 1937, to obtain a Doctor of Music degree from Oxford University,³¹² the second movement, *Threnody for Cello and Orchestra*, was only fair-copied in 1936.³¹³ Christopher Palmer rediscovered it in 1992 and orchestrated it

³¹⁰ Spicer, *Herbert Howells*, 100.

³¹¹ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 502.

³¹² Christopher Palmer, *Herbert Howells 1892-1983: A Celebration*, 85, 118. and Herbert Howells. *Fantasia for Violoncello and Full Orchestra* (Suffolk, United Kingdom: Novello, 1937).

³¹³ Palmer, *Herbert Howells 1892-1983: A Celebration*, 117.

for a “centenary concert in Westminster Abbey, where Howells’ ashes had been buried.”³¹⁴ Similarly, the third movement was realized from extant sketches by Jonathan Clinch as late as 2013.³¹⁵ The completed concerto was premiered at the 2016 Cheltenham Festival in Gloucester Cathedral. Perhaps there were practical and logistical reasons for Howells declining to finish this score, one being that the “Fantasia” was already a long, fully developed and aesthetically satisfying one-movement piece.³¹⁶ Upon closer inspection of Howells’s life-long mourning, one might well surmise that this work was truly Howells’s most personal, intimate expression of grief, the private inner tombstone beside the lofty memorial of *Hymnus paradisi* that he could revisit in seclusion to tend by himself, for himself, as he nursed his attenuated spiritual and emotional condition. A parent does not forget the death of a son or daughter. For Howells, this was a painful truth. It is as though part of him had died with Michael. It is telling that the following lines, taken out of their original context in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 6:21, is carved into Michael’s gravestone: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

³¹⁴ Herbert Howells, “Cello Concerto (Fantasia, Threnody and Finale),” Guy Johnstone, Britten Sinfonia, Stephen Cleobury, Christopher Seaman, The Choir of King’s College Cambridge KGS0032 / 2SACD hybrid, 2019, 2 compact discs, Liner notes by Jonathan Clinch, 11.

³¹⁵ Ibid., Clinch began to complete the concerto in 2010. The Herbert Howells Trust supported the project.

³¹⁶ Bryon Adams, Ph.D. Advising Session (June 26, 2020), University of California, Riverside, via Zoom conference.

In his 1965 book, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, Geoffrey Gorer surveys British individuals' reactions to the death of loved ones, noting that is against "the order of nature' for a child to die before the parents." He contends that "...it seems as though the parents, in some obscure way, interpret this as a punishment for their own shortcomings, a sort of divine retribution, whether they are actively religious or no."³¹⁷ Howells's religious beliefs were tenuous and unorthodox, even though he composed assiduously for the Anglican Church in the aftermath of Michael's death. According to his daughter, Howells said in his last years that he did not believe in an afterlife.³¹⁸ Adams has observed that Howells behaved more like a non-believer than a Christian in respect to losing his son, evincing an obsession with Michael that resembles the veneration of a lost minor deity.³¹⁹ It is understandable that Howells could have devolved into a mentality reminiscent of paganism in the face of wrenching personal loss, but not before first attempting to reconcile his fragile religious beliefs with his intense desire to see his son again, in this world and in the flesh. Gorer's explanation may well be valid in

³¹⁷ Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset Press, 1965), 106.

³¹⁸ Spicer, *Herbert Howells*, 98. Ursula Howells recounted to Spicer that, "As far as religion goes I think he adored the music and the buildings—he adored cathedrals. Emotionally, he had a sort of spiritual sense. I know he said to me, about a year before he died when we were sitting one day in the dining room: 'I don't believe there's anything'. I was very surprised that he said it as definitely as that. That was the only surprise I had. Not that he didn't believe. It was the fact that he said it, and come out with it."

³¹⁹ Adams, "Musical Cenotaph: Howells's *Hymnus paradisi* and Sites of Mourning" in *The Music of Herbert Howells*, ed. Philip A. Cooke and David Maw (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 292-293.

this case. Perhaps Howells felt guilt, real or imagined, for Michael's death, and felt that he needed to appease God by creating church music. Guilt about what is another question. As Adams postulates in his chapter on *Hymnus paradisi*, Howells might have felt guilty over the fact that he miraculously survived Graves' Disease, an incurable ailment before he became the first-known survivor using previously untested radium treatments; yet, his son did not survive a case of polio, which is not always fatal.³²⁰ Moreover, his mother had cared for Howells during his radiation therapy. In contrast to his mother, Howells may have thought that he had not done enough for Michael.

Given this background, Howells's concerto is, unsurprisingly, a score pervaded by both melancholy and anguish, despite its origin as a conglomerate of original and edited work that was, furthermore, premiered in parts over decades in two centuries. Though it cannot be confirmed by any testimony by Howells, who, uncharacteristically, never spoke of it, the concerto clearly has its origin in the dire situation of the composer's life in the mid-1930s. The following analysis will elucidate the personal nature of this concerto. If stream of conscious pertains to the continuous log of thoughts, this concerto addresses the bundle of emotions that is formed by mourning.

If someone begins a narrative by sighing, there is reason to suppose that some unusual circumstance has befallen them. The length and depth of the sigh can

³²⁰ Adams, "Musical Cenotaph: Howells's *Hymnus paradisi* and Sites of Mourning", 288.

signify the seriousness of the story that is about to unfold. For example, if the sigh is long and low-pitched, one may predict a tale tragedy. If it is short and moderate-pitched, one may expect merely that a minor disappointment or setback will be related. The broad spectrum of nuances of the sigh, which can mean different things in different contexts, invokes a concomitant spectrum of interpretations. The way in which the listener translates the sigh is as complex and meaningful as the sigh itself. When considering the musical equivalent of a sigh, a similar concept is useful for interpreting the work's emotional trajectory. In the *Fantasia*, the first movement of Howells's concerto, the sighing motif played by the cello in the second measure—the instrument's very first notes—comes right after a distinctly brief orchestral introduction that suggests the continuation of a previous statement.³²¹ In the retelling of a story, this could be symbolic of the rhetorical “And so....” Intonation, volume, and pace are additionally a critical factor, and the slow, soft (marked *pianissimo*) rise from the C-major chord to F# minor to an E minor chord (the D in the violins resolves up to the cello's E) sounds like a pronounced pickup, or the deep breath one takes before sighing profoundly (Example 6.1). That E minor is the resolution is no coincidence; though the movement will end in E major, Howells cast

³²¹ Herbert Howells, “Cello Concerto (Fantasia, Threnody and Finale),” Guy Johnston, Britten Sinfonia, Stephen Cleobury, Christopher Seaman, The Choir of King's College Cambridge KGS0032 / 2SACD hybrid, 2019, 2 compact discs, Liner notes by Jonathan Clinch, 12. Clinch notes perceptively that the concerto's opening orchestral introduction is an allusion to the opening of Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*. He explains that Vaughan Williams was “the chief influence.”

Tranquillo, quasi Andante

The musical score is for the piece 'Tranquillo, quasi Andante' by Herbert Howells. It is written for a full orchestra and a cello. The tempo is 'Tranquillo, quasi Andante'. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score shows the first two measures of the piece. The woodwinds (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets in Bb, Clarinet in A, Bassoons) and strings (Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass) play a melodic line. The dynamics range from piano (p) to pianissimo (pp) and then mezzo-piano (mp). The cello part is also shown, playing a similar melodic line.

Example 6.1 Howells, *Fantasia*, mm.1-2

Fantasia For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

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it predominantly in E minor, the same key as Edward Elgar’s concerto.³²² This is no accident. Christopher Palmer illuminates the significance of Howells’s connection to Elgar’s work: “For E minor was the key of Elgar’s great valedictory Cello Concerto;

³²² For more information about Elgar’s use of E minor in his Cello Concerto, see Chapter II-“Elgar’s Melancholy.”

Elgar died the year before Michael in 1934; and the slow movement of Howells's Concerto for Strings, completed in 1938, is inscribed conjointly to Elgar's memory and to Michael's."³²³ The sighing motif, like a Baroque *Affekt*, initiates a lyrical statement whose contours and underlying harmonies are curiously reminiscent of Delius, and specifically his Double Concerto. The result of the combination of the sigh with Delius's habit of pantheistic contemplation through music establishes a melancholic precedence for the entire first movement. Howells's phrases are broad and chromatic, similar to those found in Delius's music, too, except Howells's *Fantasia* lacks the sense of ecstasy Delius expresses in his Cello Sonata.³²⁴ Given Howells's *fantasia* approach, the structure is quite fluid, just as in Delius, determined more so by the flow of the melody than by formal dimensions. Motives arise in a manner that recalls stream of consciousness, often setting the cello apart from the orchestral activity, as well as the foreshadowing or reminiscences found in other British cello concertos. In the measures after rehearsal one, the cello presents a rising trill motive with a turn on each (Example 6.2 and 6.3), a classical embellishment. Finzi would use the same effect in his own cello concerto, though it is unknown if Finzi ever heard the *Fantasia* or examined Howells's score, published

³²³ Christopher Palmer, *Herbert Howells 1892-1983: A Celebration* (London: Thames Publishing, 1995), 118.

³²⁴ For more information about Delius's Cello Sonata, see Chapter III—"Frederick Delius, Pantheistic Wanderer."



Example 6.2 Herbert Howells, *Fantasia*, R1 mm.1-3

Fantasia For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

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Example 6.3 Herbert Howells, *Fantasia*, R1 mm.4-6

Fantasia For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

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or unpublished.³²⁵ Rapid sixteenth-note passages in the cello solo beginning four measures before rehearsal eight resemble some passages of Bridge's *Oration*. Since *Oration* was premiered in 1936, it is possible that Howells heard it, though this cannot be confirmed.³²⁶ Howells certainly knew a great deal of the work of both Bridge and certainly of Finzi.

³²⁵ McVeagh, ed., *Gerald Finzi's Letters, 1915-1956*, 877. Finzi was aware that Howells had an incomplete Cello Concerto, as referred to in a letter from Howells to Finzi dated 28 January 1954. "But so much of the *Grove* list is still in manuscript and two or three of the works therein are unfinished (e.g. the final section of the Cello Concerto; and 'Waking of Lazarus' and the 'York' and 'Hereford' canticles)."

³²⁶ Howells's commentary about his experience as one of Charles Villiers Stanford's students at the RCM evinces indirectly a shared dislike for Frank Bridge. In a 1971 interview with the artist Richard Walker and his student Robert Spearing, Howells ended his answer to a question about Stanford with a note about Bridge: "The only man he ever spoke, as it were, consistently disapprovingly of among his many pupils, was Frank Bridge. He said he never could teach him, whether music or manners." Palmer, *Herbert Howells 1892-1983: A Celebration*, 352.

The first section of the *Fantasia* ends cyclically, followed by a transition in which the woodwinds provide a birdsong-like background that is particularly reminiscent of Delius in effect and texture (R3 m. 1- R4 m.13). While this transition begins in tranquility, a dark shadow passes over the music with a high-pitched falling gesture in the piccolo and violins (R3 m.11). String tremolos ensue shortly thereafter (R3 m.14) heightening the distress. The transition gradually fades as if a threatening cloud has obscured the sun. Suddenly, a sequence of pizzicato chords in the cello mark the beginning of a new passage that is more adventurous, energetic, and dramatic (Example 6.4).



Example 6.4 Howells, *Fantasia*, R4, mm.11-13

Fantasia For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

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The music becomes impassioned and even tortured, much like Bridge's *Oration*, until it arrives at a tutti string climax that gathers into a great orchestral cry of anguish, akin to the remembrance of trauma (Example 6.5). The suffering slowly subsides, as passion diffuses in exhaustion. Pizzicato chords in the cello signal the end of the "memory" and the instrument descends into its low range. Here, the cello is quieter and lugubrious, like a person lost in their own thoughts and memories. The orchestral texture brightens, as if attempting to console, but the cello refuses to

be comforted, like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing comfort, as described in the Bible, and remains despondent like the woman in Burton's anecdote: "The woman that communed with Esdras (lib. 2. cap. 10) when her son fell down dead. "fled into the field, and would not return into the city, but there resolved to remain, neither to eat nor drink, but mourn and fast until she died."³²⁷ Descending pizzicatos renew the mournful expression. The music rises from the mire of John Bunyan's "Slough of Despond," attaining the opening theme again (R17 m.1), which functions formally as a recapitulation. The energetic theme recurs, and the internal conflict resurfaces as if someone is once again reliving the traumatic "memory." However, at this return, the music sounds more belligerent, even defiant. The cello unleashes a flurry of notes until the end, punctuating the protest through pronounced pizzicato chords (R27 mm.7-8). The *Fantasia's* opening theme, lovely at first but never fully developed, is absorbed or, more accurately, mauled by denial and metaphysical resistance—this is melancholy turned inward to the point of anger.

Howells began sketching this score before his son's death, but the emotive outline of the movement uncannily anticipates the composer's own reaction to the loss of his son. It should be remembered that Howells, who escaped the trenches

³²⁷ Jeremiah 31: 15. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 501-502. Burton references the passage about the inconsolable Rachel which is quoted in the Nativity story found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 2:18. When all the children two years and younger of Bethlehem were killed by King Herod in his attempt to kill Jesus, Matthew recalls the prophecy from Jeremiah 31:15: "In Rā'ma was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

due to a life-threatening disease, mourned friends, such as Francis Purcell Warren (1895-1916).³²⁸ Howells possessed a melancholic temperament, personally and musically, before Michael's death; that tragedy caused him to descend into tormented and lasting grief. This grief marred his life. His obsessive mourning had a corrosive effect on his faith, his marriage, and his relationship with his daughter. Nowadays, Howells might have sought therapeutic relief, but in the 1930s and for a member of the British middle class, such course of action was all but unthinkable. Howells may well have been depressed and had to seek such remedies as he could find around him.

Howells's innocent world was spoiled by a ruthless and cruel reality when his son suddenly died. To express his sorrow he turned to the tropes of British pastoralism, intensifying and transforming them in the process: "Et in Arcadia ego." Sadly, his habit of constant lamentation curdled into resentment. Adams postulates that this resentment was ultimately turned against God, for Howells eventually espoused the nihilism of a disappointed theist. Although he composed the dark but glowing *Hymnus Paradisi* in Michael's memory, the cello concerto's persistent despair is the obverse of the radiance of this choral fresco. As Palmer writes, "We recognize immediately that here was a side of Howells none of us had heard before—deeper, darker, more ambiguous, more troubled, more personal—much closer in spirit to the *Stabat Mater* (1959-65) than to the near-contemporaneous

³²⁸ See Adams, "Musical Cenotaph," 293-95.

Organ Sonata of 1932. It *has* to have to do with Michael.”³²⁹ The concerto is reminiscent of Dowland’s “In darkness let me dwell.” Since Howells composed it over the course of his life in private without the intent of publishing it, one could interpret it as a musical diary in which Howells documented his sorrow and bitterness. Howells’s expression of his obsessive anguish can be hard to bear for some listeners; as Susan Sontag once declared, “Depression is melancholy minus its charms.”³³⁰

After the first movement's complicated mourning, it is difficult to assess the exact purpose of the *Threnody*. When a death occurs, the mourning begins before the funeral. There will be weeping at the ceremony as the deceased is eulogized and interred, but it does not necessarily mark the inception of pain. It is only a glimpse at the longer process of healing, which is interrupted by waves of mourning, sometimes at a long temporal distance from the death; a measure of repose comes to the mourner only through memory and perspective. With this in mind, the second movement of Howells’s concerto serves a symbolic purpose. It is a ritual for the dead—the event—that is being relived and lamented. One laments past mourning. Initially, the movement unfolds in a traditional elegiac fashion, as a *marche funèbre* as is found in the second movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony, Op. 55, or Stravinsky’s *Chant funèbre*, Op. 5 (1908), written in memory of

³²⁹ Palmer, 118.

³³⁰ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978), 49.

his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov. In Howells's threnody, a ponderous marching ostinato rhythm in the strings sets the scene. The cello melody enters as if weeping, its high register at times like keening, as though oblivious to the ostinato (Example 6.6). The march rhythm's unconventional asymmetrical 7/8 meter sounds awkward compared to the more traditional 4/4 meter funereal marches. Thus, the weeping sounds less square and predictable, and the imaginary entourage makes only shuffling and reluctant progress to the graveyard (Example 6.7). Eventually, the march pauses, allowing the cello to eulogize as would be expected in the middle section of a musical elegy (Example 6.8)—and is in fact exactly what happens in Fauré's *Élégie*, Op. 24 (1880). In Howells's *Threnody* there is no coherent melody, as if it is unable to articulate formal statements due to grief. The orchestra accompanies sporadically in dissonant strains until a general pause. It is right before the middle section that the cello's pizzicato motif from the *Fantasia* returns with an austere horn accompaniment, marking a change of mood, just as it did in that previous movement (Example 6.9 and 6.10). Afterwards, the melodic content flows more readily until "cries of agony" cause an interruption (Example 6.11) and devolve into a short cadenza in the low range that descends gradually into the depths. Cruelly, the orchestra reasserts the march ostinato in a truly ominous response (Example 6.12). A sense of desolation follows through the brief cadenza for the cello, whose mournful searching garners no solace. From this point onwards, the energy wanes gradually, moving neither towards resolution nor conclusion, but towards dissolution. Howells completed the *Fantasia* and *Threnody*

Example 6.6 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.8-12
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer
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Handwritten musical score for 'Threnody' for Cello and Orchestra, measures 8-12. The score includes parts for Flute 1 & 2, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Cello, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature is B-flat major and the time signature is 3/8. The score features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'mp esp.' and 'colla parte'. The word 'COLLA PARTE' is written above the flute and cello parts. Measure numbers 10, 11, and 12 are indicated below the cello part.

Example 6.7 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.8-12
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer
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The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 35, 36, and 37 of 'Threnody For Cello and Orchestra' by Herbert Howells, orchestrated by Christopher Palmer. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- FLS. (Flute)
- OBS. (Oboe)
- CLTs. (Clarinet)
- Bsns. (Bassoon)
- Hns. (Horn)
- Tprs. (Trumpet)
- Tbns. (Trombone)
- Tuba
- GR.C. (Glockenspiel)
- CELLO (Cello)
- Vln. 1 (Violin I)
- Vln. 2 (Violin II)
- VLA. (Viola)
- VC. (Violoncello)
- CB. (Contrabass)

Key annotations and markings include:

- Measures 35-37:** The Cello part is marked 'Arco' and 'mp'. The string parts (Violins, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass) are marked 'Senza SORD'.
- Measures 35-36:** The Clarinet and Bassoon parts feature 'Soli' markings and 'mezzo' dynamics.
- Measures 36-37:** The Cello part includes a 'Cresc.' marking and a '3' (triple) marking.

Example 6.8 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.35-37
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer
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Handwritten musical score for "Threnody For Cello and Orchestra" by Herbert Howells, measures 25-28. The score includes parts for Flute (FLS.), Oboe (OBS.), Clarinet (C.A.), Guitars (GITS.), Basses (BNS.), Horns (HNC.), Trumpets (TPRS.), Trombones (TBNS.), Tuba (TUBA.), Cello (CELLO), Violin 1 (VLN. 1), Violin 2 (VLN. 2), Viola (VLA.), Violoncello (VC.), and Contrabass (CB.). The score features dynamic markings such as *mp*, *pp*, and *p*, and tempo changes from *RIT.....* to *A TEMPO*. Measure numbers 25, 26, 27, and 28 are clearly marked.

Example 6.9 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.25-28

Threnody For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer

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FLS.

OBS. 1
2
C.A.

CLTS. 1
2
3. CLT.

BONS.

HNS. 1
3
2
4

TPrs. 1
2
3

TBNS. 1
2

TUBA

HARP

CELLO (fizz) notes

VIN. 1

VIN. 2

VLA.

Vc.

CB.

29 30

Example 6.10 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.29-30
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer
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Example 6.11 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.46-47
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer
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The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for an orchestral score. The staves are arranged vertically and include the following instruments from top to bottom: Flute (FLS.), Oboe (OBS.), Clarinet in A (C.A.), Clarinet in Bb (CLTS. B. CLAS.), Bassoon (BONS.), Horn (HNS. 1/2, 3/4), Trumpet (Tprs.), Trombone (TNS. 1/2), Tuba, Timpani (Timp.), Cello, Violin I (VLN. 1), Violin II (VLN. 2), Viola (VLA.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (CB.).
 The score covers measures 48, 49, and 50. Measure 48 shows the beginning of the piece with various instruments. Measure 49 continues the orchestration. Measure 50 features a prominent cello line with the instruction 'Cello' written above it, and a tuba part with the instruction 'Tuba' written below it. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f, ff, mf), articulation (marcato), and performance instructions like 'sonore e pesante' and 'arco'.

Example 6.12 Howells, *Threnody*, mm.48-50
Threnody For Cello And Orchestra

By Herbert Howells

Orchestrated by Christopher Palmer

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over decades. It is important to remember that he fully orchestrated only the *Fantasia*. As mentioned earlier, *Threnody* was written out but never orchestrated. The reason for this incomplete state is unknown, though Palmer speculated that Howells was unwilling to make public such a personal document. Moreover, he had already used the *Fantasia* for his doctoral examination at Oxford, and it had been published by Novello, which might have led him to accept it as a work that could stand alone. One might also argue that the emotional content was nearly exhausted by the end of the *Threnody*, so that the composer had no more to say.

Despite his uncertainty about the concerto's future, Howells composed portions of a finale. He had many years to complete it but declined to do so. As with Mozart's *Requiem*, the third movement of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, Beethoven's sketches for a tenth symphony, or, notoriously, Elgar's "Third Symphony," the interest—musical and commercial—in reconstructing a piece based on fragments should raise pertinent questions about authenticity. Nevertheless, Dr. Jonathan Clinch, who is well acquainted with Howells's music in general and was trained as a cellist, recently realized a complete finale by drawing upon Howells's extant sketches. His commendable efforts cannot be categorically considered as representing Howells's intentions for the movement. The following analysis is based on the general mood evoked by the finale and its main structures. Apart from that, there is little room for conjecture.

Clinch's handiwork incorporates traditional aspects of both scherzo and finale. Clinch casts his finale realization in ternary form and in 2/4 meter,

proceeding at a blistering pace expected of a scherzo. (Interestingly, Elgar's Cello Concerto's fourth movement is also a march, though slower than Clinch's march). The motifs are compact and rapid, composed mostly of sixteenth note units which proceed like a *moto perpetuo* in a fashion similar to Howells's Second Piano Concerto in C Major, Op. 39 (1925). In Clinch's realization the forward motion is punctuated with percussive eighth-note tutti chords in a manner curiously reminiscent of the famous opening chords from Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. Palmer says that, "Of Stravinsky's later works Howells admitted to being moved to tears by the finale of the *Symphony of Psalms*—not once, but regularly.³³¹ The use of constant meter changes and ostinatos throughout the movement further recall Stravinsky. Howells and his contemporaries were initially fascinated by Stravinsky's music, especially the three early ballets. According to Palmer, Howells was particularly attracted to *Petrushka*, which he may well have seen when the Ballets Russes visited London:

"He loved in *Petrushka* the energy, the gadabout, knockabout rhythms (we meet them again in *Merry-Eye* and elsewhere, even in a work of patently non-Russian provenance like the Concerto for Strings), the woven-in folksongs (what composer of Howells' generation was not to some extent affected by folksong?) and the novel harmonic language—not so much the blatantly 'modernistic' use of two keys at once to depict *Petrushka*'s hysteria (or is it schizophrenia—part-human, part-puppet?) as the extraordinary richness and diversity of *diatonic* dissonance, represented both by the fairground music itself and the celebrated 'Danse Russe' for *concertante* piano and orchestra.³³²

³³¹ Palmer, 183n.

³³² Palmer, 183.

The A section of the rondo form into which Clinch casts Howells's sketches demonstrates an awareness of modernism initiated by Stravinsky with *Petrushka* in 1911. (The third movement of Howells's Second Piano Concerto is obviously indebted to the vivacious pandiatonic "Danse Russe" in *Petrushka*.) Hemiolas and syncopation in the finale offer a welcome counterbalance to the sinuous melodies of the *Fantasia* and *Threnody*.

A brief hiatus from the vigor of the A section march occurs in the trio section (RL mm. 169-244). The orchestra accompanies the cello sparsely; Clinch makes sure that the cello soloist is never overwhelmed by the orchestra. Howells himself asserted that he composed his melodic lines according to the outline of the Malvern Hills, which are found in the West Midlands of England.³³³ The geographical shape of those hills undulates but never rises to extreme peaks. The Malvern Hills are low, rolling, verdant, and tranquil hills that stretch for miles in all directions. Howells's long phrase lengths, often step-wise motion, and generally quiet dynamic range replete with subtle crescendos and decrescendos can be said to create a musical analogue to these hills. Despite its placid quality, the cello's slow wandering melody (Example 6.13 and 6.14) evokes a certain emptiness or disconnect, as it does not react to the orchestral accompaniment; each follows its own course and rhythm as two individuals who walk side by side but are lost in their own melancholic thoughts. These are not the pleasant murmurings of the second movement, "By the

³³³ BBC, 1982. "Herbert Howells—Echoes of a Lifetime," by Robert Prizeman, Aired 17 October on BBC Radio.

M **Tranquillo**
♩ = 90

175

181

Example 6.13 Howells and Clinch, *Final Movement*, RL, m.12-RM, m.8
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Final Movement Elaborated By Jonathan Clinch
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188

estinto

PPP

mp

Example 6.14 Howells and Clinch, *Final Movement*, RM, mm.8-14
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra
 By Herbert Howells
 Final Movement Elaborated By Jonathan Clinch
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Brook,” from Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, nor the suave main theme of Brahms's Third Symphony, nor the riverbank of Smetana's *Vltava* from *Má vlast*. Howells pastoralism is enigmatic and lonely.

This pastoral interlude soon flows into a renewed frenzy that characterizes the A section. Rhythmic counterpoint between the cello and orchestra enliven the quicker tempo in the coda (mm.310-333). It is a virtuosic ending in E major to a concerto that has often hovered around E minor. The significance of this key, even though it is obscured by fairly dissonant harmonies, cannot be missed: Elgar's concerto is cast in the same key. Although in a more overtly modernist idiom, Howells's score partakes of the melancholic legacy established by Elgar's concerto.

Gerald Finzi's Cello Concerto

An appreciation of the fragility of mortality provides the key to understanding the character and music of Gerald Finzi (1901-1956). This is not to say that he possessed a morbid outlook, nor is his music pervasively gloomy. On the contrary, Finzi demonstrated a zeal for activity from a young age, defying mortality symbolically through undertaking multiple musical, intellectual, and agricultural pursuits. His life reflected a keen awareness of the evanescent nature of time, one which he acquired as a consequence of early losses in his family and of his friends. According to Diana McVeagh, the sudden deaths of his father, brothers, and his teacher, the gifted composer Ernest Farrar (1885-1918), influenced “his grasp of

how short is life, how precarious is youth.”³³⁴ Finzi’s father had died from cancer when Finzi was almost eight years old, leaving his unstable and flighty mother in the precarious position of caring for five children—Katie, (her eldest), Felix, Douglas, Edgar, and Gerald. As Finzi’s father was part of a wealthy Jewish family that dealt with shipping, they were sufficiently affluent to escape the penury that characterized Howells’s family. However, they were not able to avoid loss. Douglas died of pneumonia in 1912; Felix, who suffered from a weak heart, died from an overdose of sleeping draughts in 1913 (possibly suicide); and Edgar died fighting in the Royal Air Force in 1918. Compounding this last familial loss was the death of Farrar at the Front just a few days later. Farrar was a promising composer as well as Finzi’s cherished first composition teacher, whose death at the age of thirty had a profound impact upon Finzi and upon many others, including Frank Bridge, who, as mentioned earlier in this dissertation, dedicated his *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco for Cello and Orchestra*, to Farrar’s memory.³³⁵ For Finzi, who had already lost three brothers and his father in the course of a few years, the loss of Farrar must have been traumatic indeed. McVeagh writes, “He at the time was devastated, though more by Farrar’s death than by Edgar’s. The bond between a teacher and an eager pupil is close, and Farrar was young enough to be his first real friend, a man whose ideals

³³⁴ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2005), 15.

³³⁵ For more information on Bridge’s *Oration*, see Chapter IV-“Frank Bridge: Modernism and Melancholy.”

became his own.”³³⁶ Farrar had guided the creation of Finzi’s first compositions. Farrar was a truly sympathetic and encouraging pedagogue, answering Finzi’s letters from the Front, introducing him to Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, and recommending Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)³³⁷ as a replacement when he could no longer give Finzi the necessary attention.³³⁸ Rather than being demoralized by the tragedy, however, Finzi channeled his energy into his love for music. Finzi learned at an early age what it meant to be a survivor surrounded by death.

Finzi’s precocious experience of death made life all the more precious, a lesson also shared by many of those who survived the Great War. McVeagh identifies that “the mainspring of Finzi’s devotion to his art was his recognition of his own escape from war’s carnage. All his life he was touched by the pathos of artists who died young.”³³⁹ This perceptive comment links to a tradition of thought purveyed by artists, philosophers, and theologians. Composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Thomas Linley (“the English Mozart”) (1756-

³³⁶ McVeagh, 15.

³³⁷ Francis Jackson, “Bairstow, Edward C(uthbert),” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—). Accessed 15 March 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01811>. Bairstow had a prolific career as an organist, pedagogue, conductor, and composer; he is chiefly remembered today as the composer of a handful of Anglican anthems. Among the various positions he held throughout his life, Bairstow conducted the Leeds Philharmonic Society and was a professor of music at the University of Durham.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

1778),³⁴⁰ Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (“the Spanish Mozart”) (1806-1826),³⁴¹ Vasily Sergeyevich Kalinnikov (1866-1901),³⁴² and Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) all died young without realizing fully their artistic plans. Such deaths reinforced the popular association of the musical prodigy with “premature” death. In turn, this popular view created a myth of a much broader scope that encompassed other sorts of precocious artists. Tragically, there were others who were robbed of their potential by death in later decades on a global scale—the countless youth of the world who perished in wars. Farrar died in the First World War alongside contemporaries such as George Butterworth (1885-1916); others, such as Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), returned too deeply traumatized to take up their careers after the Armistice.

Due to complications of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma that announced itself in the 1950s, Finzi had to confront his own mortality, dying at the age of fifty-five of chickenpox, a childhood illness from which his compromised immune system could

³⁴⁰ Gwilym Beechey and Linda Troost, ed., “Linley, Thomas (ii),” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed 15 March 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/omo/9781561592630.013.90000380319>. Linley was a prodigious British composer and performer of Mozart’s same age. His level of musical ability is judged by scholars to have been commensurate with that of Mozart, and promised much. Since he died at twenty-two in a boating accident, it cannot be known, however.

³⁴¹ Willem de Waal, “Arriaga (y Balzola), Juan Crisóstomo (Jacobo Antonio) de,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed 15 March 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01342>. Arriaga, like Mozart, was already composing large scale pieces in his early teenage years. His intense productivity may have led to his fatal exhaustion and pulmonary infection.

³⁴² Jennifer Spencer, “Kalinnikov, Vasily Sergeyevich,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001—), accessed 15 March 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.14618>. A contemporary of Rimsky-Korsakov, the Russian composer Kalinnikov demonstrated excellent skill at a young age. He struggled with poor health throughout his life, but this did not prevent him from finishing large-scale works such as his landmark first symphony.

not protect him. His composing career lasted until 1956, longer than those composers who perished in the First World War, but still well short of the biblical age of three-score years and ten.

Certainly, a distinction must be made between those veterans who suffered protracted illness or injury that curtailed their productivity, such as E. J. Moeran, whose war-related brain injuries led to periods of derangement due to chronic alcoholism, and those, such as Frank Bridge who died suddenly while in their creative prime. Moeran was aware of the precariousness of his condition, after all, and mourned his steady decline, while Bridge had little or no warning of an early death. Due to the circumstances of his life, however, Finzi was able to identify with both sorts of conditions. Until he was given the somber diagnosis of lymphoma in 1951, he knew that he *could* die, but afterwards Finzi knew that death was not just inevitable but close. Yet, he remained unsurprised by his fate. He had experienced a death-haunted childhood and understood the loss of innocence; even artistic purity must fall away in the face of death. With an admirable resolve, Finzi labored assiduously at composition and, indeed, at anything that gave him joy, including raising two sons. Neither a Christian believer nor a practicing Jew, Finzi nevertheless knew the injunction from Ecclesiastes, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest.”³⁴³ Finzi was an agnostic, although, like Parry,

³⁴³ Ecclesiastes 9:10

Vaughan Williams, Howells, and many other twentieth-century British composers, he was well-versed in the Bible. As there is no separation between the Anglican Church and the British state, and as Anglicanism was at that time woven into the fabric of British life, Finzi often composed anthems suitable for the Anglican liturgy and found no contradiction in doing so.³⁴⁴ Finzi received commissions for a series of religious works, usually at least tinged by Anglican aesthetics, such as his mystical festival anthem *Lo, the full, final sacrifice* (1946), the concert *Magnificat* written for Smith College (1952), and his last large score, *In Terra Pax* (1956).³⁴⁵ Moreover, Finzi took a vested interest in British art and institutions, especially the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which was permeated by references to the Bible and the Anglican liturgy. (Thus the paradox of an agnostic of Jewish heritage composing an extended anthem—one of his most perfectly realized works—about the Eucharist, *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*.) Finzi read continually, collecting a vast library of rare books. Like Elgar's thirst for literature, Finzi reading of an immense amount of poetry over the course of his life was intended to cultivate his intellect and aesthetic sensibility. To this son of Italian-Jewish immigrants, Britain was an adoptive home, and he identified so strongly with every aspect of its culture that he sought to hide, or at least ignore, both his Italian and Sephardic roots.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2002), 397.

³⁴⁵ *In Terra Pax* is a setting for choir and orchestra of the shepherds' story from the Nativity in Luke 2:8-20 framed by excerpts selected from a poem by Robert Bridges (1844-1930).

³⁴⁶ Stephen Banfield, *Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 24-29.

Passionately devoted to preserving the past through period music revivals, Finzi searched for music by obscure composers from the Tudor era through the eighteenth century. He performed these pieces conducting the orchestra that he founded, the Newbury String Players (NSP). In regards to his love of farming, he strove to preserve and reintroduce disappearing varieties of English apples, which he believed contributed to the richness of life. Finzi was indefatigable: he cared for refugees during World War II; during the war he worked with success in the shipping office of the War Ministry; he promoted and protected Gurney's poetic and musical legacy; and he stayed informed about new musical trends through his friendship with numerous contemporaries, including Vaughan Williams, Edmund Rubbra, Herbert Howells, Howard Ferguson, and Arthur Bliss.

Finzi always felt there was more for him to do, especially in his last few perilous years, but not enough time to do it all, so he filled his time with work. In part, his attitude was one that came from his strong rationalism, even about death, as he elucidated in a moving letter written to his German friend William Busch.³⁴⁷ Finzi declared, "I'm fundamentally a rationalist (A Hardyite, if you like, - disbelieving in Beliefs and accepting only ideas and feelings. In this respect Hardy's compassionate outlook is the one, above all, that I appreciate)."³⁴⁸ As Diana McVeagh has overserved, Finzi demonstrated a strong predilection for Thomas

³⁴⁷ Letter dated October 10, 1940.

³⁴⁸ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 174.

Hardy's philosophy of life, and he set many of the writer's poems to music in numerous songs that are among the best written by any twentieth-century British composer. Hardy's attitude toward the past paralleled Finzi's compulsion towards remembrance. Finzi's antiquarianism is key to understanding his music's melancholic moments. As McVeagh writes eloquently, "For Hardy, the past was a quarry: poem after poem celebrates a memory, more precious and vivid than the present." Although Finzi was not one to indulge regrets, he turned to Hardy's poetry "concerned with the power of memory to crystallize the past." His purpose became a "romantic rescue of the neglected, the obscure, the unfulfilled, the disadvantaged—whether apple trees, eighteenth-century worthies, young artists struggling in unhelpful circumstances, or killed before their prime."³⁴⁹

The harsh realism found in Hardy's novels such as *The Return of the Native*, *Jude the Obscure*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Far from the Madding Crowd*, most of which might best be described as tragi-comic, filled with the absurdity and dreadfulness of life, evoke a sense of melancholy even as the reader of those novels observes how the tragic flaw in one character or frustrated relationship of another can set in motion the events that lead to another's joy. This kind of harsh reality—Hardy called it "hap"—preoccupied Finzi as well, as his late cello concerto attests. This concerto was his most ambitious large-scale instrumental work,³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 175.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 238.

demonstrating his burgeoning late-blooming mastery of form and development that he had honed after many years of searching, though after he finished it, his time on earth was up.

Finzi's Concerto in A Minor for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 40 (1955), arose from circumstances not uncommon for artists accustomed to dreaming of possible future works while involved in creating an entirely different body of work. Disclosing his dream of composing a cello concerto to William Busch in a letter from November 19, 1940, Finzi wrote, "I'm delighted to hear about the cello work, an instrument I love. In fact, a cello concerto has long been at the back of my mind, one of the many things started then put into cold storage."³⁵¹ At the time of this correspondence, Busch allegedly had been at work on his own cello concerto (1940-1941); mention of it must have prompted Finzi's confession. McVeagh observes that Finzi had in fact begun sketching a concerto in the 1930s.³⁵² Whatever the reason for pausing his work on this project, Finzi's interest in writing such a concerto persisted. There is reason to believe that his interest remained strong due to his familiarity with the cello. He regularly promoted cello works dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by programming them with the Newbury String Players (NSP). The list of cello concertos performed included scores by

³⁵¹ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi Letters: 1915-1956*, 421.

³⁵² McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 238.

Leonardo Leo (1694-1794),³⁵³ John Garth (1721-1810),³⁵⁴ Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Obscure though some of these pieces were at the time, their inclusion in the orchestra's repertory demonstrates that Finzi valued the instrument and genre. He paid particular attention to reviving the English composer Garth's cello concertos that, Finzi's romantic antiquarianism aside, were unusual for the eighteenth century. According to McVeagh, the cello-concerto genre was rare in England during the 1760s; thus, given the predominantly accompanimental status of the cello until the nineteenth century, when European composers began featuring the instrument for solos, Finzi took an artistic risk in programming these pieces.³⁵⁵ He took that risk in the same spirit that he had when he endeavored to preserve English apple varieties, fearing that any "good thing should disappear."³⁵⁶ (In addition, Finzi's son Christopher, known as "Kiffer," studied the cello.) As a result, his compositional and performative choices were eclectic and occasionally curious, but these older cello concertos were beautiful overall and, as

³⁵³ Leo was an accomplished Neapolitan composer who composed six cello concertos among many other works for theatre and the church. For more information, see Hucke, Helmut, Rosa Cafiero, ed., "Leo, Leonardo [Lionardo] (Ortensio Salvatore de [di])," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001-), accessed 13 April 2022: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16416>. Finzi worked with the distinguished cellist Anna Shuttleworth (1927-2021), who had studied at the Royal College of Music. She went over the slow movement of his cello concerto while he was composing it.

³⁵⁴ Garth was a British composer and organist who was a friend of Charles Avison (1709-1770). He taught cello and composed six cello concertos following the three-movement scheme found in Vivaldi concertos. For more information, see Sadie, Stanley and Simon D.I. Fleming ed., "Garth, John," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001-), accessed 13 April 2022: <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.10696>.

³⁵⁵ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 206.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

regards his own music, Finzi possessed a decided and attractive lyric gift: he could write a tune. Finzi was keenly aware that ignorance, neglect, and finiteness were the triumvirate against survival and propagation of “good things.” He felt compelled to preserve these scores, a compulsion that became more urgent after his diagnosis in 1951.

There is a quality to Finzi’s late music that suggests that he knew that he was engaged in “a race against time.” However, he was not predisposed to engage in hurried and shoddy artistry: rather, he worked from a deep conviction that life was precious and that whatever work he could accomplish within an ever-diminishing span of time he was allotted was worthwhile. He was also aided by rigorous self-discipline and an ingrained work ethic. Had this not been the case, it is reasonable to suppose that he could not have finished the cello concerto at the same time he was composing his choral work *In Terra Pax* over the course of four years. These two superb scores, both among his finest works, were completed in addition to his other professional, familial, and agricultural activities. Compounding his preoccupations at the time, the extended and complex cello concerto demanded that he summon all his technical prowess in composing a multi-movement work that cohered tonally and thematically. McVeagh explains that

Finzi had little use for Classical long-range tonality, for balanced repetition, or for the architecture of structured harmonic planes. That was one reason why he did not rate Mozart highly, and why he found it harder to compose quick or long movements than slow or short ones.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 262.

Much of Finzi's output consists of fine song cycles—many using Hardy's poetry—and single-movement choral works, but few "lengthy works—no symphony, opera, or piano sonata."³⁵⁸ Prior to the cello concerto, he had composed a notably unsuccessful violin concerto (1928) and the charming and expert Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, Op. 31 (1949): the clarinet concerto neatly demonstrated that he had attained a level of experience in composing in the three-movement concerto structure. The cello concerto's proportions exceeded those of the clarinet concerto, especially in the second movement, and testify to Finzi's growing mastery of large-scale forms. Despite studying with various distinguished teachers, Finzi, who possessed a decided stubborn streak in his character, was a determined autodidact who composed at his own pace and taught himself through exposure to old and new music. Like Elgar, Finzi's autodidacticism enabled him to develop a remarkably idiosyncratic style whose lyricism and use of tonality differed from the often virtuosic modernist techniques espoused by some of his contemporaries, such as Frank Bridge and his precocious pupil Benjamin Britten. Finzi's deliberate pace meant that he had technical lacunae he overcame only gradually. McVeagh writes that "He took almost a pride in his 'slow mind' and admired late developers—Parry and Vaughan Williams—whose maturity was hard-won. He was just reaching a point where he had learnt to integrate virtuosity into his own style, as in his Cello Concerto."³⁵⁹ Therefore, Finzi dedicated himself to

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid

what he believed was important and lasting, rather than to the ephemeral fashions that drew the superficial plaudits of critics.

Since Finzi, like Elgar, insisted on fancying himself a traditional “English gentleman,” his music retained a basically romantic aesthetic at odds with much of the British music of the 1930s, most of which leaned towards Continental models. Composers of “pastoral” music, with its nationalism, academism, and intimate connotation with the RCM fell out of fashion with critical opinion as the century progressed. By the time that he composed his cello concerto, Finzi began to experience what Elgar had experienced when he composed his cello concerto—a loss of popularity. Martin Cooper, critic of the *Musical Times*, writing about Finzi’s 1950 *Intimations of Immortality* for Choir and Orchestra, Op. 29, deemed Finzi’s music as both old-fashioned and irrelevant.³⁶⁰ Finzi’s lyricism was derived from the pastoral composers, such as his teacher Farrar, who had flourished decades earlier, but to dismiss him as irrelevant was both disingenuous and short-sighted. As often occurs in artistic movements, popular opinion is devoted to novelties for a time, and from the late 1940s through 1970 Britten occupied the limelight, abetted by a formidable publicity apparatus run by his publisher, Boosey and Hawkes, and the music festival that he had founded with Peter Pears at Aldeburgh. Britten had been trained under progressive composers such as Bridge and Ireland, who were then in

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 191. This remark resembles Vaughan Williams’ tongue-in-cheek criticism of Herbert Howells: “Sometimes I think you are a reincarnation of a lesser Tudor composer.” Vaughan Williams did not like ostentation, which Howells displayed through his adoption of an aristocratic accent and fine clothing. He also did not appreciate cleverness, leveling this criticism at Howells for its technical proficiency as well as at Bridge.

the forefront of the development of English musical modernism. Finzi could not compete with Britten's connections or influence: his aesthetic refuted much of Britten's aesthetic. Finzi embraced past styles for their own sake rather than as decoration, as can be found in Britten's coronation opera, *Gloriana* (1953), stubbornly asserting the authenticity of his aesthetic vision. As will be discussed below, Finzi's cello concerto reflects Baroque, Mendelssohnian, Brahmsian, and art-song elements, combined with stylistic features drawn from Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and William Walton. It is as far from modernist austerity of Britten's Cello Symphony, Op. 63 (1963), as can be imagined.

As much as British music reflects melancholy through pastoral signifiers, their composers also use themes and styles that are seemingly unrelated to mourning (or, at times seemingly joyous) as a psychological defense against that old "English Malady." Not all melancholic music need be overly melancholic in sound, however. Beethoven composed his ebullient and refulgent Cello Sonata in A Major, Op. 69, "in tears," while, as noted above, Finzi created his passionate, life-affirming cello concerto literally in the shadow of death.

Of the three movements that comprise Finzi's cello concerto, the tone of the first is overtly tragic. Finzi uses a plethora of musical devices in order to create a mood of foreboding. Finzi imbues this sonata form movement with tension and unrelenting drama. Through the use of a trill, the orchestral introduction (Example 6.15) presents the turbulent main theme. Although this trill figure initially seems ornamental, it is later revealed as a recurrent motif that permeates the movement in

I

Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = c.84$

Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = c.84$

Example 6.15 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R0, mm.1-7
 Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi
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a manner reminiscent of Brahms's First Piano Concerto in D Minor, Op. 15 (1858). The use of elements from older music is not at all unusual in Finzi's musical language. As discussed above, Finzi was an avid connoisseur of obscure Tudor, Baroque, and early-Classical composers; he knew the standard Romantic repertory in detail.

In addition, he disseminated early music through the programs of the Newbury String Players, including much eighteenth-century music. It is unsurprising, therefore, that ornamentation in the Classical style can be heard throughout a great deal of Finzi's own music. A great deal of this music was unknown in the 1940s and 50s, and a great deal of it, e.g., the music of John Stanley (1712-1786), is not widely known today. So the trill figure in Finzi's concerto may have had an origin in earlier music. However, in the case of this score, a graceful ornament is transformed into something dramatic and even menacing. Finzi's evocation of the past is not isolated solely to allusions to Baroque or Classical music: the harmonic progressions underpinning the exposition's first and second subjects are reminiscent of late-Romantic composers such as Brahms and twentieth-century composers such as Ernest Bloch and Maurice Ravel. Although Finzi never studied at the Royal College of Music—the closest he came was private counterpoint lessons with R. O. Morris (1886-1948), a superb technician as well as Vaughan Williams's brother-in-law—he followed the careers of such RCM graduates as Arthur Bliss (1891-1975), Howard Ferguson (1908-1999), and Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986).

Finzi's assimilation of Brahms was not unusual for a composer fascinated with the Brahmsian music of Sir Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918), who became director of the RCM in 1895. What is unusual are Finzi's overt allusions to the music of other composers throughout the first movement. In the introduction, a rhapsodic sixteenth-note passage in the cello solo (Example 6.16) recalls the denouement of the middle section of Gabriel Faure's *Élégie*. A passage recalling the texture of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* occurs in passing (Example 6.17). Finzi admired Vaughan Williams's music intensely, and the "Englishness" that he rightly detected in the older composer's music explains Finzi's deep attraction to and knowledge of Vaughan Williams's scores. Finzi sought to announce, and perhaps confirm, his own Englishness through constant allusion to aspects of Vaughan Williams's style, such as modality, the use of folk song, and frequent homages to the works of Tudor composers. However, the melody (Example 6.18) that follows immediately after Finzi's allusion to the *Tallis Fantasia* seems to combine the style of Vaughan Williams with that of Delius, who was one of Vaughan Williams's *bête noires*.³⁶¹ Interestingly, Finzi uses the dynamic trochaic rhythm known as a "Scotch snap" prominently in the main theme, which Max Bruch (1838-1920), like many other European composers, used as a signifier for Scottish music in his *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra, Op.46 (1880).

³⁶¹ See Chapter III-"Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer."

6

Oboe (Ob.)
 Clarinet in A (Cl. in A)
 Bassoon (Bsn.)
 Horn in F (Hn. in F)
 Trumpet in C (Tpt. in C)
 Trombone (Tbn.)
 Tuba (Tuba)
 Timpani (Timp.)
 Solo Vc.
 Violin I (VI. I)
 Violin II (VI. II)
 Viola (Vla.)
 Violoncello (Vc.)
 Double Bass (Db.)

Example 6.16 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R5, m.10-R6, m.2

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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The image shows a page of a musical score for a cello concerto. The score is for measures 6-8, with measure 10 highlighted in a black box. The instruments listed are Fl. 1, Cl. in A (1 and 2), Bsn. 2, Hn. in F (1, 2 and 3, 4), Solo Vc., VI. I, VI. II, Vla. div., Vc., and Db. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *ppp*, *pp*, and *Solo*. The tempo is marked $\frac{12}{8}$. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Example 6.17 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R9, mm.6-8

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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Finzi's allusions in the concerto include conspicuous instances of two other national musical styles, namely those of Italy and Spain. A triplet ornament appears briefly (Example 6.19) before the cadenza, foreshadowing the use of this rhythmic pattern in the third movement. At the end of the cadenza, a double-stopped section (Example 6.20) evokes Spain. (It might be recalled that Finzi's family were Sephardic Jews, who, expelled from Spain in 1492, made their way to Italy encouraged by Pope Alexander VI.) It is easy to attribute this Italian-Spanish writing for the cello to Boccherini, who was a prominent Italian composer

The image shows a page of a musical score for the Cello Concerto I, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi, specifically measures 18 through 21. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves for each instrument. The instruments listed on the left are: Flutes (1, 2), Oboes (1, 2), Clarinets in A (1, 2), Bassoons (1, 2), Horns in F (1, 2, 3, 4), Trumpets in C (1, 2), Trombones (1, 2, 3), Tubas, Timpani, Solo Cello, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. A box highlights the first four measures of the score, which correspond to measures 18-21. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (e.g., *f*, *mf*, *ff*, *dim*), and articulation marks (e.g., *unis*, *pizz*). The measure number '18' is printed in a box at the beginning of the first staff.

Example 6.19 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R18, m.1-4
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Example 6.20 Finzi, Cello Concerto I. R19, m.34-45

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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during the Classical era as well as virtuoso cellist who spent most of his career in Spain. Boccherini's *oeuvre* often reflects elements of Spanish folksong. Finzi does so in the finale of his concerto, albeit fleetingly. This was not unprecedented historically, for numerous European composers were fascinated by Spanish music, such as Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Bizet, and Debussy. British composers were not excluded: among Elgar's compositions are his early *Spanish Serenade*, his *Sevillana* for orchestra, and his unfinished opera, *The Spanish Lady*. Although Finzi composed his concerto immediately after the Second World War when composers were exhibiting avant-garde preferences, he adhered to his convictions and ignored fashion.

Consisting of a collection of English, Spanish, and Italian musical signifiers, Finzi's allusions reveal a broad taste. One would be remiss, however, to ignore the nostalgic ethos that the signifiers represent and their inclusion contributes to the

sense of tragedy that haunts the concerto as a whole. Each signifier belongs to a bygone musical era, but not in the ironic neoclassical manner that rose to prominence after the First World War, but rather in a retrospective way that glances backward towards earlier periods with a kind of nostalgic sadness and even pain. Unlike Vaughan Williams in his overtly modernist Fourth and Sixth Symphonies, or his friends Bliss and Ferguson, Finzi never completely repudiated nineteenth-century aesthetics. Central to his approach was tonal lyricism, a facet of his work that contrasted with such composers as Britten, Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989), or Elizabeth Lutyens (1906-1983).

After all, Finzi was primarily a composer of songs and choral music—the basis of his style was the human voice. McVeagh, Trevor Hold, and others have justly lauded Finzi's gift for composing for voices, a gift evident throughout *In Terra Pax*. His trove of song cycles and art songs has entered into the standard repertory of singers around the world. The majority of his orchestral works and chamber music reflect his essentially vocal approach. Additionally, for someone who never composed a film score, Finzi's music has a curiously cinematic quality, in that its objective is to communicate affect through instantly comprehensible means. An instance of this quality occurs at the recapitulation of the cello concerto's first movement, where the orchestra plays a truncated version of the primary theme that is immediately followed by the cello playing the movement's second subject. Soon after, the violins enter with a countermelody that creates a foreground and background effect utilized in film scores. Whereas modernist composers such as

Stravinsky rejected Romanticism, Finzi continued to cultivate it as unabashedly as if it was one of his ancient apple trees. In his concerto, at least, Finzi can be identified as an heir to Elgar: both of their concertos lament in a way replete with Romantic gestures. This similarity notwithstanding, Finzi's lamentation is permeated with a dark, fatalism reminiscent of Hardy's novels that is removed from Elgar's resignation and sadness. The coda of Finzi's opening only reinforces the sense of fatalism and despair. In hindsight, it is hard not to regard the ending of the first movement as a portent of the composer's own imminent demise as it convulses in towards a sudden brutal final cadence.

In the second movement of his concerto, Finzi concentrates the melancholy and pathos of the entire score: it is as if the first and last movements function as the side panels of an altarpiece, with the slow movement as the central point of focus. Chronologically, the second movement was completed first, as Finzi finished it in 1951. Finzi had worked on the score with an uncharacteristic desultoriness until Sir John Barbirolli, the renowned British conductor who had started as a virtuoso cellist, commissioned the score, promising a prestigious premiere during the 1956 Cheltenham Festival. This commission was intertwined with the diagnosis of the lymphoma that Finzi received around the same time. Finzi's doctors accurately gave him five to ten years more to live. He underwent a course of radiation treatment to slow the progress of the disease which weakened him significantly. The result was the opposite of Howell's experience: each treatment brought him nearer death. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Finzi's immune system was compromised, making

him susceptible to other illnesses. McVeagh writes, "In the dark days of January 1952, encouraged by John Russell, Gerald began scoring the slow movement of his early Piano Concerto, and then the slow movement of a Cello Concerto, which Anna Shuttleworth tried over with him...X-ray treatments and his sons' playing for the first time with the Newbury String Players were cheering."³⁶² Everything suddenly became urgent. With courage and resolve, Finzi summoned enough energy to compose the cello concerto. Finzi poured immense passion into the work. Finzi knew that the slow movement was an elegy—for himself. His friends noticed the quality of this score, and in 1955, Bliss complimented Finzi in a letter: "I knew the elegiac second [movement] would sound beautiful & moving & it did."³⁶³ Furthermore, Bliss recognized the elegiac quality of the concerto. Ferguson also alluded to the movement's profound expression of sorrowful love and marred beauty: "I think the music is heartbreakingly beautiful but that formally and emotionally it overbalances the rest of the work."³⁶⁴ Ferguson's critique conveys his own aesthetic judgement, but what is of interest is what its "overbalancing" says of the overwhelming emotional impact of this central elegy. The melancholy expressed there is all the more effective because the listener is not distracted by an elaborate, long opening movement. Finzi knew exactly what he was doing in creating the formal design of this concerto. Barbirolli commented to Finzi in 1956

³⁶² McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 203.

³⁶³ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: Complete Letters*, 942-944.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 944.

that, "I still think the Concerto lovely & I felt tears in my eyes in the slow movement."³⁶⁵

Who dares to judge the music of a dying man? Dmitri Shostakovich composed his last work, the Sonata for viola and piano, Op. 147, while his very life was draining away. Shostakovich managed, like Finzi, to leave a message behind about the all-too-human experience of dying. Though not composed on his deathbed, Finzi's cello concerto's second movement also conveys both the melancholy and renunciation of living in the valley of the shadow. Certain segments in the movement fall into a palpable gloom, counter-balancing the serenity of the lyrical main theme. The predominantly homophonic texture emphasizes the melody, which the cello takes up and carries as if it was a swan singing its last song.

Interestingly, Finzi's often-restrained orchestration creates an intimacy redolent of chamber music. In the slow movement, for example, Finzi creates a trio amidst the orchestra: the cello, French horn, and clarinet weave a polyphonic web around each other (Example 6.21 and 6.22). The solo clarinet prepares the entrance of the cello with the melody, a gesture that Finzi repeats before the final statement of the main theme (Example 6.23). The prominent combination of the clarinet and cello recalls Brahms's similar pairing in his late Trio in A Minor for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, Op. 114 (1891), a work that belongs to that composer's last years and was written when Brahms often fell ill. In his concerto, Finzi also alludes to the

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 982.

The image shows a page of a musical score for a cello concerto, starting at measure 25. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments included are Flute I and II, Oboe I, Horns I and II (with the second horn part in F), Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello (Cello), and Double Bass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score features various dynamic markings: *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), and *dim.* (diminuendo). Performance instructions include *Solo* for the Horns, *con sord.* (con sordina) for the Horns, *div.* (divisi) for the Violins and Viola, *unis.* (unisono) for the Violins, Viola, and Cello, and *pizz.* (pizzicato) for the Double Bass. The music consists of melodic lines for the woodwinds and strings, with some rests and dynamic changes throughout the passage.

Example 6.21 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R2, m.5-10

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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second movement of Brahms's Symphony No.4 in E Minor, Op. 98 (1884-5), as well

as to the first movement of Brahms's Sonata No. I in G Major for Violin and Piano,

Op. 73 (1878-9). Finzi's allusions to Brahms function as a backward glance at the

late nineteenth-century music that he loved. The use of the French horn calls

suggests the irretrievable pastoral world. Closer in time are passages that recall

Fauré and Elgar—voices of the Belle Époque and the Edwardian age. Fauré's *Élégie*

again is heard in six measures after rehearsal 10 (Example 6.24). The *Élégie*'s

ternary B section features a "melting" of feelings in a cascade of sixteenth notes

before recapitulating the melody. Elgar's cello concerto's second movement appears

through a melodic fragment (Example 6.25). Elgar as a composer had lost some of

The image shows a page of a musical score for a cello concerto. The score is arranged in two systems of staves. The top system includes Flute 1 (Fl. 1), Clarinet in A (Cl. in A, 1 and 2), Bassoon 1 (Bsn. 1), Horns 1 and 2 in F (Hn. 1, 2 in F), and Solo Violoncello (Solo Vc.). The bottom system includes Violin 1 (VI. I), Violin 2 (VI. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score features various musical notations, including dynamics (dim., p, pp, ppp), articulation (ritard., 3 a tempo), and performance instructions (1. Solo, div., arco, pizz.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 6.22 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R2, m.6-R3, m.4

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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his popularity after World War One, and by 1951, he was deemed a composer of a bygone era. By including Elgar among Fauré, Brahms, and his own art song, Finzi summarizes the world he cherished, which no longer existed for the general populace and would soon no longer be his.

The second movement intermingles joy and sorrow. The joyful main melody is only answered by a secondary theme that appears immediately after the classical cadence that ends the exposition. It proceeds in a wistful vein until the Elgarian fragment diverts its trajectory to an ominous low point (Example 6.26) that pauses

The image shows a page of a musical score for Example 6.23, measures 14-18. The score is for a symphony orchestra and includes parts for Flute (Fl. 1, 2), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in A (Cl. in A), Bassoon (Bsn. 1, 2), Horn in F (Hn. in F), Violin I (VI. I), Violin II (VI. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.). The music is in 3/4 time, marked 'Tempo I' with a tempo of c. 48. The key signature has three flats. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, and *ppp*, and performance instructions like 'express.' and 'rit.'. The first measure of the excerpt is measure 14, which is boxed and labeled '14 Tempo I'. The score ends with a first ending bracket and a 'rit.' marking.

Example 6.23 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R14, mm.1-8

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the essentially 12/8 (3/4 x 4) pastoral lilt. This is an emotional pivot point. The melody draws itself out gradually, aspiring higher and higher in the cello over the following measures (mm. 69-76). The despair it extricated itself out of belonged to the first movement, and the second movement attempts to remain above that by meditating on the warmth, serenity, and nobility that constitute joy.³⁶⁶ It returns to the main theme in various voicings and ranges, as though not wishing to let go, yet,

³⁶⁶ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers*. Woodbridge, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2002. "[Hubert] Parry also bequeathed not only a contrapuntally based diatonic idiom but also that 'nobilmente' strain which so often occurs in Finzi's music." Hubert Parry (1848-1918) was a composer and a teacher at the RCM. He is often remembered for his choral piece "Jerusalem" (1804).

68 [6] *Meno mosso* (♩ = c.44)

Fl. I

Cl. in A

Bsn.

Tbnc.

Solo Vc.

[6] *Meno mosso* (♩ = c.44)

VI. I

VI. II

Vla. div.

Vc. div.

Db.

Example 6.26 Finzi, Cello Concerto II. R6, mm.1-5

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in the end, acknowledging it must. In what might be described as a musical loss of conscience, the closing material (R15 mm. 1-12; mm. 168-179) transforms from the melody into an ascending destabilization of tonality by means of augmented and diminished intervals, which finally cadence in a peaceful tonic chord. Finzi thus transcribes the mysterious serenity that often precedes death.

The third movement is a playfully joyous ending to a concerto that has distanced itself progressively from tragedy. Certainly, it shares the first movement's pathos at some key moments, but the overall mood is of festivity—a contrasting

traditional, one used by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) in his Concerto No.2 in E Minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 64 (1844), Max Bruch's (1838-1920) Concerto No.1 in G Minor for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 26 (1868), and Brahms's Concerto No.1 in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77 (1878). All those concertos are set in a minor key and begin with serious, brooding first movements, which are followed by adagio reflective movements, and culminate in highly energetic, bright, and triumphant third movements. Finzi's Cello Concerto has an ominous first movement, a melancholic second movement, and a jocund third movement that recalls William Walton's brilliant style from *Crown Imperial* and *Belshazzar's Feast* (Example 6.27). Moreover, the third movement is a rondo. These traditional elements are not merely adhered to in an abstract, structural manner, as they often are in other modern works. The melodic and harmonic content is still aligned with a Romantic idiom, making the work a successor to Elgar's concerto.

Apart from these similarities, the rondo is far removed stylistically from the first and second, sounding almost spontaneous. Perhaps Finzi sensed the need of some levity after the deeply moving second movement and composed this Italianate dance.³⁶⁷ Bryon Adams suggests this serves as a testament to Finzi's heritage. While Finzi identified with being British, he remembered his family roots. He retained his family name, not attempting to anglicize it. Finzi was a boy when his family immigrated to England. Therefore, he was raised as a British youth normally

³⁶⁷ Walter Clark suggested that the rondo was like a polonaise.

identity, which may explain partially his zeal to enhance his Britishness. Hence, the overt Italianate gesture of the cello concerto, its climax being the rondo, evinces his willing personal acknowledgement of his last name. This Italianate background does not nullify the rondo's aesthetic connection to the rest of the concerto. Memories of sorrow permeates it also. The sparse opening features the same trio of cello, French horn, and clarinet from the preceding movement. Similar to a group of musicians who are warming up for their final number, each instrument plays an "impromptu" harmonic progression. The cello, of course, is the star of the show, but the communal aspect of this dance subsumes its voice. Finzi did not appreciate virtuosity for its own sake, deriding pieces that fell into that trap. Motifs heard previously in the concerto appear here. The trill motif from the first movement (Example 6.28) and the distinct turn (Example 6.29) recur. Finzi only quotes those. He does not dwell on them during the development, signifying that there is no time for melancholic reminiscence. Approaching the expected final repetition of the A theme, however, the mood changes suddenly when the cello melody introduces a sighing motive (Example 6.30). It begins to diffuse the energy of the dance before the triumphant recapitulation, as if the main dancer is becoming exhausted. What ensues is a rush to the end, for the dance must close properly. A last vigorous push by the cello and horns—no time for the clarinet's lyricism—brings the orchestra to an alternative A section that is a scherzo in the vein of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol*, Op. 34 (1887). The melodic material yields to rapid finger work that

The image shows a page of a musical score for Example 6.28. The score is for a Cello Concerto, III, R7, measures 7-12. The instruments listed are Fl. 1, Cl. 2 in A, Bon. 1, Solo Vc., VI. I, VI. II, Vla., Vc. div., and Db. The Solo Vc. staff is highlighted with a black box. The score includes dynamics such as *p*, *pp*, and *un.* (unison). The Solo Vc. part features a melodic line with a trill-like figure in measure 10, which is the focus of the analysis.

Example 6.28 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R7, mm.7-12

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explodes in a tutti burst in A major. A tragic ending has been averted; the bow is taken, and all rejoice.

Yet, the rondo was not finished formally. Its potential to continue *ad libitum* was cut short. Reading it from a biographical perspective, Finzi's own life was curtailed by his disease. After the trauma of the devastating diagnosis lessens, thoughts turn to the beauty of life and relationships. In time, the reality of a death sentence recedes into the background and melancholy is supplanted by ebullience momentarily. But no one can live indefinitely with this reality without succumbing to mental and emotional exhaustion. The cello's brief mournfulness in the rondo creates a musical analogy of this fact. McVeagh attests that Finzi, with the help of his

Example 6.29 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R2, mm.2-5

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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269 **ritard.** **14** **Meno mosso** $\text{♩} = c.60$

Cl. 1, 2 in A
Fl. 1, 2
Solo Vc.
Vln. I
Vln. II div.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

sempre crescendo
unis.
pizz.

ritard. **14** **Meno mosso** $\text{♩} = c.60$

arco (div.)

275 **ritard. poco**

Cl. in A
Bsn. 1, 2
Hn. 1, 2 in F
Solo Vc.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

ritard. poco

pp
ff
arco
pizz.

Example 6.30 Finzi, Cello Concerto, III. R13, m.14-R14, m.9

Cello Concerto, Op. 40 by Gerald Finzi

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wife, endured his condition bravely and stoically.³⁶⁸ Finzi strove to continue living as he had always, engaged constantly in musical activity as well as his other interests. He produced the score of the cello concerto during this time, and the haste noted by Jeremy Dale Roberts as visible in its score connotes his dedication to doing as much as possible.³⁶⁹ Ostensibly, he had a deadline from the festival to meet. But he also had a weightier deadline, and a work of this magnitude would take an uncertain amount of time to complete. As he made progress on the concerto, he grew physically weaker from the X-ray treatments, making finishing ever-more urgent. Thus, impending death accelerated the concerto's completion.

Classical elegies unfold from sorrow to joy to sorrow. Finzi's work likewise begins with sorrow and ends with joy. However, the melancholy only recedes into the background as living distracts one from the reality, which will eventually assert itself. In response, Finzi suggests that we celebrate in the present, for there is no music in the grave.

Conclusion

Howells and Finzi had very distinct compositional languages. Their approaches to melancholy, Britishness, pastoralism, and the cello differed substantially. Finzi wrote in a Romantic concerto style for the cello, infusing his

³⁶⁸ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 198. "They [Finzi and Joy] both felt that the quality of life, not its length, was what mattered. 'The great thing now was to do as much as you could before you went.'"

³⁶⁹ Gerald Finzi, *Cello Concerto, Op.40* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1956), v. This is mentioned in the editorial notes.

music with British and pastoral musical references (i.e., quotes of Vaughan Williams). Howells composed in a modernist style that was inspired by British modernists like Delius and Bridge. Instead of musical allusions, Howells absorbed those styles, developing his musical ideas over longer spans. This makes the influences subtler than that of Finzi's. Hence, in this respect, Howells is more Delian. He basks in melancholy as Delius does in his cello works, sharing some of the same harmonies and melodic shapes. Nevertheless, for Howells, melancholy is the object in itself. He mourns for mourning's sake, whereas Delius mourns the transience of beauty. The very opening motive of Howells concerto is a pronounced sigh in the cello's high range that seems to respond to some previous statement, some deeply moving situation, or some stirring memory. The cello thus fulfills the role of the one who confides. Howells's confession pertains to loss caused by the death of someone else, evinced by the *Threnody* second movement. It is not the character who has died, although a part of him died with the deceased, but rather another cherished individual. Given the overriding melancholy of the three movements, the music exudes an aura of inconsolable grief. The energetic passages, in their relentless pauses, runs, and syncopations, bely cheer. They are coldly virtuosic. Yes, life continues and distracts us by its activity, but the grief still lurks under the still waters. Grief in Finzi's concerto predominates in the first movement but less so in the second and third. He confronts the sad reality with stoic nobility in the first, passionate affection in the second, and jubilation in the third, never fully forgetting the presence of death, but refusing to yield to despair.

Both Howells and Finzi lost what was precious to them and composed cello works that mourn their grievous experiences. One was immediately public and the other problematically private. One was conventional and the other unconventional. Just as all people grieve, but each does so differently, the melancholic expression of both concerti engage different musical practices. This may be said of British cello concertos in general. However, Howells's and Finzi's works set a clear point of divergence in approaching the "English Malady." Finzi acknowledges and surmounts pain through music. Howells internalizes and memorializes loss. It is the difference between celebrating life and enshrining sorrow. But where heartfelt mourning is concerned, the cello appeals to both.

Chapter VII

Visions and Vignettes of British Musical Melancholy

The preceding chapters have dealt in detail with selected British composers and their cello works that exemplify their individual expressions of melancholia, “The English Malady.” As in Burton’s extensive survey, some examples of melancholy are notable and expansive to a degree that they demand prolonged explanations. Other examples are less complex, as the precedence established facilitates a more expedient explanation. The process of contextualizing, analyzing, and assessing how the cello concertos by Elgar, Delius, Bridge, Howells, and Finzi convey melancholy and mourning has transformed their pieces into points of reference that can be used to study later cello works written in a similar vein. By comparing their facets with those of following works for cello by Moeran, Rubbra, Holst, Vaughan Williams, and Walton, one notes their similarities, certainly, but, more importantly, their nuances. Every case Burton used to expostulate on melancholy in his attempt to identify its causes, consequences, and cure was unique and added to a richer understanding of the “malady.” Likewise, every piece for the cello studied in this dissertation confirms that melancholic expression in music is just as nuanced and ultimately relatable, whether composed in an early or late modernist style. Therefore, the survey of works—musical vignettes of melancholy—in this chapter demonstrates that the need to express melancholy in a traditional manner remains consistent in twentieth-century British music.

Ernest John Moeran

After his marriage to the cellist Peers Coetmore (1905-1976) in 1943, E.J. Moeran (1894-1950) expressed his sense of emotional renewal in two of his best compositions, the Cello Concerto (1945) and the Cello Sonata (1947),³⁷⁰ both of which he dedicated to Coetmore.³⁷¹ Moeran composed these scores at a pivotal time in his musical career, as he attained a new level of artistic success.³⁷²

Between 1929 and 1943, Moeran, who was a wounded veteran of the First World War, recuperated most of his musical imagination and skills after a protracted period of dissolute friendship with composer and occultist Peter Warlock (1894-1930, pseudonym of Philip Heseltine).³⁷³ According to biographer Geoffrey

³⁷⁰ Maxwell, Ian, "E.J. Moeran," In *Grove Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed 31 October, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.48243>. Moeran had met Coetmore briefly in 1930 and became reacquainted with her in 1943. Maxwell explains that, "Coetmore's legacy was the inspiration of a number of works for the cello that stand as some of Moeran's most inventive and heartfelt music."

³⁷¹ Moeran had desired to also form an artistic relation Coetmore and consulted with her on the cello works. British composers Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, and Frank Bridge had also undertaken a collaboration with the cellists who ultimately performed their works, although their relationships with them were warm and professional, as far as can be discerned. Beatrice Harrison helped both Elgar and Delius with their respective pieces that featured the cello in a solo capacity, while Florence Hooton advised Bridge on *Oration, Concerto Elegiaco for Cello and Orchestra*, H.180. Ostensibly, one cannot truly determine the exact effect Harrison's and Hooton's contributions had on the overall quality of Elgar's, Delius's, and Bridge's music, but in respect to Coetmore and Moeran's cello concerto and sonata, there is a noticeable change in his music's substance and structure compared to the works that immediately preceded them.

³⁷² Moeran had experienced a shrapnel wound to his head during WWI which weakened his physical and mental health. It was exacerbated when he lived with composer Peter Warlock for three years, becoming an alcoholic in the process. Once he left Warlock, he was able to gradually rebuild his musical career, but not his emotional well-being.

³⁷³ Ibid. (See footnote 3) This span of time falls within what Maxwell categorizes as Moeran's "Middle Period" (1927-1929). While this may be convenient when analyzing Beethoven, it remains to be seen whether or not this categorization tradition applies to Moeran.

Self, "Warlock's music enriched Moeran's harmonic language, but it took away its blithe optimistic quality."³⁷⁴ The deep melancholy that characterized his style was not unmitigated, however. Moeran had been an avid collector of English and Irish folksong from Norfolk, Suffolk, and Kerry during the English Folk Music Revival.³⁷⁵ Moeran assimilated folk music into his idiom, and this hybrid idiom permeated his later works, including his cello concerto.³⁷⁶

Moeran had a penchant for absorbing musical styles. Among his early inspirations were those of Robert Sterndale Bennett (Sir William Sterndale Bennett's grandson), who had been his teacher at the public school he attended, Uppingham, as well as John Ireland, who was his teacher at the RCM (1912-1913, 1920-1923). In addition to Warlock, the music of Delius, Vaughan Williams, and Ravel had an impact on his style. As a result, a plethora of musical moods, ideas, and devices derived from British and French music of his time constitute his original voice. This is clearly apparent in his *Symphony in G minor*. Nonetheless, Moeran demonstrated an admirable ability to recast his musical idiom when necessary. As he planned the concerto, Moeran told Coetmore, "I shall have to find a new idiom, as I did temporarily when I wrote the *Sinfonietta*"³⁷⁷ Indeed, the concerto has formal

³⁷⁴ Self, Geoffrey and Vernon Handley, *The Music of E.J. Moeran* (London: Toccata Press, 1986), 77.

³⁷⁵ Self, "Moeran, Ernest John Smeed," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2005-, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35052>.

³⁷⁶ The curious distinction between folk song and folk-like melody is thus subtle in his music; one who is unversed in the English folk music repertoire struggles to tell the two apart.

³⁷⁷ Self, *The Music of E.J. Moeran*, 176.

dimensions and thematic development that are more focused and overtly Romantic than those found in the symphony, which was heavily influenced by Sibelius's later symphonies.

Coetmore premiered the cello concerto on November 25, 1945, at the Capitol Theatre, Dublin, with Michael Bowles conducting his orchestra.³⁷⁸ The English premiere occurred on January 19, 1946, at a Liverpool Philharmonic Society's concert. *The Musical Times's* reviewer F.B. claimed that "Moeran does not deliberately set aside the natural aptitude of the instrument for lyrical expression. He gives it tunes and designs that sound far better on the cello than they could possibly do on other instruments."³⁷⁹ The concerto's first movement features the lower range of the instrument with admirable clarity, a delicate balance to achieve, as Moeran attested to his wife,

The cello is the devil....On account of its middle and bass register: frequently you must treat it as a solo, albeit alto or tenor part, and you must be careful not to put too much on top. Hence, I believe, the scarcity of cello concertos owing to the technical difficulty in writing them.³⁸⁰

In the opening movement, Moeran develops an obsessive rhythmic motif, favoring minor thirds as he creates a resolute, albeit melancholic, mood (Example 7.1). This melancholy is further accentuated by a 9/8 meter, reminiscent of both the 12/8

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 187.

³⁷⁹ B., F., "Moeran's Cello Concerto," In *The Musical Times* 87/1236 (February 1946): 60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/935746>.

³⁸⁰ Self, *The Music of E.J. Moeran*, 197. This is taken from a letter to Peers dated February 8, 1945.

I

E. J. MOERAN

Moderato $\text{♩} = 69$

VOLONCELLO

PIANO

Cl.

Fag.

pp Timp.

Arpa

Ob.

Fag.

Cor.

Vl.

pp

cresc.

p

pp

cresc.

p

pp

Example 7.1 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R0, mm.1-10

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

By E.J. Moeran

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meter in Elgar's cello concerto and the compound-triple meter in Delius's cello concerto. The triple meter is a familiar trait of a Siciliana, a prominent pastoral signifier, and in the historical context of the post-War years, it is one that evokes

The image displays a page of musical notation for a cello concerto. It features five systems of staves. The top system includes a vocal line and staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Strings (Str.). The second system continues the orchestration with a Flute (Fl.) staff and a grand staff for piano accompaniment. The score is marked with dynamics such as *p* and *pp*, and tempo changes from *rall.* to *a tempo (meno mosso)*. A measure number '23' is clearly visible at the beginning of the second system.

Example 7.3 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R22, m.7-R23, m.3

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

By E.J. Moeran

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an Irish lilt that mingles melancholia with a certain lightness of touch. This music is meant to provide solace and, perhaps, a certain empathy. Marked *adagio*, this music parallels Elgar's theme in the third movement of his concerto (Examples 7.4, 7.5, and 7.6). Moeran seems to be addressing Coetmore, as Gustav Mahler did his wife, Alma Mahler, in his Fifth Symphony's *Adagio*.³⁸¹ The lush orchestration is

³⁸¹ One also thinks of "Nimrod" in Elgar's Enigma Variations.



Example 7.4 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R26, m.8-R27, m.4

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

By E.J. Moeran

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Example 7.5 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R27, m.5-R28, m.2

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

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beautifully balanced, again allowing the cello to be heard clearly. In a further gesture to Classical concerto form, Moeran provides another cadenza.

Moeran skillfully elides the second movement into the third, which is redolent of a hearty Irish jig. The folk-like music contains occasional Delian inflections, but the effect is similar to Vaughan Williams's treatment of folk music, especially in his *The Running Set*. Moeran organizes the movement into a rondo, a

III.

34 Adagio. $\text{♩} = 50.$ 35

Clarinetto (A) 1 2

Fagotto 1 2

Corno (F) 1 2

Violoncello Solo

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

Adagio. $\text{♩} = 50.$
molto espressivo ten.
arco
p *pp* *cresc.*

senza sord.
arco
pp *ppp* *p*

senza sord.
arco
pp *ppp*

senza sord.
arco
pp *ppp*

senza sord.
arco
pp *ppp*

senza sord.
pp *ppp* *arco*
pp

36

f *p* *pp* *espress.*

dim. *pp* *pp*

pp *pp*

dim. *pp* *pp*

dim. *pp* *pp*

dim.

Example 7.6 Elgar Cello Concerto, R34, m.1-R36, m.2

favorite formal strategy, which lends a further jocund air to the already energetic jig. However, a lamenting strain appears from time to time, which implies that the piece's initial melancholy has only been subdued, not fully expunged (Example 7.7 and 7.8). As the movement draws to a close, a peculiar verbosity threatens to set in,



Example 7.7 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R50, m.12-R51, m.4

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

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as if the jig refuses to stop. Notwithstanding this detour, the work concludes with a brilliant coda.

Moeran's cello concerto is remarkably classical in its three-movement plan. A sonata form followed by an adagio and ended by a jig in rondo form place it in the company of other cello concertos of the Classical and Romantic ages, such as Édouard Lalo's (1823-1892) and Antonin Dvořák's (1841-1904) works. Moreover, it follows in the footsteps of its British predecessors, particularly those of Elgar and

fff
Str.
ff
Tr.
f/ff
mf
Trb.

rall. 52 allargando
ff
Cl.
mf

poco rall. Lento $\text{♩} = 58$ ten. poco accel.
mp p

Ob.
W.W.
mp
Str.
pp
ppp

Example 7.8 Moeran, Cello Concerto, R51, m.5-R52, m.9

Concerto For Violincello And Orchestra

By E.J. Moeran

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Delius. Moeran's propensity to melancholy was chronic, akin to that of Dowland, and as pronounced.

Gustav Holst

Music is often associated with worship, functioning as a medium for spiritual communication with a deity or the supernatural. In some instances, music is composed with an express spiritual purpose, particularly in religions that, within the cosmology of their faith system, give its performance a sacred status; the music not only represents a belief, it also exerts power of its own. For this reason, societies like the Aztecs forbade anyone but the specially trained musicians to play for their rituals. Ascribing such properties to Gustav Holst's (1874-1934) *Invocation* for cello and orchestra, Op. 19, No. 2 H. 75 (1911) is admittedly a bit of a leap, but it is useful to consider how the work suggests a spiritual function. Holst was deeply interested in Eastern religions such as Buddhism and, especially, Hinduism. Holst also dabbled in astrology, occultism, and esotericism: he would cast horoscopes and had an early interest in phrenology.³⁸² His close study of Hindu scripture—he learned Sanskrit in order to read the original texts—inspired him to compose his opera *Sāvitrī*, whose mystical plot is drawn from the *Mahabharata*. Holst's fascination with astrology led to his most renowned work, *The Planets*, Op. 32 (1914-1917). As he was fascinated by spirituality, he took an interest in Christian topics, though not always orthodox ones. His unorthodox *The Hymn of Jesus*, Op. 37 (1917),

³⁸² Michael Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6. Short commented that “The exact nature of Holst's mysticism remains unclear. Although not conventionally religious, he believed strongly in supra-human forces....”

a choral piece with text from the Apocryphal Acts of St. John, numbered among Holst's most popular works during his lifetime.

Additionally, several of his hymns have entered the Anglican repertory, such as the Christmas carol "In the Bleak Mid-winter," through their inclusion in *The English Hymnal* that his friend Ralph Vaughan Williams compiled and edited in 1906³⁸³ While Holst did not take to the field to collect folk songs and dances, he adapted folk songs to his style. According to biographer Michael Short, Holst once explained to the music critic Edwin Evans that "I consider the English tunes magnificent but their words often unworthy of them."³⁸⁴ He eventually "allowed the essential features of folk-song, such as clarity, simplicity, modality, and rhythmic flexibility to permeate his own personal musical style."³⁸⁵ In this manner, his music acquired a distinct British sound.

Short explained that Holst "believed very strongly in music as a means of human communication...and the substance of Holst's message was the expression of emotion, which he declared to be "The fundamental necessity in all art."³⁸⁶ Furthermore, he believed that "Musicians express in sound what all men feel."³⁸⁷ These broad statements imply a universal outlook in respect to music that parallels

³⁸³ Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music*, 55.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*.

his exploration of various religions, cultures, and philosophies.³⁸⁸ Holst was well acquainted with Buddhism and its compromised nineteenth-century offshoot Theosophy, both of which influenced his dedication to teaching. Raymond Head explains that “All his life Holst adhered to [the tenets of Theosophy], which he initially derived from his stepmother.³⁸⁹ They determined his choices and, together with socialism, encouraged his committed teaching life”³⁹⁰ This points to his advocacy for musical education, notably in his dedication to teaching music at the James Allen’s Girls’ School and the St. Paul’s Girls’ School, Morley College, and the Passmore Edwards Settlement (subsequently Mary Ward Centre).³⁹¹ Like Vivaldi, Holst composed pedagogical pieces for his students in addition to teaching them vocal technique, music theory, composition, and conducting.

³⁸⁸ Raymond Head, “Holst - Astrology and Modernism in 'The Planets,'" *Tempo* No.187 (December 1993): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/945181>. Curiously, Holst’s statements echo the once Theosophist and Sanskrit scholar George R.S. Mead’s principles behind *The Quest*, a society Mead founded of which Holst was a member. According to Head, “The aims of the society were to promote investigation into comparative religion, philosophy and science and encourage the expression of the ideal in beautiful forms. Stylistically the aims were ‘to express my belief,’ as Mead propose at the inaugural address on March 11, 1909, ‘that the highest use and purpose of art is to reveal and express the inner soul of things.’” This was concerning actually the Theosophical dealing with essences. Of course, Theosophy had its origin in the fertile imagination of Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), at once a seer and a con-woman: see Matthew Buchan, “Rutland Boughton’s The Immortal Hour, The Celtic Twilight, and the Great War,” *The Musical Quarterly* 103, nos. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2020): 311-345.

³⁸⁹ Paul Holmes, *The Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers, Holst: His Life and Times* (London, New York, and Sydney: Omnibus Press, 1997), 8. Holst’s stepmother, Mary Stone, a clergyman’s daughter and pianist, married Holst’s father, Adolf von Holst, in 1885 when Holst was eleven. Holst’s biological mother, Clara Lediard, had died in 1882 from a miscarriage. Stone took great interest in Theosophy, discussing it with Theosophist friends at home and allowing Holst and his three siblings to overhear them. This early exposure to a philosophy opposed entirely to the dry tenets of the Anglican Church during what was a difficult period in Holst’s young life—trauma from losing his mother, especially at the age of eight—contributed to his life-long skepticism and melancholy.

³⁹⁰ Head, “Holst - Astrology and Modernism in 'The Planets,'" 15.

³⁹¹ Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music*, 53.

Holst's activities as a scholar and teacher of music suffused his compositions. Despite his formidable experience and technical mastery of composition, Holst nevertheless experienced difficulties in the creative process, just as was the case for Elgar, Bridge, and Finzi. Short notes that Holst did not like excessively polished music. Rather, if it sounded to him as if a composer had struggled with their materials this was a mark of authenticity. Holst may well have viewed his own occasional struggles in light of this quest for the authentic. However, as Short notes, Holst also experienced acute "self-doubt, and an inner desire to explore and not accept received opinions." Head declares that such lack of self-confidence "could leave Holst floundering and questioning the basis of his life, " which in turn stifled his musical progress. His failure to enter Trinity College of Music in 1892, the failure of his early Wagnerian opera *Sita* to win the Ricordi prize in 1908 (another of the losers in that competition was Delius's lurid *Margot la Rouge*), and the lackluster reception of *Sāvitrī* 1908-1909), *Beni Mora* (1912), *Phantastes* (1911), *Hecuba's Lament* (1912), and *The Cloud Messenger* (1909-1910) discouraged Holst acutely, leading him to seek reassurance in psychoanalysis as well as in his esoteric enthusiasms. Despite the wholly unexpected success of *The Planets* and, in 1920, *Hymn of Jesus*, Holst was gradually worn out by the burden of failure, compounded by an unending and confusing search for answers to imponderable metaphysical questions. After the mid-1920s, Holst's music became more and more esoteric, leaving most audiences of the day behind. He grew more depressed as he aged, which was partly physical: he suffered from severe lifelong neuritis in his forearms.

It is hardly surprising that "he turned to a mood of pervasive melancholy"³⁹² in his later compositions, such as *Egdon Heath* (1827), which was inspired by a passage in one of Hardy's novels, and the *Lyric Movement* for viola and orchestra (1933).

Some works, ostensibly, received the brunt of his self-doubt more than others. Holst withdrew several compositions from public performance, and these scores remained in the shadows for decades after his death. Holst brought to bear such severe self-criticism upon his *Invocation* (1911). Little is known about the origins of this brief but balanced orchestral work for solo cello. In her biography of her father, Imogen Holst made a passing remark about the work, stating that "He was trying out some of the possibilities for the texture of Venus in the *Invocation* for solo cello and small orchestra. As in the earlier *Song of the Night* for violin, the opening *senza misura* suggests that it will one day blossom into the *Lyric Movement*."³⁹³ *Venus*, or rather *Venus, the Bringer of Peace*, is of course the second movement of *The Planets*, the landmark orchestral suite consisting of seven movements, each representing the astrological significance of each planet in our solar system as it was known in 1918. (The dwarf planet Pluto was discovered in 1930). Whether or not Holst's early experimentation with textures meant that he was already planning *The Planets* as early as 1911 is unclear, given that A.E.F. Dickinson deemed the work a companion piece to *A Song of the Night* for violin and

³⁹² Ibid., 6.

³⁹³ Imogen Holst, *The Music of Gustav Holst and Holst's Music Reconsidered*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 28.

orchestra (1905), whereas Imogen Holst only compared the *senza misura* opening of *Invocation* to that of the violin work. Short judges any connection between the violin and the cello works as merely an allusion.³⁹⁴

Dickinson's assessment focuses on the similarity of the original title of *Invocation*, the *Song of the Evening*, to *The Song of the Night*. He therefore correlates it to Edward Elgar's *Chanson de Nuit*.³⁹⁵ This is entirely unconvincing: Elgar's piece is high-level salon music, while Holst's *Invocation* is pensive and serious. Logically, *Invocation* was the second of a series, as is often done with miniature works, but one must also remember that Holst composed other pieces that he titled "Songs Without Words," notably his *Two Songs Without Words*, Op. 22 (1906). It is unknown if Holst considered the two concertante works as a pair, but the aesthetic similarities between the two demonstrate a common creative mindset. Keeping *Invocation*'s original title makes it a derivative of the earlier work. The influence of *Invocation* upon the 1933 *Lyric Movement* for viola and orchestra is also just as reasonable.

On May 2, 1911, May Mukle and the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Landon Ronald premiered *Invocation* at Queen's Hall. Holst was part of a group of composers and musicians who knew Mukle and solicited her playing.³⁹⁶ Cellist

³⁹⁴ Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music*, 91.

³⁹⁵ A.E.F. Dickinson and Alan Gibbs, eds. *Holst's Music: A Guide* (London: Thames Publishing, 1995), 191-192. Elgar composed the *Chanson de Nuit* for Violin and Orchestra Op.15, No.1(1897). At first he wrote it for violin and piano, but he later orchestrated it. A complimentary piece, Op.15, No. 2, was the *Chanson de Matin*.

³⁹⁶ For more information about Mukle, see Chapter V-"British Women Cellists of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century: An Overview."

Thelma Bentwich (1895-1959) and pianist Myra Hess (1890-1965) played it again six years later in 1917, implying that Holst had created a piano reduction.³⁹⁷ The premiere came at a time when Holst was given new opportunities to have his music performed in Queen's Hall by the conductor Edward Mason. Mason conducted the *Second Group of Hymns from the Rig Veda*, *Somerset Rhapsody*, and *King Estmere* there in 1911.³⁹⁸ Afterwards, though, *Invocation* was not performed again for almost sixty years after its premiere, until 1983 when Julian Lloyd Webber revived it.³⁹⁹ Imogen Holst had been dismissive of the work's worth, saying it was “not of any value in itself” and refusing to publish it.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, like Bridge's *Oration*, Holst's *Invocation* only garnered attention posthumously.

³⁹⁷ Boris Schwarz, “Yellin [née Bentwich], Thelma,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001—), accessed May 2, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.30696>. Bentwich, later Yellin when she married Eliezer Yellin, was a cellist and a foremost advocate for music in Israel. She studied with Pablo Casals. Dame Myra Hess was a celebrated British pianist who had organized the daily chamber-music concerts at the National Gallery in London during World War Two. She had an active solo career, performing contemporary and Romantic era orchestral and chamber repertoire, and toured extensively in Europe and the United States. She formed a duo with Jelly D'Aranyi and she most likely knew Pablo Casals personally, since she participated in the Casals summer festivals in Perpignan (1951) and Prades (1952).

³⁹⁸ Holmes, *The Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers, Holst: His Life and Times*, 49.

³⁹⁹ Gustav Holst, *Holst*, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Lorraine McAslan and Alexander Baillie. David Atherton, Lyrita SRCD.209, 1982 and 1993, compact disc, Liner notes by Lewis Foreman.

⁴⁰⁰ Gustav Holst, *Holst*, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Tim Hughes, David Lloyd Jones, Naxos 8.553696, 1998 and 2021, compact disc, liner notes by Christopher Mowat, 3. Really, you might want to look up my review of Short's book, during the course of which I say some trenchant things—with which I still agree—about Imogen Holst, who was a bitter and disappointed woman. Just cite that review with something like: Byron Adams sees Imogen Holst's treatment of her father's music as problematic; see Byron Adams, “review, etc., *The Musical Quarterly*, etc.

The sense of mystery connoted by the first title, *Song of the Evening*, is augmented by the change to *Invocation*. This word, with its close association with the mystical, suggests a kind of abstract program for this short score. It can be a prayer, an incantation, or a summoning of supernatural beings or forces. Considering Host's esoteric background as well as his numerous compositions that pertain to Eastern religious subjects, his choice of title appeals to his mystical sensibilities. For this reason, the following analysis will explore *Invocation's* quasi-spiritualist aspects.

Invocation's opening is declamatory. The cello represents an individual making a petition in a two-part sentence. Holst's use of the Aeolian mode does not sound particularly melancholic at first due to its alternating ascending and descending patterns, but upon repetition, the opening motif, with its descending motion, encapsulates a sighing gesture reminiscent of the opening of Howells's *Fantasia* (Example 7.9 and 7.10). Its modal quality also foreshadows the modal



Example 7.9 Holst, *Invocation*, R0, m.1
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Example 7.10 Holst, *Invocation*, R0, mm.2-5
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inflections of the opening theme of Elgar’s future cello concerto.⁴⁰¹ This opening motif gradually becomes increasingly fervent. In 1911, Holst still composed in a Romantic vein influenced by Wagner, especially adopting the German master’s “endless melody.” At the same time, Holst began to incorporate modal inflections such as those that appear in his close friend Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* (Example 7.11), which was premiered the year before

The image shows a page of a musical score for Holst's *Invocation*. It features six staves: Flutes (1 & 2), Oboe 1, Bassoons (1 & 2), Solo Cello, Violins, and Double Basses. A large black box highlights a section from measure 6 to measure 11. Above the Solo Cello staff, the text 'colla parte' is written, followed by '1.' and a first ending bracket. Below the Violin and Double Bass staves, 'colla parte' is written, followed by 'pizz.' and 'p'. The tempo marking 'Poco meno mosso' appears above the Flute staff and below the Violin staff. Dynamics 'p' are indicated throughout the highlighted section. A first ending bracket is also present above the Solo Cello staff in measure 11.

Example 7.11 Holst, *Invocation*, R0, m.6-R1, m.2

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Invocation. Increasing the sonorous variety, Holst was becoming more interested in Indian music, which is reflected in orchestral sonorities as the doubled “bass” flutes

⁴⁰¹ For more information about Elgar’s Cello Concerto, see Chapter II-“Elgar’s Melancholy.”

(R1).⁴⁰² One of the aspects of French impressionism that Holst admired was the use of “oriental” scales, such as the whole-tone scales used by Debussy in such works as *Pagodes* from his piano triptych, L. 100 (1904).⁴⁰³ (It should be remembered that Debussy was considered a radical modernist in 1911.) As part of his researches into non-Western music, Holst explored irregular meters such as 5/4 and 7/4 that were in vogue among modernists such as Stravinsky.⁴⁰⁴ By British standards, Holst was an experimental composer.

Holst's music from 1911 onwards increasingly exemplifies modernist aesthetics and procedure tenets such as concision. *Invocation* contains elements of a Classical concerto compressed into a brief ternary form. The cello plays an introduction with primary and secondary themes, an expansive middle section with an ethereal climax, and a recapitulation. Cadenzas, trills, embellishing cadences, and orchestral imitative passages connote nods to tradition. However, these elements appear in the context of an incantation, as the title suggests, and are answered by Holst's conjuring up music evocative of magic and transcendence (Example 7.12). His novel pairing of harp glissandi with the cello in its highest range derive from the orchestral palette of Debussy and Ravel. This passage anticipates the ethereal effects Holst used during *Venus: Bringer of Peace* in *The Planets*. In this music,

⁴⁰² Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music*, 427. Holst was actually referring to the flutes playing in their low register. In a parenthetical observation, Short said, “Holst always erroneously referred to the alto flute in G as a ‘bass flute.’”

⁴⁰³ Short, *Gustav Holst: The Man and His Music*, 376-378.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 354.

6

3 Adagio

45

Fls. 1 & 2 *pp* *p* 1. Solo

Ob. 1 *p* 1. Solo

Clts. in A 1 & 2 *pp* *p* 1. Solo

Bsns. 1 & 2 *pp*

Harp A major *ppp* *gliss.* *8va basso*

Solo Cello *pp* *p cantabile*

3 Adagio

Vln. 1 con sord. div. *pp*

Vln. 2 con sord. div. *pp*

Vla. con sord. div. *pp*

Vlc. *pp*

Db. *pp*

Example 7.12 Holst, *Invocation*, R3, mm.1-3
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mysticism challenges and transcends tradition: the result is inconclusive, shrouded in mystery. After a passionate appeal (Example 7.13), the recapitulation of the opening theme suggests the acquisition of peace as it ascends with the harp, but its restatement implies hope with no guarantee of fulfillment. Moreover, the ambiguity of the message of the invocation creates a metaphorical conundrum. Who—or what—is the music invoking? Holst took emotional expression through music seriously. The music is elusive and poignant: like a great deal of Holst, it seems to float in a liminal space. For all its gestures towards the modernism of its times, *Invocation* is not a radical work, yet it evinces a shift in British music aesthetics from the certainties of the Georgian age to Continental modernism.⁴⁰⁵ Strangely, Holst's reliance on the otherworldly points towards a growing unease in British society that all was not well, spiritually, socially, and politically. There was a desire for peace, for enlightenment, but the means to that end evaded many British subjects. The Anglican church was becoming increasingly irrelevant, and the old verities of religion were passing away in the years after the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Spiritualism, Theosophy, and non-Western systems of belief were filling the void created by the increasing disarray of the state church, Anglicanism. In a few years a world war would break out, causing the deaths of millions. The undercurrents of strife were apparent to members of the intellectual elite; as the result of the war, even scientists like the physicist Sir Oliver Lodge

⁴⁰⁵ King Edward VII died the year before Holst composed *Invocation*.

became involved in Theosophy and occult practices. Holst numbered among these who sought direction and solace from these mysteries. Was, then, *Invocation* his supplication for peace?

Edmund Rubbra

A conversation between musicologist Arthur Hutchinson and composer Constant Lambert gravitated toward the topic of British composer Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986):

Lambert—“Oh don’t worry about Rubbra. He has nothing to grouse about. He’s quite sure of himself. Weren’t you fond of Brahms, too?”

Hutchinson—“I don’t see why that should make me like Rubbra’s stuff.”

Lambert—“I didn’t say it should.”⁴⁰⁶

It is often mentioned that Brahms’s music permeated the halls of the Royal College of Music during the time of Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. The composition students had to learn a great deal of Brahms’s music, whether or not they later chose to later to follow its example. It is no coincidence that many graduates came to emulate Brahms’s style and procedures, some more than others. Vaughan Williams’s early scores, such as the Quintet for clarinet, horn, violin, cello and piano, reflect Brahms’s influence. Although primarily trained by Cyril Scott and Gustav Holst, Edmund Rubbra was one such RCM student whose mature music

⁴⁰⁶ Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (New York: October House Inc., 1967), 18.

continues to reflect a distinctive Brahmsian approach.⁴⁰⁷ (In 1938, Rubbra brilliantly orchestrated Brahms's monumental piano solo work, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel*.) Rubbra made such aspects of the German composer's technique, e.g., developing variation and motivic "organicism," part of his style, which at times seems as if Rubbra had made a close reading of Arnold Schoenberg's 1947 essay "Brahms the Progressive." As Brahms manipulated and expanded small germinal motifs as the basis of his instrumental works, so does Rubbra. Like Brahms, Rubbra was a master of counterpoint. In a review of recordings of Rubbra's music, Martin Anderson writes that the composer's motivic ideas "evolve as inevitably as a leaf unbuckling toward the sun."⁴⁰⁸ Rubbra employs these techniques in the first movement of his Sonata in G Minor, for cello and piano, Op. 60 (1946), as well as in his Symphony No. 7, Op. 88 (1956-1957). In the former, Rubbra constructs his musical edifice with a falling fifth. In the latter, he uses a rhythmic cell similar to the "fate" motive in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in order to build his musical argument.

"Developing variation" represents Brahms's individual adaptation of Beethovenian motivic saturation. To use Schoenberg's organicist metaphor, multiple ideas spring up in reaction to its extending shoots, and those ideas are of

⁴⁰⁷ Ralph Scott Grover, "Rubbra, Edmund," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001-), accessed October 25, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.24041>. Rubbra studied with Vaughan Williams at the RCM when Holst was not available.

⁴⁰⁸ Martin Anderson, "A British Music Round-up, I: Rubbra and Others" in *Tempo* 215 (Jan. 2001): 56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/946655>.

different species. (Any botanist knows that this assertion is nonsense, by the way.)

Rubbra drew on his intimate knowledge of counterpoint—he studied with the great British expert on Renaissance polyphony, R.O. Morris—in order to create cohesion in his music. The effect of Rubbra’s assimilation of Brahms creates a tone that is at once serious and archaic, though, curiously, not old-fashioned. Brahms, too, interpolated archaic elements such as canon and fugue in his own compositions, which gave them a heft and density that sometimes puzzled even his admirers. In his *Handel Variations*, Brahms alludes to Couperin in several variations, for example (Brahms edited music by Couperin): he alludes to Domenico Scarlatti in his Trio in B-Major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Op. 8 (1854),⁴⁰⁹ and he uses Baroque forms, such as the passacaglia that concludes his Symphony No.4 in E minor, Op.98 (1884-1885). Brahms casts the finale of his Sonata No. 1 in E minor for Cello and Piano, Op.38, as a fugue. Brahms’s antiquarianism is further found in sets of variations using themes of Handel and Haydn, respectively, and by allusions to themes from much earlier eras, such as the quotation of the old German student song “Gaudeamus igitur” that is found in his *Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80. All of this is part of Rubbra’s style, which was counterintuitive among British composers, who, like Vaughan Williams, mostly looked to French models until after the Second World War.

⁴⁰⁹ Jacquelyn Sholes, “Lovelorn Lamentation or Histrionic Historicism? Reconsidering Allusion and Extramusical Meaning in the 1854 Version of Brahms’s B-Major Trio” In *19th-Century Music*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Summer 2010), 61-86, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncm.2010.34.1.061>.

Not only do these Brahmsian procedures create a certain density to Rubbra's thematic procedures, but his study of Renaissance polyphony and the music of J.S. Bach amplified these predilections. In her article on Edmund Rubbra, Elsie Payne notes that the composer's textural and formal coherency are both contrapuntal and epic. She detects an inherent if subtle unity.⁴¹⁰ As Payne notes, keeping pace with Rubbra's musical train of thought requires close, undivided attention, as his ideas mutate rapidly. New rhythms, kaleidoscopic instrumental timbres, styles, and moods appear and disappear throughout a piece while counterpoint drives his music forward. Knowing what to expect, either through score study or by listening to his pieces several times, helps the listener decipher his logic.

One of the several controversies about Rubbra's style is whether to categorize it as traditional or modern. According to Hugh Ottoway, Rubbra dismissed both of these labels out of hand.⁴¹¹ Yet, such a repudiation is hardly unique to Rubbra, for other modern composers renounced traditional forms in favor of self-wrought methods. However, Rubbra reinterprets traditional forms and procedures, giving his music a timeless quality—it cannot be glibly described as “modernist.” A devout Catholic, Rubbra viewed history, including music history, as a continuum rather than a series of revolutions. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect

⁴¹⁰ Elsie Payne, “Edmund Rubbra” in *Music & Letters* 36/4 (Oct. 1955): 354, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/730945>.

⁴¹¹ Ottoway, Hugh, “Edmund Rubbra” in *The Musical Times* 107/1483 (Sep. 1966): 767: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/954291>.

of Rubbra's career is how he created an individual style based so squarely on traditional models.

For instance, after the success of Vaughan Williams's *Tallis Fantasia*, twentieth-century British composers were particularly adept at reimagining the English fantasia genre. While Rubbra stubbornly denies Frank Howe's suggestion that his symphonies were inspired by the Elizabethan fantasia,⁴¹² his musical language is too varied for anyone to dismiss the clear evidence that musical genres from the Tudor era influenced his formal procedures. Payne explains that "[Rubbra's] melodies always dictate and are not dictated by the tonal and modal systems which are operative."⁴¹³ Hence, the melodies determine the length and shape of his music's form. For Rubbra, conventional tonal schemes were never sacrosanct.

Rubbra's Sonata in G Minor for cello and piano, Op. 60 is a case in point. For approximately twenty minutes, Rubbra generates a variety of ideas and then subjects these ideas to a close motivic development. The first movement's seminal idea, a lamenting falling-fifth figure, mutates into different phases, some of which are reminiscent of Debussy's style⁴¹⁴, and others are contrapuntal and neo-Baroque as if drawn from Bach's keyboard music, before culminating in a resonant tenth

⁴¹² Ibid.,767. Rubbra expresses that, "Writers have said that I've been influenced by the Elizabethans. Whenever they say this I'm surprised for it has never occurred to me that analogies might be drawn."

⁴¹³ Payne, "Edmund Rubbra", 344.

⁴¹⁴ Grover, "Edmund Rubbra" in *Grove Music Online*. Claude Debussy's music impressed Rubbra during his formative years as a composer.

chord. Rubbra's conclusion is reminiscent of the ending of the Prelude from Bach's Suite in G Major, for unaccompanied solo cello, BWV 1007. It is a truly satisfying ending for a movement filled with plaintive melodic gestures. Following in its wake, a quick "scherzo" second movement presents a galloping motif, recalling the second movement of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Sonata in G Minor for Cello and Piano, Op.19. Rubbra's signature momentum defines the "Vivace Flessibile," driving the music forward in a vivacious, bounding manner. The last movement of Rubbra's sonata is not unlike Brahms's E minor symphony's finale, which is often described often as a passacaglia. At once ponderous and melancholic, the main theme of Rubbra's finale is varied through different textures and manipulations, including a three-part fugue shared between the cello and piano. It is a peculiar way to end a multi-movement sonata, given that numerous Classical and Romantic sonatas for cello display the most virtuosity in the finale. There is, however, the precedent of Beethoven's Sonata in D major, for cello and piano, Op. 102, No. 2, and Brahms's Cello Sonata No. 1, the finale of which is a fugue. Nonetheless, Rubbra's formal gambit is befitting in light of the first movement's melancholic tone, which casts a shadow over the entire sonata, just as Brahms's choice of an unremitting passacaglia fittingly brings his somber Fourth Symphony to a close.

Therefore, Rubbra's music appears to be an extension of Beethoven's and Brahms's formal innovations, particularly with the unfolding of thematic material. The British composer confessed that the hardest part of composing for him was establishing the beginning of a work—the seed—for, once planted, the rest of the

piece grew from it and flourished.⁴¹⁵ The resulting work does not sound like Brahms, however; Rubbra is no mere epigone of previous composers. Paradoxically, Rubbra's eclecticism is what lends his music a personal, idiosyncratic quality that belongs more to the period after the First World War than to the nineteenth century. His mastery of counterpoint insures continuity. As Lambert remarked, Rubbra's eclecticism translated into a stylistic self-confidence that is maintained even when the music sounds improvisatory. Rubbra thereby creates a "subtle unity" in his music, one that accommodates tradition while articulating a message at once timeless and of the twentieth century. Responding to the badinage between Arthur Hutchinson and Constant Lambert, one might interject, "Perhaps Brahms should make one like Rubbra's music, at least in theory."

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Although one of the foremost British composers of any century, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), like Beethoven, did not compose a cello concerto. This was not from want of trying. He went a step further than Beethoven, however, by working seriously on a concerto near the end of this life. Vaughan Williams had long intended to compose one for Pablo Casals, who would probably have accepted it more readily than Bernard Romberg did of Beethoven's offer.⁴¹⁶ Vaughan

⁴¹⁵ Anderson, "A British Music Round-up, I: Rubbra and Others", 56.

⁴¹⁶ Margaret Campbell, *The Great Cellists* (North Pomfret, Vermont: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1989), 62. "Beethoven thought highly of Romberg and his playing, but the latter had little understanding of his friend's music....Perhaps the most unforgivable legacy of his arrogance is that when Beethoven wanted to write a cello concerto for him, Romberg rejected the offer because he only performed his own compositions."

Williams earlier had composed two works for cello: *Six Studies in English Folksong*, for cello and piano (1926), which was successful, and the *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes* (1929), with which he was dissatisfied and withdrew. The former he wrote for Muckle, who, as noted earlier, refused to play it, and the latter for Casals, who did. *Six Studies in English Folksong* became one of Vaughan Williams's most popular works; numerous cellists have performed and recorded it.

Vaughan Williams was among a small but dedicated group of proto-ethnomusicologists during the early twentieth century who collected folk songs and dances from the British countryside. Vaughan Williams collected in excess of 800 folk songs. This was frankly a nationalistic project: to discover "authentic" English music and preserve it for posterity. Their timing was propitious, as increasing educational opportunities for working-class rural people and the growth of readily available popular entertainments, first the music halls, then the phonograph, and eventually radio, meant that musical folk traditions were imperiled. The two world wars effected changes to both agrarian laborers and landed gentry alike as class lines became blurred, a process that had begun with the rise of middle class during the Industrial Revolution. As noted above, modernization brought new music technologies that, as Lambert noted in his volume *Music Ho!*, shifted the focus from active live performance to passive listening. After 1922 when the BBC went on the air, availability of the radio allowed country folk to enjoy music in the comfort of their homes. As folk-song collecting occurred during this period of change there was a certain irony to the entire project. The very class whose ancestors had made

and sung folk songs became increasingly attuned to broadcasts of newly composed popular music—especially from America. The intellectuals who collected folk music became the minority who valued it most. As a composer of art music who matriculated at the Royal College of Music and Cambridge University, Vaughan Williams belonged to the earnest and aspirational Victorian upper-middle class. European art music formed their standards and their musical habits. Nevertheless, as preservationists of their own culture, they gravitated toward what they perceived as genuine English music and sought to reinject it to the “bloodstream” of Britain by incorporating it into hymns, operas, and symphonic music.

The Pastoral School has often been described as one of the solutions Vaughan Williams and other folksong revivalists such as Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) and Australian Percy Grainger (1882-1961) developed in response to a German claim that Britain was a land without music. Folksong was a means by which past eras of British identity were meant to be revived, thus generating a transgenerational sense of belonging that transcended empire. Yet, even these composers realized that the unadorned oral tradition of folk song "as-is" could not appeal to most modern listeners without intervention. Merely collecting and depositing folk songs and dances in libraries and museums was not creating a living music. Like Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók in Hungary, Vaughan Williams took folk materials as a point of departure for the creation of art music. Like Bartók, Vaughan Williams selected songs from the vast number being collected. He idealized the songs—that is he created variants dictated by his own taste and incorporated them into a style that

also was influenced by French impressionism and the rediscovery of Tudor motets, masses, and madrigals.⁴¹⁷ Vaughan Williams's preference for modes and interesting scales bound up these disparate elements into a personal style. In an article on Vaughan Williams's use of the modes, Julian Onderdonk explained that "It was not enough simply to *arrange* folk songs: they had also to be made to *appeal*...[They] had to be carefully chosen, selected with an eye to popularity and attractiveness."⁴¹⁸ Vaughan Williams extended his artistic license to create sophisticated arrangements of folk material, occasionally altering the melody. In that respect, he treated them more like his own themes than just material for arranging. In other instances, Vaughan Williams composed wholly original folk song-inspired themes in a procedure similar to that of Falla in Spain or Bartók in Hungary.

Vaughan Williams's arrangements of folksongs for instrumental combinations, such as in the *Six Studies in English Folksong*, necessarily omit the words. As a result, the stories told in these songs are lost when such music is performed. Much of the affective quality of the songs is bound up in those stories, however; without them, the music assumes a different life of its own. The verbal aspect of the oral tradition is severed from the music that expressed its emotion; in

⁴¹⁷ Julian Onderdonk, "Vaughan Williams and the Modes," *Folk Music Journal* 7, no. 5 (1999): 618, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4522631>. Onderdonk explains further, "This is not to say that modality was the only criterion of 'unusualness' that Vaughan Williams recognized. My research suggests that he was drawn to songs whose texts departed from known versions or reflected regional or personal circumstances. I have also found that he favoured tunes that were rich in melodic variation or that otherwise gave evidence of musical skill and dexterity on the part of the singer. In still other cases, irregularity of metre or rhythm appears to have been the deciding factor."

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 622.

some cases Vaughan Williams imposed a new and foreign narrative onto the tunes. One such example was Vaughan Williams's use of folk song in the creation of the 1906 *English Hymnal*. In several instances, Vaughan Williams replaced the often-bawdy original texts with Anglican verse. Nevertheless, those few who still remembered the original texts may have felt a distinct and perhaps unpleasant shock at encountering them sung by an Anglican choir accompanied by an organ during the service of Morning Prayer. Originally, the project of a group of Anglo-Catholics led by the Rev. Percy Dearmer, *The English Hymnal* nevertheless became the basis for many other Anglican, Episcopalian, and other Protestant hymnals produced since; in an ironic turn of events, hymns synthesized by Vaughan Williams from English folk songs and Anglican sacred verse are now sung regularly at Roman Catholic masses throughout the Anglophone world.

The experience of editing *The English Hymnal* had a profound effect upon Vaughan Williams's music. Often, the texts of certain pre-existing melodies communicated an emotional weight, even when they were not present. For example, the aggressively Protestant and anti-Catholic words of a section drawn from Archbishop Parker's Psalter that were set to music by the recusant Catholic Thomas Tallis was the source of his *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*: "Why fumeth in fight the Gentiles spite, in fury raising stout?" (here Archbishop Parker paraphrased Psalm 2:1-2; for him the "Gentiles" were rebellious Roman Catholics). This reminder of Anglican anti-Catholicism qualified his work for its 1910 Three Choirs Festival premiere at Gloucester Cathedral in order to create a Protestant

musical antidote before Elgar's very Catholic oratorio, *The Dream of Gerontius*, was allowed to be performed in this Anglican edifice after a ten-year embargo by its clergy. Even though text was not sung its inference was still unmistakable.⁴¹⁹ In light of this instance of the "persistence the text," Vaughan Williams's treatment of folksong in his *Six Studies in English Folksong* and his *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes* reveals tangential but still significant correlation between the textual ethos and the music's overall emotional narrative.

In 1927 Vaughan Williams published his *Six Studies on English Folksong* for cello and piano and dedicated the work to May Mukle. The work had been premiered at the Scala Theatre in London the previous year by Mukle and her pianist sister Anne on June 4, 1926. Various recordings by amateur cellists of the studies found on the internet attest to its approachability. With the exception of the sixth and final movement, the cello solo is conceived in a vocal style; given the simplicity of the piano part, the effect of a wordless folk song arrangement is achieved. The brevity of each movement resembles the early miniature writing of Bridge, such as his *Miniature Pastorals* for piano, H.127 (1917). The finely wrought simplicity inspired by the easy lyricism of folksong lends this music a piquant appeal.

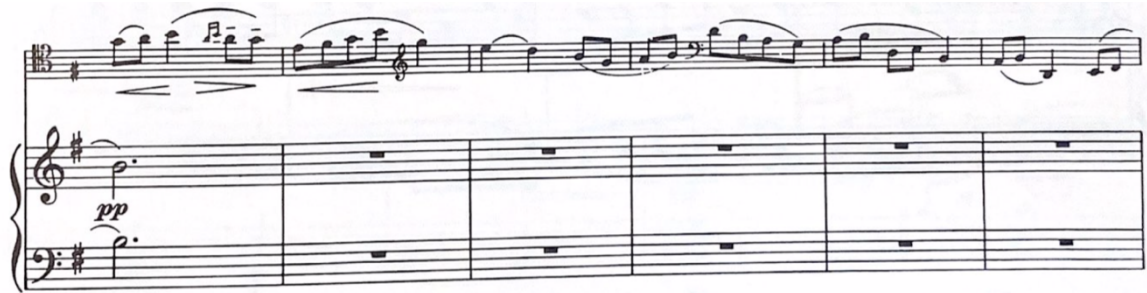
⁴¹⁹ See Charles Edward McGuire, "'Vaughan Williams and the English Music Festival: 1910,'" in *Vaughan Williams Essays*, Byron Adams and Robin Wells eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2003), 259-261. McGuire makes the salient point that in 1910 Tallis was viewed as the "Father of Anglican Music" as his Catholicism was not revealed by research until decades later.

The subjects of the songs lend a Romantic nostalgia to the work that would only be experienced today through prior study or program notes, since audiences and performers are far removed nowadays from the cultural milieu inhabited by Vaughan Williams and his fellow collectors. *Six Studies in English Folksong* consists of the following tunes: "Lovely is the Water," "Spurn Point," "Van Dieman's Land," "She Borrowed Some of Her Mother's Gold," "The Lady and the Dragoon," and "As I walked over London Bridge."

"Lovely is the Water" comes from an old broadside "Henry and Nancy, or the Lover's Separation," which Vaughan Williams had collected in the early 1900s at South Walsham, a few miles from Norwich.⁴²⁰ The tragic tale is set in Tudor England: a young sailor named Henry is in the Royal Navy and must go off to war. He bids farewell to Nancy, explaining that he needs to serve his country, and he asks her to wait for his return. The somber tune implies that he never returns. The melody is in the Aeolian mode, featuring pentatonic inflections that haunt a great deal of English folk song. A sighing minor-third motif and leaps to high notes are akin to those Finzi used in his Cello Concerto to conjure up a feeling of simultaneous sadness and hope (Example 7.14).

Continuing with the maritime theme, "Spurn Point" refers to a famous peninsula at the southern tip of Yorkshire that extends into the English Channel.

⁴²⁰ Cattia Salto, "Lovely on the Water," *Terre Celtiche Blog*, 2018, accessed 3 May 2022, <https://terreceltiche.altervista.org/lovely-on-the-water/>.



Example 7.14 Vaughan Williams, *Six Studies in English Folk Song*, I. mm.19-24

The original text tells a tragic anecdote of the failed rescue of a stranded ship by the lifeboat station crew.⁴²¹ The ship's captain rejected help until it was too late and all on board drowned due to his mistake. The melody is short and contemplative, resolving peacefully, a reflection on the sad folly of the captain's stubbornness. The ocean yet bears significance in the following traditional Celtic folk song, "Van Diemans (sometimes spelled "Diemann's") Land." The song references the historical convict transport to the convict colony on Van Dieman's Land, which is modern-day Tasmania.⁴²² The main characters, a group of Irish men, were sentenced to hard labor in Van Dieman's Land for having poached a local landlord's game. Singing in first person, they rue their crime and punishment, suffering hard labor and unrelenting homesickness. Originally a ballad with multiple verses, Vaughan

⁴²¹ Liam Robinson, "Spurn Point." *Muddy Banks: Traditional Songs from Lincolnshire and the East Coast*, Liam Robinson, 2010, streaming audio, accessed 19 April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx607TFCGi4>. and also, The Yorkshire Garland Group, "The Wreck of the Industry," The Yorkshire Garland Group, 2007, accessed 3 May 2022, <http://yorkshirefolksong.net/song.cfm?songID=67>.

⁴²² Irish Music Daily, "Van Diemen's Land—14 years hard labour," Irish Music Daily, 2022, accessed 3 May 2022, <https://www.irishmusicdaily.com/van-diemens-land>.

Williams does not follow the strophic structure, however, as he states the tunes a single time.

"She Borrowed some of Her Mother's Gold" is an enigma as little documentation exists about this melody. However, "The Lady and the Dragoon," another broadside ballad, is more thoroughly documented because it developed in turn from an earlier broadside and was adopted in the United States.⁴²³ This movement offers respite from the hitherto tragic stories. In this heroic love story, a young soldier falls in love with a wealthy man's only daughter. The couple elopes, but he must fight her father to gain the inheritance. Happily, the young soldier prevails. The sixth and final movement, "As I walked over London Bridge," retells the dour story of a convicted man who stole sixteen of the king's white steeds and sold them.⁴²⁴ His wife laments that he will be hung at Tynburn and pleads with the judge in vain. Vaughan Williams's setting of this incongruously lively tune is anything but plaintive. When the begins expanding; he instantly compresses the melody and cuts it off wittfully (Example 7.15).

Despite the jaunty tune of the last movement, melancholy over farewells, shipwrecks, and loss of freedom pervade the overall mood of the *Six Studies in English Folksong*. Whether or not that was Vaughan Williams's intention in selecting

⁴²³ For more information, see Greene, David Mason. "'The Lady and the Dragoon': A Broadside Ballad in Oral Tradition." *The Journal of American Folklore* 70, no. 277 (July-September 1957): 221-230. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/538320>.

⁴²⁴ S.F. Russel, "As I Walked Over London's Bridge," 2013 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings / 1978 Blue Ridge Institute, accessed 3 May 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFMrxAp_h1Y.



Example 7.15 Vaughan Williams, *Six Studies in English Folk Song*, VI. mm.38-51

these particular songs, or if he was just particularly fond of them, cannot be answered. An aspect of much British folk song is the frequent presence of melancholy, quite distinct from the folk melodies of, say, France. Rural Britons of the pre-industrial era enshrined mourning and heartache in their songs: Vaughan Williams compounded their poignance by using them for one of his most popular scores.

Vaughan Williams turned to Pablo Casals (1876-1973) as the interpreter of his next cello work, the *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes*, which he first called the *Sussex Rhapsody*. Casals was an artist beloved by British audiences, and so he stayed in England for prolonged periods. Casals was often sought after by British composers and musicians. Vaughan Williams and Casals shared a similar musical

outlook and became friends. Vaughan Williams decided to compose a major work for the Catalan cellist. However, Vaughan Williams deemed the *Fantasia* a failure and died before he could complete the cello concerto, a great deal of which was sketched out and even partially orchestrated. Stringently self-critical, Vaughan Williams kept revising the *Fantasia* until two and a half months before Casals premiered it with Sir John Barbirolli in a Royal Philharmonic Concert at Queens Hall on March 13, 1929.⁴²⁵ In a letter to Casals, Vaughan Williams asked him for help in composing a suitable cadenza.⁴²⁶ Evidently, Vaughan Williams had misgivings about the work, but he allowed it to be performed. Back stage after the premiere, an embarrassed Vaughan Williams thanked Casals with a handshake and a "gruff 'thank you' and walked away," leaving Casals disconcerted.⁴²⁷ Two corroborating factors exist for the composer's apparent lack of enthusiasm, neither of which had to do with Casals's performance. As H.L. Kirk explains, Vaughan Williams did not feel that the cello part fit well into the orchestral fabric. The second reason was more circumstantial—he had just been awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's gold medal at the concert, which probably had left him self-conscious.⁴²⁸ His own feelings corroborated by lukewarm press reaction, Vaughan Williams withdraw the

⁴²⁵ Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 128.

⁴²⁶ H.L. Kirk, *Pablo Casals: A Biography* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 365.

⁴²⁷ H.L. Kirk, *Pablo Casals: A Biography*, 365.

⁴²⁸ James Day, *Vaughan Williams* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 234. Day suggests that "[Vaughan Williams] may have felt embarrassed that the work of his featured on the occasion was not one of his best."

Sussex Fantasia from public performance. He did not, however, destroy the score as he did with some others. It was only years after Vaughan Williams's death that cellist Julian Lloyd Webber convinced Ursula Vaughan Williams, the composer's widow, to allow a public performance and a recording.

Regarding the folk songs that he selected for the *Sussex Fantasia*, Vaughan Williams moves from melancholy to euphoria. He began with "Salisbury Plain," a 17th- (or 18th-) century song about a highwayman whose story is related from the perspective of the highwayman's lover—the young woman awaits her robber friend while, unbeknownst to her, he is being taken to the gallows for his crimes.⁴²⁹ The melancholic nature of this song connects to the next, Vaughan Williams having planned the folk melodies as episodes within the *Fantasia*. According to Michael Kennedy, "In the *Sussex Rhapsody* the tunes are extended by the composer's skill into new tunes, with an amusing commentary on the quicker tunes from the woodwind section."⁴³⁰ "The Long Whip" or "There was an old man who lived in the city" (Rehearsal letter F m.5) is the next song, one Vaughan Williams collected from a certain Mr. Beck at Rodmell on January 10, 1906.⁴³¹ Marked *Allegro scherzando ma non troppo*, this song in 6/8 time provides a dance-like contrast to the slower preceding ballad (Example 7.16). The song theme then moves from levity to

⁴²⁹ Mainly Norfolk: English Folk and Other Good Music, "Salisbury Plain," Reinhard Zierke, 2022, accessed 3 May 2022, <https://mainlynorfolk.info/lloyd/songs/salisburyplain.html>.

⁴³⁰ Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 129.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 128.



Example 7.16 Vaughan Williams, *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes*, RF, mm.3-6
 © Oxford University Press

bawdiness with "Low down in the broom" (Rehearsal O).⁴³² This risqué song, collected by Vaughan Williams from W. P. Merick at Lodsworth near Midhurst, tells of a young man and woman who had a planned sexual encounter in a field of broom, which is a large, deciduous plant with colorful flowers but no thorns. Such a topic is not uncommon in British folk songs, lending the adoption of their melodies for other contents, especially sacred ones, a whiff of scandal. The fourth song, entitled "Bristol Town," is more chivalric. A rich merchant's daughter is courted unsuccessfully by many suitors until a young poor sailor steals her heart. Her enraged father plots to have him assassinated, but the assassin whom he hires foils the father's plan by allowing the sailor to escape and lying to the father that he had killed him. After some time, the father dies and his daughter marries the sailor. This triumphant love story creates a joyous mood, leading naturally to a drinking

⁴³² Mainly Norfolk: English Folk and Other Good Music, "Low Down in the Broom," Reinhard Zierke, 2022, <https://mainlynorfolk.info/frankie.armstrong/songs/lowdowninthebroom.html>.

song. "I've been to France" is the fifth and final folk song before the cadenza.⁴³³ The singer's jocund, frivolous boast of having been to France, Dover, Plymouth, and all over ends with a challenge to the contestant to finish their cup of liquor. Vaughan Williams used the momentum of the repetitious melody to propel the cadenza to the end. He revised the original, which consisted of sixteenth-note runs exclusively. That may have been aesthetically problematic, so the revised version is more technically varied (i.e., sixteenth-note runs, double stops and chords) and less textural (Example 7.17). The orchestra then winds down, finally keeling over with a forte chord.

Vaughan Williams did not lose his interest in composing solo works for the cello after the *Fantasia*. Instead, he began sketching portions of the cello concerto for Casals. Upon his death, all that was found were extensive sketches for an opening movement, less complete sketches for a finale, and a virtually complete and scored slow movement. The BBC commissioned a later British composer, David Matthews, to reconstruct the extant material, which was premiered and published in 2010 as *Dark Pastoral*, a melancholic work of foreboding and loneliness for cello and orchestra.⁴³⁴ Compared to Clinch's work on Howells's Cello Concerto, this slow movement was virtually complete and much of it was orchestrated, so that

⁴³³ Tony Wales, "I've been to France," on *Sussex Folk Songs and Ballads*, Folkways Records and Service Corporation 3515, 1957, streaming audio, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41VZNLKCzas>.

⁴³⁴ Faber Music, "Dark Pastoral: Cello and Chamber Orchestra," Faber Music, 2022, accessed 3 May 2022, <https://www.fabermusic.com/music/dark-pastoral-5530>.

The image displays a musical score for Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes*, specifically measures 6-66. The score is presented in two main sections: a 'REVISED CADENZA' and an 'ORIGINAL CADENZA'.

The top section, labeled 'REVISED CADENZA', begins with a piano introduction marked *ff* (fortissimo). It features a complex texture with multiple staves. The first staff shows a melodic line with a trill-like figure. The lower staves contain dense harmonic accompaniment with many tied notes. A tempo marking 'doppio piu lento' (twice slower) is indicated, along with a dynamic marking 'p' (piano). An 'accel.' (accelerando) marking appears later in the section. The tempo returns to the original '♩ = ♩' (quarter note equals quarter note) at the end of the revised cadenza.

The bottom section, labeled 'ORIGINAL CADENZA', consists of several staves of music. It features a more rhythmic and melodic texture compared to the revised version, with clear eighth-note patterns in the upper staves and a steady accompaniment in the lower staves. The key signature is D major, and the time signature is 2/4.

Example 7.17 Vaughan Williams, *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes*, RCC, mm.6-66
 © Oxford University Press

Matthews had relatively little to do.⁴³⁵ It is remarkable that Vaughan Williams selected the cello for conveying darker emotions, using the instrument's baritone tessitura. He clearly grasped the instrument's potential to express the ruminative melancholia of old age—Vaughan Williams was a few months shy of his eighty-sixth year.

The collecting of folk tunes indicates that outside of enthusiasts, few are interested in singing the originals. By the twenty-first century, most of the British populace, infected by American media fashions, has drifted away from their ancient traditions, including Anglicanism. When only a small minority practice a tradition, such as Morris dancing, it becomes marginalized at best. Even if aspects of a tradition unexpectedly become fashionable, there is necessarily an element of reconstruction. The way it is perceived will be different, and its values will be fundamentally incomprehensible. Just as modernism can itself be construed in part as an act of mourning the past, folk music revivals, in an indirect manner, mourn a time long past. Folk songs are a remnant of bygone culture. The difficulty of reinvigorating something that has passed is tantamount to restoring a whole world that has died or is dying. It is fair, then, that composers like Vaughan Williams sought to curate those tunes in a way that they thought might be most attractive to the audiences of their own time, arranging them to fit present purposes. After all,

⁴³⁵ David Matthews, "Dark Pastoral, Op.112," David Matthews, 2022, accessed 3 May 2022, <https://www.david-matthews.co.uk/works/work.asp?criteria=all&catid=0&workid=264&sortorder=asc>.

engaging in such reconstruction can suggest a sense of cultural continuity, or at least mask its gradual decline into irrelevance.

William Walton

From the mid-1930s onward, many British commentators viewed Sir William Walton (1902-1983) as Elgar's successor. After all, both Elgar and Walton were granted the highest possible British honor, the Order of Merit. In addition, by the time that he composed his cello concerto in the 1950s, his music was considered old fashioned, a similar fate to the one that overtook Elgar in his later years. As Elgar had belonged to the Victorian and Edwardian eras, he was largely rejected by his younger contemporaries after the First World War. Walton was born into the Edwardian age but lived into the present Elizabethan one. To the modernists of the Manchester School such as Birtwhistle and Davies, who rose to prominence after World War Two, Walton was classed with the generation of Vaughan Williams and Holst, when he in fact was a contemporary of Finzi and Rubbra. Walton's 1957 cello concerto is as enigmatic as Elgar's. Despite the obvious melancholy that pervades the first movement, which opens with a figure that conjures up the ticking of a clock marking the passage of time, it does not mourn the passing of an era. Rather, it vacillates between nostalgia for the immediate past and the uncertainty of the present: a concerto for the Atomic age.

Like Elgar's family, Walton hailed from the lower middle class. Both his parents were singers with modest artistic inclinations. Walton had the good fortune to have a pleasing and true voice as a boy soprano and was admitted into the choir

of Christ Church at Oxford University. He transitioned from choirboy to youthful undergraduate. At a crucial juncture he was taken up by the talented literary siblings, Osbert (1892-1969), Sacheverell (1897-1988), and Edith (1887-1964) Sitwell. Secure in their massive inherited wealth and social position, the Sitwells liked Walton, and seeing his potential, more or less adopted him when he was a teenager. They provided room and board for him while granting him some of the privileges of a family member, although they sometimes treated him like one of their servants. Walton responded readily to the avant-garde circle that formed around the Sitwells. Despite his later claims to have been self-taught as a composer, Walton had been well trained at Oxford and evinced a precocious and strong-willed compositional style from early on, and the Sitwells gave him the necessary freedom to experiment. He also picked up something of the Sitwells's gift for shameless self-promotion.

Born in Oldham, a drab town in Lancashire, Walton was determined not to return to relative penury in the industrial north. He developed an unusually guarded personality: he was taciturn, appearing disinterested in new people he met, but on closer acquaintance he was revealed to be quite garrulous, naughty, and witty. He kept an eclectic set of friends, many of whom he met through the Sitwells, and was befriended by many famous musicians and artists. His association with the Sitwells allowed this child of the lower middle class to mingle with the upper echelons of society. Unlike Elgar, who was always troubled by a dual identity caused by his humble origins, the confident Walton assimilated neatly into an

upper-class and artistic milieu. Walton was eventually knighted and composed works for royal occasions such as the two coronations that resulted in the composition of two ceremonial marches: *Crown Imperial* (1937) and *Orb and Sceptre* (1953).

Walton's career was characterized by vigorous opportunism and a fierce ability to concentrate musically that set him apart from his friend and fellow Sitwell protégé, Constant Lambert (1905-1951). He was constantly producing new works or contributing to new musical ventures. His first major success, *Façade* (1921-28, final version published in 1951) came about from an unconventional idea by Osbert Sitwell, who suggested that Walton write some appropriate music over which his sister Edith would declaim some of her recent avant-garde poems. At this point, Walton was only in his early twenties but sufficiently audacious to provide music scored for a mixed chamber ensemble for an outlandish “entertainment” that was first performed in the Sitwells’s house in Chelsea before invited guests. The first performance in 1922 scandalized the Sitwells’s guests but created a ruckus with critics and audiences alike when it was performed publicly on June 12, 1923, in the Aeolian Hall. This concert, at which there was a minor disturbance that the Sitwells later inflated into a “riot,” brought Walton a welcome notoriety. In the 1920s Walton was fascinated by such modernists as Stravinsky, Ravel, and Prokofiev, as well as his precocious friend and rival, Lambert, whose career was a long decline from the mid-1930s until his death from chronic alcoholism. After the introduction of “talkies” in the late 1920s, Walton found a lucrative activity in providing high-

class film music. He continued to produce concert music, including chamber music: two elaborate symphonies, three concertos for viola, violin, and cello; and a hugely successful oratorio, *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931). In other words, he moved effortlessly from *enfant terrible* in the 1920s to a lauded and successful establishment composer in the 1930s.

Walton benefitted from patronage, in addition to substantial support from his publishers, Oxford University Press, the Sitwells, Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), his lover, Lady Alice Wimborne (1880-1948), and the art collector Samuel Courtauld (1876-1947), and his wife Elizabeth (d. 1931), who granted him a handsome annuity for life.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, Walton also garnered various well-paying commissions, including those for the violin and cello concertos. He was able to travel extensively, and after the Second World War he bought a house on island of Ischia in Italy, where he settled with his wife Susana. His career was as successful as that of Elgar and as financially free as that of Bridge.

The artistic development of Walton shared certain similarities with that of Elgar, including developing an individual compositional voice in his teenage years. Unlike Elgar, however, until the rise of the avant-garde after the Second World War, Walton moved with the times. As noted above, he was influenced by Stravinsky, Ravel, and Prokofiev, but also Gershwin, Sibelius, and Hindemith. (Walton was not, however, influenced by Vaughan Williams and generally eschewed the modality of

⁴³⁶ Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton*, 67.

the “Pastoral School”: he was not interested in folk song whatsoever.) Walton's style was modern, with a certain precision and pragmatism that did not exclude irony: he always kept a certain distance. Nevertheless, one emotion that often surfaced in his music, especially in the three string concertos, was melancholy. Unlike Elgar, Walton’s melancholia contained more than a hint of suppressed eroticism.

Ukrainian-born of Jewish heritage, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky (1903-1976) admired Walton’s music, calling him "a rare combination of greatness and simplicity."⁴³⁷ Following in the footsteps of his colleague Jascha Heifetz, who had commissioned Walton’s Violin Concerto in 1937, Piatigorsky commissioned a concerto from Walton through a third party, the collaborative pianist Ivor Newton (1892-1981). Piatigorsky knew Walton’s viola and violin concertos, and Michael Kennedy states that the cellist wanted a concerto of his own. In a tongue-in-cheek fashion, but knowing that Piatigorsky was an American citizen, Walton accepted the commission on the condition that he be paid in dollars (the dollar was stronger in 1956 than the pound). Walton received \$3,000, a large sum at the time. The commission entailed a close collaboration between cellist and composer similar to that between Delius and the Harrisons. As Margaret Campbell notes, "The Walton concerto, dedicated to Piatigorsky, was the result of considerable co-operation between composer and soloist—much of it was uncellistic until Piatigorsky

⁴³⁷ Neil Tierney, *William Walton: His Life and Music* (London: Robert Hale, 1984), 139.

suggested modifications."⁴³⁸ Tierney and Kennedy mention the detailed exchange of letters between Walton and Piatigorsky that facilitated their plans for the concerto. There is a general notion echoed by Frank Howes that, since Walton did not know how to play the cello, nor the viola or violin, for that matter, he needed to seek advice for how to write for those instruments.⁴³⁹ Clearly, however, he had a firm grasp of the basic technique. (In fact, Walton had studied the violin as a choir boy at Christ Church.) Walton solicited and took advice from both Heifetz and Piatigorsky. An instance of this propensity is the 1974 revision of the cello concerto's ending. Kennedy explained that 'there had been a long exchange of letters, Piatigorsky wanting "a less melancholy ending." Kennedy recounts that Walton revised the ending accordingly: "Walton recalled Piatigorsky's original doubts about the end." Walton admitted to Arthur Jacob, "but I didn't have any till many years later. Then I thought 'Perhaps he's right.'"⁴⁴⁰

When he was eighteen years of age, Piatigorsky managed to flee the Soviet Union to Poland and then to Berlin, where he studied with Hugo Becker and Julius Klengel. He quickly established himself as concert soloist, touring in Europe and the United States. After the rise of Nazism, Piatigorsky emigrated to America and, as

⁴³⁸ Campbell, *The Great Cellists*, 171.

⁴³⁹ Frank Howes, *The Music of William Walton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 101. Howes states that "Walton disclaims all ability to play an instrument and recalls the piano lessons of his boyhood with wry amusement. Yet, concertos for instruments bulk largest in his output."

⁴⁴⁰ Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 199.

noted above, became a citizen.⁴⁴¹ He recorded for HMV and gave his first concert in Britain in 1935 at Grotian Hall. By 1956, Piatigorsky was an international star. Prokofiev composed his Cello Concerto, Op. 58 (1938), for him, and Darius Milhaud composed his *Suite Cisalpin*, Op.332 (1954) expressly for Piatigorsky.

The great cellist played the world premiere of Walton's concerto on January 25, 1957, with the Boston Symphony conducted by Charles Münch. Piatigorsky played the London premiere as well—the first performance in Europe—that took place at a Royal Philharmonic Concert on February 13, 1957 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting. The critical reaction was generally favorable but somewhat muted by comparison with his other concertos. For Walton, who only heard recordings of the premieres as he was recuperating from an automobile accident, Piatigorsky's interpretation was good, though not quite what he had envisioned in regards to the tempi.⁴⁴² After consulting with the cellist, the next performance pleased Walton tremendously. He had wanted it, "altogether more tough and rhythmical," and Piatigorsky complied with Walton's requests with alacrity.⁴⁴³

The passage of time and its uncertainties obviously haunt the opening of Walton's Cello Concerto. A pizzicato eighth-note texture in the strings doubled in the first measure by the woodwinds with a touch of color added by harp and

⁴⁴¹ Campbell, *The Great Cellists*, 171.

⁴⁴² Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton*, 198.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*.

vibraphone suggests, as mentioned above, the relentless ticking of a clock. The harmony, a polychord consisting of C-major triad played simultaneously with a half-diminished seventh chord on B heightens the eerie effect—orchestrated with “magic” instruments of harp, celesta, and vibraphone, the memorable chord will appear throughout the concerto, providing continuity both through harmony and orchestration (Example 7.18). The entire movement teeters uncertainly between C major/minor and B major/minor. Out of this figure the cello plays the main theme of the movement beginning in the third measure. The dominant-ninth chord that appears in measure six introduces an element of tradition, perhaps even a romantic vision, that will pervade the entire concerto (Example 7.19). Tension between consonance and dissonance is so pronounced that even the soloist and orchestra will be symbolically driven apart in the finale. Furthermore, as Herbert Murrill explains, “Of Walton's music in general it is true to say that rhythmically he has worked almost always at very high tension, and that harmonically and melodically he has derived much of his material from the interval of the octave in its perfect, augmented and diminished form.”⁴⁴⁴ In the first movement, however, the chromaticism of the opening motif also produces tension, and the effect is blurred and surreal, like Salvador Dalí's painting of limp watches drooping in a barren landscape. In time, the cello descends from the high treble range into the lower tenor range, adding double stops and chromatic inflections that distance the tonal

⁴⁴⁴ Herbert Murrill, “Walton's Violin Sonata,” *Music and Letters* 31, no.3 (July 1950): 209, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/729788>.

Moderato ♩ = 66-69 c. I WILLIAM WALTON

The score is arranged in the following order from top to bottom:

- FLAUTI 1 2
- OBOE 1
- CORNO INGLESE
- CLARINETTI 1 2 A
- FAGOTTI 1 2
- 4 CORNI F
- 2 TROMBE C
- 3 TROMBONI & TUBA
- TIMPANI
- VIBRAFONE
- CELESTA
- ARPA
- VIOLONCELLO SOLO
- VIOLINI I
- VIOLINI II
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 SOLI VIOLE
- VIOLONCELLI
- CONTRABASSO SOLO

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Example 7.18 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R0, mm.1-4

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2

1
Fl.

2
Fl.

Ob.

Cor.
Ing.

1
Cl.
A

2
Cl.
A

Fag.

1
3
Cor.

2
4
Cor.

Arpa

Vcl.
Solo

VI.
I

VI.
II

1
Soli

2
Soli

3
Soli

4
Soli

Vle

Vlc.

Cb.
Solo

Example 7.19 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R0, mm.5-6
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center from the tonic key of C. The combination of these two elements during a descending melody creates a somber overall mood (Example 7.20). The orchestral transition to the second theme (R3, marked “a tempo tranquillo”) echoes and extends the dark presentiment. However, the contrasting second theme is more lyrical, as its sixteenth-note groupings move more fluidly than anything in the preceding section. Its opening sultriness (R3 m.3) gives way to a passionate unfurling towards a climax, which turns out to be precipitous. Instead of the expected climax, a chord a half step short upsets the mood. However, the effect is not as crushing as a similar place in Delius’s Double Concerto (Example 7.21 and 7.22).⁴⁴⁵ The ensuing struggle between dissonance and consonance reinforces the surreal character of the movement, eventually arriving at a recapitulation (R5 m. 1). Walton varies the main theme, resolving the melody’s plaintive descent (R5 mm. 7-10) on a double-stop C and E natural in the cello, unlike a solitary C, as in its first appearance. The more lyrical second theme expands as it features longer note values and glissandi leaps. This expressive section is far less emotionally reticent than the second theme’s first appearance in the exposition: its melancholy has deepened, and it darkens gradually, settling on a low C# (R8 m.1). A final restatement of the main theme is replete with the ticking motif with which the movement commenced. The cello climbs towards its upper register, attempting to reach a catharsis that fails to provide a culmination. It fades out, only able to

⁴⁴⁵ For more information, see Chapter III-“Frederick Delius: Pantheistic Wanderer.”

6 *poco rit.* 2 *a tempo poco allarg.*

Clar. b Bb *Solo f espress.*

Cor. 2

Vcl. Solo *f*

Vcl. *mp* *arco*

Cb. *fz*

1 FL. *mf*

2 Ob. *mf*

Cor. Ingl.

Cl. 1 A *mf*

Cl. b Bb *f* *p*

Fag. 2 *pp*

Cor. 1 *Solo mp*

Vcl. Solo *mf*

Vle. *pp*

Vcl. *pp* *arco*

Cb. *die.* *pp*

Example 7.20 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R1, m.11-R2, m.5
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Example 7.21 Walton, Cello Concerto, I. R3, m.8-R4, m.2
© Oxford University Press

Example 7.22 Delius, Double Concerto, R44, m.8-R45, m.3
© Oxford University Press

articulate a C-major chord with a left-hand pizzicato on a C-G dyad in the movement's final measure.

The opening movement of Walton's concerto has a poignant, introspective quality reminiscent of certain moments in Shostakovich: the tenebrous conclusion of the slow movement of the Soviet composer's Fifth Symphony, Op. 47 (1937), comes to mind. The main theme is ironic because it is morose, but well-placed major triads provide evanescent flashes of illumination. The entire movement revolves around the note C, which anchors the tonality to a degree. As a gesture toward modernism, Walton introduces chromaticism that at times blurs the sense of tonality.

The orchestration of this movement is skillful, filled with touches of color but never covering the cello. Curiously, Walton told Piatigorsky to remove the vibraphone if he wished, but that he himself liked it.⁴⁴⁶ That the composer felt that the vibraphone—a sonority then associated with jazz bands—was not essential suggests that he was experimenting with how far he could push the movement's mysterious sonorous profile. Within the dreamscape conjured up by the harmony and original orchestration, the noble melancholic strains of the cello signify lyricism, while the combined celesta, harp, and vibraphone timbres conjure up a magical and slightly sinister aural landscape. These juxtaposed timbres challenge the listener to

⁴⁴⁶ Kennedy, 197. In a letter to Piatigorsky, Walton said, "If anything in the orchestration—that vibraphone, for instance—should irk you, just cut it out, because it's not absolutely essential (though I might miss it)."

make the attempt grasp the elusive nature of the movement in a way strikingly similar to that of Holst's *Invocation*, a score that Walton could not have known in the late 1950s. Finzi opined that Walton had created an atmosphere of "cold, glittering detachment" in his Cello Concerto⁴⁴⁷

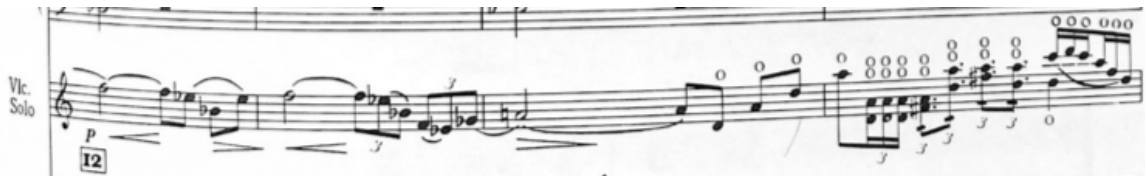
Like the second movement of Elgar's concerto, Walton's Scherzo is quicksilver and elusive. Walton's affinity with Elgar predated the Cello Concerto, however. Kennedy points out that the formal structure of Walton's Viola Concerto, the first of the sting concertos to be written, was indebted to Elgar's example: "Not the least of the extraordinary virtues of this concerto is the choice of solo instrument: the dark and huskily passionate sound of the viola became the perfect medium for the music's prevailing mood of plaintive melancholy."⁴⁴⁸ The viola's timbre approximates the cello through their common tuning, which reinforces Kennedy's observation. Certainly the "plaintive melancholy" Kennedy cites reappears in Walton's Cello Concerto. There are further similarities between the cello concertos of Elgar and Walton. Walton marked the movement of the Cello Concerto *Allegro appassionato*, not too distant from Elgar's corresponding movement's tempo marking of *Allegro molto*. Both Scherzos exhibit an angular dynamism, but Walton is more forceful than Elgar. Finzi noted Walton's idiosyncratic energy, calling it "nervous tension."⁴⁴⁹ There is a sense of tension in

⁴⁴⁷ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2005), 83.

⁴⁴⁸ Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton*, 47.

⁴⁴⁹ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 83.

this mercurial second movement, not of the harmonic kind, but of a relentless rhythmic propulsion, one that will fly into a passion, metaphorically speaking. Walton emphasizes bursts of excitement with rapid arpeggiated harmonics (Example 7.23), as well as double and triple stops. It is clear from the many



Example 7.23 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R12, mm.1-4
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ostinatos here that Walton had studied and truly understood Stravinsky's dynamism. The only time the tension threatens to exceed its bounds and spin off into chaos is at the end (R23 mm. 11-14), when the cellist resorts to playing *col legno*. The joke is that the cellist has played so fast that he or she wears out the bow to the nib, with the explicit instruction in English, "throwing bow," on a glissando ascending double stop toward a harmonic C#, two octaves above middle C (Example 7.24). Interestingly, Elgar's Scherzo ends on a disintegrating ascent toward a



Example 7.24 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R23, mm.11-14
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punctuating pizzicato. Walton's similar gesture captures the levity of the whole movement, belying the serious expressive moments. Nevertheless, as whimsical as it sounds, the movement's relentless rhythmical drive and modal inflections may

again remind listeners of Shostakovich's irony and the macabre energy of the *Danse sacrale* from Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Moreover, a lamenting *rubato ad lib* casts a pall over the playful material that surrounds it on either side (Example 7.25).

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system consists of two staves: the top staff is for Violin Solo (Vlc. Solo) and the bottom staff is for Cello (Cello). The Vlc. Solo part begins with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking and a 'rubato ad lib.' (rubato ad libitum) marking. The Cello part also begins with a 'rit.' marking and ends with a 'ff' (fortissimo) marking. The second system continues the Vlc. Solo and Cello parts, both marked 'affrett.' (accelerando).

Example 7.25 Walton, Cello Concerto, II. R18, m.12
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The finale of Walton's concerto begins with an expressive slow introduction that features the cello's middle and lower ranges; the orchestration is attenuated. Walton transitions from this material into a substantial final movement in which he attempts a formal innovation by juxtaposing a slow movement with a brilliant finale. Earlier material, including sonorities such as the harp, vibraphone, and celesta, returns to create a sense of continuity between movements. This procedure might be justly termed an epistolary musical drama. A mysterious lull introduced by the harp and celesta closes the opening *lento* section and ushers in the first of two extended cadenzas for the soloist (Example 7.26 and 7.27). The cadenza functions like a letter to the orchestra, as if posing a question it. The closing, a very high

86 *poco rit.* [7] *a tempo* (♩ = 60c) *(poco accel.)*

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

Cor. Ing.

Vib. *poco rit.* [7] *a tempo* (♩ = 60c) *(poco accel.)*

Cel.

Arpa

Vlc. Solo

VI. I *poco rit.* [7] *a tempo* (♩ = 60c) *(poco accel.)*

VI. II

Vle *pizz.* *arco*

Vcl. *pizz.* *arco* *div. (armonici)*

Cb. *div. (armonici)*

Example 7.26 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R6, m.6-R7, m.3
 © Oxford University Press

artificial harmonic on E, betrays self-conscious sense of humor. Instantly and viciously, the orchestra responds to the cello's cadenza with a Stravinskian truculence. This bellicose diatribe leaves the soloist sitting in stunned silence: listeners may recall the interaction between the stern Hades and Cerberus and the placating Orpheus that are said to constitute the narrative behind the slow second movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4, Op.58 (1808). In Walton's Cello Concerto finale, the tension that has been present from the beginning has flared into open antagonism between soloist and orchestra, individual and community. Frank Howes illuminates this idea.

For a parallel to the finale one would have to look far. Variations of a sort to be sure, but the idea of antithesis, which is of the original essence of concerto form though it has not been greatly in evidence so far in this concerto, is here exploited to the extent of solo instrument and orchestra having alternate variations to the exclusion of the other party.⁴⁵⁰

After the orchestra's vehemence, the second cadenza, which precedes the coda at Rehearsal fourteen, is calm and pensive. This second cadenza, marked "Rapsodicamente," is predominantly in minor, with many arpeggiated diminished chords, lending a sense that melancholia has deepened into angst. Nearing the end of the cadenza, Walton employs the Classical cadential device of the trill and appoggiatura. Such a closure demands resolution: the high note A6 before R14 m.1 should traditionally resolve down to G, but just as the deceptive resolution in the first movement, the trill descends elusively to a trilled F#, a deceptive resolution to

⁴⁵⁰ Howes, *The Music of William Walton*, 102.

a B-major triad reinforced by the entry of the orchestra (Example 7.28 and 7.29).

Walton exploits the cunning tonal deception by transforming the trill from an



Example 7.28 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R13, mm.40-41

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ornament into a texture (R 14 mm.1-8). Tonal direction is nebulous, remaining that way until another trill at two before RI6 in the cello enters, initiating a descent to a reassertion of the tonic C natural (R16). The function of the extended trills becomes apparent; they are to prepare for the return of the opening movement's main theme complete with the oscillating ticking played by harp and celesta. Walton restates the theme with slight variation, as if it is being recalled but misremembered: to conclude the finale, he appends a slow extrapolation of the principle motive, which he reduces to a low G resolving to a final low C. Kennedy mentioned that Piatigorsky had his reservations about the ending; he wanted a "less melancholic ending."⁴⁵¹ Later, as noted above, Walton reconsidered Piatigorsky's advice and changed the final bars so that the ultimate conclusion is introspective without bitterness.

Accustomed as he was to both laudatory and acerbic critiques of his music, Walton was disconcerted by the ambiguous press reaction to the Cello Concerto. Michael Kennedy notes that music critic Peter Heyworth of *The Observer* attacked

⁴⁵¹ Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton*, 198.

14 a tempo di No **6** 1° Mov. ma un po' più lento

103

Fl. 1

Picc.

Ob. 1

Cor. Ing.

Cl. 1 A

Cl. 2 Bb

Fag. 1

Fag. 2

Cor. 1

Tuba

Timp.

Arpa

Vcl. Solo

VI. I

VI. II div.

Vle

Vcl. arco

Cb. arco

Muta in Fl. 2

p *mp* *mf* *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *fp* *p* *pp* *div.*

Example 7.29 Walton, Cello Concerto, III. R14, mm.1-4
 © Oxford University Press

Walton's music as being old fashioned. Kennedy observes, "To others, notably Peter Heyworth, in *The Observer*, it was final proof that the *enfant terrible* of the 1920s—was he ever that?—had become a pillar of the musical Establishment."⁴⁵² Heyworth opined, "there was 'something rather run-down and enervating about the work as a whole.'"⁴⁵³ If Heyworth aimed this critical dart by association at the British establishment, Donald Mitchell, an unashamed and at times intemperate partisan of Britten's music, criticized the concerto within the context of Continental modernism. Kennedy reports on this development:

Mitchell cited Adorno's theory that *Angst*, 'the element of anxiety', was the distinguishing feature of the 'heroic epoch' of modern music—Stravinsky, Bartók, Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern—and that this element had, by 1957, been repressed. 'Tension has relaxed and imagination grown feebler ... Afraid of being afraid, modern music is allowing itself to grow old. In Mitchell's opinion, Walton's Cello Concerto, Mitchell thought, was an example of an idiom growing old.'⁴⁵⁴

Walton developed a cautious public rapport with Heyworth despite the latter's pointed critiques of his music. Such critiques reflect the wrenching change of musical fashion in favor of Boulez and integral serialism that took place after the Second World War.

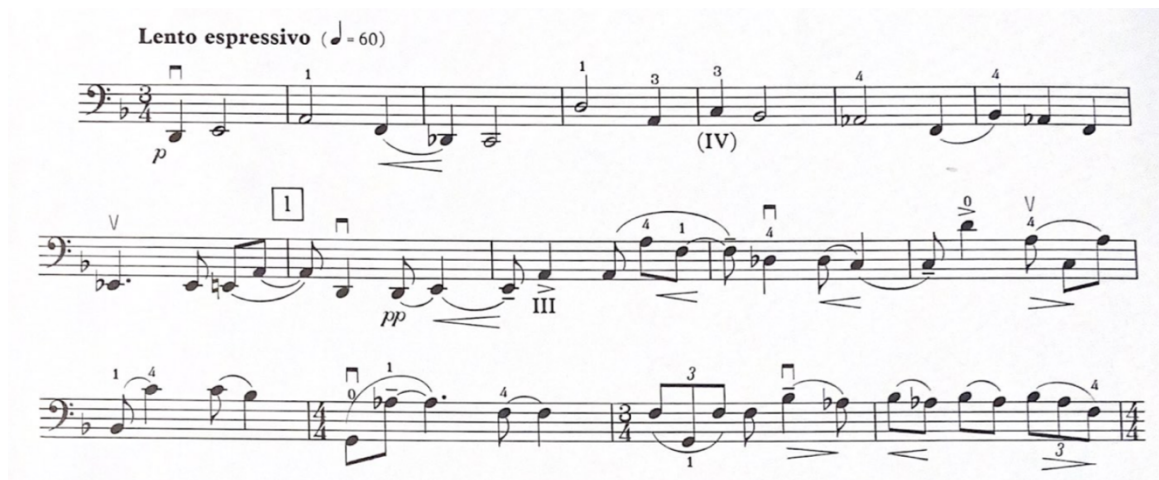
Near the end of his life, Walton became friendly with the great Soviet-born cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (1927-2007). Through this friendship, Walton

⁴⁵² Ibid., 199.

⁴⁵³ Ibid..

⁴⁵⁴ Kennedy, *Portrait of Walton*, 199.

composed a final work for cello, his *Passacaglia*, for solo cello (1980), which he dedicated to Rostropovich. A form favored by Bach and other Baroque composers, the passacaglia informs Walton's own work. Its variations on the opening sequence behave according to Baroque procedure, and the tone is serious (Example 7.30). The



Example 7.30 Walton, *Passacaglia*, R0 -R1, m.8
© Oxford University Press

slow deliberate tread of the passacaglia and the dark D-minor key center may well speak to the trials of old age and infirmity that Walton was undergoing when he composed this very late score. In a way, this musical vignette only underscores the pervasive melancholy that the cello has come to represent for British composers and audiences.

However, Kennedy observes that "The melody [of Walton's Cello Concerto] is drenched in melancholy but it is also drenched in Italian sunshine."⁴⁵⁵ Taking poetic liberty, one replaces the word "melancholy" with the phrase "the English Malady," for all the necessary elements of that malady's legacy as discussed throughout the

⁴⁵⁵ Kennedy, 203.

chapters of this dissertation are summed up in Walton's Cello Concerto and Passacaglia. Though Walton belongs to a later generation, he continued the discourse surrounding the melancholic nature of the cello initiated by Elgar. Distorted by the upheavals of the twentieth century and ravaged by the fragmentation of memory, Walton's vision in the concerto is that of a tradition undergoing a surrealistic modification. However, the bright glimpses of beauty that shine forth in Walton's score can remind listeners that, according to Burton, melancholy can help them reach a higher intellectual and spiritual understanding.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown how severe disruptions and losses of the twentieth century profoundly impacted how the British people responded musically to what Burton called the “English Malady.” Those elements of culture closely associated with the Victorian and Edwardian Era, like their music, no longer seemed appropriate to many of those living in a strange new world. The composers who were aware needed novel modes of expression and numerous ones turned to the cello as an instrument for mourning. Some of them, like Elgar, being moved by the events of their times, particularly World War One, composed cello works that reflected the perceived sense of loss in society. Elgar enshrined his melancholy over the passing of the world he knew in his Cello Concerto, setting an example of the cello’s potential for expressing melancholy in that century. Some composers were moved deeply by personal loss, such as Howells, and composed their scores to effect a catharsis—a therapeutic process for overcoming grief through musical memorialization.⁴⁵⁶ Some, such as Bridge, composed their cello works to cope with the horrors of world war. Some, in Delius’s manner, sought to preserve the beauty of what was lost to transience. Others, so altered by chronic melancholy returned obsessively to the creation of sad strains. None approached the dolefulness of John

⁴⁵⁶ Byron Adams, “Musical Cenotaph: Howells’s *Hymnus paradisi* and Sites of Mourning,” in *The Music of Herbert Howells*, eds. Phillip A. Cooke and David Maw (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 285. For further discussion of Howells’s Cello Concerto, see Chapter VI—“Innocence Lost: The Cello Concertos of Herbert Howells and Gerald Finzi.”

Dowland, whose life was plagued by a conceit of misery, but most knew its sound.

The cello inspired concomitant feelings.

Certainly, one would be remiss to not consider the performers in a discussion of these works, for their interpretation of new music is indispensable to its "life." The selection of performers is important to composers. Elgar, Delius, and Bridge understood this concept, as they were enthusiastic about the cellists and orchestras who premiered their concertos, sonatas, and solo works. Several of the cellists with whom these composers collaborated were women, a significant fact since the music world in which these virtuosic women worked was dominated by men. Beatrice Harrison worked with Frederick Delius and Edward Elgar; May Mukle knew Vaughan Williams and worked with Gustav Holst; Guilhermina Suggia performed various British pieces; Florence Hooton collaborated with Bridge; and Peers Coetmore advised her husband E. J. Moeran. Hence, these women cellists' artistic voices formed an integral part of the melancholic expression of the works they performed.

As this study has demonstrated, British composers expressed the "English Malady" in their music overtly at times and indirectly at others. But regardless of the method, the complexity of the emotions involved in their melancholy pleaded for empathy. Those who hope to be understood and consoled can only trust that those who hear are feeling something commensurate to their grief. The composer strove to recreate the right musical analogy that could stir sorrow. In the case of melancholy, the musical symbols they used did not all have to express unrelieved

tragedy. Juxtaposition of beautiful, serene, or lively passages with hints of lament only heighten the elegiac emotions when they return. One need only recall Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" or "Ode to a Nightingale", Fauré's *Élégie*, or any artistic work that commemorates loss to comprehend on some level that beauty and joy are intertwined with melancholy. The British cello works discussed in this investigation evinced such juxtapositions of light with darkness. Not all their passages or movements sound like a lament. When taken as a whole, however, the melancholy is felt. Knowing a few words about the context of some seemingly pleasant and joyous music can also reframe the emotional impact. Beethoven, in writing about his third cello sonata in the bright key of A Major, said that he wrote it in tears. Was he melancholic, heartbroken, overwhelmed by joy? Or did its sheer loveliness move him to smiling through tears? Beauty and tears are compatible, as there are experiences or thoughts quite beyond the mundane happiness that, upon ending, leaves a person yearning, saddened by the current reality which immediately pales in comparison. While it is unclear what Beethoven had experienced, it is clear that he composed the sonata under stress and that the very act of writing down the music provided a catharsis. Likewise, British composers encapsulated tears in their music.

Of necessity, this dissertation is but a partial investigation by necessity, as the repertory of British cello music composed in the last century is immense. The examples discussed herein were selected because there were apt representatives of certain attitudes towards the cello that permeate British musical life as a whole.

Arnold Bax, John Ireland, Benjamin Britten, Alan Rawsthorne, Herbert Murrill, William Alwyn and John Tavener—to name but a few—wrote cello concertos and sonatas that merit attention, as most manifest melancholy and mourning to a greater or lesser degree. Further exploration awaits us in the future. What the works covered here illuminate is the fact that the cello serves consistently as a vessel for the expression of melancholy and mourning for British composers, performers, and listeners during the harrowing and tragic twentieth century. Finally, this study confirms that music is still, as Burton postulated, one of the most potent cures for melancholy.

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